TRAUMAS OF 1066 IN THE LITERATURES OF ENGLAND, NORMANDY, AND SCANDINAVIA

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Traumas of 1066 in the Literatures of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia

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In memory of
Ursula Hassett Goeres
1953–2020

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Abbreviations

Aelred of Rievaulx	*Aelred of Rievaulx*: *The Historical Works*, ed. by Marsha L. Dutton, trans. by Jane Patricia Freeland, Cistercian Fathers Series, 56 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 2005)
Ágrip	'*Ágrip*', in *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum. Fagrskinna: Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 29 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornrítafélag, 1985), 3–54
ASC C	*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 5. MS C*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001)
ASC D	*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 6. MS D*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996)
ASC E	*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 7. MS E*, ed. by Susan Irvine (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004)
Carmen	Guy of Amiens, *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens*, ed. by Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
DSM-5-TR	American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edn, Text Revision (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2022)
Estoire des Engleis	Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis. History of the English*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
Fagrskinna	'*Fagrskinna*', in *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum. Fagrskinna: Nóregs konunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 29 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornrítafélag, 1985), pp. 55–373.
Gesta Danorum	Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. by Peter Fisher, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015)
GG	William of Poitiers, *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. by R. H. C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
GND	William of Jumièges, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed.

	and trans. by Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)
GRA	William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
HA	Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by Diana Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
HE	Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–1980)
Hemings þáttr	*Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar*, ed. by Gillian Fellows-Jensen, Editiones Arnamagnænæ, Series B, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962)
Heimskringla	Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit, 26–28, 3 vols (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornrítafélag, 1941–1951)
Játvarðar saga	'*Játvarðar saga*', in *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen of the British Isles*, ed. by Gudbrand Vigfusson [Guðbrandur Vigfússon], Rolls Series, 4 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887–1894), I, pp. 388–400
La Estoire de Seint Aedward	Matthew Paris, *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei, attributed to Matthew Paris*, ed. by Kathryn Young Wallace, Anglo-Norman Texts, 41 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1983)
La Vie d'Edouard, trans. by Bliss	*La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur by a Nun of Barking*, trans. by Jane Bliss (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014)
La Vie d'Edouard, ed. by Södergård	*La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur: Poème Anglo-Normand du XII^{e} siècle*, ed. by Östen Södergård (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948)
Morkinskinna	*Morkinskinna*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 24, 2 vols (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornrítafélag, 2011)
Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar	*Færeyinga saga, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd munk Snorrason*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 25 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornrítafélag, 2006), pp. 123–380.
Rou, trans. by Burgess	Wace, *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess with notes by Glyn S. Burgess and Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004)
Rou, ed. by Holden	Wace, *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. by A. J. Holden, Société des anciens textes français, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 1970–1973)

SE	Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press for the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–1974)
SkP I	*Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. by Diana Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 1, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012)
SkP II	*Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. by Kari Ellen Gade, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009)
The History of Saint Edward	Matthew Paris, *The History of Saint Edward the King by Matthew Paris*, trans. by Thelma S. Fenster and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 341, The French of England Translation Series 1 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008)
The Life of King Edward	*The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster, Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin*, ed. and trans. by Frank Barlow, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
Vita Haroldi, ed. by Birch	*Vita Haroldi: The Romance of the Life of Harold, King of England*, ed. by Walter de Gray Birch (London: Elliot Stock, 1885)
Vita Haroldi, trans. by Swanton	'The Life of King Harold Godwinson', in *Three Lives of the Last Englishmen*, trans. by Michael Swanton, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series B, vol. 10 (New York: Garland, 1984), pp. 1–41
Vita Sancti Ædwardi	*Aelred of Rievaulx, Aelredi Rievallensis 'Vita Sancti Ædwardi regis et confessoris', Anonymi: Vita Sancti Ædwardi versifice*, ed. by Francesco Marzella, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 3A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017)
Vulgate Bible	*The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation*, III: *The Poetical Books*, ed. by Swift Edgar with Angela M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)
Waltham Chronicle	*The Waltham Chronicle: An Account of the Discovery of our Holy Cross at Montacute and its Conveyance to Waltham*, ed. and trans. by Leslie Watkiss and Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)

A Note on Translations

Translations from Old Norse and Old English are my own unless otherwise noted. Other translations are from published works, although I have at times modified them to enhance clarity or to reflect more closely the wording of the medieval texts; significant modifications are noted. Names of characters associated with England and Normandy are given in their modern English forms (e.g. Harold Godwinson), while names of characters associated with Scandinavia are given in the Old Norse nominative (e.g. Haraldr Sigurðarson). Placenames are generally given in their modern English forms, with the exception of lesser known (usually Scandinavian) places, or those for which the modern equivalent is unknown.

Introduction

Learning to Hear

Consider the following two stories. The first, set during the Norwegian retreat from the Battle of Stamford Bridge, tells how the king's marshal, Styrkárr, managed to grab a horse and escape from the field:

> Um kveldit gerðisk á vindr nǫkkur ok heldr svalt, en Styrkárr hafði ekki klæði fleiri en skyrtu eina ok hjálm á hǫfði ok nøkkvit sverð í hendi. Honum svalaði, er hann hratt af sér mœðinni. Þá kom í móti honum vagnkarl einn ok var í kǫsungi fóðruðum. Þá mælti Styrrkárr: 'Viltu selja kǫsunginn, bóndi?' 'Eigi þérna', segir hann. 'Þú munt vera Norðmaðr, kenni ek mál þitt'. Þá mælti Styrkárr: 'Ef ek em Norðmaðr, hvat viltu þá?' Bóndi svarar: 'Ek vilda drepa þik, en nú er svá illa, at ek hefi ekki vápn, þat er nýtt sé'. Þá mælti Styrkárr: 'Ef þú mátt mik ekki drepa, bóndi, þá skal ek freista, ef ek mega þik drepa' — reiðir upp sverðit ok setr á háls honum, sva at af fauk hǫfuðit, tók síðan skinnhjúpinn ok hljóp á hest sinn ok fór til strandar ofan.[1]
>
> (In the evening a rather cold wind began to blow, but Styrkárr had no other clothing but a tunic and a helmet on his head and some kind of sword in his hand. He grew cold as he recovered from exhaustion. Then a peasant driving a wagon came toward him, and he was wearing a fur-lined jacket. Then Styrkárr said, 'Will you sell your jacket, farmer?' 'Not to you', he replies. 'You must be a Norwegian, I recognize your speech'. Then Styrkárr said, 'If I am a Norwegian, what do you want then?' The farmer answered, 'I would like to kill you, but unfortunately I have no useable weapon with me'. Then Styrkárr said: 'If you can't kill me, farmer, then I shall see if I can kill you' — and he sweeps up the sword and strikes the farmer's neck so that the head flew off. Then he seized the fur coat and leapt onto his horse and rode down to the shore.)

The second tells of a misunderstanding that occurred during the coronation of William I, the first Norman king of England:

> Interea instigante Sathana qui bonis omnibus contrarius est, importuna res utrique populo et portentum futuræ calamitatis ex

1 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 192–93.

improuiso exortum est. Nam dum Adeldredus præsul alloqueretur Anglos, et Giosfredus Constantiniensis episcopus Normannos, an concederent Guillelmum regnare super se⁊ et uniuersi consensum hilarem protestarentur una uoce non unius lingæ locutione, armati milites qui extrinsecus erant pro suorum tuitione⁊ mox ut uociferationem gaudentis in æcclesia populi et ignotæ linguæ strepitum audierunt, rem sinistram arbitrati flammam ædibus imprudenter iniecerunt. Currente festinanter per domos incendio plebs quæ in æcclesia lætabatur perturbata est⁊ et multitudo uirorum ac mulierum diuersæ dignitatis et qualitatis infortunio perurgente celeriter basilicam egressa est. Soli præsules et pauci clerici cum monachis nimium trepidantes ante aram perstiterunt, et officium consecrationis super regem uehementer trementem uix peregerunt⁊ aliique pene omnes ad ignem nimis furentem cucurrerunt, quidam ut uim foci uiriliter ocarent⁊ et plures ut in tanta perturbatione sibi prædas diriperent. Angli factionem tam insperatæ rei dimetientes nimis irati sunt⁊ et postea Normannos semper suspectos habuerunt, et infidos sibi diiudicantes ultionis tempus de eis peroptauerunt.

(But at the prompting of the devil, who hates everything good, a sudden disaster and portent of future catastrophes occurred. For when Archbishop Ealdred asked the English, and Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances, asked the Normans if they would accept William as their king, all of them gladly shouted out with one voice, if not in one language that they would. The armed guard outside, hearing the tumult of the joyful crowd in the church and the harsh accents of a foreign tongue, imagined that some treachery was afoot, and rashly set fire to some of the buildings. The fire spread rapidly from house to house; the crowd who had been rejoicing in the church took fright and throngs of men and women of every rank and condition rushed out of the church in frantic haste. Only the bishops and a few clergy and monks remained, terrified, in the sanctuary, and with difficulty completed the consecration of the king, who was trembling from head to foot. Almost all the rest made for the scene of conflagration, some to fight the flames and many others hoping to find loot for themselves in the general confusion. The English, after hearing of the perpetration of such misdeeds, never again trusted the Normans, who seemed to have betrayed them, but nursed their anger and bided their time to take revenge.)[2]

2 *HE*, II, pp. 184–85.

The first of these episodes appears in *Heimskringla*, a thirteenth-century saga of the Norwegian kings.[3] In the encounter between Styrkárr and the farmer, language is both a sign of enmity and a reminder of a common history. The Norwegian and the Englishman are able to communicate because their languages were descended from a common Germanic ancestor, with Norse and English remaining mutually intelligible during the early medieval period.[4] The languages had, moreover, been in regular contact since Norse-speaking settlers arrived in England during the late ninth century. Through both violent and peaceful means, immigrants from Denmark and Norway had established themselves in the northern and eastern regions of England. They intermarried with the local population and a hybrid culture emerged in that area, which came to be known as the 'Danelaw'.[5] In 1016 the conquest of England by a Danish prince, later known as Cnut the Great, further consolidated the position of Old Norse as one of the languages of England.[6] During his reign and that of his sons, speakers of Old Norse flocked to the royal court at Winchester, adding their voices to a vibrant polyglot community that counted English, Norman, Dutch, and Latin among its many modes of communication.[7] As Styrkárr flees the Battle of Stamford Bridge, he rides across a land that had been home to speakers of both Norse and English for nearly two centuries. As the episode in *Heimskringla* demonstrates, however, mutual intelligibility did not always ensure harmony. It is Styrkárr's voice that marks him as a

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3 It appears almost verbatim in two other works, *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 321–22, and *Fagrskinna*, pp. 289–90. The relationship between these three texts will be discussed in more detail below.

4 On the interaction between Norse and English in early medieval England, see Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts', pp. 75–105, as well as the more detailed study in Townend, *Language and History*. On the nature of English identity before the Conquest, see Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp. 20–31. The terms '(Old) Norse' and 'English' are used here for simplicity; it should be remembered that neither was standardized during this period and that both existed in multiple forms and dialects. The Norse texts under discussion are largely associated with Iceland and Norway, and thus written in what we would now call Old West Norse.

5 Standard works on this topic include Hadley, *The Vikings in England*; Graham-Campbell and others, eds, *Vikings and the Danelaw*; and Hadley and Richards, eds, *Cultures in Contact*. See also recent studies such as Raffield, 'The Danelaw Reconsidered', and Kershaw, 'Culture and Gender in the Danelaw'. Adams and Holman, eds, *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350*, contains chapters on Anglo-Scandinavian relations as well as Scandinavian contact with Europe more generally.

6 On the nature and impact of Cnut's reign, see recent studies such as North, Goeres, and Finlay, eds, *Anglo-Danish Empire*; and Ashe and Ward, eds, *Conquests in Eleventh-Century England*. See also Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut*; Lawson, *Cnut*; and Rumble, ed., *The Reign of Cnut*.

7 On this see Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts', and Townend, 'Cnut's Poets'. See also the discussion of the multilingual court of Cnut's son Harthacnut in Tyler, *England in Europe*, pp. 102–34.

foreign invader, and the quick escalation of violence between the two men reads like a microcosm of the conflict between their peoples. Styrkárr cajoles and then he kills; like a viking raider he grabs his booty and rushes back to his ship.

The second account likewise emphasizes the role of language in the outbreak of hostility. The scene is from a twelfth-century Latin text, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by the Anglo-Norman monk Orderic Vitalis. Here, a ceremony designed to unite King William's subjects into one voice (*una uoce*) ends in fire and confusion because they cry out in different languages (*non unius lingæ locutione*). Linguistic difference maps directly onto political difference in this episode. Although the Normans were themselves descended from Scandinavian settlers on the Continent, they had quickly adopted the language and culture of their Frankish neighbours.[8] By 1066 they spoke a dialect of medieval French that would not have been easily understood by many of England's inhabitants. The description of William's coronation presents the two language communities as separate and suspicious of each other. William's supporters flee the burning abbey even as looters rush toward it: the scene is one of fear, panic, and cold-hearted opportunism. Despite this, while a state of mutual incomprehensibility likely did exist between English and Norman speakers in the years immediately following the Conquest, it is unlikely to have persisted for long. The number of Normans to settle in England was lower than that of the Scandinavians who had arrived during the previous two centuries. By around the middle of the twelfth century the mother tongue of many elite members of society was English, and most would have been fluent in both English and French. French became the language of literature and culture, a status English only acquired during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[9] The language of Orderic's text moreover reminds us that Latin was also read and spoken by the educated elite throughout the medieval period. As the language of the Church and therefore of scholarship, it offered a means of communication across many different language groups. The educated elite of the post-Conquest period moved in a multilingual world, the mixing of language and culture matched by the blending of English and Norman families, and their movements to and fro across the

8 See further Green, *The Normans*, pp. 34–50, and Abrams, 'England, Normandy and Scandinavia'. On representations of the Normans' Scandinavian past and the formation of a 'Norman' identity, see Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*; Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity*; and Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*. On the ongoing engagement with the Viking past in post-Conquest England, see especially Parker, *Dragon Lords*.

9 Among the many recent discussions of multilingualism in post-Conquest England, see Stein, 'Multilingualism'; Crane, 'Social Aspects of Bilingualism'; Tyler, ed., *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England*; and Wogan-Browne and others, eds, *Language and Culture*. See also such classics in the field as Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, and Short, 'On Bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England'.

Channel.[10] Orderic himself had an English mother and a Norman father; he writes of his childhood in England before being sent to Normandy for his education.[11] The picture of English–French antagonism painted in his text is a dramatic evocation of the anger and mistrust provoked by armed conflict, but by Orderic's day the interaction between speakers of these languages, at least at the elite level, was more complicated.

In addition to their focus on the role language played in the conflicts of 1066, the two episodes also share an interest in the vulnerability of the human body and the role physical privation plays in a person's capacity to inflict harm on others. Styrkárr appears almost in a state of shock as he rides away from the defeat at Stamford Bridge. He does not notice how cold the wind is until he begins to recover from his exertions on the field; when he does, he is so desperate for warmth that that he is willing to kill for a fur-lined coat. William, trembling in the sanctuary as Westminster burns, is a similarly vulnerable figure. His disrupted coronation is anything but a display of royal power. Rather than a symbol of unity, it becomes a wedge of mistrust driven between his English and Norman subjects. In Orderic's telling, the Conqueror becomes acutely conscious of the fragility of his position after this experience. He crushes all subsequent uprisings quickly and with great violence: 'iram suam regere contempsit, et reos innocuosque pari animaduersione peremit' (he made no effort to restrain his fury and punished the innocent with the guilty).[12] When the people of the North rebel, the king uses fire to inflict maximum damage on that region: 'Iussit enim ira stimulante segetibus et pecoribus cum uasis et omni genere alimentorum repleri, et igne iniecto penitus omnia simul comburi, et sic omnem alimoniam per totam regionem Transhumbranam pariter deuastari' (In his anger he commanded that all crops and herds, chattels and food of every kind should be brought together and burned to ashes with consuming fire, so that the whole region north of the Humber might be stripped of all means of sustenance).[13] Over 100,000 people die in the famine that follows. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, William's fiery vengeance on the North is an extreme and deadly echo of the chaos that rocked his coronation ceremony. The man who once trembled in Westminster Abbey now uses fire to impose his will on others. Like Styrkárr's killing of the unarmed peasant, the episode shows how the violence of armed conflict perpetuates, with those who experience threat to their own lives subsequently imposing more violence on the lives of others.

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10 On the process of assimilation between English and Norman in the post-Conquest period, see Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp. 56–92; on the role of language in this process, see the same volume, pp. 378–90.

11 *HE*, III, pp. 6–9.

12 *HE*, II, pp. 230–33.

13 *HE*, II, pp. 232–33.

These twin concerns — the relationship between different cultural and linguistic traditions, and the representation of violence and conflict in the writing of the past — underpin the work presented here. This book is not a history of the conflicts that rocked England in the year 1066; many such studies already exist.[14] I am, rather, interested in how the events of that year came to be portrayed in literature produced in England, Normandy, and Scandinavia during the centuries that followed. As Elaine Treharne observes,

> No Anglo-Saxon could have known that the events of the Battle of Hastings heralded a permanent loss of their political state. [...] It is only hindsight that permits us to know otherwise: there was nothing inevitable about the Conquest's success and the changes brought about by this cultural trauma.[15]

The political and cultural repercussions of 1066 could not have been fully understood at that time. In the aftermath of the conflicts, however, medieval writers began to explore not only the events themselves, but how people had experienced them, and what effect the memory of that experience had on their own times. In this book, therefore, I explore the strategies medieval authors employed as they engaged with extreme and catastrophic events from the past, evaluated their consequences, and presented them for contemporary audiences.[16] I ask how the stories of 1066 changed over time, and how they were moulded to suit the needs of diverse reading communities. This study is eclectic in scope and comparative in approach, bringing together works in English, Norse, French, and Latin. While my focus is largely historiographical, hagiography, romance, folktale, and myth all play an important role in the literary representation of 1066. Violence and armed conflict are recurring themes in any depiction of that year, and I am especially interested in how medieval authors

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14 Examples include recent work by Green, *The Normans*, pp. 86–101; many of the chapters collected in Ashe and Ward, eds, *Conquests*; and Bates, *William the Conqueror*. See also Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings*; Chibnall, *The Debate on the Norman Conquest*; Chrisp, *The Norman Conquest*; Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*; Brown, *The Norman Conquest*; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*; and the magisterial study by Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest*. The Norwegian invasion has received less attention but still figures prominently in recent work, for example, Jones, *The Forgotten Battle of 1066*; DeVries, *The Norwegian Invasion*; McLynn, *1066: The Year of the Three Battles*; and the recent reassessments in Blundell, 'The Battle of Stamford Bridge', and Blundell, 'A Mislocated Battlefield?'.

15 Treharne, *Living through Conquest*, p. 91.

16 I use terms like 'author' and 'writer' for brevity, but I acknowledge that such terms do not fully reflect the complexity of medieval writing and manuscript production. They are intended to include not only the original 'author' (if such existed) but also any others involved in the production of the texts we have today. These include translators, adaptors, scribes, and illustrators.

sought to represent the mental and emotional impact such experiences had on those who lived through them, and on those who came after. My work therefore draws on theoretical perspectives from the field of trauma studies to explore how the violent events of 1066 affected individual and collective memory, and the processes through which such memories were transformed into literary texts.

The traumatic nature of the Conquest of England is increasingly recognized among scholars of the medieval period. In 1996 Elisabeth van Houts drew comparisons between the silence of contemporary English chroniclers and those writing in the immediate aftermath of the First and Second World Wars.[17] In each case, she observed, an initial silence was followed by an explosion of history writing two or three generations later, as shock and disbelief gave way to a desire to understand and cope with the experience. More recently, Elaine Treharne has offered an alternative view, challenging the seeming discontinuity of English writing in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest by pointing to the continued production of English-language manuscripts during the second half of the eleventh century.[18] She does, however, read the absence of English voices responding to the Danish conquest of 1016 as a sign of cultural trauma, and points to the pervading theme of social collapse in texts produced at that time. As evidence for the hardship and loss of life caused by the Conquest, historians also point to the high body-count of Hastings and subsequent uprisings, in which between half and three-quarters of the English male elite were killed.[19] The Norwegians too were decimated and the memory of this defeat is given as a reason not to invade England by numerous rulers in the generations that followed.[20] The harrying of the North is described as a catastrophic event for all classes of society in that region,[21]

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17 van Houts, 'The Trauma of 1066', and van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066'. See also a discussion of the Conquest as trauma in Brownlie, *Memory and Myths of the Norman Conquest*, pp. 9–11 and 25–27.

18 Treharne, *Living through Conquest*.

19 For instance, van Houts, 'The Trauma of 1066', p. 9; but on the contradictory nature of the sources, see Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings*, pp. 128–35. The Bayeux Tapestry depicts numerous dead and mutilated bodies, both in the main narrative and in the margins.

20 The exact numbers of the Norwegian dead are disputed but the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* record that, of the 300 Norwegian warships to arrive in England, only 24 returned (*ASC* D, pp. 80–81). In the sagas, Haraldr's son Óláfr refers to his father's defeat when refusing to invade England with the Danish king in 1085 (*Morkinskinna*, II, pp. 11–12), and it is raised again as Haraldr's grandson, Magnús berfœtr, prepares for a similarly unsuccessful campaign in 1103 (*Morkinskinna*, II, p. 65).

21 Orderic Vitalis strongly condemns William for the widespread destruction of the north in *HE*, II, pp. 229–33. On this see also Speight, 'Violence and the Creation of Socio-political Order' and Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 117–57. This episode is even noted by A. Dirk Moses in his survey of the historical context of genocide; see Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide*, p. 28.

while records like Domesday Book witness the systematic dispossession of English land-owners.[22] This process moreover went hand-in-hand with the forced marriage (and thus, presumably, rape) of English widows to Norman lords.[23] Despite the silence of contemporary records, it is difficult to believe that people who lived through such experiences would not have felt something akin to the grief, loss, and fear we might expect today. Indeed, Catherine Clarke, in her examination of trauma in the twelfth-century 'Anarchy' period, points to an episode in William of Newburgh's *History of English Affairs* that speaks directly to modern conceptions of trauma:

> [E]odem monasterio locus ille ubi Anglorum pro patria dimicantium maxima strages facta est, si forte modico imbre maduerit, verum sanguinem et quasi recentem exsudat, acsi aperte per ipsam rei evidentiam dicatur quod adhuc vox tanti sanguinis Christiani clamet ad Deum de terra, quae aperuit os suum et suscepit eundem sanguinem de manibus fratrum, id est Christianorum.
>
> ([I]n that same monastery [Battle Abbey], the spot at which occurred the greatest slaughter of the English fighting for the fatherland sweats real and seemingly fresh blood whenever there is a slight shower of rain, as if it were being openly proclaimed on the very evidence of this event that the voice of all that Christian blood is still crying out to God from the earth, which opened its mouth and received that blood at the hands of brother-Christians.)[24]

The diagnostic term 'trauma' comes from the Greek word for 'wound' and refers, in contemporary English, to both physical and mental forms of injury. As Clarke observes, we use the term as 'a metaphor to concretize the notion of psychological damage or distress, or the continuing impact of disturbing experience or memory on a wider community'.[25] In Newburgh's work, the seemingly fresh blood that seeps from the ground at Battle Abbey testifies to a wound not yet healed: the killing of Christian men by their metaphorical brothers remains a disturbing and unresolved memory over a century later.

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22 A useful overview of studies on this vast subject is provided in Roffe, 'Domesday Now', with further examples discussed in the same volume by Williams, 'Hunting the Snark', and Keats-Rohan, 'A Question of Identity'. On English landholders who did survive the Conquest, see Thomas, 'The Significance and Fate', pp. 303–33.

23 On this see especially Searle, 'Women and the Legitimization of Succession'; Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest'; and, more recently, Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp. 138–60.

24 William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs*, pp. 40–41, quoted in Clarke, 'Signs and Wonders', pp. 60–61.

25 Clarke, 'Signs and Wonders', p. 61.

Nevertheless, Wendy Turner and Christina Lee observe that modern assumptions about the Middle Ages have made us less willing to acknowledge the likelihood of trauma during that period:

> There is a misconception that the medieval world *experienced* the horrors of life first hand, toughening each individual, so that s/he could not be traumatized by catastrophe. At the same time and by using this same logic, the other aspect of this misconception is that because the horrors of war on the nightly news in the twenty-first century are somehow 'distant' from viewers, this distance supposedly insulates them, creating an artificial world in which viewers are protected and 'soft', unready to face trauma. Yet, looking closely at both worlds, neither of these things is completely accurate.[26]

Turner and Lee argue that medieval people did experience trauma but that, as we might expect, they expressed it in different ways to what we typically see today. The articles collected in their edited volume make a compelling case for the variety of traumatic experience in the medieval period and for the usefulness of modern trauma studies in the investigation of the past.[27] Although the field is indebted to early work by Jean-Martin Charcot, William James, and above all Sigmund Freud, trauma studies have branched out in many directions since the disorder called 'hysteria' first came under serious study during the late nineteenth century.[28] Associated first with women and then, in the aftermath of the First World War, with men returning from combat, traumatic responses to extreme events have been identified in an enormous range of situations and time periods.[29] The field has become increasingly interdisciplinary, with scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Kalí Tal, and Dominic LaCapra instrumental in bridging the gap between the scientific and medical communities, on one hand, and scholars of the humanities on the other.[30] The study of trauma is now also

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26 Turner and Lee, 'Conceptualizing Trauma', p. 4. Emphasis original.

27 For other studies of trauma in medieval England, see among others Arner, 'The Disappearing Scar of Henry V'; Clarke, 'Signs and Wonders'; and Coley, 'Remembering Lot's Wife'. Studies of trauma in medieval Scandinavia include Heiniger, 'The Silenced Trauma in the *Íslendingasögur*', and Torfi H. Tulinius, 'Skaði kennir mér minni minn'. For those focusing on France and Normandy, see the many articles collected in Guynn and Stahuljak, eds, *Violence and the Writing of History*, as well as Gilbert, 'The *Chanson de Roland*'.

28 A useful overview of the history of trauma studies is given in Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 7–32. See also the more in-depth discussion of early trauma work in Micale and Lerner, eds, *Traumatic Pasts*.

29 A useful overview with examples from both clinical and cultural studies is Kirmayer and others, eds, *Understanding Trauma*. The official diagnostic categories are enumerated in the chapter 'Trauma and Stressor-Related Disorders' in DSM-5-TR.

30 Important works in this respect include Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*; Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History*; LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*; LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*; and Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*. See further the many examples and comprehensive

linked to the study of emotion and *mentalités*, both of which have proved fruitful to medievalist scholarship in recent years.[31] A focus on trauma can help uncover not only the mental and emotional lives of those who lived in the past, but also the experiences of groups traditionally marginalized by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or economic position; these groups are all too often the victims of violent aggression and therefore especially vulnerable to traumatic experiences.[32] As Donna Treminski argues, the concept of trauma is an analytical tool that 'opens up a space for a more nuanced and precise understanding of the past. [...] It allows for a reading of texts that has the potential to deepen and nuance our perceptions of historical emotions and actions and historical interactions between people'.[33] As this book will demonstrate, emotion, action, and the interactions between people are all key to the representation of conflict in 1066.

Although individuals such as William the Conqueror and Harold Godwinson play an important role in the historiography of 1066, my aim is not to diagnose specific instances of trauma in the medieval period but to use the framework of trauma studies to explore literary responses to the experience and memory of extreme events. I regard most of the works composed about the conflicts of 1066 as 'literature about trauma' rather than 'literature of trauma'. Literature *of* trauma is understood to be the writing of those who have survived the traumatic experiences they write about. Such literature is, as Tal observes, defined by the identity of the survivor-author, who typically focuses on reconstructing and coping with events they have witnessed first-hand.[34] Literature *about* trauma is a broader, more amorphous category. Such narratives are not necessarily penned by those who have themselves experienced the events described; works written one or two generations after the two World Wars, as noted above, or indeed after the Conquest itself, tend to fall into this category.[35]

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discussion of this topic in Davis and Meretoja, eds, *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*.

31 On this link see further Kerth, 'Narratives of Trauma'. Recent contributions to this increasingly vast field include Ruys and Monagle, eds, *A Cultural History of the Emotions*; Burger and Crocker, eds, *Medieval Affect*; Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*; and Brandsma and others, eds, *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature*.

32 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 7–20 and 96–114. Discrimination based on ethnicity or race is a well-established risk factor for post-traumatic stress responses in the modern period; see for instance Chou and others, 'Perception of Racial Discrimination', and DSM-5-TR, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder'. Studies of trauma as a collective experience include Alexander and others, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, and Robben and Suárez-Orozco, eds, *Cultures under Siege*.

33 Trembinski, 'Trauma as a Category for Analysis', p. 14.

34 Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, pp. 17–19 and 128–32.

35 As noted in van Houts, 'The Trauma of 1066', p. 9. This distinction is similar to LaCapra's 'writing about trauma' (the historiographical project of reconstructing the past as objectively as possible) versus 'writing trauma' (exploring the after-effects of traumatic experience and

These narratives of trauma, Sonja Kerth suggests, 'can be defined as literary tales of lasting, overwhelming and uncontrollable emotional damage caused by war and violence'.[36] In the medieval context, she argues, such narratives are 'a construction and a part of historical discourse in which a medieval feudal society explores how to deal with fear, horror, loss of control, pain, grief, exploding rage, and other emotional results of extreme violence'.[37] Importantly, this form of literature tends to explore the experiences of both victims and perpetrators, and indeed the distinction between the two is often blurred. Those who fight on the battlefield, for example, experience the threat to life we would associate with trauma while also inflicting that threat on others.[38] Considering the traumas of both victims and perpetrators is not, however, meant to excuse the actions of those who commit violence and aggression; it is meant to help us understand the effects of those traumas on the communities in which they occurred. My study is not intended to suggest that the conflicts of 1066 should be equated with the events of the twentieth century that have played such an important role in the development of trauma studies. The Holocaust, the Vietnam War, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples around the world: these are all examples of extreme, catastrophic events that are both quantitatively and qualitatively distinct from the conflicts of eleventh-century England. An ethical distinction must be drawn between those who participated in the invasions of England in 1066 and survivors of the violent and genocidal events that have rocked the modern world. The purpose of this study is not to equate all traumatic experiences across different times and places, but to use the insights given to us by trauma studies to better understand the emotional lives of those in the past, and the ways in which medieval people sought to engage with distressing events.

Although the conflicts of 1066 encompass the myriad individual experiences of each person involved, it should also be noted that the medieval texts discussed in this book tend to focus on the large-scale instances of violence that affected whole communities. In just over a month England was rocked by two separate invasions, multiple pitched battles, and the

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the process of coming to terms with them). See further LaCapra, *Writing History*, pp. 185–87.

36 Kerth, 'Narratives of Trauma', p. 278.

37 Kerth, 'Narratives of Trauma', p. 280.

38 See Tal's discussion of trauma in combat soldiers in *Worlds of Hurt*, pp. 128–38, as well as Herman's discussion of trauma in those who commit atrocities in *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 54–56. The DSM-5-TR likewise includes the experience of being a perpetrator, of witnessing atrocities, and of killing the enemy as additional risk factors associated with traumatic disorders. As Tal and other writers point out, there is still an ethical imperative to distinguish between those who commit violent acts and those who suffer them. On this see also LaCapra, *History and Memory*, p. 41.

deaths of thousands. The disruptive effect such events have on the fabric of a community is well documented. As Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and Antonius Robben observe, 'Large-scale violence engenders dynamics that are unique and in some ways incommensurable with individual violence. Large-scale violence targets social bonds and cultural practices as much as it targets the body and the psyche'.[39] Such violence rips apart the bonds of family and community; it calls into question fundamental human relationships and the belief systems that give meaning to one's experience of the world.[40] Reviewing a host of trauma narratives ranging from rape and incest to genocide and war, Judith Herman concludes: 'Survivors of atrocity of every age and every culture come to a point in their testimony where all questions are reduced to one, spoken more in bewilderment than in outrage: Why?'[41] It is this 'why' that gripped the imagination of so many of the authors I discuss in this book.

What, then, of the events in question? The history of 1066 is widely known, and I will therefore sketch it only briefly here. The conflicts of that year revolved around a succession crisis. In January 1066, Edward the Confessor, King of England, died without an heir. Powerful men both within and beyond England claimed the throne. Harold Godwinson, brother-in-law to the king and foremost earl of the realm, claimed that the dying Edward had entrusted the country to him. He was crowned a day or two later, on the same day as Edward's funeral. Around Easter he travelled north to secure the support of the nobles there, before returning south and gathering his forces on land and sea. At the same time, William, Duke of Normandy, was preparing to invade. William was the illegitimate son of Duke Robert 'the Magnificent', nephew to Emma, King Edward's mother. Driven out of England during the Danish conquest fifty years before, Edward had spent much of his early life in Normandy. Norman sources claim that he sent Harold to Normandy a year or two before his death, expressly to confirm William as his heir. While there, Harold is said to have sworn fealty to William and promised to support his claim to the throne, although the exact nature of his journey and oath are debated in both medieval and modern sources.[42] Receiving news of Harold's coronation, William sent an embassy to Rome to secure the pope's backing for an invasion; he then set about building ships and gathering forces from Normandy and beyond. The third pretender to the English throne was Haraldr harðráði ('the Severe') Sigurðarson, King of Norway. Haraldr's claim was even more tenuous than Harold's and William's, although both Norwegian

39 Suárez-Orozco and Robben, 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Violence and Trauma', p. 10.
40 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 50.
41 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 178.
42 A summary is provided by Lawson in *The Battle of Hastings*, pp. 24–30; see also Brownlie's discussion of this episode in *Memory and Myths*, pp. 100–09.

and Danish rulers had long claimed sovereignty over various parts of England, Scotland, and the other North Atlantic territories. Scandinavian sources report that Haraldr was invited to invade by Tostig Godwinson, Harold's brother. Tostig had previously quarrelled with Harold and then spent some time travelling around the North Sea attempting to secure foreign support for an incursion of his own. Haraldr also claimed England through his family's alliance with the Kings of Denmark. Cnut the Great had won England by conquest in 1016 and was soon recognized as the ruler of both countries. Cnut's son Harthacnut, who eventually succeeded him, was said to have designated as his heir the King of Norway, Magnús inn góði ('the Good') Haraldsson. Magnús was Haraldr's nephew and the two had briefly shared rule over Norway before Magnús died in 1047. Haraldr considered himself Magnús's heir and thus, in a roundabout way, could argue for his own hereditary claim to the English throne.[43]

The Norwegians arrived in the north of England in early September. Harold Godwinson had, by this point, disbanded his army, and the combined forces of Haraldr and Tostig met little opposition as they rowed into the River Humber. This was the old Danelaw, a region that had weathered many attacks from Scandinavia but whose hybrid population had often supported the claims of Scandinavian rulers. On 20 September Haraldr and his troops defeated an army led by the English Earls Edwin and Morcar; this is now known as the Battle of Fulford or Fulford Gate. The victorious Norwegians took English hostages and opened negotiations with the local population, hoping to secure their support. King Harold, however, reassembled his army and marched north. On 25 September he surprised the Norwegian army at Stamford Bridge, near York. Haraldr and Tostig were killed along with the greater part of their army. The surviving Norwegians were eventually given quarter; they returned to their ships and sailed home. Three days later the Normans landed in Pevensey Bay and began building fortifications in the south. Harold rushed back with his remaining forces and engaged the Normans in battle on 14 October. Harold and his brothers were killed, and the English army routed. William spent the remaining months of 1066 consolidating his position and quelling rebellion; he was crowned King of England on Christmas Day. As Pauline Stafford has shown, conquest is more of a process than a moment, and William's hold over both England and Normandy continued to be challenged in the years that followed.[44] This study, however, focuses primarily on the literary representation of the two invasions of 1066, and of the three principal battles that took place during that year.

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43 On the claims of various other pretenders to the throne, see further Gautier, 'Harold, Harald, Guillaume et les autres', and Howard, 'Harold II'.

44 Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, pp. 101–13; see also Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 71–125. As Brownlie notes, the year 1066 is mainly resonant in an English

The Sources

The network of sources documenting the conflicts of 1066 is vast. This study focuses on narrative texts, but the struggles of that year are reflected in the archaeological record, language change and usage, charters and other legal documents, visual artworks, and many more.[45] Selection is both necessary and inevitable when faced with such riches, even when the scope is limited to written works. Given the comparative nature of this study, it is important to introduce the principal texts consulted. I am particularly interested in bridging the gap that too often exists between the study of Anglo-Norman England, on one hand, and that of medieval Scandinavia, on the other.[46] This section therefore offers a *précis* of the principal sources — English, Norman, and Scandinavian — discussed in the book, with the aim of introducing readers from a variety of disciplines to texts composed in all three regions.

There are a few contemporary or near-contemporary sources for the period. Chief among these are the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, a collection of annals begun around the end of the ninth century and regularly updated, in one case until the mid-twelfth century.[47] Written in Old English but drawing on continental models, the *Chronicles* are descriptive rather than analytical in their presentation of historical events, beginning with the arrival of the Romans in 60 BCE. Presented year by year, entries are succinctly crafted and matter-of-fact in tone. While not a narrative history as such, the *Chronicles* contain many narrative episodes, with the description of important events such as the Norman Conquest and the subsequent consolidation of Norman power stretching across multiple entries. With their focus on the political history of England, the *Chronicles* are often regarded as key texts in the construction of an English identity or, in the words of Sarah Foot, 'the story of the making of *Angelcynn*'.[48] They

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context (although I would add that this is true of the Scandinavian perspective as well). The year 1093 was more disastrous in terms of Norman advances against the Welsh and the Scots, while the Norman invasion of Ireland is associated with the date 1169: Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*, p. 23.

45 A thorough discussion of the sources is given in Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings*, pp. 45–118. A good introduction to the topic is Galloway, 'Writing History in England'. A useful overview of the Anglo-Norman chronicle tradition specifically is van Houts, 'Historical Writing'; see also the lengthier discussions in Shopkow, *History and Community*, and Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*.

46 The work of Elisabeth van Houts is a notable and important exception to this, and has been for the last forty years. See for example her articles 'Scandinavian Influence in Norman Literature' and 'The Norman Conquest through European Eyes'.

47 A good, recent overview of the *Chronicles* is Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'.

48 Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 99. On this topic see also recent responses such as Tyler, 'Cross-Channel Networks of History Writing', and Konshuh, 'Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity'.

are thus associated with an 'English' perspective of the Conquest and are generally favourable in their presentation of Harold Godwinson and other English notables.[49] In common with many other chronicles, however, they present the English defeat by the Normans as divine punishment for sinful behaviour. The account in the *Chronicles* is complicated by the fact that they exist in multiple versions, having been copied and updated at different monasteries around the country. Variations are common between the extant manuscripts and different local traditions are reflected.[50] The events of 1066 are related in three of the extant manuscripts, those known as C (Abingdon), D (Worcester), and E (Peterborough).[51]

Also spanning the Conquest is the anonymous text known as the *Vita Ædwardi regis qui apud Westmonasterium requiescit* (Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster). It was commissioned by Edward's wife, Queen Edith, either just before or immediately after the Conquest, and is the work of an anonymous monk from the monastery of St Bertin in Flanders.[52] Although ostensibly about the life of the king, the work is a powerful statement in support of Edith and the Godwin family. The first part of the text is mainly concerned with the deeds of Edward, the second with his character and piety. This second part contains the king's prediction of the conflicts that will engulf the country after his death, and there is a dramatic shift in tone between the two parts, which may be linked to the death of the king.[53] This first life of Edward was rewritten several times over the centuries that followed. Two more Latin *vitae*, by Osbert of Clare and Aelred of Rievaulx, date to the twelfth century. Aelred's work formed the basis of two vernacular French poems in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the first by an anonymous Nun of Barking and the second by the prolific English chronicler Matthew Paris. There are also a number of versions of the life in Middle English, for example in the

49 As noted above, the precise constitution of 'Englishness' in this period is a matter of debate and was most likely not a single, fixed sense of identity that all of Harold's subjects would have shared.

50 See for example Thomas A. Bredehoft's discussion of the Mercian Register and Northern Recension in Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 64–71.

51 Stephen Morillo helpfully presents Dorothy Whitelock's modern English translations of the three Chronicle accounts side-by-side in Morillo, The Battle of Hastings, pp. 21–27. The editions used in the book are *ASC* C, *ASC* D, and *ASC* E.

52 The precise dating is uncertain. Barlow argues for a split composition between 1065 and 1067 while Stafford argues for a context immediately after the Conquest, around 1066–1067. On this, as well as Edith's role in the production of the text, see *The Life of King Edward*, pp. xxviii–xxxiii; Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, pp. 40–52; and Tyler, *England in Europe*, pp. 202–59. A recent review of the authorship and dating of the text has been done by Licence, 'The Date and Authorship of the *Vita Ædwardi regis*'.

53 See further Otter, '1066: The Moment of Transition'.

South English Legendary, and in Old Norse, with *Játvarðar saga* (the Saga of Edward) likely compiled during the fourteenth century.[54]

One of the earliest sources associated with the Norman court is the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* (Song of the Battle of Hastings). This Latin poem is generally attributed to Guy, Bishop of Amiens from 1058 to 1075 and a member of the household of William's queen, Matilda, in England.[55] Although it was likely composed only a year or two after the Conquest, there has been some debate as to its historical reliability, as the narrative differs in key places from other early accounts.[56] Composed in elegiac hexameters, it is self-consciously rhetorical in many places, similar in tone to Carolingian panegyric while also drawing indirectly on the classical tradition. The text centres on William the Conqueror and his invasion of England, but space is also devoted to the deeds of other nobles, notably Eustace of Boulogne. William is not a perfect figure in this work, but the portrayal of both the duke and of his consolidation of power are generally favourable. Harold, in contrast, is described as a competent leader but his character is marred by deceit and wickedness.

The earliest prose account of the Conquest written from the Norman perspective is the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (Deeds of the Norman Dukes). This Latin chronicle is attributed to William, a monk at the abbey of Jumièges in Normandy. The first part of the *Gesta* is a revised and abbreviated version of Dudo of Saint-Quentin's history of the Norman dukes, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* (On the Ways and Deeds of the First Dukes of Normandy), written between *c.* 966 and *c.* 1015. It tells the story of the founding and settlement of Normandy, as well as the reigns of its earliest dukes. William must have worked on his revision of Dudo's text over several years, and added an account of the Normans' subsequent history up to and including the reign of Duke William. He likely completed the work by 1060 but a decade later, perhaps at the request of King William himself, added an account of the Conquest of England.[57] In the preface to this work William writes of his desire to compose in a simple and unadorned style; he generally does so, in marked contrast to Dudo. He also presents himself as an impartial narrator who rarely makes explicit his own views, but he is throughout on the side of the Norman ducal family.[58] The fact that this work is now extant in

54 An excellent overview of many of these works is given by Fenster and Wogan-Browne, *The History of Saint Edward*, pp. 3–11. See also my discussion in Goeres, 'Exile and Migration'.

55 For an overview of the dating, authorship, and transmission of this text, see *Carmen*, pp. xv–lxvi.

56 The *Carmen*'s unusual description of the death of Harold Godwinson will be discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 195-96. In favour of the overall reliability of the narrative, see *Carmen*, pp. xxxv–lix; against, see Davis, 'The *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*'.

57 On the date, authorship, and transmission of this text, see *GND*, pp. xix–lx.

58 *GND*, pp. 4–5.

forty-seven manuscripts suggests it enjoyed significant popularity during the medieval period. It seems to have been widely available and influential in its presentation of the Conquest. It was also revised by multiple authors in the years that followed. Principal among these were two twelfth-century historians, Orderic Vitalis and Robert de Torigni, who went on to compose historiographies of their own.

Both the *Carmen* and the *Gesta Normannorum* were used by the Norman-born William of Poitiers as a source for his biography of William the Conqueror. The *Gesta Guillelmi* (Deeds of William) was likely composed around 1073–1075.[59] Although unfinished, it centres on William's invasion of England and is lavish in its praise of the new king. Indeed, William has been called 'essentially a propagandist rather than a historian' thanks to his exuberant justification of the Conqueror's deeds.[60] He was a former knight who became chaplain to Duke William, and had a close relationship with William's half-brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux. It is suggested that much of his information about the Battle of Hastings came from Odo himself, along with other eyewitness accounts.[61] William drew on the chronicles of Dudo of Saint-Quentin and William of Jumièges but the text is also steeped in classical learning, especially the works of Caesar, Vergil, Sallust, and Cicero. The text seems not to have been widely known in the medieval period, but it was an important source for Orderic Vitalis and may also have been used (perhaps indirectly) by Robert de Torigni, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and Wace.[62]

While sources from the late eleventh century tend, in this way, to present either an English-leaning or Norman-leaning perspective, those that emerge in the twelfth century are more nuanced. In contrast to the relatively direct experience reflected in the contemporary sources, texts composed by writers two and three generations after the Conquest represent what Marianne Hirsh calls 'postmemory'.[63] These are the memories passed on from parents, who have experienced the traumatic event directly, to their children and grandchildren, whose memories of that event are mediated through imaginative investment and marked creativity. The first half of the twelfth century saw an explosion of historiographical works in this vein.[64] Most combine material from the English and Norman traditions, perhaps because many of the principal authors were themselves of mixed

59 On the dating, authorship and background of this text see, *GG*, pp. xv–xxxv.

60 So described by Morton and Muntz in *Carmen*, p. xviii.

61 *GG*, p. xvii.

62 *GG*, p. xliii.

63 Hirsch, *Family Frames*. See also discussion of this concept in the context of the Norman Conquest in Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*, pp. 7–8.

64 This has been discussed by numerous scholars. Emily A. Winkler gives a useful overview of this in Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, as well as detailed explorations of the works of William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, John of Worcester, and Geffrei Gaimar.

English and Norman heritage and, consequently, had access to (and an interest in) the memories of both groups.[65] Henry of Huntingdon exemplifies the blended identity of Anglo-Norman England during this period. Archdeacon of Huntingdon and a canon of Lincoln cathedral, Henry used the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* as the basis for his *Historia Anglorum* (History of the English). Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History) was also an important source for his work.[66] Henry's father, archdeacon of Huntingdon before him, was descended from a Norman family, while his mother was English. Henry's facility with sources in multiple languages suggests he grew up speaking both English and French, in addition to his formal education in Latin. According to the Prologue to the *Historia*, Henry was asked to write a history of England by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, likely in the mid-1120s.[67] Henry worked on the book over the next two decades, often updating and revising earlier material, and concluding with the coronation of Henry II. The work began to circulate before its completion and seems to have been widely known; it is now extant in over forty manuscripts. This is perhaps thanks to its clarity and concision; the work was intended to be a teaching handbook that would synthesize other historiographical works and update them to Henry's time. As Diana Greenway observes, each of the ten books of the *Historia* could be read, perhaps aloud, in a single setting. The language is simple and accessible, the narrative light on dates and packed with dramatic and even scandalous events.[68] Henry moreover intersperses the prose with short verses of his own composition, using poetry to eulogize important historical figures and emphasize key moments in the narrative.[69] He also uses rhythm and rhyme, and draws on both biblical and classical motifs to enliven the prose. Henry's writing demonstrates a detailed knowledge of secular and ecclesiastical politics. Invasion is a prominent theme in the work, with Henry identifying the five invasions of England — by the Romans, the Picts and Scots, then the Angles, the Danes, and finally the Normans — as punishments by God on the faithful and faithless alike. Henry focuses on the evolution of monarchy in England but stresses that without God the affairs of men count for little.

Like Henry, the monk known as John of Worcester took the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* as the starting point for his own *Chronicle*, a world history with a focus on English affairs. The *Chronicle* translates much of the Old

65 On the role oral history, and particularly that transmitted by English women, likely played in the memorialization of the Conquest, see van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 123–42.

66 On Henry's use of sources, see *HA*, pp. lxxxv–cvii.

67 *HA*, pp. 2–9.

68 *HA*, pp. lviii–lxvi.

69 On this, see especially Rigg, 'Henry of Huntingdon's Metrical Experiments', as well as *HA*, pp. cvii–cxii.

English text into Latin and updates it to the middle of the twelfth century. This is supplemented with material ranging from the world chronicle of Marianus Scotus, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, hagiographies of early English saints, and Norman historical works such as Eadmer's *Historia novorum in Anglia*.[70] John seems to have been of English descent, but we know little of his background or personal life. Certainly the monastic milieu in which he worked was mixed, and he seems to have been in regular contact with fellow writers in Durham, Canterbury, and Malmesbury. Corrections and annotations to the main manuscript, most likely in John's own hand, testify to at least four different stages of the text's development, undertaken over a period of around twenty years up to *c.* 1140.[71] John follows the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in presenting Harold and the English in favourable terms, but with a few exceptions criticism of Norman rule is minimal; this is perhaps further evidence that he had a mixed audience in mind. Nevertheless, the *Chronicle* did not reach as wide an audience as Henry's *Historia Anglorum*. It survives in only five medieval manuscripts and the single leaf of a sixth.

William of Malmesbury was also descended from English and Norman families. In his *Gesta regum Anglorum* (History of the English Kings), he famously declares his intent to present a balanced account of the Conqueror and his sons.[72] Librarian and precentor at the abbey of Malmesbury, William was one the most prolific authors from this period. Around twenty works are now attributed to him, in addition to numerous collections and compilations.[73] Principal works of historiography are the *Gesta regum*, the *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (History of the English Bishops), and the *Historia Nouella* (Contemporary History). The Conquest features prominently in the *Gesta regum*. Dedicated to the Empress Matilda and, in one version, to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the *Gesta regum* follows the tradition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in relating the coming of the Angles and Saxons and the early history of England, before turning to the coming of the Normans and the reigns of King William and his sons. An early translator of the *Gesta regum*, John Sharpe, memorably characterized William's work as 'a kind of biographical drama' in which the great sweep of narrative history is presented through the 'skilful gradation of character and variety of personage'.[74] The narrative is indeed lively and detailed, combining material from an array of earlier historical works with oral

70 See further John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, pp. xvii–xx, and Darlington and McGurk, 'The "Chronicon ex Chronicis"'.

71 Brett, 'John of Worcester'.

72 *GRA*, I, pp. 424–25.

73 A full list is provided at *GRA*, pp. xlvi–xlvii.

74 From the preface to his translation of *The History of the Kings of England and the Modern History of William of Malmesbury*, quoted in *GRA*, p. xliii.

history and legend, presumably accumulated during his travels to other religious houses. William comments frequently on the process of selecting material and assembling his text; he presents different versions of the same episode side-by-side as if inviting the reader to do the same. He portrays himself as a diligent researcher occupied with the truth, although he is not afraid to offer his own opinion about the events described. Despite his avowed neutrality he mourns the fact that 'Anglia exterorum facta est habitatio et alienigenarum dominatio' (England has become a dwelling-place of foreigners and a playground for lords of alien blood).[75] The *Gesta regum* was likely composed over a period of several years, up to around 1126, with William continuing to revise it until *c.* 1135. Clearly a popular text, it now exists in four different but related versions and is extant in over thirty manuscripts.

The same cannot be said for the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History) of Orderic Vitalis. Although born in England, Orderic spent most of his life in Normandy.[76] He was born near Shrewsbury in 1075 to a Norman father, a clerk to the Earl of Shrewsbury, and an English mother whose identity is unknown. At the age of ten Orderic was sent to the abbey of Saint-Évroul in Normandy, which remained his home for the rest of his life. Orderic must have been a constant presence in the scriptorium; his hand has been detected in over a dozen manuscripts from the abbey's library.[77] Having cut his historiographical teeth revising the *Gesta Normannorum ducum* and updating the abbey's annals, Orderic began his major work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, around 1110. He worked on the text for over thirty years, with the bulk of that concentrated between 1123 and 1137. In both length and scope the *Historia* is vast when compared to the works discussed above. It seems to have begun as a response to the abbot's request for an account of the refounding of Saint-Évroul, but gradually expanded into a thirteen-book history of the Christian Church. It tells, among other things, of the life of Christ and the history of the early Church; of the lives of the apostles, evangelists, and popes; of the history of Saint-Évroul and several of its sister-houses; and the monastic and political histories of England and France, including the Norman Conquest.[78] Orderic drew on over one hundred sources in constructing the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, some of which are quoted verbatim; he also composed his own verse epitaphs and eulogies to insert into the prose narrative. Central to his work is biblical material and the works of early Christian writers like Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Jerome; Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* exerts

75 *GRA*, I, pp. 414–15.

76 About Orderic's life we know only what he tells us in his own writings. On Orderic's life see further *HE*, I, pp. 1–6 and 32–44.

77 *HE*, I, pp. 23–24.

78 On the content and sources of the *Historia*, see further *HE*, I, pp. 45–97.

a strong influence over many parts of the text, and abbreviated saints' lives feature in many places. Thanks to his monastic education Orderic had a thorough grounding in grammar, rhetoric, and the classical tradition, and many of the battle scenes and speeches seem to take inspiration from poets such as Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. He incorporated much documentary evidence into the work, especially charters, calendars, and other records from monastic archives. In his account of 1066, Orderic presents the English as sinful and undisciplined, but many of the Normans are likewise haughty and violent. Apart from his description of the harrying of the North, Orderic is more equivocal in his presentation of the Conquest than earlier Norman writers, despite having drawn on the works of William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges; he likewise knew (or at least knew of) the *Carmen*. Like William of Malmesbury he also recorded oral history, local legends, and eyewitness testimony, and there are tantalizing hints that he was familiar with Scandinavian traditions, perhaps via England.[79] Orderic considered it the historian's duty to preserve events for future generations so they could learn by example and, as Marjorie Chibnall demonstrates, the *Historia* is addressed to lay as well as monastic audiences.[80] Wace and Robert of Torigni seem to have known Orderic's work, and some sections were excised and copied separately.[81] Perhaps due to its size and scope, however, the *Historia* did not circulate widely during the medieval period. The principal extant manuscript, of which three volumes out of four now survive, is thought to be in Orderic's own hand and was likely intended for circulation among his fellow monks.[82] Parts of the work are preserved in six other manuscripts, three of which are medieval.

These major works contributed to the 'twelfth-century renaissance' in England and became fundamental to later understandings of the Conquest. They were not alone, however. Histories with a more local focus were produced throughout England and Normandy during the post-Conquest period. One of the earliest is Simeon of Durham's Latin chronicle about the history of the Church in Durham. Composed between 1104 and 1108, it is an important source for the history of northern England after the Conquest. The monk Eadmer's *Histora novorum in Anglia* (History of Recent Events in England) is another early text, dating from *c.* 1093 to the late 1120s. It contains a relatively brief account of the Conquest, although it is primarily a biography of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, focusing on events related to the community of Christ Church, Canter-

79 See Marritt, 'Crowland Abbey'; Musset, 'L'image de la Scandinavie'; and van Houts, 'Scandinavian Influence'.

80 *HE*, I, pp. 36–39.

81 See *HE*, I, pp. 112–23, on the transmission and manuscript history.

82 For a description of this and the other extant manuscripts, see *HE*, I, pp. 118–23.

bury.[83] Legal-historical works were also produced at religious houses such as Ely, Ramsey, and Abingdon, often with a view to legitimizing claims to land and property. The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, produced during the final quarter of the twelfth century, is especially relevant to studies of the Conquest, as it gives a brief history of the Norman invasion and relates how William vowed to found an abbey on the site of the Battle of Hastings.[84] A monk at Battle Abbey also composed the *Brevis Relatio de Guillelmo nobilissimo comite Normannorum* (Brief Account of William, the most Noble Duke of the Normans) sometime between 1114 and 1120. The account is indeed brief, but it contains a useful early description of the Battle of Hastings.[85] Chronicles were likewise produced for aristocratic families. The twelfth-century *Warenne Chronicle*, formerly associated with Hyde Abbey, is an example of this, focusing as it does on the history of the Earls of Warenne in Normandy. This chronicle retells a number of episodes connected to the events of 1066, albeit largely derived from the historiographical works discussed above.[86]

The *Waltham Chronicle*, also known as *De inventione sancte crucis* (On the Discovery of the Holy Cross), is related to these histories of monastic houses.[87] The text centres on the miraculous history of the Waltham Cross, whose discovery during the reign of Cnut had led to the foundation of the religious house. Around 1060 Harold Godwinson had re-founded and enlarged Waltham as a secular college, but it was dissolved in 1177 and replaced by an Augustinian abbey. The *Chronicle* likely dates to shortly after that time. Importantly, for the purposes of this study, the text dwells on the abbey's relationship with Harold Godwinson, claiming Waltham as the site of Harold's burial. It is preserved in only two manuscripts, one of which also contains the sole extant copy of the *Vita Haroldi* (Life of Harold [Godwinson]).[88] Composed perhaps thirty years after the *Waltham Chronicle*, the *Vita* combines history, hagiography, romance, and legend to tell the story of how Harold survived the Battle of Hastings and died a holy man many decades later.[89] The authors of both texts seem to have lived

83 See further the recent discussion of this text by Rozier, 'Between History and Hagiography'.

84 *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 32–45. On the portrayal of 1066 in several of the monastic chronicles, see Parker, 'Fighting the Last War'.

85 See further Elisabeth van Houts' edition of this text, 'The Brevis Relatio'.

86 See further *The Warenne (Hyde) Chronicle*, pp. xiii–lvi.

87 For an overview of the text and its author, see *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. xiii–liii.

88 This is London, British Library, Harley 3776, thought to date from around the middle of the fourteenth century. The *Waltham Chronicle* is also found in a manuscript dated around a century earlier, British Library, Cotton Julius D. VI, and in a later paper copy of this manuscript. See further Watkiss and Chibnall's introduction to *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. xlviii–liii.

89 On the dating of the *Waltham Chronicle* and the *Vita Haroldi*, see *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. xxix–xlviii.

or worked at Waltham. Both reflect on their own memories of the place and claim to have spoken to those who witnessed the miraculous events they relate. The author of the *Chronicle* also drew on written sources, such as the abbey's foundation charter and other legal documents, while the *Vita* is indebted to the writings of William of Malmesbury and Aelred of Rievaulx. The two narratives extol the virtues of the community at Waltham, promoting both its principal relic, the Waltham Cross, and former patron, Harold Godwinson.[90]

With the exception of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and the vernacular lives of Edward the Confessor, all of the works so far discussed were written in Latin. As the language of learning and the church, Latin was a means of communicating across linguistic and regional boundaries. By writing in Latin, the historians of Anglo-Norman England followed in the footsteps of classical authors and the early Church fathers; many also acknowledged their debt to the monk Bede, whose *Historia Ecclesiastica*, completed in 731, had done so much to establish historical writing in England. Nevertheless, the twelfth century also saw a flourishing of French vernacular culture, with texts written in that language making the record of the past more accessible to lay audiences. The earliest work of historiography in the French vernacular now extant is Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (History of the English), a verse adaptation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. Written around 1136–1137 at the behest of Constance, wife of the minor Lincolnshire nobleman Ralph fitzGilbert, it seems intended for a secular, aristocratic audience based in that region.[91] In its extant form it covers the years 495–1100 but, according to its epilogue, originally reached back to the days of Troy.[92] The text is composed in rhyming octosyllabic couplets, and the annalistic structure of the *Chronicles* interspersed with what Ian Short describes as 'proto-romance interludes'.[93] Little is known about the author, but he was probably a secular cleric born in England; he clearly knew English, French, and Latin.[94] The text is rooted in the multilingual, ethnically mixed region of the former Danelaw, with the author drawing on Scandinavian as well as Anglo-Norman traditions. Much attention is paid to the Danish history of England and the Danish claims to the English throne. The Norman Conquest is, however, downplayed in the broader context of English history, with Gaimar describing faults on all sides of

90 On the sources used in these works, see *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. xxxiii–xxxviii, and Matthews, 'The Content and Construction of the *Vita Haroldi*'.

91 This is the date suggested in *Estoire des Engleis*, p. xii, and Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Liber vetustissimus*'. The slightly later date of 1141–1150 is also suggested: see Dalton, 'The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*'.

92 *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. 352–53 (ll. 6528–32).

93 *Estoire des Engleis*, p. xl.

94 On Gaimar's identity and background, see *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. xii–xiii.

the conflict.[95] Reconciliation between the different peoples of England is a pervasive theme of the work. Gaimar presents himself as a careful historian whose account of the past is reliable. In the epilogue he discusses his sources and notes how he gained access to them; he declares that the text is neither 'fable ne sunge' (fiction nor fantasy) but a faithful historical record of past events.[96] It exists in only four manuscripts, however, suggesting that its reach was relatively limited.

The *Estoire des Engleis* is a chunky 6532 lines long, but it is dwarfed by the nearly 17,000 lines of Wace's *Roman de Rou* (Story of Rou [Rollo]). The *Rou* is a collection of four poems relating the Scandinavian origins of the Norman people; the settlement of Normandy and the history of its early dukes; and the reigns of later dukes up to Henry I of England. The Norman Conquest figures prominently in the third of these poems. Composed in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, the *Troisième Partie* is the longest section of the *Rou*, and may have come to be seen as a stand-alone text: it now survives independently of the rest of the *Rou* in three of the four extant manuscripts.[97] Begun around 1160, the *Rou* was the final work produced by the poet Wace. In that text Wace gives a few biographical details about himself, declaring that he was born in Jersey and received his first education at Caen. He then went to France for further study before returning to Normandy.[98] Wace lived for many years at Caen and was near the end of his life appointed a canon of Bayeux cathedral. He describes himself as a *clerc lisant* for the kings of England, meaning he likely worked in an administrative role for the kings and their household in Normandy.[99] Much of his work has been lost but that which remains is impressive. He began his writing career with verse hagiographies, but it was the *Roman De Brut* (Story of Brutus), a verse adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, that made his name. Completed in 1155, the *Brut* may have been presented to Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine and was certainly intended for an aristocratic, courtly readership.[100] Wace's deft adaptation of early British history for a vernacular audience is presumably what led Henry II to commission the *Rou*. Unlike the *Brut*, the *Rou* was not based on any one source but looked to many of the works above

95 See further Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings'.

96 There are two versions of the epilogue. The reference to fables and fantasies is in the shorter epilogue at *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. 354–55 (A16); the longer epilogue discusses Gaimar's sources: *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. 348–53 (ll. 6436–532). See further *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. xxx–xxxi, and Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue'.

97 Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*, pp. 154–56; see also *Rou*, ed. by Holden, III, pp. 19–34.

98 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 84 (ll. 35299–312). On Wace's life and works, see Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*, pp. 1–10.

99 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, I, p. 168 (ll. 3180). The exact meaning of this phrase is unknown but is discussed by Le Saux in *A Companion to Wace*, pp. 3–4.

100 Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*, pp. 80–84.

for information about the past. Wace followed the overall chronological structure of William of Jumièges's *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*; he also consulted the works of Dudo of St Quentin, William of Poitiers, Orderic Vitalis, and William of Malmesbury. Wace writes of the historian's role as one of seeking out, preserving, and transmitting the knowledge of the past to future generations.[101] The thoroughness of his endeavour seems to have taken much longer than planned, however, and he was still working on the text a decade and a half after he began. This may be one of the reasons King Henry asked another writer, Benoît of Sainte-Maure, to continue the work.[102]

Benoît was a cleric likely attached to the monastery of Marmoutiers, near Tours. He is thought to have written the popular verse romance known as the *Roman de Troie* (Story of Troy), likely during the 1160s. He may already have embarked on a history of the Normans by the time he received the royal commission, but the sprawling, 44,544-line *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie* (Chronicle of the Dukes of Normandy), was only completed sometime in the 1180s. The *Chronique* is, like the *Troisième Partie* of the *Rou*, crafted in octosyllabic couplets, but unlike Wace, Benoît's French shows no influence from the Anglo-Norman dialect. He was therefore likely not resident at the Anglo-Norman court and indeed may never have left his native region of Touraine.[103] While Wace mainly drew on Orderic's revision of the *Gesta Normannorum*, Benoît used the even longer redaction by Robert de Torigni, although like Wace he also consulted Orderic, Dudo, and the *Rou* itself. The *Chronique* therefore covers much of the same material as the *Rou*, albeit interspersed with interludes that are closer in style to popular romance. Benoît is also prone to including extra detail and amplifying his sources; he is less critical than Wace of past rulers and more providentialist in his presentation of history. If the *Rou* represents a generally secular approach to history, the *Chronique* offers the monastic perspective. Benoît seems to have imagined himself as the intermediary between clerical and lay audiences.[104] Bombastic and moralizing in tone, the *Chronique* is robust in its praise of the dukes of Normandy, and clear in its support for their family's status. It does not, however, seem to have been a popular text, surviving in only in two manuscripts. Perhaps, like Orderic's

101 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, I, p. 161 (ll. 3.1–10).

102 Discussed by van Houts, 'The Adaptation of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*'. Other reasons suggested are the fall from favour of his patron, Queen Eleanor, 1173–1174, and Wace's criticism of King Henry in the *Rou* itself. See further the discussions in Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Three Anglo-Norman Kings*, pp. 4–5, and Gouttebroze, 'Pourquoi congédier un historiographe'.

103 Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Three Anglo-Norman Kings*, p. 5. For further discussion of Benoît's life and work, see Mathey-Maille, *Écritures du passé*, and Laurent, *Pour Dieu et pour le roi*.

104 Damian-Grint, *'En nul leu truis escrit'*.

Historia Ecclesiastica, its immense size was simply too daunting for most scribes.

French was not the only vernacular tradition to engage with the history of the Conquest. Modern accounts of the Conquest tend to focus on the works discussed above, that is, those composed in England and Normandy.[105] Writers in the Nordic world, however, also responded to the conflicts of 1066, and their versions of that year offer an important counterpoint to the Anglo-Norman perspective. Early Scandinavian historiographers were, like their Norman and English counterparts, interested in the origins and histories of their regions. Saxo Grammaticus's sixteen-book *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes), produced in Demark between *c.* 1188 and *c.* 1208, seems to draw directly on the Anglo-Norman historical tradition as it chronicles the history of Denmark from the distant past to the twelfth century. The emergence of historical writing in Denmark may have been due to that region's proximity to continental Europe, and to the many opportunities available for cultural exchange between the two.[106] Saxo was most likely based at the archepiscopal centre of Lund, which had an extensive library and was visited by scholars from across northern Europe.[107] The relationship between Denmark and Norway was also close, with the exchange of culture facilitated by political and religious ties. Travellers from Norway offered further sources of Latin learning, along with vernacular material from Norway and its North Atlantic colonies.[108] Norway and Denmark had close ties with England as well, thanks to the centuries of trade and migration noted above. English historical writing in both Latin and the vernacular may have provided another model for early Scandinavian historiographers.[109]

Like Denmark, Norway saw an increase in historical writing in the latter part of the twelfth century. Latin works such as the anonymous *Historia Norwegie* (History of Norway, *c.* 1160–1175) and the *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (History of the Ancient Kings of Norway, *c.* 1180) of Theodoricus Monachus detail the sweep of Norwegian history from the ancient past to more recent times; the text known as *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* (Short History of the Kings of Norway, *c.* 1190) does so in the vernacular. All are relatively succinct in their presentation of historical events, however; it was particularly with the biographies of prominent Norwegian kings that historiographers fully began to develop

105 See Treharne's discussion of this in *Living through Conquest*, pp. 91–93, as well as a discussion of sources composed elsewhere in Europe in van Houts, 'The Norman Conquest through European Eyes'.

106 Ghosh, *Kings' Sagas and Norwegian History*, pp. 148–52.

107 Mortensen, 'The Nordic Archbishoprics'.

108 Mortensen, 'The Nordic Archbishoprics', pp. 148–49.

109 See further White, *Non-Native Sources*.

the thematic and structural complexities found in the Anglo-Norman works.[110] The apogee of Old Norse historical writing was arguably reached during the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and it is in writings from this period that we see the most sustained interest in the events of 1066. Three major compendia date from this time. Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (Circle of the World) has received the bulk of scholarly attention, although the slightly shorter accounts given in the texts known as *Morkinskinna* (Rotten Parchment) and *Fagrskinna* (Fair Parchment) have increasingly become a site of scholarly interest.[111] The three compendia bring together the chronological sweep of the shorter, early texts with a more in-depth exploration of character and biographies of the individual kings. This is particularly evident in the work of Snorri: like the *Gesta Danorum*, *Heimskringla* begins in the realm of myth and legend, tracing the Norwegian royal family back to the Norse god Óðinn; it then details the lives of all major kings up to the Battle of Ré in 1177. The scope of *Fagrskinna* is similar, although the narrative begins in the ninth century with the reign of Hálfdan inn svarti; it ends, like *Heimskringla*, in 1177. *Morkinskinna*, in contrast, begins *in media res* around the year 1035 with the rise of Magnús inn góði, joined shortly afterwards in co-rule by his uncle, Haraldr harðráði Sigurðarson. The extant manuscript breaks off in 1157 but, like *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, may have continued up to the year 1177 with the accession of Sverrir Sigurðarson to the throne of Norway. While all three texts draw upon older written and oral traditions, they are relatively distant from the events of 1066. With the possible exception of some poetry contained within (discussed in more detail below), they are not records of direct experience or of the postmemories of earlier generations; they are, rather, imaginative reworkings of the historical record crafted from a thirteenth-century perspective. This period was a tumultuous one, especially in Iceland, where warring bands of chieftains — many of them related — struggled for supremacy in a nation increasingly divided against itself. Armed conflict escalated and the country eventually submitted to the king of Norway, Hákon Hákonarson, in 1262–1264. It seems likely that this backdrop of violence and unrest would have informed representations of earlier conflicts in the sagas, but it is difficult to determine precisely how, or to what extent. The relationship between the tumult of that time and the narratives of 1066 must remain speculative, and therefore does not form the focus of this study. My interest is, rather, in the transmission of narratives about 1066 to a thirteenth-century Nordic context, and the ways

110 On this see the more detailed discussion in Goeres, 'Kings' Sagas'.

111 The profile of the kings' sagas in the English-speaking world has been greatly helped in the last twenty years by the publication of modern English translations of all three works, as well as a new edition of *Morkinskinna* in the prestigious Íslenzk fornrit series.

in which these later authors participated in the mythologization of conflict, invasion, and defeat.

Morkinskinna is thought to be the earliest saga of the kings to treat the lives of multiple rulers in detail. The Icelandic manuscript now known by that name was compiled around the year 1275 but is thought to derive from one composed around 1220. The extent to which the text of the later manuscript differs from the earlier has been the subject of much debate, but there is no firm evidence to suggest significant changes were made.[112] Both *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* draw on this work, which is a lively and meandering account of Norwegian history and of the Norwegian kings' interactions with their subjects, particularly the Icelanders. The text is characterized by digression, amplification, and a determinedly prosimetric structure that sees stanzas of Old Norse court poetry woven regularly into the prose narrative. This form of Old Norse poetry, known as skaldic verse, is a riddling, syntactically complex one, quite unlike the clear, laconic style typical of saga prose. It has a strict metrical form involving intricate patterns of alliteration and internal assonance; skaldic poets moreover seem to delight in complicated wordplay and allusive nods to figures from Old Norse myth and legend, often quite obscure ones. Verse incorporated in the kings' sagas tends to focus on battles and rulers, usually in a eulogistic vein. Thanks to its rigid metrical structure, such verse was (and to a large degree still is) thought to remain relatively stable over time. Saga authors writing centuries after the events described in their prose narratives often seek to incorporate verse attributed to poets from that earlier time. Verse is, therefore, often presented like a historical footnote, corroborating events related in the prose. The battle scenes of *Morkinskinna* frequently revolve around sequences of skaldic stanzas, sometimes strung together with only the briefest of prose comments. However, verse is also presented in that text and others as formal recitation, impromptu performance, and poetic dialogue. Like William of Malmesbury, the narrator of *Morkinskinna* writes about the process of selecting and compiling his material, both poetry and prose; he presents the work as a reliable historical narrative, the product of much careful sifting through his many sources.[113]

The second of the major kings' sagas, the text known as *Fagrskinna* survives only in sixteenth-century copies but was probably composed around 1220. It is likely that this took place in Norway, perhaps by an Icelander working for the Norwegian king, Hákon Hákonarson. The degree to which *Fagrskinna* may be claimed as 'Norwegian' or 'Icelandic' has been much discussed, but given the significant amount of cultural exchange between the two regions, it is perhaps best thought of as a product of both tradi-

112 Ármann Jakobsson, *A Sense of Belonging*, pp. 35–69.
113 See for example *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 205.

tions.[114] The author seems to have drawn on many of the vernacular works mentioned above, including *Morkinskinna* and *Ágrip*.[115] Like *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* contains copious amounts of skaldic verse. Although the prose narrative is relatively concise, *Fagrskinna* quotes around 290 stanzas or part-stanzas, many of which are not preserved elsewhere. *Morkinskinna*, by contrast, contains only 265, although it is a much longer work. Nevertheless, *Fagrskinna* is often characterized as a more straightforward, historically inflected narrative than *Morkinskinna* and even *Heimskringla*. It includes fewer digressions and fantastical episodes; the narrative focuses rather on battles and other major historical events, with much of the verse cited in a corroborating fashion.

The longest and most influential of the three compendia is the chronicle known as *Heimskringla*, attributed to the Icelandic chieftain, poet, and law-speaker Snorri Sturluson. Snorri likely composed the narrative between 1220 and 1235, starting with a so-called 'Separate saga of St Óláfr' (*Óláfs saga helga in sérstaka*) before embarking on the full compendium.[116] *Heimskringla* has been celebrated as the 'middle way' between the exuberantly digressive *Morkinskinna* and the carefully historical *Fagrskinna*.[117] The work focuses on a specific king or group of kings in roughly sequential order, with the most important rulers (or at least those with the most turbulent reigns) treated in the greatest detail. The text draws on a vast array of material, including earlier vernacular sagas and royal biographies. Some material, however, has no identifiable source and may be the work of Snorri himself; it also seems likely that he made use of oral material circulating in Iceland and Norway, but the nature of such sources will always be uncertain.[118] Uniquely among the vernacular kings' sagas, Snorri's work includes a Prologue in which the author discusses his approach to the writing of history, in common with many of the Anglo-Norman authors discussed above.[119] There, he names his principal poetic sources and discusses why verse may be considered a reliable historical source. He assures his reader that he has drawn on narratives, genealogies, and poems passed down to him by well-informed men.[120] He moreover acknowledges the potential for stories to change over time and emphasizes the importance of eyewitness testimony.[121]

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114 See further *Fagrskinna*, pp. 14–17.

115 *Fagrskinna*, pp. 8–15.

116 On Snorri's authorship and life, see Whaley, *Heimskringla*, pp. 13–40.

117 Storm, *Snorre Sturlassöns Historieskrivning*, pp. 97–98.

118 For a full account of Snorri's sources, see Whaley, *Heimskringla*, pp. 63–82.

119 This Prologue has been much discussed by scholars: see the summary given in Ghosh, *Kings' Sagas*, pp. 53–58. The Prologue exists in three slightly different versions in the various redactions of *Heimskringla* and the 'Separate saga' of Óláfr Haraldsson.

120 *Heimskringla*, I, pp. 3–7.

121 *Heimskringla*, II, pp. 419–22.

Like earlier kings' sagas, *Heimskringla* presents the reader with a polyphonic text in which multiple sources of information come together. The work incorporates more than 600 skaldic stanzas attributed to over sixty poets, with verses presented in every way the prosimetric form allows: they are cited in authenticating and situational contexts; as single stanzas and as long sequences; as formal recitations, impromptu compositions, and dialogue. Snorri's presentation of verse is notably artistic in many places: a single stanza is often used as a pithy conclusion to a dramatic moment, while long poetic sequences mark the end of a king's life or a key turning point in the narrative. Many key scenes in *Heimskringla* revolve around a set speech or dialogue, often spoken in verse but sometimes in prose. The result is a text that foregrounds the importance of the verbal utterance: the record of the past arises out of a patchwork of voices all striving to be heard. Unlike *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, Snorri's text was widely copied and now survives in multiple medieval and later manuscripts. Later compilations of kings' sagas rely heavily on Snorri's text, and the work has dominated scholarly discussion of the kings' sagas for at least two centuries.[122] Material from all three kings' sagas continued to be copied and revised in the centuries that followed. The thirteenth-century *Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar* (Tale of Hemingr Áslákson) refers explicitly to such works, while at the same time combining such material with motifs from romance and folklore.[123] With respect to 1066, the Norse material focuses on the life and legacy of Haraldr Sigurðarson, the king's failed invasion of England forming the dramatic climax to his reign. Although they have rarely been brought into dialogue with the Anglo-Norman works discussed above, the Norse sources demonstrate how the events in England continued to resonate across the northern world in the centuries that followed.

The Present Study

This book, then, brings together texts composed in a variety of languages and contexts to explore the literary representation of 1066, and particularly medieval authors' explorations of the traumatic events that occurred during that year. Chapter 1, 'Histories Entangled', sets the stage by examining key moments of interaction between the different peoples and cultural traditions brought together by the conflicts of 1066. The burial of Harold Godwinson on the English coast after his death at Hastings and the

122 Whaley, *Heimskringla*, pp. 10–12.

123 Translator Anthony Faulkes provides a useful introduction to this work in *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 6–8; see also the extensive discussion by Gillian Fellows-Jensen in *Hemings þáttr*, pp. xv–lxxiii.

ominous way in which both Haraldr Sigurðarson and William of Normandy fall to the ground before significant battles are episodes that draw together classical, Norman, and Scandinavian traditions. The different means by which medieval authors handle such moments signal the variety of interpretations they bring to the writing of traumatic events. In the Old Norse kings' sagas, Haraldr attempts to reframe his fall as a positive omen but is unsuccessful in doing so. In contrast, Norman works such as the *Gesta regum Anglorum* and the *Roman de Rou* use William's fall as an opportunity to foreshadow the duke's seizure of England and his investiture as king. The contrast between the two rulers is marked: one is powerless to prevent the traumatic defeat that awaits, while the other demonstrates stern-minded resilience in the face of challenging events. A parallel to these falls is found in the miraculous story of the Waltham Cross, which bows to Harold Godwinson as he travels between Stamford Bridge and Hastings. Described in both the *Waltham Chronicle* and the *Vita Haroldi*, the episode reveals the link between the king's body, his defeat, and the way his story is remembered. The three leaders' bodies become focal points for later authors' investigations into the role each man played in the violent conflicts of 1066. The twin themes of heroism and arrogance likewise echo through multiple works, and similarly form a locus of investigation for the traumas of that year. Harold's decision to engage the Norman troops before all of his army has arrived at Hastings is noted even in the English sources, while Norman chroniclers condemn his pride and arrogance. In such works, the king's moral failings lead directly to his traumatic defeat. Norse authors likewise interrogate the motives behind royal decision-making, but focus on the actions of Haraldr Sigurðarson rather than the English king. Despite Haraldr's reputation in much scholarly literature as rash and arrogant, I argue that saga authors are more nuanced in their portrayal of him. The kings' sagas show how the decision to embark on the invasion of England was not taken by Haraldr alone but was debated by the king's counsellors and the Norwegian people. This is paralleled by the account in Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica* in which Tostig Godwinson issues a call to arms to William of Normandy, and the Normans engage in a similar process of collective decision-making. Haraldr seems again to echo the actions of his Norman counterpart but, whereas William's followers are able to share in his victory, the joint decision of the Norwegian people only implicates them further in Haraldr's traumatic failure. Turning then to the death of Haraldr Sigurðarson, I consider the importance of poetry and song in the memorialization of the battles of 1066, and the use of such utterances in the crafting of a ruler's posthumous reputation. I draw parallels between the Norman singing of the *Chanson de Roland* before the Battle of Hastings to the recitation of skaldic verse in the moments before Stamford Bridge, considering how the depiction of verbal utterances contributes to the memorialization of trauma in these works. While Haraldr matches William

in heroism, however, his death from an arrow to the throat seems to echo that of Harold Godwinson. The Scandinavian king emerges as a creative hybrid of all three literary traditions, reminding us of how the stories and traumas of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia are all entangled in the narratives of 1066.

Chapter 2, 'Dreaming of England', explores the use of dreams in the narratives of 1066. Noting the prevalence of dreams among medieval historiography, I consider the role played by Edward the Confessor's dream of a severed tree, widely considered to be a premonition of the Conquest. First described in the *Vita Ædwardi regis*, this image may be seen as a metaphor not only of regime change but of the trauma experienced by Edward's queen, Edith, and her compatriots because of that change. The story of Edward's dream exemplifies the coded symbolism and disrupted chronology associated with literature about trauma in the modern day. I argue that the dream vision offers a way of exploring the emotional experience of the conquered, and that this is likewise the strategy employed by Old Norse writers in the *konungasögur.* In the kings' sagas, dreams foreshadow the mental and emotional cost of 1066. Saga authors employ dreams in the process of 'mythologizing' the conflict, transforming frightening experiences into historical narratives. A series of visions is recorded in all the major *konungasögur*, but with dramatically different results. *Morkinskinna* describes how a sleeping King Haraldr is visited by his dead half-brother, King Óláfr inn helgi ('the Holy') Haraldsson, and advised not to proceed with the invasion. Although the dead king seems to offer a choice, this is undercut by the appearance of two strange women off the coast of England, who promise only defeat and bloodshed. In *Fagrskinna*, both the women and the king appear in dreams, which become all the more terrifying as a result. The account in *Heimskringla* is greatly expanded as the women take the form of monstrous trolls accompanied by beasts of battle. Kennings for war and death seep into the prose saga, coming to life in the descriptions of these unsettling figures. The monstrosity of the troll seems to encapsulate the contradictory impulses of fear and desire provoked by the invasion, becoming an uncanny embodiment of the violence the Norwegian army has brought to England. The semi-fantastical *Hemings þáttr* demonstrates, I argue, the logical conclusion of this process of expansion and mythologization. The *þáttr* teems with ominous visions, dreams, and omens, showing how Haraldr's decision to invade England stems from his inability to correctly read such signs. The *þáttr* places much of the blame for this on Tostig Godwinson, who persuades Haraldr to invade, but ultimately shows how the king himself is responsible for his own defeat. The *þáttr* demands that those who survive tell the story of this traumatic event, and of the failures of interpretation that led to it.

Chapter 3, 'Fratricide in the North', examines the theme of fratricide in the mythologization of the Conquest and the traumas associated with

it. I show how multiple lives of Edward the Confessor — Aelred of Rievaulx's *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, the Nun of Barking's *Vie d'Edouard* and Matthew Paris's *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* — trace the conflict between Harold and Tostig Godwinson back to their childhoods. All three authors dwell on a boyhood brawl in which one brother attempts to kill the other. For Aelred of Rievaulx, the episode foreshadows their conflict as adults, while the Nun of Barking emphasizes the emotions of anger and hatred that drive the brothers' conflict. Emotion plays an even greater role in Matthew Paris's text, in which an excess of negative emotion overwhelms Harold even from childhood. The conflict between the two brothers prompted other Anglo-Norman authors to compare their story with that of Cain and Abel, and to present William of Normandy as the divinely sanctioned punisher of fratricide. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Orderic Vitalis compares the faithless Harold with his honourable brother Tostig. In this work, it is Tostig's integrity and care for the kingdom that leads him to oppose his brother, with the conflict between them drawn as one of opposing personalities. Tostig realigns himself with a surrogate brother in the person of William of Normandy, while Harold seeks a new fraternal relationship with his wife's brothers. Orderic presents the Battle of Stamford Bridge as the dramatic end to this fraternal conflict, and one which leads directly to the traumatic defeat of the English people.

Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* similarly foregrounds fraternal conflict, but in an account that combines the boyhood brawls of the lives of Edward with the raw emotion of the Cain and Abel myth. In this text, an adult Tostig is enraged by King Edward's preference for his brother. He attacks Harold in the royal court and dismembers his servants, offering their limbs soaked in wine to King Edward. The episode is a mythic reimagining of the brothers' strife that urges the reader to consider the role of individual emotional experience in the unfolding of traumatic political events. The chapter then turns to the representation of fraternal conflict in the Old Norse sagas, which are unique among medieval accounts to declare that four of the Godwinsons came into conflict in 1066: not only Harold and Tostig, but the English earls Morcar and Waltheof are identified as brothers in these accounts. With members of this expanded royal family finding themselves on opposing sides of all the major battles, the sagas emphasize — in a way quite unlike English and Norman accounts — the internecine quality of the struggle for England. This theme emerges most strongly in *Hemings þáttr*, in which an embittered Tostig pursues the deaths of both Waltheof and Harold. Waltheof emerges in this tale as a paragon of loyalty, able to successfully navigate the competing claims for his allegiance, and ultimately attaining sanctity. The death of Tostig, however, seems to echo both exegetical traditions about the death of Cain and the Old Norse myth of the death of Baldr. This chapter reveals how authors from across the medieval North used the motif of fratricide to

set the traumas of 1066 against a wider backdrop of social, political, and cultural breakdown.

Chapter 4, 'Enigmas of Survival', looks beyond the year 1066 to consider the narratives of two men who are said to have survived the conflicts of that year: King Harold Godwinson and Earl Waltheof, Earl of Northumbria. Although the death of King Harold figures in numerous written and artistic sources, the nature of that death and the location of his body remain uncertain. One of the earliest Norman sources, the *Carmen de Hastingae*, declares that Harold was set upon by four knights in the heat of battle, and his body dismembered. Later sources tell the more well-known story of the arrow in the eye, with some combining the two. Uncertainty about Harold's death still lingers, however, with later authors alluding to the legend of Harold's survival. I read this legend from the perspective of Cathy Caruth's work on Freud and her examination of what she calls 'the enigma of survival'. Focusing first on the *Vita Haroldi*, I show how this thirteenth-century imagining of Harold's survival story includes many elements we would now associate with literature about trauma. The text explores the role of penance as a response to traumatic events, but ultimately admits the uncertainty of what happened to Harold. In the Old Norse context, the legend of Harold's survival became linked to a similar legend about the Norwegian king Óláfr Tryggvason. *Hemings þáttr* blends elements of both survival legends in its account of 1066. There, the bleeding body of Harold Godwinson is dangerously revealing of his location after the battle, in marked contrast to non-Norse accounts in which the king's corpse is almost (or completely) impossible to identify. After Harold's death in a hermit's cell, his sweet-smelling corpse becomes a confirmation of his sanctity. Transcending political difference, the Christian rites of burial and commemoration seem to offer the possibility of post-traumatic healing through the reconciliation of English, Norman, and Norwegian worshippers. Reconciliation through Christian community is also explored by those who tell the tale of Earl Waltheof's survival after 1066. The Anglo-Danish Waltheof is a political chameleon, fighting at first for the English and then, after the Conquest, integrating successfully into the Norman regime before being executed for treason. I show how the mixing of verse and prose is used to great effect by authors in England, Normandy, and Scandinavia who seek to tell the earl's story. The heteroglossic mixing in so many of these narratives reflects Waltheof's shifting identity in the troubled years of conquest and the consolidation of Norman rule. Waltheof's conflicting identities are key to the narratives of survival and reconciliation his story offers. The opportunity to venerate the rebel earl as a saint offers an opportunity for the diverse population of England to come together after his death and, perhaps, to transcend the traumas they have collectively experienced.

In 'Departures', I conclude the book by discussing *Játvarðar saga*, the Old Norse adaptation of the *Life* of King Edward. The saga concludes by describing the emigration of a group of English noblemen and their followers in the aftermath of the Conquest. Settling on the edges of the Byzantine Empire on the shores of the Black Sea, the English attempt to reconstruct the homeland they have lost. Nevertheless, by killing or expelling the former inhabitants of that land, the English ultimately inflict the traumas of conquest they themselves have suffered. The narrative shows us how the traumas of history repeat themselves in a process that, I argue, continues to resonate in the present day.

This book thus offers a series of explorations rather than a comprehensive overview of the events of 1066. While keeping the broader context in mind, I focus on the specific moments, themes, and characters I have found to be most revealing of how medieval authors explored the traumatic history of that year, and of how narratives about that history developed through multiple generations of writers and readers. The works examined here are not unified in voice or perspective; in many places they do not even give the same version of events. The heterogeneous view they present reflects the multilingual, multiethnic world they describe, one in which many competing interests, agendas, and values drove the composition of literary texts. The vision these texts present of the conflicts of 1066 is contradictory and uncertain, but this is true of traumatic experience more generally. As Caruth writes, 'Sometimes a traumatic address comes from our past. Sometimes it comes from pasts we do not know. [...] Neither the questions nor the answers can be identified with a single voice, nor articulated in a single language.'[124] The processes of witnessing, recording, and exploring traumatic experience are inherently uncertain and yet, as she argues: 'From the place of this uncertainty, and in the power of its literary resonance, the theory of trauma addresses us ultimately, I would suggest, with the possibility of life, but in a voice we cannot always identify, and in a language, enigmatic and resonant, that we must still learn to hear.'[125] This book is an attempt at learning to hear.

124 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 139.
125 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 139.

CHAPTER 1

Histories Entangled

Ragnars saga loðbrókar (the Saga of Ragnarr Shaggy-Breeches) is a tale about the legendary ancestors of the Scandinavian royal dynasties.[1] It describes the dying wish of Ívarr inn beinlausi ('the Boneless'), son of Ragnarr and an early viking ruler of England:

> Ok þá er hann lá í banasótt, mælti hann, at hann skyldi þangat færa, er herskátt væri, ok þess kvaðst hann vænta, at þeir mundi eigi sigr fá, er þar kæmi at landinu. Ok er hann andast, var svá gert sem hann mælti fyrir, ok var þá í haug lagiðr. Ok þat segja margir menn, þá er Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson kom til Englands, at hann kæmi þar at, er Ívarr var fyrir, ok fellr hann í þeiri för. Ok er Vilhjálmr bastarðr kom í land, fór hann til ok braut haug Ívars ok sá Ívar ófúinn. Þá lét hann gera bál mikit ok lætr Ívar brenna á bálinu, ok eptir þat berst hann til landsins ok fær gagn.[2]
>
> (And when he lay dying of illness, he said that he should be taken to where the land was most exposed to war, and said that he expected that those who might come ashore there would not win victory. And when he died, it was done as he had said before, and he was then laid in a burial mound. And many people report that when King Haraldr Sigurðarson came to England, he arrived at the place where Ívarr was, and he dies on that expedition. And when William the Bastard arrived in the country, he went to Ívarr's mound and broke it open and saw that Ívarr's body was uncorrupted. Then he had a great funeral pyre made and has Ívarr burned on the pyre, and after that he attacks the country and wins victory.)

1 Ragnarr and his sons appear in multiple medieval sources, which vary in their presentation of these characters, and of their relation to the various ruling families of Scandinavia and prominent Icelanders. On this see Rowe, *Vikings in the West*, and her useful summary, pp. 269–76. *Ragnars saga* was likely composed during the thirteenth century in Iceland, although it draws on older material, both written and oral. See further Rowe, *Vikings in the West*, pp. 207–16, and McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga*.

2 *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, I, p. 144. The scene also appears in *Hemings þattr*, although that version does not mention William's invasion. See further Rowe, *Vikings in the West*, pp. 239–41, and McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga*, pp. 246–47.

Ívarr too had conquered England, having killed the Northumbrian King Ælle in revenge for the death of his father Ragnarr. Ívarr's gravemound is both a statement of his own conquest and a warning to those who might attempt a similar feat. With his uncorrupted body, Ívarr becomes a sort of anti-saint, a supernatural guardian of the land protecting it from those who might seek to emulate his conquest. Contrasting Haraldr Sigurðarson's defeat with Ívarr's success, the saga suggests that Haraldr's failure to win England was fated, or perhaps even caused, by the lingering sorcery of England's legendary past. In contrast to Haraldr, William of Normandy is able to overcome Ívarr's baleful influence by seeking out his tomb, breaking into the mound and burning the corpse. Not only does the episode present William as a leader who understands the power of England's Scandinavian heritage, but also as one who possesses the skills to neutralize it. The burning of Ívarr's body has a ritualistic, almost magical effect, the funeral pyre evoking the cremation practices of pre-Christian Scandinavia and their description in the myths and legends written down in the medieval period.[3] It is appropriate that William should use this ancient practice to counteract the power of England's former ruler, and is a reminder perhaps of the Normans' own Scandinavian roots. Following in the steps of Ívarr, their arrival is both an invasion and a homecoming. That William of Normandy is able to do this where Haraldr of Norway fails demonstrates the validity of the duke's claim to the kingdom; however, it also marks the violent reorientation of England away from its ancient Scandinavian past and toward a new relationship with Normandy and the Continent.

The inclusion of this episode in the thirteenth-century *Ragnars saga* would seem to place it squarely within the Scandinavian literary tradition.[4] As Elisabeth van Houts has observed, however, the motif of the king guarding the shore appears in some of the earliest Norman accounts of 1066.[5] Dating from only a year or two after Hastings, the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* describes how William ordered the body of Harold Godwinson to be buried under a mound overlooking the sea. In this way, William declares, Harold will become a 'custos littoris et pelagi' (guardian of the shore and sea).[6] The duke has Harold's body wrapped in purple cloth and interred with honour, but sets over it a memorial stone inscribed with an epitaph that leaves the viewer in no doubt as to who

3 Snorri describes the funeral pyres of several early Swedish kings in *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*, I, pp. 9–83; on this see further Price, 'Dying the and Dead', pp. 257–61.

4 A reference to Ívarr's burial mound is also included in *Hemings þáttr*, p. 46, albeit more briefly and without the reference to William burning the corpse.

5 van Houts, 'Scandinavian Influence', pp. 111–12.

6 *Carmen*, pp. 38–39 (ll. 592). Orderic Vitalis similarly says that William ordered Harold to be buried by the seashore because he had defended it for so long, but does not mention a burial mound. See *HE*, II, pp. 178–79.

has triumphed: 'Per mandata ducis rex hic Heralde quiescis' (By the duke's commands, O Harold, you rest here a king).[7] Although this account emphasizes the honour with which William treats his defeated rival, Harold's funeral mound is also a declaration of the power the Norman duke now wields over his subjugated kingdom.[8] This too nods to a heroic past, as gravemounds from across the northern world attest: from Jelling to Sutton Hoo, the power of ancient kings remained visible in the landscape long after their deaths.[9]

In William of Poitiers's *Gesta Guillelmi*, however, it is precisely the public nature of such monuments that works so well to diminish Harold's memory. In this text, William orders the seaside burial as a way of mocking his vanquished enemy: 'Dictum est illudendo, oportere situm esse custodem littoris et pelagi, quae cum armis ante uesanus insedit' (It was said in jest that he [Harold] should be placed as a guardian of the shore and sea, which in his madness he had once occupied with his armies).[10] Apostrophizing the dead king, the author predicts that Harold's memory will live on in infamy:

> Vicisti digno te prouentu, ad meritum tuum et in cruore iacuisti, et in littoreo tumulo iaces, et posthumae generationi tam Anglorum quam Normannorum abominabilis eris.
>
> > (You have reaped the reward that you deserved, and have fallen bathed in your own blood; you lie in a tumulus on the seashore and will be an abomination to future generations of English no less than Normans.)[11]

This sentiment is different to that in *Ragnars saga*: Harold's tomb is not a memorial to a successful reign, as is Ívarr's, but a symbol of the last pre-Conquest king's inability to defend the borders of England. Here, the gravemound functions as an inescapable reminder of how two peoples — English and Norman — are now united because of Harold's failure. For the author of the *Carmen*, the mound memorializes a fallen king; for William of Poitiers, it enfolds an abomination. Absorbing Harold's corpse into the land he has lost, the mound is a visible reminder of the wounded body within, and a proclamation of defeat for generations to come. Although different in their presentation of this scene, both episodes are thought to demonstrate the influence of Scandinavian motifs on Norman

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7 *Carmen*, pp. 38–39 (l. 591).
8 On the political uses of funeral mounds see Goeres, *Poetics of Commemoration*, pp. 47–53.
9 See further the many examples discussed in Andrén, 'Places, Monuments and Objects'.
10 *GG*, pp. 140–41. A further analogue is given by William of Malmesbury, who writes that the seaside grave of Gawain, nephew of the legendary King Arthur, was found during King William's reign (*GRA*, I, p. 520).
11 *GG*, pp. 140–41.

historiography in the decade immediately following the Conquest. Likely transmitted via England, as Elisabeth van Houts has argued, they seem to indicate an ongoing Norman interest in their Scandinavian past.[12] As Davis and Chibnall note, however, the term *tumulus* in this text also evokes the classical past, used as it is by Lucan in his 200-line meditation on the death of Pompey.[13] Pompey too is buried by the seashore, his cremated body hastily interred after his assassination. The contrast between the two scenes is ironic and allows William of Poitiers to pour further scorn on his fallen subject: in contrast to the heroic general Pompey and his humble grave, Harold, the perjured king, is covered by an ostentatious mound that invites all who see it to remember his well-deserved defeat.

Ívarr, Harold, Pompey: whose is the body in the tomb? Is it a monument to victory or failure? Whose legacy does it bear witness to? The enigmatic image of the mound embodies the complexities of conflict and conquest. Set between the land and the sky, it represents life and death, past and present. Set between the land and the sea, it is a witness to those who arrive and to those who depart, a symbol of both permanence and change. Although raised to be the grave of one man, it symbolizes the defeat of an entire people, and the victory of another. As Caruth observes, individual and collective experience are deeply entwined, and thus 'traumatic experience can never with certainty be reduced to, or framed within, the boundaries of an individual life'.[14] It is, rather, the 'dispossession of experience that binds the psyche and the political and social realms to each other'.[15] Caruth urges her readers to consider history through the lens of traumatic repetition: the traumatic event is a wound whose meaning unfolds over time, bringing together — and yet repeatedly severing — individual and collective experience. Caruth builds on Freud to argue that 'history, like trauma, is never simply one's own [...] history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas'; in so doing, she shows how traumatic events entangle the individual with the collective, the past with the present, the victim with the perpetrator.[16] Although her work focuses on the modern context, we can also see this in narratives about the conflicts of 1066. People, places, and histories blur into each other in works from across the medieval North. Individual traumas weave in and

12 van Houts, 'Scandinavian Influence', p. 121. In contrast to this view, Robert M. Stein argues that the episode reflects Capetian notions of sacral kingship rather than any echoes of Scandinavian burial practice. See Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', p. 185. On Harold's burial, see also Chapter 4, below.

13 *GG*, p. 141 n. 5. See Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, *De Bello Civili Libri X*, p. 223 (Book 8, l. 816). The *Gesta Guillelmi* is steeped in classical allusions of this kind: see further *GG*, pp. xxxi–xxxxii.

14 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 121.

15 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 123.

16 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 25.

out of collective experience, while the ordeals of one group implicate the sufferings of another. The interwoven narratives of 1066 demonstrate the surprising instability of the historical record, and the degree to which all three regions remained connected long after the traumas of conquest.

A King Falls

It has long been acknowledged that Old Norse accounts of the Battle of Stamford Bridge contain striking similarities with Anglo-Norman accounts of the Battle of Hastings.[17] Saga authors insist, for example, that at least part of the English army fought on horseback, and yet this detail is at odds with other descriptions of early English military tactics and seems rather to reflect the Norman use of cavalry at the Battle of Hastings.[18] The Norse sagas also describe how, at the start of the battle, the English horsemen charged the Norwegian shield-wall but were repulsed by their archers; this too seems to parallel the Battle of Hastings, at which the first charge of the Norman cavalry was met by a hail of arrows. Battle tactics employed by the English at Stamford Bridge and the Normans at Hastings are also remarkably similar. Both pretend to flee at various points during the conflict, and this causes their opponents to break ranks and pursue them. In each case the apparently fleeing troops suddenly turn around and slaughter those behind, with great effect.[19] As Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson observes, however, the kings' sagas are not identical in their accounts of Stamford Bridge. Bjarni argues that, while Snorri clearly drew on *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* in his work, *Heimskringla* also makes considerable use of William of Malmesbury's account of Hastings in the *Gesta regum Anglorum*. *Morkinskinna*, in contrast, contains details found in the works of William of Jumièges and Orderic Vitalis, although the author of that

17 See *Heimskringla*, III, pp. xxviii–xxxiv; see also White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 102–06, and Gade, 'Northern Lights'. Parallels have also been made with battles at Jaffa and at Bouvines, as argued in Gelsinger, 'The Battle of Stamford Bridge and the Battle of Jaffa', and Hughes, 'The Battle of Stamford Bridge and the Battle of Bouvines'.

18 On the question of whether the early English made use of cavalry, see Hooper, 'The Aberlemno Stone and Cavalry', and Strickland, 'Military Technology and Conquest', among others.

19 The Normans used this tactic multiple times during the Battle of Hastings, although sources differ on the specifics of it, particularly with respect to the number of times the Normans feigned retreat, and whether the first retreat was planned. See a discussion of this debate in Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings*, pp. 198–202. On the representation of the battle in the various English and Norman sources, including the feigned flight, see Brown, 'The Battle of Hastings'.

text borrowed from his Norman sources to a lesser extent.[20] The use of different Norman sources by the authors of *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna* may simply be due to the availability (or lack thereof) of manuscripts in different parts of Iceland.[21] Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, however, has argued that Snorri used William of Malmesbury's account because William's ideological programme coincided with Snorri's own: the *Gesta regum* justifies the Norman Conquest by portraying it as divine punishment for the sins of the English.[22] Ashman Rowe links Snorri's interest in the Norman Conquest to the historical similarities between Iceland and Normandy:

> It might be imagined that Snorri, with his intense interest in origins, saw Normandy as a parallel to, or as a political sibling of Iceland, and therefore that he viewed the conquest of England by the Normans with a kind of fraternal pride, as the sort of thing that Iceland could have accomplished, if God had seen fit to make Iceland an aristocracy instead of a republic.[23]

If *Ragnars saga* suggests a blurring of historical memory around the resting place of Ívarr the Boneless and Harold Godwinson, the use of the Battle of Hastings as a model for the Old Norse accounts of Stamford Bridge demonstrates to an even greater degree the ways in which the events of 1066 were conflated and manipulated by medieval historiographers. Such conflation is not confined to the broad brushstrokes of battle, however. As noted above, it is difficult to untangle individual experience from the collective. Narratives of 1066 focus on the experiences of the three rulers — Harold Godwinson, Haraldr harðráði, and William of Normandy — and yet the same stories shift from one leader to another. Such shifts reveal the instability of the boundaries that separate these three rulers and, consequently, the peoples they lead. Creative confusion reigns: who is the conqueror and who the conquered? As the interwoven nature of these narratives reveal, each is implicated in the others' trauma.

The translation of one king's story to another is seen most clearly in the motif of the king's fall before a decisive battle. In the Norse sources,

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20 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. xxviii–xxxiv. Kari Ellen Gade suggests that the author of *Morkinskinna* drew on an abbreviated or interpolated version of *HE* or the *GND* in Gade, 'Northern Lights', pp. 77–81.

21 This is the suggestion made by Paul White, although he also suggests that Snorri, assumed to be writing at a later date than the earliest version of *Morkinskinna*, may have been in a better position to judge the credibility of the different Norman sources with respect to their Icelandic counterparts: White, *Non-Native Sources*, p. 109.

22 Rowe, 'Historical Invasions', p. 159.

23 Rowe, 'Historical Invasions', p. 160. Bjarni, in contrast, suggests that the saga authors used Hastings as a model for Stamford Bridge because the small number of Norwegian survivors meant that few details of the battle would have been carried back to Norway and Iceland: *Heimskringla*, III, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

Haraldr Sigurðarson falls off his horse just before the Battle of Stamford Bridge. It is a dramatic moment. Having won the Battle of Fulford and accepted hostages from the people of York, Haraldr and his men set off from their ships on the morning of 25 September. They do not expect battle but rather a peaceful assembly with their new subjects. The king leaves a third of his force behind with the ships, and those accompanying him leave their mailcoats behind as well. Rejoicing in their victory under a warm autumn sun, they are in high spirits as they ride along. Unbeknownst to the Norwegians, however, Harold Godwinson has arrived with an army and secretly reoccupied the town of York. When the English troops suddenly appear outside the town, they cast an instant pall over the day. Menace hangs in the air as the English approach: 'var liðit því meira, er náligar kom, ok allt at sjá sem á eina ísmǫl, er vápnin glóuðu' (the army looked larger the closer it came, and it all looked just like shards of ice, where the weapons glittered).[24] Glinting off the enemy spears, the autumn sun is revealed to be just as treacherous as the English themselves. The warm weather has lured the Norwegians out unarmoured, and the shining spears are a cold reminder of the conflict and death about to come.[25] The Norwegians arrange themselves in battle formation and send messengers back to the ships to summon the rest of the army. As the three compendia relate:

> Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson reið þá um fylking sína ok skynjaði, hvernig fylkt var. Hann sat á svǫrtum hesti, blesóttum. Hestrinn fell undir honum ok konungr af fram. Stóð hann upp skjótt ok mælti, 'Fall er fararheill!'[26]
>
> (King Haraldr Sigurðarson then rode around his army and examined how they were arranged. He sat on a black horse with a white blaze on its forehead. The horse fell under him and the king fell forward off of it. He stood up quickly and said, 'A fall is good luck for a journey!')

As the Norwegian troops prepare for battle, the king's fall is not only an omen of defeat but a physical enactment of the moment joy turns to fear. The hope of an easy victory is dashed, as the modern metaphor goes, just

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24 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 184. A similar description is given in *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 311–12 and in *Fagrskinna*, p. 281. It is not found in *Ágrip*, where the account of Haraldr's invasion is much condensed. There, it is related simply that Harold was in Normandy at the time of the Norwegians' arrival and that he hurried back so unexpectedly that most of the Norwegian forces were still on their ships, and those on land nearly unarmed: *Ágrip*, pp. 39–40.

25 The treachery of the English takes on supernatural proportions in *Hemings þáttr*, where the king's foolhardy decision to proceed without armour is explained by his having slept in a magic tent given to him by a mysterious Englishwoman (*Hemings þáttr*, pp. 376–77).

26 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 186. See also *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 314–15, and *Fagrskinna*, pp. 282–83.

as the king is thrown to the ground. As in English, the Old Norse verb *falla* means both 'to fall' and 'to die', and the act of falling or stumbling often appears in the sagas as a portent of bad luck.[27] Haraldr, however, seems to interpret the fall as a positive one, as suggested by his proverbial-sounding utterance, *fall er fararheill*. As Paul Cavill observes, '[t]he basic aim of coining or repeating a saying is to invoke a sense of order in a context where chaos threatens'.[28] Battle, particularly in the medieval context, is the preeminent example of such chaos, and narratives about battle therefore offer a key site for the deployment of maxims and proverbs. According to Cavill, such phrases 'express the ideal and the proper order against the tendency of the prevailing situation'.[29] Haraldr's utterance, like all such sayings, appears to encode the received wisdom and experience of his society. Ostensibly drawing on collective wisdom, he offers a positive reading of the omen in an attempt to assert control over an increasingly chaotic situation.

His attempt is, however, unsuccessful. The phrase *fall er fararheill* has been much discussed, and the question of whether it was a proverb in general use remains unclear.[30] Earlier accounts of 1066 use an entirely different proverb in this context. When Haraldr falls from his horse in the *Historia* of Theodoricus Monachus, the king himself admits, 'raro [...] tale signum portendit victoriam' (seldom is a sign of this sort an omen of victory).[31] *Ágrip* follows Theodoricus at this point, and in this version of the narrative the king similarly observes, '[s]jaldan fór svá, þá er vel vildi' (it has seldom gone thus when fate was favourable).[32] As the saga author notes, 'svá var ok sem konungrinn sagði' (and it was just as the king said), as death and defeat follow.[33] Thus, Haraldr's blithe assurance in

27 See further Almqvist, 'The Death Forebodings of Saint Óláfr'. DEATH IS DOWN (as opposed to HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP) is one of the 'orientational metaphors' discussed by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 14–21. Such metaphors, they observe, are generally linked to the way our bodies operate in the world around us: dead bodies are physically lying down, and the metaphors around death reflect our spatialized experience of this.

28 Cavill, 'Maxims in *The Battle of Maldon*', p. 631.

29 Cavill, 'Maxims in *The Battle of Maldon*', p. 632.

30 See further the discussion in Holm-Olsen, 'En replikk i Harald Hardrades saga'. As Holm-Olsen notes, the phrase is also spoken in *Sverris saga* by Jarl Erlingr skakki Kyrpinga-Ormsson shortly before he is killed in battle. There too, the hopeful nature of the proverb does little to prevent his untimely end: see *Sverris saga*, pp. 52–53. See also Harris, 'The Proverbs of Morkinskinna', and de Vries, 'Normannisches Lehngut'.

31 *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ*, p. 57, and Theodoricus Monachus, *An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, p. 45. Theodoricus follows this episode with an enumeration of the portents that preceded the death of Charlemagne, a connection that is not made in any of the vernacular *konungasögur*.

32 *Ágrip*, p. 39.

33 *Ágrip*, p. 39.

later sagas that *fall er fararheill* cannot be taken as evidence of widespread belief in the fall as a good omen. Rather, the king's utterance in the later sagas verges on the performative: Haraldr is not drawing on received wisdom but rather attempting to alter the outcome of events in a way that contradicts that wisdom. Attempting to reinterpret a bad omen, he is also, in a sense, attempting to rewrite the narrative of his own life, to alter the course of events with a performative utterance.[34] The circumstances are, however, infelicitous: the utterance fails because Haraldr does not have the power — in a political, social, or narrative sense — to effect the change he desires. He cannot alter the course of history, and the meaning of the fall remains unchanged. There is moreover a strong element of dramatic irony in this scene: the reader knows that the king is doomed, but the king himself refuses to believe it. The episode demonstrates Haraldr's fatal misinterpretation of events leading up to the battle, as well as his powerlessness to affect its outcome. Despite Haraldr's attempt to reframe the situation in a positive light, his tumble from the horse remains a symbol of the greater fall to come.

Those who witness Haraldr's fall are quick to recognize its ominous nature. Principal among them is Harold Godwinson, as the sagas relate:

> Þá mælti Haraldr Englakonungr til Norðmanna þeira, er með honum váru: 'Kennduð þér þann inn mikla mann, er þar fell af hestinum, við inn blá kyrtil ok inn fagra hjálm?' 'Þar er konungr sjálfr', sǫgðu þeir. Englakonungr segir: 'Mikill maðr ok ríkmannligr, ok er vænna, at farinn sé at hamingju'.[35]
>
> > (Then Harold, king of the English, said to the Norwegians who were with him: 'Do you recognize that large man who fell off his horse there, with the dark tunic and the beautiful helmet?' 'There is the king himself', they said. The king of the English said: 'A large man and kingly, and it is likely that his luck has disappeared'.)[36]

Haraldr's fall is not only a personal warning to the king but a public indication of impending doom. Where the Norwegian king either does not understand or does not want to accept the negative implications of his tumble off the horse, the English king recognizes them immediately. It is notable, however, that Harold must rely on his Norwegian followers to identify the fallen rider, and their presence in this pivotal scene reminds the saga audience that both armies comprise English and Norwegian

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34 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, and Searle, *Speech Acts*. On speech acts in Old Norse, see among others Lönnroth, 'Old Norse Text as Performance', and Jóhanna Katrín Fridriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 15–45.

35 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 186.

36 On the use of *hamingja* and related words in Old Norse literature, see Hallberg, 'The Concept of *gipta—gæfa—hamingja*'.

fighters. The two armies are mirror images of each other, and there is an ominous irony in the English king's comment, *er vænna, at farinn sé at hamingju* (it is likely that his luck has disappeared). This statement is true not only of Haraldr Sigurðarson but of Harold Godwinson himself: even though he will defeat the Norwegian king in battle, Haraldr's invasion has lured the English army north, leaving southern England vulnerable to attack from Normandy. Haraldr's tumble off the horse thus presages not only his own downfall but that of his English namesake as well. Although Harold Godwinson correctly interprets the meaning of Haraldr Sigurðarson's fall, his understanding of the situation remains partial; he too is blind to the full import of that event, and of the defeat that will soon befall him.

The scene is somewhat different in *Hemings þáttr*, where the episode takes on a more religious cast. There, the Norwegian king's horse stumbles three times as he draws up his troops in advance of the battle. Although Haraldr does not fall off the horse in this version of the tale, he grasps the implications of the event immediately:

> konvngr mællti hvi skal nv sva Olafr broðir segir hann. T(osti) hlær ok mællti ætlar þv at Olafr konvngr felli herstin vndir þer. hann s(egir) eigi man ek annars manz meiʀ at giallda en þin ef hann litr af mer. hann stigr af herstinvm ok gengr i fylkingina.[37]
>
> (The king said, 'why are you doing this now, brother Óláfr?' he says. Tostig laughs and said, 'do you think King Óláfr made the horse fall under you?' He says, 'I will have no one more to thank than you if he turns away from me'. He dismounts from the horse and walks in among the drawn-up troops.)

Chapter 2 will show how the author of *Hemings þáttr* primarily blames Tostig Godwinson for Haraldr's fatal decision to invade England.[38] The exchange above further emphasizes Tostig's culpability but, in contrast to the *konungasögur*, it is notable that in this text Haraldr is quick to acknowledge the warning the fall represents. His question — *hvi skal nv sva Olafr broðir* (why are you doing this now, brother Óláfr?) — stands in marked contrast to the proverbial-sounding utterance he speaks in the kings' sagas. In *Hemmings þáttr*, the king does not attempt to rewrite his destiny; he is ready to listen and to learn, even if the signs predict a course of events he would rather avoid. The fact that Haraldr dismounts voluntarily to stand among his troops likewise suggests a stronger readiness to accept his fate than in the three compendia. The reference to Óláfr moreover makes explicit an allusion that is only hinted at in the *konungasögur*: Óláfr

37 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 50.
38 See pp. 132–47, below.

too was said to have fallen upon his arrival in Norway after a period of raiding in England as a young man. Recounted in both *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* many chapters before the section on 1066,[39] this episode presents an alternative interpretation of the ominous fall:

> Stígr konungr þar ǫðrum fœti, sem var leira nǫkkur, en studdisk ǫðrum fœti á kné. Þá mælti hann: 'Fell ek nú', segir konungr. Þá segir Hrani: 'Eigi felltu, konungr, nú festir þú fœtr í landi'. Konungr hló við ok mælti: 'Vera má svá, ef guð vill'.[40]
>
> (The king steps ashore there with one foot where there was some mud and caught himself from falling with the other knee. Then he said, 'I fell just now', says the king. Then Hrani [his foster-father and companion] says, 'You did not fall now, king, you planted your feet in the land'. The king laughed at this and said, 'It will be so, if God wills it'.)

Unlike Haraldr's fall, Óláfr's prefigures his successful rule of Norway. The soon-to-be king does not attempt to reinterpret the fall himself; rather, the positive gloss is offered by his companion. Óláfr's pious and rather fatalistic comment — *vera má svá, ef guð vill* (it will be so, if God wills it) — is a far cry from Haraldr's bullish attempt in the *konungasögur* to rewrite the meaning of his own fall. The contrast between Haraldr and his sainted half-brother only emphasizes further the later king's inability to control — and even to understand — the perilous circumstances around him.

As previous scholars have shown, the scene in *Óláfs saga* is in turn borrowed from another episode connected with the conflicts of 1066. In his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Willliam of Malmesbury tells the same story about Duke William as he arrives in England.[41] As William of Malmesbury writes, 'In egressu nauis pede lapsus euentum in melius commutauit, acclamante sibi proximo milite: "Tenes" inquit "Angliam, comes, rex futurus"' (As he left the vessel, he [William of Normandy] slipped, but turned the mishap into a good omen, for the knight who was nearest cried: 'You have England in your hand, duke, and you shall be king!').[42] This story is recounted in numerous versions of the Norman Conquest and ultimately

39 It likewise appears in Snorri's separate saga of the king and in the *Legendary Saga*. See further the discussion in White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 86–87.

40 *Heimskringla*, II, p. 36; see also *Fagrskinna*, pp. 170–71.

41 See White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 86–87, drawing on earlier sources such as Moberg, 'Olav Haraldssons hemkomst', and von See, 'Hastings, Stiklastaðir und Langemarck', pp. 3–5.

42 *GRA*, I, pp. 450–51. The event also echoes an earlier episode in the same text in which the newborn William is said to have filled his hands with the rushes covering the floor of his delivery room; this is interpreted by the midwife and her helpers as a portent that the baby will become a king (*GRA*, I, pp. 426–27).

drawn from the classical tradition.[43] Julius Caesar was said to have fallen upon disembarking in Africa, but turned the omen into a favourable one by exclaiming, 'Teneo te […] Africa' (I hold you fast, Africa).[44] The rhetorical advantage to be gained by comparing the duke to Caesar is clear, and later authors seized upon the imaginative potential of this episode, using it as an example of William's intelligence and self-reliance.[45] Wace treats the episode in depth in his *Roman de Rou*. There, the duke's fall is immediately preceded by a speech in which William scornfully dismisses the prophecy of a fortune-telling cleric among his ranks. Noting that the cleric had claimed to foretell the outcome of the battle but had not been able to predict his own death on the way over, William exclaims:

> Fols est qui se fie en devin
> qui d'altrui ovre set la fin
> e terme ne set de sa vie
> d'altrui prent garde e sei oblie.[46]
>
> (He is a fool who trusts a prophet who knows the outcome of someone else's business and does not know when his own end will come; he takes an interest in others and forgets himself.)[47]

Thus, when the duke falls to the ground only a few lines later, his followers' first reaction — 'Mal signe a ci!' (This is a bad sign!) — is shown to be equally foolish.[48] Like Haraldr, William asserts his own interpretation of the fall, but he does so far more effectively than his Norwegian counterpart. In Wace's text, the fall becomes a performance in which William's conquest and coronation are enacted for the benefit of his watching army:

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43 White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 86–87. In the *Estoire*, William asks an attendant what the fall might mean rather than declaring its meaning himself: see *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, pp. 127–28 (ll. 4529–36). The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* contains the additional detail that William's nose was bloodied by the fall. This, however, is declared by one of his companions to be a sign that he has consecrated the land for his descendants with his own blood: see *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 34–35.

44 Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, p. 112 (§ 59). According to Moberg, the earliest version of this scene is related by Valerius Maximus about Scipio's landing in Africa; the story was then reused by Frontinus and then Suetonius, who applied the motif to Julius Caesar. Moberg shows that William of Malmesbury's version is closest to Suetonius's, while Wace (in common with *La Estoire*) seems rather to draw on Frontinus: see Moberg, 'Olav Haraldssons hemkomst', pp. 556–61.

45 As Emily Winkler observes, William of Poiters depicts the Duke as superior to Caesar: see Winkler, 'The Norman Conquest', pp. 464–67. See also van Houts, 'Latin Poetry', pp. 41–42.

46 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 128 (ll. 36567–70).

47 *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 164.

48 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 129 (l. 36576); *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 164. The verb used here is *chair* which, like the Old Norse *falla*, can refer both to the body falling and metaphorically to death (i.e., 'falling' in battle).

e il lor a en haut crié:
'Seignor, par la resplendor Dé!
La terre ai as dous mains saisie,
sainz chalenge n'iert mais guerpie;
tot est nostre quantqu'il i a,
or(e) verrai qui hardi sera'.
Donc corut uns hoem al terrain,
sor un bordel tendi sa main,
plein poig prist de la coverture,
al duc torna grant aleüre.
'Sire', dist il, 'avant venez,
ceste saisine recevez!
De ceste terre vos saisis,
vostre est sainz dote le païs'.
E li dus respont: 'Jo l'otrei,
e Deus i seit ensemble od mei'.[49]

> (But he [William] cried out to them: 'My lords, by the splendour of God!' I have taken possession of the land in my two hands. It will never be abandoned without a challenge. Whatever is here is ours. Now I will see who is bold'. Then a man ran on to the land and stretched out his hand over a cottage; taking a fistfull of the roof, he ran quickly back to the duke: 'My lord', he said, 'come forward, receive this investiture! I invest you with this land, the country is yours without doubt'. The duke replied: 'I accept it and may God be with me'.)[50]

Whereas in the sagas Haraldr's fall makes clear the king's inability to prevent his impending defeat, the same portent here becomes a symbol of William's conquest even before the first arrow has been shot. Thanks to the duke's quick thinking, his fall gives rise to an impromptu performance, complete with dialogue, props, and the physical acting out of an investiture ceremony.[51] Here, the circumstances of the king's utterance are felicitous, and the exchange acts as both a proxy for and a pre-enactment of the king's official coronation in Westminster Abbey.[52] Where Haraldr's utterance failed, William's succeeds. The duke asserts control over his own destiny

49 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 129 (ll. 36577–92).
50 *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 164.
51 See the many examples discussed in Bak, ed., *Coronations*, especially chapters by Le Goff (pp. 46–57) and Bonne (pp. 58–71).
52 This would take place three months later, on Christmas Day. Wace describes the joint assembly of bishops and noblemen who convene in London to elect William, as well as his coronation and the formal dispensing of land and titles that follow: see *Wace*, ed. by Holden, II, pp. 219–21 (ll. 38973–9010).

— and over England — not only by embracing the omen, but by imbuing it with new layers of meaning.

The contrast between the two falls, by Haraldr and William (not to mention by Óláfr inn helgi), demonstrates the ease with which stories of one king could be transposed to another. The motif of the fall sits at the heart of an intertextual web that binds the stories of the two rulers together, and yet differentiates between them — and between the very different fates that awaited them in England. The episode is not, however, a one-off, but another link in a chain of episodes connecting Haraldr Sigurðarson with his Norman counterparts. As has long been noted, many of the episodes told about Haraldr as a young man echo those associated with prominent Normans.[53] This is particularly clear in the series of stratagems Haraldr, then a member of the Varangian guard, employs to gain access to enemy towns around the Mediterranean.[54] In the most famous example, Haraldr instructs his men to pretend he has died, and to request access to a besieged town in order to bury him. Disguised as pallbearers and carrying an empty coffin, Haraldr and his men attack the townspeople as they pass through the open gate.[55] A similar episode is described by William of Jumièges, who drew in turn on Dudo of Saint-Quentin.[56] Both authors attribute this ruse to the viking Hasting, who is said to have led the original Scandinavian settlement of the land that would become Normandy. The same tale came to be associated with later Norman adventurers as well. William of Apulia uses the motif to emphasize the ingenuity of Robert Guiscard as he leads the Norman campaign in Calabria,[57] and it appears again in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*, where Guiscard's son Bohemond is said to have hidden inside an empty coffin in order to sail through hostile waters.[58] Although often presented

53 Sigfús Blöndal, *Væringjasaga*, pp. 131–33. Ghosh has an excellent discussion of this topic and provides extracts from the relevant Norse and Norman sources: see Ghosh, *Kings' Sagas*, pp. 152–65.

54 The account of Haraldr's travels in the east is longest in *Morkinskinna*, but *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* also contain fairly full versions of the story, which was clearly a popular one. On this see further Goeres, 'Kings' Sagas'.

55 *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 102–06. Saga authors attribute several such stratagems to Haraldr, and there has been considerable debate about how these motifs came to travel across the various languages and literatures of Europe. See the summary of this in White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 99–102.

56 *GND*, I, pp. 22–27, and Dudo of St Quentin, *History of the Normans*, pp. 17–20.

57 'Gesta Roberti Wiscardi', pp. 260–61.

58 Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*, pp. 329–30. The motif then appears in the *Gesta Danorum* in association with the legendary King of Denmark Frothi and his conquest of London. Indeed, so popular does the motif appear to have been that it is told a second time in the pages of *Morkinskinna* itself, when King Sigurðr Jórsalafari visits Constantinople some seventy years after Haraldr harðráði. Arguing for the opposite direction of influence, Theocharis Alexopoulos suggests that Anna's account of the Battle of Dyrrachium (1081)

as diverting tales of adventure and guile, the stories nevertheless commemorate the violent processes of conflict and conquest that accompanied the expansion of the Norman domain: the viking annexation of north-western France; the Norman conquest of Italy; the turmoil of the First Crusade; and the establishment of the Crusader states. Haraldr's story is, in this way, entangled with a narrative of past violence that spreads across Europe. His invasion of England, however, marks a sudden reversal in fortune, which the allusion to William's successful bid for the same country marks all the more strongly: although Haraldr was able to emulate the success of his Norman counterparts in the east, he fell — literally — at the last hurdle and was unable to match their triumphs in the west. The trauma of defeat will be felt all the more strongly, these texts imply, precisely because it was so unexpected.

A King Bows

Haraldr and William are not alone in their ominous tumbles. The ambiguous fall also appears in a more unusual guise connected with the figure of Harold Godwinson. Two texts, the twelfth-century *Waltham Chronicle* and the early-thirteenth-century *Vita Haroldi*, describe the miracle of the Waltham Cross, on which a stone figure of Christ is said to have bowed to Harold when the king stopped at Waltham Abbey on his way from Stamford Bridge to the Battle of Hastings. While not an exact parallel to the falls of Haraldr and William, the bowing of the Waltham Christ offers an intriguing counterpoint to the texts discussed above. The miraculous bending of the stone relic is prompted by the king's prostration of his own body in the act of prayer and, like the episodes discussed above, this episode functions as an ambiguous omen of events to come. Unlike the Norse and Norman sources, however, there is a hagiographic component to these texts, and the double bowing of the king and Christ serves to place the trauma of the English defeat within a broader context of sin, salvation, and the remembrance of both.

As the *Waltham Chronicle* relates:

> Clero igitur eum comitante et processione precedente, ueniunt ad ualuas templi ubi conuersus ad crucifixum, rex ille sancte cruci deuotus, ad terram in modum crucis prosternens se, pronus orauit. Contigit autem interea miserabile dictu et a seculis incredibile. Nam

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might be based on accounts of the Battle of Hastings, mediated either by early Norman writers or oral narratives brought to Constantinople by members of the Varangian guard. For this intriguing but somewhat speculative argument, see Alexopoulos, 'Anna Komnene's Description of the Battle of Dyrrachium'.

> imago crucifixi, que prius erecta ad superiora respiciebat, cum se rex humiliaret in terram, demisit uultum, quasi tristis; signum quidem prescium futurorum!
>
> (Accompanied by the clergy, and with a procession leading the way, he [Harold] came to the doors of the church where, turning towards the crucifix, the king in devotion to the holy cross stretched himself out on the ground in the form of a cross and prayed. Then occurred an event pitiable to relate and incredible from an earthly point of view. When the king bowed low to the ground, the image of the crucified one, which had previously been looking directly ahead above him, now bowed its head as if in sorrow, a sign portending what was to happen!)[59]

Not one but two bodies bend in this scene, and the visual parallels between them are striking. The *Chronicle* author has earlier remarked on the unusual size of the Waltham Cross, along with the fact that the Christ-figure was large enough to have been girded with a real sword and adorned with a crown.[60] The martial aspect of this life-sized Christ mirrors that of the warrior king, as Harold rushes between the two battles. When Harold himself seeks to mirror the cross by stretching out his arms as he bows before it, this gesture prompts the relic to move as well: as the king bows to the cross, so the Christ-figure bows to the king. While not a fall in the manner of Haraldr or William, the scene is understood as a bad omen (*infaustum auspicium*), filling the onlookers with grief (*dolor*).[61] The bowing of the Christ-figure acknowledges the king's Christian devotion even while rejecting his request for a favourable outcome. As the Chronicler observes, '"frangit Deus omne superbum", nec diuturnum extat hominis edifitium, cui non est ipse Deus fundamentum' ('God breaks all who are proud', and a man's bodily habitation does not last long if God is not its foundation).[62] While the *Chronicle* is more favourable in its presentation of Harold than the texts discussed above, the king remains a mortal man caught up in the sins of the world. He is both too headstrong (*nimis*

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59 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 46–47. This is one of only two times in the *Chronicle* that the figure on the cross mimics the human body. The other occurs soon after it is found: when an attempt is made to nail precious stones and metal to the cross, it bleeds (*Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 18–21). The Waltham Cross is not unique in behaving as though it were alive. Barbara Raw notes several examples of crucifixes that were said to have spoken, bled, or trembled: Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, p. 18.

60 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 22–23. Raw notes several examples of life-sized crucifixes from the pre-Conquest period, many of which were ornamented in precious metals (as is the Waltham Cross); these objects would have dominated the interior space of any church in which they were housed. See Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 41–42.

61 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 46–47.

62 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–49.

preceps) and too bold (*nimis animosus*); he trusts in his own strength rather than God.[63] Like Haraldr and William, Harold attempts to control the events to come, but even his voluntary fall — the bowing of his body in prayer — is not enough to counteract the sin of pride. A much greater fall is necessary, the *Chronicle* implies: only the fall of his kingdom will do. With his outstretched arms mirroring the crucifixion, Harold's posture signifies not only his personal devotion, but the suffering and death soon to come.

The miracle of the bowed cross is, as the author of the *Chronicle* notes, incredible (*incredibilis*), and he is quick to offer the testimony of an eyewitness to confirm the veracity of his report:

> Hoc se uidisse contestatus est Turkillus sacrista et multis intimasse, dum et ipse colligeret et reconderet que altari superposuit rex benefitia. Ab eius ore ego hoc suscepi, et multorum assertione prestantium uirorum qui oculis suis caput imaginis erectum uiderunt, set nulli preter Turkillum demissionis horam nouerunt.
>
> > (Turkill, the sacristan, testified that he had seen this [the movement of the Christ-figure] while he was himself collecting together and putting away the gifts which the king had placed on the altar, and that he told many people about it. I heard this from his very lips, and it was confirmed by the many bystanders who with their own eyes saw the head of the figure upright, though none of them except Turkill knew the moment it had bowed.)[64]

In contrast to the miraculous bowing of the cross, the description of Turkill is strangely domestic as the sacristan putters around the altar tidying up the king's gifts. Such prosaic details lend the scene an air of believability, as does the chain of witnesses linking Turkill's memory to the *Chronicle* text: Turkill told people about the miracle; the Chronicler heard of these events directly from Turkill himself; he now relates them to the reader. The text seems to throng with witnesses, but the Chronicler notes a curious detail: despite the many onlookers present in the abbey, only the sacristan was watching at the precise moment the stone figure bowed. The miraculous movement of the head slips past almost unnoticed by the crowd; it seems that only Turkill is able to testify to the moment of movement itself. The king and his followers witness only the *effect* of the miracle, that is, the changed position of the figure's head after it has moved. The miracle itself thus operates like a traumatic event: as Caruth observes, the overwhelming and incomprehensible nature of such events means they cannot be fully grasped as they occur. Those who experience such events

63 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 47–49.
64 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 46–47.

have a sense of missing them entirely, with trauma manifesting afterwards in the endless repetition of the ungrasped event through nightmares and flashbacks.[65] Such repetitions, 'in which one is haunted or possessed by the past' are, for LaCapra, a form of traumatic acting out:

> it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. Any duality (or double inscription) or time (past and present or future) is experientially collapsed or productive only of aporias and double binds. In this sense, the aporia and the double bind might be seen as marking a trauma that has not been worked through.[66]

The bending of the Christ-figure represents such an aporia. Time collapses between the moment of the miracle and the disaster it predicts, between the year of the Conquest and its memorialization in the decades that follow. Is the miracle at Waltham a prelude of the trauma to come — a pre-repetition, as it were — or is Christ's rejection of Harold's prayer the traumatic moment itself, and the defeat at Hastings merely a repetition of that moment? Or is the bowing of the stone figure principally an echo of Christ's death on the cross? Is the crucifixion the ultimate traumatic moment, of which the violent conflicts of history are merely endless repetitions? Wrestling with the enigma of the ungrasped miracle, the *Chronicle* text seems an attempt to 'work through' these cycles of violence and trauma.

The singularity of Turkill as the only person to witness the miraculous moment itself speaks to the Chronicler's comment that the event seemed incredible from an earthly point of view (*a seculis*). The Chronicler here draws a distinction between lay and ecclesiastical witnessing. Although the lay bystanders cannot fully grasp — nor even see — the miracle in its entirety, the Chronicler suggests that it is the privileged status of sacristan that allows Turkill to do so. The Waltham monks have, the Chronicler implies, access to a higher level of understanding that allows them to grasp what their lay counterparts cannot. It is perhaps this recognition that prompts the community of Waltham to adopt the role of official witness to subsequent events. The monks appoint two of their number, Osgod and Æthelric, to accompany the king and to witness the outcome of his battle with the Normans; they are moreover instructed to bring the king's body back to Waltham in the event of his death.[67] It is, therefore, the bending of the cross that assures the presence of these clerical witnesses among the king's troops on that fatal day. Thus, although the miracle at Waltham presages the king's death, it also ensures that his death will be witnessed by

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65 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 91. These symptoms are also listed as part of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD in DSM-5-TR, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder'.

66 LaCapra, *Writing History*, p. 21.

67 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 46–47.

those with the ability to grasp both its earthly and its divine implications. The battle itself is described with relative brevity in the *Chronicle*, but is followed by a lengthy, sermon-like address in which Chronicler pleads for God to remember Harold and the religious community of which he was a patron.[68] Quoting Psalm 73, the Chronicler implores, 'Vt quid, Deus, reppulisti in finem, iratus est furor tuus super oues pascue tue? Memor esto congregationis tue' (Why, O God, have you turned your anger against the sheep of your pasture and cast them off forever? Remember your flock).[69] 'Numquid obliuio cadit in Deum?' (But surely God does not forget?) he wonders, enumerating the many gifts Harold had bestowed on the abbey.[70] It is Waltham, the Chronicler concludes, that must lead the public rites of mourning for the king: 'Set quid restat, plange, Waltham, et luge, et exue te uestibus iocunditatis; induere cinere et cilitio, quia priuauit te Dominus sponso iocunditatis tue' (But hereafter, Waltham, grieve and mourn, shed your garments of joy and put on sackcloth and ashes, for the Lord has deprived you of your hope of joy).[71]

In this way, the Chronicler elides the act of witnessing trauma with that of remembering it, and establishes the Waltham monks as the central figures in both processes. The Chronicler does not, however, hide the emotional burden that accompanies such remembrance, which falls particularly strongly on the two monks who follow Harold to battle:

> Post miserabiles belli euentus et infaustum omen certantium, quid animi, quid angoris, quidue suppremi doloris fuerit fratribus predictis Osegodo et Ailrico qui fatales hos regis euentus secuti fuerant a longe ut uiderent finem, pensare poterit cuius animo hoc fixum sit, 'O uos qui transitis per uiam attendite et uidete si est dolor sicut dolor meus'.
>
> (After the unhappy outcome of the battle, with its bad omen for those who fought in it, the man who can recall the verse 'O you who pass by, look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow', will be able to appreciate what feelings of anguish and sorrow the brethren Osgod and Æthelric had to endure, who had followed the king's doomed fortunes from afar that they might see his end.)[72]

Quoting the biblical Book of Lamentations, the Chronicler sets the anguish experienced by the two monk-witnesses within the ancient poetic

68 In the modern edition, the description of the battle occupies 15 lines, whereas the Chronicler's apostrophe to God is more than twice as long, running over 29 lines of prose and 6 of verse: *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–51.

69 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–49; see also *Vulgate Bible*, pp. 344–45 (Psalm 73.1–2).

70 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–49.

71 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–49.

72 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 50–51.

tradition of mourning for fallen cities, peoples, and states.[73] Lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587/86 BCE, the biblical poems are a moving description of the deep sadness — and, arguably, the collective trauma — prompted by that event. It is an evocative parallel for those who witness the fall of Harold and his kingdom.[74] However, the poems in Lamentations do not only mourn but blame, presenting the fall of Jerusalem as divine retribution for the sins of those dwelling in the city. A clerical audience would no doubt spot the none-too-subtle analogy with the Norman Conquest: like the people of Jerusalem, the people of England are, the Chronicler implies, responsible for the fall of their homeland, and Harold is especially to blame for this catastrophic loss.[75] In claiming the role of witness to the events of 1066, the Waltham monks pledge to remember not only the king, but also the circumstances of his death and the sins that caused it. Their remembrance of the fallen king is likewise the remembrance of a fallen kingdom; the memorialization of this collective trauma is also a warning to those who succeed him.

In keeping with the communal nature of this remembrance, Osgod and Æthelric beg the Conqueror for Harold's body and, after some negotiation, are allowed to take it back to Waltham.[76] There, the king's body becomes its own monument and the final, irrefutable witness to the violent conflict that accompanied his fall. As the Chronicler writes:

> cuius corporis translatione, quoniam sic se habebat status ecclesie fabricandi, uel deuotio fratrum reuerentiam corpori exibentium, nunc extreme memini me tertio affuisse et, sicut uulgo celebre est et attestations antiquorum audiuimus, plagas ipsis ossibus impressas oculis corporeis et uidisse et manibus contrectasse.
>
> (I can now in my old age remember that I was present when his body was translated for the third time, occasioned either by the state of building work in the church or because the brethren out of devotion were showing reverence for the body. It is generally

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73 A useful summary of Lamentations and its poetic tradition may be found in Meyers and Rogerson, 'The World of the Hebrew Bible', pp. 296–99.

74 The allusion may also function as a critique of the Normans, who implicitly parallel the Babylonians in this episode. Although the Chronicler paints a relatively positive depiction of William the Conqueror, his description of the Normans as perfidious (*perfidi*) and savage (*efferi*) warriors is in line with this reading (*Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 44–45 and 48–49). As Michael Winterbottom has shown, William of Malmesbury draws a similar parallel between the Conquest and the destruction of Jerusalem in his commentary on the Book of Lamentations. See Winterbottom, 'William of Malmesbury and the Normans'.

75 The use of Old Testament migration myths by early English authors is discussed by Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, and Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 208–11.

76 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 54–55. The difficulty of finding the king's body among the corpses of the English dead and the Chronicler's rebuttal of rumours that the king survived the battle will be discussed in Chapter 4.

> well-known, and we have heard old men testify, that men saw with their own eyes, and touched with their hands, the marks of the wounds visible on his bones.)[77]

This account of the king's body is more subtle than the blood-sweating land of Battle Abbey described by William of Newburgh and discussed in the Introduction to this book. It is, however, analogous in its metaphorical use of the wound — the trauma — that remains unhealed, serving as the visible reminder of a catastrophic past. The king's bones are still marked with the wounds that caused his death and led to the fall of his kingdom. In this passage, the damaged corpse seems to move through time as the buildings of Waltham rise and fall around it. As in the episode of the bowing Christ, movement is again key to Harold's relationship with Waltham. It is during these moments of translation from one tomb to another that the corpse may be seen and touched, its wounded presence verified by successive generations of Waltham monks. Ultimately, the movement of the king's corpse is witnessed by the Chronicler himself, becoming the memory that verifies the story he has just related in the text. As with the bodies of wounded saints, the king's corpse becomes a kind of text, with the wounds inscribed on his bones retelling the story of his fall.[78] The story is passed on through generations of monks until it comes to the reader.[79] The image of the old men touching Harold's wounded bones presents the memory of this event as almost tangible, something that can be passed from one body to the next. Visible long after the king's death, the wounds are a reminder of the violent struggle in which the king fell, and of the ongoing trauma that remains unhealed.

Thanks both to the Holy Cross and to the king's relics, Waltham becomes a place of miracles, but it is notable how many of these miracles are punitive rather than redemptive, and that they result in even more damaged bodies. When thieves break into the abbey church and steal its silver vessels, they are blinded; when caught, the ringleader is branded on the face with a red-hot iron.[80] A local nobleman who sets fire to the vill

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77 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 56–57.

78 Compare to the wounded bodies discussed in Foys, 'The Body as Media'; and the promotion by rulers such as Cnut and William I of the cults of saints whose bodies witnessed their violent martyrdom at the hands of the vikings: see further Foot, 'Kings, Saints and Conquests'.

79 As Corinne Saunders has argued, battle-wounds are an essential component of chivalry, particularly of the kind described in medieval romance. The wounds and scars that mark the knight's body are a testament to his experience and a complement to the damage done to his armour. The *Chronicle* seems to channel the conventions of romance in this depiction of Harold's wounded corpse. See further Saunders, 'The Affective Body', pp. 95–96.

80 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 62–65. Two more examples of men attempting to burgle the church and being blinded as a result are described at pp. 80–85.

of Waltham is likewise wounded in battle shortly afterwards, and dies.[81] In a grotesque inversion of the bowed Christ-figure and the bowing king, a woman who steals a penny from the church's altar becomes so deformed that her body is bent over backwards, and she is forced to look up into the sky forever.[82] The Chronicler is careful to attribute these miracles to the Holy Cross rather than to Harold,[83] but the two are joined by their presence at Waltham, and by the joint reverence paid to them by the monks. The cross and the king come together at the abbey, just as they did in the days before Hastings. Where the king once bowed his body to the figure of Christ and the stone head bowed back, the two objects — the corpse and the cross — now function as a double relic in the abbey church. Each bears the marks of a traumatic past and, together, their wounded bodies continue to exert a wounding agency in the present.

A King's Body

For all his flaws, Harold is a generally positive figure in the *Waltham Chronicle*. In the *Vita Haroldi*, however, he is the undisputed hero. From the opening lines of that text, the *Vita* author glories in the task of committing to parchment the life of the king:

> Illustrissimi vere quia regis legitimi Haroldi jam rite ac legitime coronati gesta recensere . nichil aliud est quam divine serenitatis simul et clemencie quasi speculum quoddam lucidissimum piis mentibus exhibere.[84]
>
> (To recount the deeds of Harold, a most famous and lawful king — rightfully and lawfully crowned — is no less than to display to pious minds the most brilliant reflection of godly serenity and humility.)[85]

Here and throughout the work, the author emphasizes a double legitimacy: Harold was the rightful king of England, and is now a true saint. While his accession to the throne of England is important in this work, it is only a prelude to his more exalted position in the religious sphere. The story of his fall from power is, therefore, only a prelude to his rise

81 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 79–81.
82 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 66–69.
83 Watkiss and Chibnall note that the Chronicler is careful to avoid promoting a cult of Harold, which could be seen as seditious; instead, he focuses on the Waltham Cross as the primary object of worship (*Waltham Chronicle*, pp. xiii–xiv).
84 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 12.
85 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 3.

to sanctity, and the miracle of the bowed cross plays a central role in exploring this evolution.

Harold had led a successful campaign in Wales three years before King Edward's death, claiming hostages and tribute from the Welsh and installing rulers favourable to England. The *Vita Haroldi* presents Harold's miliary campaign in Wales as central to his consolidation of power at the court of King Edward:

> Viribus autem corporis quantum prestiterit quam acer et strenuus animis armisque innotuerit: subacta immo ad internicionem per Haroldum pene deleta: Wallia est experta. In hiis quidem triumphis . vivente adhuc sancto rege Edwardo: insignis enituit . Hiis regi et regno pacem et quietem quam fortiter tam et utiliter adquisivit.[86]
>
> (How Harold distinguished himself in strength of body and became noted for astuteness of mind and military vigor, was proved by the way he conquered Wales, reducing it nearly to the point of extermination. These victories made him a shining example even during the lifetime of the saintly King Edward; and through his bravery in this way he gained a peace and tranquillity of advantage to both king and country.)[87]

Conquered (*subacta*) and almost annihilated (*pene deleta*), Wales stands at the point of extermination (*ad internicionem*). While such language does not connote acts of colonialism and genocide in the way a modern reader would understand those terms, the passage is a startling reminder of the violence with which, in life, Harold suppressed a neighbouring people. That the tranquillity of the English is bought by the near annihilation of the Welsh is an unsettling reminder of Caruth's argument that history is the way we are implicated in each other's traumas.[88] Even in the flattering pages of the *Vita Haroldi*, the English are not only the victims of violent conquest, but also the perpetrators of it. It is fitting, therefore, that the decimation of Wales is linked to the breakdown of Harold's own body, as shortly thereafter he is stricken with paralysis. Despite the best efforts of doctors from across the kingdom and abroad, Harold cannot be cured, and his body becomes the grim simulacrum of a corpse:

> Paralisin vocant medici genus morbi quo corpus hominis attactum debita dediscit officia . obsequia homini derogat consueta. Reddit enim subito partem quam invaserit . aut corporis totum: stupidum torpens et quasi emortuum. Haroldus hac repente tactus ac prostractus

86 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 17.

87 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 5.

88 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 25. Harold's return to Wales after his defeat at Hastings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

> molestia; cum ceteris esset merori tum presertim regi: fit precipui causa doloris.[89]
>
> > (Doctors call that kind of disease 'paralysis', by which one's body when affected forgets its normal functions and refuses one its customary obedience; for it suddenly renders the part it has attacked, or the whole body, senseless and numb as it if were dead. Unexpectedly attacked and prostrated by this trouble, Harold became the occasion of great sorrow, for everybody grieved for him, especially the king.)[90]

This illness is a reminder of the impermanence of earthly success, and of how quickly the fortunes of men can turn. At the height of his military and political power, Harold's body is laid low, immobilized and unfeeling. The people of England and even the king are drawn into his suffering: although Harold cannot feel his leg, the people of England feel all too well the grief his illness provokes. The embodied pain of the leader has, in this way, a direct effect on the emotional state of his people. The English are not, however, the only people affected by Harold's body. The author of the *Vita* declares that the affliction has been sent by God to save Harold's soul, and this comment begs the question as to precisely which sins Harold has committed.[91] Although the suffering of the physical body as a route to salvation is a common trope in hagiographic literature, the comment is suggestively linked to Harold's military triumph in Wales. Is it perhaps a punishment for the pain he has inflicted upon the people of that realm? Re-enacting the effects of the violent conquest he has just perpetrated, Harold's corpse-like body becomes a stark warning of how thin the line is between aggressor and victim in the world of military conflict. The grief of the English mirrors that of the Welsh as the trauma of conquest spreads through both regions. With the paralysis foreshadowing Harold's real death to come, the episode also foreshadows the imminent conquest of his country, and the pain his own people are soon to experience.

Harold's mysterious illness resists all attempts at healing, and it is only when his doctors acknowledge the hand of God in his affliction that a cure is found. Word reaches the court that a stone cross has recently been discovered and brought to Waltham, which has become the site of miraculous scenes of healing. Harold sends luxurious gifts to the Waltham monks, asking them to pray for his sins to be pardoned and his suffering eased. The paralysis vanishes and a grateful Harold endows Waltham with even more lavish gifts, building a new church and granting land to expand

89 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 17–18.
90 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 5.
91 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 17.

the community.[92] This is the first in a series of three miracles that bind the fragile body of King Harold to the stone figure of the Waltham Cross. The second occurs as Harold marches toward Stamford Bridge to confront the Norwegians. As the Norwegians slash and burn their way across the north, Harold is gripped by a debilitating pain in his leg. Here, the ravaging of the kingdom by an enemy force is mirrored by the pain that invades the king's body. Harold's body *is* the kingdom: the pain of the king's body is likewise the pain of the kingdom.[93] The elision between the two offers the deliverance of both. As the *Vita* author observes, 'Qui ex suo tali compede plus subditorum discrimini quam suo congemiscens dolori noctem pene totam suspiriis et precibus agentes insompnem familiarem sancte crucis expecierat subvencionem' (Fettered as he [Harold] thus became, and in agony for the peril of his subjects rather than at his own pain, he passed the entire night without sleep in sighs and prayers, begging for the familiar aid of the Holy Cross).[94] Harold is cured by the following morning, and the text makes clear the link between the healing of the king's body and military victory. Appearing in a vision to the abbot of Ramsey, King Edward commands, 'Surgens vade et annunciabis regi vestro ex me quia et presentis sui doloris medelam et imminentis belli me interveniente Deus ei concessit victoriam' (Get up and go tell your king from me the remedy for his present pain and for the imminent war, in which at my intercession God has granted him the victory).[95] Here, the remedy (*medela*) is both physical and political: Harold recovers his health and crushes the Norwegians at Stamford Bridge. In the *Vita*, then, Harold's body revolves through cycles of pain and healing that correspond with his military engagements, first with the Welsh, and then with the Norwegians.[96] In the first instance, Harold's immobilized body is an eerie re-enactment of the destruction he has brought to the neighbouring kingdom, and the pain he experiences is a prompt to repentance via the Holy Cross. In the second, the pain of the king's body parallels the pain of the invaded kingdom, and the healing of both is accomplished by his prayers to the same object. When the Normans arrive, the link between Harold's body and the Waltham Cross has been firmly established, and the scene is set for the most miraculous event of all: the bowing of the stone Christ before the Battle of Hastings.

Rushing south toward the third and final military encounter of the text, the king makes a detour to Waltham. This is the first time in the

92 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, pp. 7–8. There follows a long list of the gifts Harold sent to the abbey, with the author of the *Vita* noting how many of them were afterwards stolen by William the Conqueror.

93 Compare with Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

94 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 54–55; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 21.

95 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 55; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 21.

96 On the cyclical nature of fate in the *Vita* see also Matthews, 'The Content and Construction', pp. 67–68.

Vita the king has been able to worship the cross in person, and it is the climax of this cycle of pain and healing. The description of the miracle is similar to that found in the *Waltham Chronicle*, but where the Chronicler considers the event a bad omen, the author of the *Vita* sees only its positive implications:

> Quid enim favorabilius vel cogitari potuit quam ut rex seculorum immortalis invisibilis visibiliter resalutare videretur regem mortalium miserorum salutantem se . et sibi humiliter caput inclinanti caput sibi saxee ymaginis quam dignanter tam et potenter inclinare?[97]
>
> (For indeed, what more auspicious act could be conceived than that the immortal King of Ages, invisible, should be visibly seen to return the greeting of a king of wretched mortals, and should deign to, and have the power to, bow the head to him — the head of a stone statue bowing?)[98]

The correspondence between Harold and Christ is clear in this section, in which the author marvels at the seeming reversal in status between the King of Kings and the King of England: mortal kings should bow to Christ, not the other way around. And yet, the act of bowing is revealed to be the ultimate kingly act. The author of the *Vita* reminds his reader that it was under the mocking sign that read 'Jesus, King of the Jews' (*Jesus Nazarenus rex Judeorum*), that Christ bowed his head at the crucifixion:

> Permansit enim vere rex . cui plebs impia quia regnum invidit ut ejus caput inclinaret: et ipsum occidit. At ille pariter et caput inclinavit et sibi regni potenciam vendicavit quam se plenius accepisse convescens, caput in tantum inclinatum super omnes celos exaltavit.[99]
>
> (He [Christ] remained a king indeed, though the impious populace envied Him the kingdom and killed Him so that He bowed His head. But in bowing His head He took up the power of His kingdom which, confessing, He received in full, exalting his bowed head above all the heavens.)[100]

Bowing is paradoxically revealed to be an act that elevates; submission on earth translates into celestial glory. Although in the *Waltham Chronicle* the statue of Christ seems to echo the bowing of Harold's body, the *Vita* reveals that it is Harold, in fact, who emulates Christ. Harold too will experience defeat on earth, but the miracle of the bowed cross promises a greater victory: 'Patet jam quam peculiari signo fideli adoratori suo victoriam

97 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 58.
98 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 22.
99 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 63.
100 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 62–63; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 25.

meliorem quam ceteri peterent aut intelligerent . caput inclinando rex regi se ostenderit concessisse' (It is now clear from this particular sign to his faithful worshipper that, in bending his head to the king, the King had shown that He would grant him a better victory than others looked for or understood).[101]

The discourse of rising and falling is thus key to the *Vita Haroldi*'s presentation of the king, and it is not confined to the miracle scene but seeps into descriptions of battle as well. The change in fortune that sees the English victory at Stamford Bridge followed so quickly by their defeat at Hastings is expressed in precisely this way:

> Sic et Haroldus noster [...] tanquam super ventum subito elevatur et repente eliditur valide. Regno pariter acclamante in regem erigitur [...] Manus conserit: et concidit congreditur et consciditur.[102]
>
> > (And thus also [like the biblical Joseph] our Harold [...] is promptly lifted up by the wind, as it were, and all of a sudden violently thrown down. He is raised to the kingship by the acclamation of the kingdom [...] He joins battle and falls; he attacks and is cut down.)[103]

The king's body metaphorically rises and falls as his fortune ebbs and flows. And yet, the nature of his final fall is, the author notes, uncertain: 'Consciditur quidem et concidit . set numquid ad perniciem vel ad insipienciam sibi?' (He is cut down and fallen indeed, but is it to his ruin or his folly?).[104] Is the final fall a sign of earthly defeat or of something more? After some rumination on the question, the author concludes that Harold's fall is merely the preface to his ascension to heaven. The *Vita* author notes how the defeat of the English at Hastings has led some to interpret the bowing of the cross as a bad omen, but he rejects this simplistic interpretation of events: the miracle prefigures both victory *and* defeat.[105] The paradoxical import of this sign is mirrored by the astonishing physical mutation that takes place within the space of the church: hard stone becomes soft; metal bends without a crack. The head of the Christ-figure stays locked in its newly bowed position, declares the author of the *Vita*, and can still be seen in his time: 'ubi mentum ymaginis quod eminuisse olim accepimus . nunc ad pectus usque demissum ei velut insedisse ex premissa ut dictum est inclinacione videmus' (where I understand the jaw of the image originally jutted out, now as a result of the bending

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101 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 62–63; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 24.
102 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 28.
103 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 10.
104 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 28–29; *Three Lives*, trans. by Swanton, p. 10.
105 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 60; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 24. On this see also Matthews, 'The Content and Construction', pp. 65–73.

I've described, we see it dropping downwards resting on the breast).[106] Permanently bowed, the miraculously changed figure becomes its own memorial, the principal witness to its own improbable transformation. The bent figure also encodes the memory of Harold's body long after its demise: it is a visible reminder of how the king's body bowed in prayer at Waltham, and of how that body fell in the battle that followed. In this way, trauma is rewritten as triumph. The Waltham Cross becomes a memorial not only to the victorious defeat of Christ at the Crucifixion, but also to that of the English king at Hastings. The parallel is a daring one, given the political context of the post-Conquest period. Unlike the Waltham Chronicler, who avoids explicitly identifying Harold as a saint, the author of the *Vita* positions Harold as a potential saviour for the English people. The story of the king thus enters the collective memory of the Waltham monks, the act of remembrance potentially offering an opportunity for pious resistance to the trauma of Norman rule. Whereas the falls of Haraldr and William relate to such worldly matters as battle, kingship, and the respective power of the two leaders to craft their own fates, the movement of Harold's body is a reminder of the link between the earthly and spiritual realms. In both the *Waltham Chronicle* and the *Vita Haroldi*, the story of the king's fall demonstrates, as Caruth notes above, how traumatic experience cannot 'be reduced to […] the boundaries of an individual life'.[107] Harold's experience is, in these texts, part of a broader investigation into how the traumas of conflict in the eleventh century intersect with the greater sweep of salvation history.

Arrogance and Heroism

For Pro-Harold texts like the *Vita Haroldi* and the *Waltham Chronicle*, the death of the king is a sensitive moment. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the *Vita* simply denies this event took place; it is one of several accounts to repeat the legend that Harold actually survived the battle and died many years later of natural causes. The *Waltham Chronicle* does not specify how Harold was killed but, in a rhetorical tour-de-force, uses the moment of his death to praise Harold's life:

> Cadit rex ab hoste fero, gloria regni, decus cleri, fortitudo militie, inermium clipeus, certantium firmitas, tutamen debilium, consolatio desolatorum, indigentium reparator, procerum gemma. Non potuit de pari contendere, qui | modico stipatus agmine quadruplo congressus exercitui, sorti se dedit ancipiti.

106 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 60; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 24.
107 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 121.

> (The king who was the glory of the realm, the darling of the clergy, the strength of his soldiers, the shield of the defenceless, the support of the distressed, the protector of the weak, the consolation of the desolate, the restorer of the destitute, the pearl of princes, was slain by his fierce foe. He could not fight an equal contest for, accompanied by only a small force, he faced an army four times as large as his; but he submitted to his fate, whatever it might be.)[108]

The simple fact of the king's death — *cadit rex* — is overwhelmed by the string of superlative epithets that follow, and the Chronicler delicately leaves unanswered the question of what his fate really was. Nevertheless, while the Chronicler is understandably eager to praise his community's benefactor, he must also tread a careful path of political expediency, avoiding overt criticism of the Norman ruling elite. It is perhaps for this reason that he balances this flattering description of Harold with an acknowledgement of the king's folly in engaging with such a large enemy force:

> Modico stipatus agmine rex properat ad expugnandes gentes exteras, heu nimis animosus, minus quidem quam expediret circumspectus, propriis quidem magis quam suorum confidens uiribus.
>
> (Thronged by a small band of men, the king hastened to drive out these foreigners, but, alas, too boldly and too rashly to advance his cause, and trusting more to his own personal strength than that of his men.)[109]

The rashness of Harold Godwinson's advance features in numerous sources, both English and Norman.[110] Although in some ways approving of the king, both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and John of Worcester report that Harold engaged the Normans before the English troops had time to assemble.[111] Other sources are more damning. As will be discussed in more detail below, the death of Tostig was frequently linked to Harold's rash decision-making: Matthew Paris declares that the killing of Tostig inflamed Harold's arrogance to such an extent that the king broke faith with his own people, thus leading to the defeat at Hastings.[112] William of Malmesbury likewise blames Harold's inflated sense of personal glory for his lack of military support, stating that Harold refused to share the booty gained at Stamford Bridge, and that this caused the widespread desertion

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108 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 48–49.

109 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 46–49.

110 It is also a much-noted point in medievalist scholarship, as in R. Allen Brown's influential comments about Harold's 'reckless and impulsive haste' in Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest*, p. 158.

111 *ASC* E, p. 87; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, II, p. 604.

112 Chapter 3, pp. 154-60. See *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 91 (ll. 3224–28).

of the English troops before the Normans arrived.[113] Wace describes Harold acting very arrogantly (*mult fierement*) after Stamford Bridge,[114] a theme also reflected in some Scandinavian sources. In his otherwise brief description of 1066, Saxo Grammaticus observes:

> Ea res uictoribus maxima queque audendi fidutiam ministrauit. Sed mox temere crescente audacia Normannos adorti infoelici pugna recentis uictorie titulum perdiderunt.
>
> (Their [i.e., the English] success supplied the victors with the self-confidence for any supremely daring deed they might envisage. Nonetheless, as their boldness grew without consideration, they shortly attacked the Normans, and, since they reaped no joy of the battle, lost the honours of victory they had so recently won.)[115]

Although Saxo's comments refer to the English troops in general rather than to Harold specifically, the related themes of arrogance and hasty decision-making permeate accounts of 1066. Along with charges of fratricide, perjury, and usurpation, the arrogance of the English king is important evidence of his moral degradation, and further justification for conquest from abroad.[116] The trauma his people suffer stems, in these texts, from within rather than without: it is a product of the king's own moral failings.

The characterization of Harold as both rash and arrogant will be familiar to readers of the sagas, albeit under a different guise: Haraldr harðráði is similarly condemned for his hasty decision to engage with the English forces at Stamford Bridge, and his arrogance is frequently blamed for the failure of the expedition overall. This is particularly true of the scholarly literature, although accusations of royal arrogance do have some basis in the medieval sources.[117] Orderic Vitalis is damning in his evaluation of the Norwegian king as a greedy tyrant (*tirannus auidus*) although Haraldr does not figure prominently in other Anglo-Norman

113 *GRA*, I, pp. 422–23; a similar comment is made by Orderic in *HE*, II, p. 170. For more on William of Malmesbury's negative portrayal of Harold and the English, see Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury*, pp. 204–08.

114 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 132 (l. 36684).

115 *Gesta Danorum*, II, pp. 798–99.

116 See further Chapter 3, pp. 150–93.

117 Kelly DeVries, for example argues that it was Haraldr's 'over-confidence which would cost the Norwegian king, his ally, Tostig Godwinson, and several thousands of their soldiers their lives': DeVries, *The Norwegian Invasion*, p. 270. Theodore Andersson views the king as 'autocratic, ambitious, and unreliable', particularly in Snorri's representation of events: Andersson, 'The Politics of Snorri Sturluson', p. 66. On the representation of Haraldr in the sagas, see also Finlay, 'History and Fiction'.

works.[118] Saxo Grammaticus's characterization of the Norwegian king is similar to that of Orderic: 'Rapuit oblationem exulum auida dominationis ambitio' (His [Haraldr's] greedy lust for power made him snatch at the exiles' offer [to share England with the sons of Godwin]).[119] Theodoricus Monachus likewise describes Haraldr as 'vir strenuus, in consilio providus, manu promptus, sui tenax, alieni cupidus' (a vigorous man, far-sighted in his decision-making, quick to take up arms, jealous of what was his and covetous of what was another's).[120] As with the negative descriptions of Harold Godwinson, such characterizations place the blame for the Norwegian defeat squarely on the king's shoulders. In contrast to these works, however, the vernacular kings' sagas are more ambiguous in their representation of Haraldr's over-confidence than has often been acknowledged; his role in the subsequent defeat of his people is therefore more complicated. Indeed, Haraldr's decision to embark on the invasion of England in the first place is notable for the care and deliberation with which he decides. When Tostig arrives in Norway seeking support, Haraldr calls together his 'spekingar ok ráðagerðarmenn' (wise men and counsellors) to consider the proposal.[121] The earl's address to this council is couched in formal and quasi-legal language, focusing squarely on the issue of royal legitimacy:

> Jarl mælti ok á þá leið: 'Þat er upphaf minnar rœðu, herra', segir hann, 'er Hǫrða-Knútr, son gamla Knúts, stýrði Englandskonungs veldi eptir Harald bróður sinn'. Tjár nú [allt] hversu farit hǫfðu allir svardagar milli Magnúss konungs góða ok Hǫrða-Knúts, ok þat næst at Magnús konungr var réttr arfi [Hǫrða-Knúts], ok hversu Magnús konungr gørði af miskunn til Játvarðs konungs er hann heimti eigi ríki ok tígn, þat er var í Englandi sem hitt er var í Danmǫrk'.[122]
>
> (And the earl spoke in this way: 'The beginning of my tale, lord', says he, 'is when Hǫrða-Knútr, the son of Knútr the Old [i.e. Cnut the Great], ruled the kingdom of England after Haraldr, his brother'. Then he describes all of the promises that had been exchanged between King Magnús the Good and Hǫrða-Knútr, and after that declared that King Magnús was the true heir of

118 *HE*, II, pp. 144–45. A distant echo of this theme may be found in Gaimar's comment that the Norwegian army was surprised and slaughtered by the English as they were out stealing cattle: *Estoire des Engleis*, pp. 284–85 (ll. 5223–32). This detail is not supported by other sources, but the presentation of the Norwegians as opportunistic raiders is analogous to the descriptions of their king as covetous.

119 *Gesta Danorum*, II, pp. 798–99.

120 *Monumenta historica*, p. 56, and Theodoricus Monachus, *An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings*, p. 45.

121 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 301.

122 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 301. The conversations in *Fagrskinna*, pp. 275–76, and *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 173–75, are similar.

> Hǫrða-Knútr, and that King Magnús had acted out of mercy to King Edward when he didn't claim the kingdom and title of king in England as well as in Denmark.)

Haraldr's claim to the English throne was far from clear-cut, which is perhaps why saga authors dwell on it in detail. Tostig carefully enumerates each link in the legal and genealogical chains that run from Cnut the Great to Haraldr of Norway. Phrases such as *réttr arfi* (true or right heir) emphasize the importance of legitimate inheritance, while the *miskunn* (mercy, forgiveness) King Magnús showed in declining to claim the kingdom from Edward the Confessor is presented as temporary, a personal favour to Edward himself rather than an abdication of Norway's right to the English throne. Tostig moreover presents his argument as a dialogue rather than a diatribe, inviting both the king and his audience to join him in resolving the knotty skein of royal inheritance: 'eða hverr er réttr erfingi Magnúss konungs at ríki?' he asks. 'Alls engi annarr en þú, Haraldr konungr, fǫðurbróðir hans, eða hvers minnir yðr, herra, at verit hafði?' (But who is the true heir to the kingdom of King Magnús? No one else but you, King Haraldr, his uncle. Or how do you, lord, remember how it was arranged?)[123] King Haraldr has no choice but to answer: 'Satt segið ér, ok á þat minnizk ér jafnt sem verit hefir um máladaga' (You speak truthfully, and you remember precisely what the agreement was).[124] Witnessed by the royal court, the dialogue between Tostig and Haraldr publicly lays out the argument in favour of the invasion, and indeed the conversation is said to continue for several more days after that. The episode demonstrates that Haraldr's decision to invade England was not a hasty one, but the product of measured deliberation.

Once Haraldr and his courtiers have taken the decision to invade, the entire country joins in the discussion. The three compendia contain near-verbatim accounts of the king's subjects' response to the proposed expedition:

> Er sjá nýjung rœdd í hvers manns húsi ok þó optast í konungs hirð, hversu Haraldi konungi myni farask til Englands. Telja þar sumir menn upp hversu mǫrg stórvirki Haraldr konungr hefir unnit víða um lǫnd; kalla þat at øngan hlut muni hann finna ófœran fyri sér. Sumir mæla þat at England er ríkt ok fjǫlmennt, ok þar er ok þat lið er kallaðirru þingamenn ok valizk hǫfðu saman af ýmsum lǫndum ok mest af danskri tungu.[125]

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123 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 301.

124 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 301. The question-and-answer format is even more pronounced in *Heimskringla.*

125 A reference to the 'thingmenn' unit set up by Cnut the Great in 1018, with the word probably coming from the OE *þeningmann*: see *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 302.

> (And this development was discussed in every home and yet most often among the king's retinue, how King Haraldr might fare in England. Some reckon up all the great deeds King Haraldr had performed throughout many countries; they say that he will find nothing that he can't handle. Some say that England is powerful and full of people, and that there is the army called 'þingamenn', and that they had been brought together from many different lands, mostly Norse-speaking.)

Although the Norwegian people do not have the same power of decision-making as the king and his counsellors, this description includes them in the process of national deliberation. It is notable that, at this stage, the people of Norway do not assume that Haraldr is setting off on a hopeless mission. The two sides are considered well-matched, and the English are presented as worthy opponents in the coming conflict. An atmosphere of excited anticipation runs through the Norwegian countryside: at this point, the invasion is not seen as an over-ambitious land-grab, but as the collective reclaiming of a territory that has long been affiliated with the Scandinavian world.

This process of public decision-making finds a close analogue in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis. The similarities between Orderic's work and the Scandinavian sources have long been noted, although the direction of influence remains a matter of debate.[126] The role of Tostig Godwinson in the months preceding the invasions is particularly notable: while multiple Norman authors describe Tostig Godwinson's journeys to the courts of Normandy and Flanders after his expulsion from England, only Orderic agrees with the Scandinavian accounts in following Tostig to Denmark and Norway as well.[127] The resulting narrative is, as Kari Ellen Gade observes, next to impossible in terms of a realistic travel itinerary; however, the parallels are close enough to suggest either that Scandinavian authors were familiar with Orderic's account or that Orderic himself drew on Scandinavian narratives about Tostig.[128] Tostig's movement around

126 White, *Non-Native Sources*, provides a useful overview of this at pp. 102–06.

127 *HE*, II, pp. 138–45. Norse sources almost uniformly insist on Tostig's presence in Scandinavia during the spring of 1066. Only Saxo Grammaticus deviates slightly from this tradition in suggesting that an unspecified number of Harold's younger brothers travelled to Norway after their expulsion from England (*Gesta Danorum*, II, p. 799).

128 Gade, '*Morkinskinna* and 25th September 1066', pp. 216–17. Gade argues that the story of Tostig's arrival in Norway must have entered the Scandinavian corpus via Orderic's work, while Marritt takes the opposite view, arguing that Orderic could have encountered Scandinavian narratives about Tostig when visiting Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire: see Marritt, 'Crowland Abbey'. The direction of narrative influence remains unclear, but it seems likely that various accounts of Tostig's movements flowed between England, Normandy, and Scandinavia at different times and in multiple directions, as did other elements in the narrative of 1066.

the North Sea is not, however, the only parallel between these works. Tostig plays the same role in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* that he does in the sagas: he is the outraged defender of royal legitimacy and the dominant voice calling for invasion from abroad. The only difference is that in Norse tradition Tostig calls on the Norwegians to invade England; in Anglo-Norman tradition, he calls on the Normans. In Orderic's work, the banished Tostig rushes to Normandy 'et Willelmum ducem cur periurum suum regnare sineret fortiter redarguit' (and boldly rebuke[d] Duke William for allowing his perjured vassal [i.e. Harold] to rule).[129] This is in marked contrast to earlier sources such as the *Gesta Guillelmi* and the *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, which present the duke himself as the driving force behind the invasion.[130] In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as in the sagas, the call to invade comes from Tostig, a member of the English royal family itself. The two invaders — Haraldr and William — are thus presented as the reluctant defenders of what is right, not as aggressive and greedy warmongers. A further parallel can be seen in the way both Orderic and the saga authors emphasize the collective nature of the decision to invade England. Like Haraldr, William acknowledges the truth of Tostig's words and thanks him for his 'amicabili redargutioni' (friendly chiding).[131] Like Haraldr, William then calls a national assembly: 'eiusque exhortationibus animatus Normanniæ proceres conuocauit: et de tanto talique negocio quid agendum esset palam consuluit' (and with his [Tostig's] encouragement [William] called together the Norman nobles for a public discussion about what ought to be done in an affair of such moment).[132] Just as Tostig's proposal is, in the sagas, evaluated by an assembly of wise men and counsellors, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* it is assessed by the most influential people in Normandy. Orderic details the name, rank, and family of each person attending the duke's assembly, remarking on their nobility, courage, and judgement. With an almost republican flair he even declares of this assembly, 'qui Romano senatui uirtute seu maturitate non cederent, sed ad laborem tolerandum hostemque tam ingenio quam fortitudine uincendum equiparari studerent' (they would have yielded nothing to the Roman senate in talents or experience, but bid fair to equal them in enduring toil and outwitting as well as overpowering enemies).[133] The group debates the matter so thoroughly that they are ultimately unable to come to a

129 *HE*, II, pp. 140–41.

130 *GG*, pp. 100–01, and *GND*, pp. 164–65. The *Gesta Guillelmi* agrees with Orderic that William asked the advice of his men, but he is clearly presented as the person who orders the invasion and directs the preparations for it.

131 *HE*, II, pp. 140–41.

132 *HE*, II, pp. 140–41.

133 *HE*, II, pp. 140–41. The comparison with the Roman senate is taken from William of Poitiers (*GG*, p. 102), but in that text refers to the men keeping the duchy safe in a general sense, while Orderic's text emphasizes the martial dimension of their deliberations.

decision. William therefore sends an envoy to the pope, who gives the project his blessing. The episode establishes the Norman invasion as the product of careful deliberation, joint purpose, and divinely sanctioned legitimacy. William is portrayed as just, rational, and humble: he is a man who leads only when necessary, and who rules by consent rather than by force. In this account at least, he is a close parallel to the Haraldr of the sagas — or perhaps the character of Haraldr is, once again, modelled on that of a notable Norman. The process of joint decision-making followed by both the Normans and the Norwegians does, however, have radically different results. While William and the Normans have jointly embarked on a path to shared victory, Haraldr and the Norwegians will share only defeat and death. The collective nature of the decision to invade implicates the Norwegian nobility and perhaps even the Norwegian people in a doomed endeavour: they too must share in Haraldr's failure. They too are implicated in the trauma that results.

If Haraldr matches his Norman counterpart in intellect and daring, to what extent does he match his English namesake in arrogance? In the Scandinavian context, the characterization of Haraldr as over-hasty relies largely on a skaldic stanza cited in the *konungasögur* accounts of Stamford Bridge.[134] It is attributed to the Icelandic poet Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson and taken from his memorial poem for the king, likely composed a few years after Haraldr's death.[135] It appears only in the text of *Morkinskinna* and closely related manuscripts, and is cited as the English forces appear unexpectedly outside the town of York.[136] Having rejected Tostig's advice to retreat, King Haraldr prepares for battle and orders his messengers to return to the ships for reinforcements. Two verses by Arnórr mark the start of battle, the second of which is usually interpreted as criticism of the king's decision to engage the English troops without waiting for the rest of his army to arrive:

Olli ofrausn stillis,
ormalátrs þats máttit,
stáls í strǫngu éli
stríðir elli bíða,
sás aldrigi, aldins
ótams lituðr hramma

134 One might also see criticism in the reference to Haraldr's 'ofstopi' (insolence, imperiousness) in the late-twelfth-century poem *Nóregs konungatal* (st. 39). See further Gade's edition of this work in *SkP* II, pp. 786–87, and Finlay, 'History and Fiction', pp. 79–85.

135 Edited by Whaley in *SkP* II, pp. 273–74 (st. 12); for a discussion of the dating and context of the poem, see also her introduction in *SkP* II, pp. 260–61.

136 See a reassessment of Haraldr's strategy at this point in Blundell, 'The Battle of Stamford Bridge', pp. 31–61.

viggs, í vápna glyggvi
Varðrúnar, sik sparði.[137]

> (The prince's over-magnificence caused it, in the severe shower of steel (battle), that the enemy of the serpents' lair (generous king) might not await old age, he who never spared himself in the gale of weapons (battle), the dyer of the paws of the ancient, untamed steed of the trollwoman (dyer of the wolf's paws, i.e. warrior).)

Haraldr's *ofrausn* has attracted much comment, although only in *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* does the saga prose suggest that it refers to a negative quality.[138] The precise meaning of the compound is difficult to pin down, however. *Rausn* often denotes such positive concepts as 'magnificence' or 'generosity', but the prefix *of-* means 'too much' or 'an excess' of something; *ofrausn* is therefore generally understood to mean 'over-boldness', 'presumption', or even 'arrogance'.[139] In the skaldic corpus, the word is used in only two other instances, describing the ambitious Duke Skúli Bárðarson and the high-handed young king Magnús inn góði.[140] In both cases, *ofrausn* refers to the relationship between the king and his subjects: Magnús's *ofrausn* is displayed in the unwarranted killing of his subjects' livestock, while Duke Skúli's is shown in his claiming of the title of king. While Magnús's *ofrausn* is condemned by the poet, Skúli's is more ambiguous. In the same stanza the duke is also praised as a 'frægðarmaðr í frömu lífi' (famous man of righteous life) and his downfall is said to be due not to arrogance but to 'hvarbrigð gift' (fickle luck) and 'ǫfugt heill' (adverse fortune). In contrast to these two examples, Haraldr's *ofrausn* occurs not in the realm of politics but in war, and it seems over-hasty to assume that the word carries the same meaning in such different contexts. In Arnórr's verse, cited above, the poet twice reminds his audience of the military backdrop to Haraldr's *ofrausn*: it is displayed 'í strǫngu éli stáls' (in the severe shower of steel) and 'í glyggvi vápna' (in the gale of weapons). Moreover, the stanza follows on from another verse from Arnórr's *Haraldsdrápa* in which the king is shown directing the disembarkation of his troops and engaging with the English forces. That verse dwells on the

137 *SkP* II, pp. 273–74 (st. 12), cited in *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 313.

138 *Fornmanna sögur*, p. 417. See further *SkP* II, pp. 273–74.

139 There are, however, only three recorded uses of the word in poetry and eight in prose: see the examples given in *The Skaldic Project* and *The Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* under *ofrausn*. One might compare the ambiguous nature of this word with Gaimar's declaration that the defeated English paid dearly for their *outrages*, a word which could mean either 'outrageous behaviour' (in the sense of criminality or sinfulness) or 'excessive courage' (in a sense perhaps analogous to *ofrausn*): see *Estoire des Engleis*, p. 290 (l. 5342). On this passage see further Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 53.

140 In, respectively, Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonarkviða*, st. 9 (*SkP* II, p. 706) and Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Bersǫglisvísur*, st. 11 (*SkP* II, pp. 22–23).

disparity in size of the enemy lines: Haraldr fights 'með lítinn helming' (with a small force) while the English are an 'ǫflugr herr' (mighty army).[141] Unlike Harold Godwinson's poor decision to engage the Normans before all of his troops have arrived, this disparity only enhances the king's valour. In this context, the reference to the king's *ofrausn* could refer not to a bad decision but to his single-minded attitude to fighting a difficult battle. An analogy may be found in *Stúfsdrápa*, in which the poet Stúfr inn blindi Þórðarson calls Haraldr 'inn ofrhugi' (the overly courageous man): in this verse the *ofr-* element, related to the *of-* in *ofrausn*, is laudatory, occurring as the poet praises Haraldr's victories in the east.[142] In Arnórr's sequence the king's inability to reach old age is not said to be the result of poor decision-making (or of fate, like Duke Skúli), but rather due to the fact that he is a warrior 'sás aldrigi sparði sik' (who never spared himself, st. 12) and 'sás aldregi sásk háska' (who never feared danger, st. 10). Returning to the verse above, it is also notable that a convoluted kenning for warrior extends over three lines of Arnórr's second *helmingr* (half-stanza), and that this further glorifies the king's fighting ability. In the first *helmingr*, the kenning *stríðir ormalátrs* follows the word *ofrausn* and, notably, is associated with it by position and alliterative pattern. Yet this kenning is a positive one, alluding to the king's generosity: *ormalátr*, the lair of serpents, is gold, and the *stríðir*, enemy, of gold is a king who distributes treasure to his followers. When it is remembered that *rausn* also means 'generosity', the juxtaposition of this kenning could well suggest a positive image of the king's over-generosity to his followers. Indeed, the poet could be emphasizing the parallels between the king's earlier financial gifts and now, in the context of battle, his selfless inattention to his own safety.

The context of the king's *ofrausn* is thus different from other examples of the word in the skaldic corpus, and its precise meaning as difficult to pin down as the much-contested *ofermod* of Earl Byrhtnoth in the Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon*.[143] Indeed, the descriptions of Maldon and Stamford Bridge are surprisingly similar, and the possibility of Scandinavian influence on the Old English text has been discussed by numerous scholars.[144] Despite their reputations as proud and perhaps over-hasty in their rush to engage the enemy, both Byrhtnoth and Haraldr are shown

141 *SkP* II, p. 271 (st. 10).

142 *SkP* II, pp. 352–53. On the closeness of this word to OE *oferhygd* and the use of *ofermod* in *Maldon*, see Clark, 'The Hero of *Maldon*', pp. 274–75.

143 For an overview of the many interpretations and translations of this word, see Gneuss, '"The Battle of Maldon" 89'. George Clark presents a useful critique of the lexicographical approach, emphasizing the importance of context in the use of potentially polysemous words: Clark, 'The Hero of *Maldon*'.

144 See especially Woolf, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in the *Germania* and in *The Battle of Maldon*', and Frank, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in *The Battle of Maldon*'.

carefully preparing for battle: Byrhtnoth advises his troops on where to stand and how to hold their shields; Haraldr directs the formation of the troop, devising a clever plan to defend the shield-wall from the expected cavalry charge.[145] The *flyting* between the viking messenger and Byrhtnoth parallels the pre-battle conversation between Harold, Haraldr, and Tostig in the sagas: in both, an offer of truce is made, and in both it is vehemently rejected.[146] Both Byrhtnoth and Haraldr fight and die as heroes, and their supporters are vocal in their determination to continue the conflict. The speeches of Byrhtnoth's followers dominate the second half of the Old English poem as the poet emphasizes their communal resolve:

> Þa ðær wendon forð wlance þegenas,
> unearge men efston georne;
> hi woldon þa ealle oðer twega,
> lif forlætan oððe leofne gewrecan.[147]
>
> (Then the proud retainers went forth, undaunted men hastened eagerly, they all desired either of two things, to forsake life or avenge their dear lord.)

Similarly, when Harold offers a truce to the Norwegian chieftains after Haraldr's fall, 'Norðmenn œpðu upp allir senn ok sǫgðu svá, at fyrr skyldi hverr falla um þveran annan en þeir gengi til griða við enska menn, œpðu þá heróp' (all the Norwegians shouted together and said that each of them would fall atop the other before they would accept a truce from the Englishmen, and then they yelled a battle-cry).[148] This is not to argue that the Norse accounts of Stamford Bridge are based on the Old English poem; rather, the two accounts reflect the same patterns of idealized heroic behaviour, mediated through shared literary motifs that emphasize the character of the leader and his relationship with his men. Such parallels differ in quality from those noted at the start of this chapter, that is, the similarities between Norse accounts of the Battle of Stamford Bridge and Norman descriptions of the Battle of Hastings.[149] The echoes of Hastings found in the Norse accounts of Stamford Bridge manifest primarily in the military tactics employed by the two sides. Hastings is evident in the minutiae of Stamford Bridge, whereas Haraldr's last battle shares with *Maldon* a broader heroic ethos. For this reason, the comparison of Haraldr's *ofrausn* with Byrhtnoth's *ofermod* is useful, albeit through analogy

145 Respectively, *The Battle of Maldon*, p. 7 (ll. 17–21), and *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 185–86.
146 *The Battle of Maldon*, pp. 7–8 (ll. 25–61), and *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 186–87. For more on this conversation see Chapter 3, pp. 181–84.
147 *The Battle of Maldon*, p. 12 (ll. 205–08).
148 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 191.
149 See above, pp. 59–60.

rather than direct borrowing. John Halbrooks has argued that, despite the potential criticism encoded in the reference to Byrhtnoth's *ofermod*, the poem presents a deliberately complex image of the ealdorman: 'the word's ambiguity is no accident or aesthetic failure on the part of the poet; rather, like the poem as a whole, the word pushes the reader in contradictory directions [...] It is a sign of both praise and blame'; the reader consequently 'experiences both regret and celebration' upon Byrhtnoth's death.[150] The portrayal of Haraldr harðráði is comparable: both the skaldic verse and saga prose present a leader who, despite his ambition and eagerness to fight, is also a hero to be mourned and venerated. He is a complex character with an even more complex history: his traumatic defeat at Stamford Bridge cannot be explained by arrogance alone.

Interlude: The Lone Norwegian

The representation of the king at the Battle of Stamford Bridge has a further analogue in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. Manuscripts C, D, and E of the *Chronicles* describe the battle in varying degrees of detail, but only the C manuscript contains the story of a nameless Norwegian fighter who single-handedly manages to defend the bridge itself. As the text relates:

> Ða wes þer an of Norwegan þe wiðstod þet englisce folc þet hi ne micte þa brigge oferstigan ne sige gerechen. Þa seite an Englisce mid anre flane at hit nactes ne widstod, ænd þa com an oþer under þere brigge end hine þur\u/stang en under þere brunie. Þa com Harold Engla chinge ofer þere brigge ⁊ hys furde forð mid hine ⁊ þere michel wel geslogon ge Norweis ge Flæming.[151]
>
> (There was one of the Norwegians who withstood the English army so that they could not cross the bridge nor achieve victory. Then an Englishman shot with an arrow, but it came to no avail, and then another man went under the bridge and stabbed through him under the mailcoat. Then Harold, king of the English, came over the bridge and his army came with him and slew in great numbers the Norwegians and the Flemings.)

150 Halbrooks, 'Byrhtnoth's Great-Hearted Mirth', pp. 235 and 248.

151 *ASC* C, pp. 122–23. See further Dickins, 'The Late Addition to *ASC* 1066 C'. Sarah Baccianti analyses this episode, and others connected with 1066 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the *Historia Anglorum*, and the Old Norse sagas in Baccianti, 'Telling Stories in the Medieval North', pp. 1–20.

Although added to the end of the chronicle in a later, twelfth-century hand,[152] the image of a heroic warrior standing alone against an entire enemy army evokes the best of the Old English heroic tradition. This episode too seems to nod to *The Battle of Maldon* and especially to the poet's account of the three warriors, Wulfstan, Ælfere, and Maccus, who defend the causeway against the entire viking army. In *Maldon*, the vikings are only able to cross when they 'ongunnon lytegian' (began to use cunning), and the stabbing of the lone Norwegian from under the bridge suggests a similar degree of trickery.[153] The *Chronicle* neatly turns the *Maldon* episode on its head, however, with the lone Norwegian temporarily repulsing the English even though his army is the invading force. Although not explicitly praised as heroic, the lone Norwegian's actions mark him out from the otherwise undifferentiated crowd of invaders: his actions were clearly considered noteworthy in later retellings of the event.[154] Henry of Huntingdon's reliance on the *Chronicles* is well known, and the episode of the Norwegian on the bridge forms the climax of his narrative of the encounter:

> Quidam uero Norwagensis, fama dignus eterna, super pontem restitit, et plus quadraginta uiris Anglorum securi cedens electa, usque at nonam diei horam omnen exercitum Anglorum detinuit solus. Vsquequo quidam nauim ingressus, per foramina pontis, in celandis eum percussit iaculo.
>
> (A single Norwegian, worthy of eternal fame, resisted on the bridge, and felling more than forty Englishmen with his trusty axe, he alone held up the entire English army until three o'clock in the afternoon. At length someone came up in a boat and through the openings of the bridge struck him in the private parts with a spear.)[155]

This finally allows the English army to cross the river and the Norwegian troops are decimated. Avoiding any direct praise of the leaders of the Norwegian army, the lone warrior, *fama dignus eterna*, serves as a foil

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152 See further O'Keeffe's discussion of the manuscript, scribes, and the lacunae present in this section in *ASC* C, pp. lxx–lxxiv.

153 *The Battle of Maldon*, p. 9 (l. 86). The meaning of *lytegian* in this context has, like *ofermod*, provoked much discussion among scholars. For a brief overview of this debate, see Halbrooks, 'Byrhtnoth's Great-Hearted Mirth', pp. 238–39.

154 There are similarities between this episode and Wace's otherwise unique description of the heroic Englishman wielding a large Norwegian axe at the Battle of Hastings. The Englishman accidentally decapitates a horse with his unusually large weapon and, like the Lone Norwegian, temporarily dominates the battle scene. In a close parallel to the Lone Norwegian, the Englishman is finally killed with a lance, and his death provides a rallying-point for the Norman troops: see *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, pp. 192–93 (ll. 38258–90).

155 *HA*, pp. 386–89.

to the usurping King Harold, damned by perjury — although the final image of the spear *in celandis* ends the episode on a bathetic note, paving the way for a heroic entrance by William of Normandy. The episode was expanded upon by William of Malmesbury, who reports that the battle was interrupted for several hours by the actions of the lone Norwegian:

> Inuitatus ad deditionem, ut tanti roboris homo largam clementiam Anglorum experiretur, inuitantes ridebat, subinde rugato uultu increpitans imbecillis animi homines esse qui nequirent uni resistere. Nemine itaque propius accedente, quod inconsultum estimarent cum illo comminus congredi qui salutis omne uiaticum desperatus effunderet, unus ex collateralibus regis iaculum ferreum in eum eminus uibrat, quo ille, dum gloriabundus proludit ipsa securitate incautior, terebratus uictoriam Anglis concessit.
>
> (Called upon to surrender, that a man of such physical strength might receive generous treatment from the English, he spurned the invitation with a frown and kept taunting the enemy, saying they were a poor lot if they could not deal with a single man. So no one went near him, for it seemed unwise to attack at close quarters a desperate man who rejected all offers of safe conduct; but one of the king's bodyguard hurled an iron javelin at him from a distance, and as he was demonstrating boastfully, rendered more incautious by justified confidence, this pierced him through and he yielded the day to the English.)[156]

As in Henry's account, the lone Norwegian is heroic but doomed. William of Malmesbury, however, expands on the episode to create a direct link between the Battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings. Just as the lone Norwegian incautiously boasts of his achievements immediately before death, King Harold celebrates his victory at Stamford Bridge by prematurely rushing south to meet the Norman duke. William describes how Harold, 'triumphali euentu superbus' (inflated by this triumphant result), refuses to share the plunder obtained from the Norwegian forces, causing many of his troops to desert before Hastings and leading to his own downfall.[157] The episode is included in the final pages of Book II of the *Gesta regum*, where the Battle of Hastings is sketched only briefly. William declares that the battle itself was insignificant, its import rather in the manifestation of God's hidden plan for the English and the punishment of King Harold for his deceit.[158] In this version of the tale, William has little time for kings and their lieutenants; rather, the anonymous figure of the lone Norwegian

156 *GRA*, I, pp. 420–21.
157 *GRA*, I, pp. 422–23.
158 *GRA*, I, pp. 422–23.

dominates his account of the battles. The nameless Norwegian comes to function as the archetypal soldier; transcending nationality, he embodies both the heroism and the arrogance that entangle all those engaged in the traumatic conflicts of 1066.

A King Dies

The story of the lone warrior is a perennial favourite, not only in chronicles but in poetry and song. William of Poitiers likens both Harold and William to classical heroes and declares that the duke would have welcomed single combat with the English king just as Achilles fought Hector, and Aeneas Turnus. Indeed, he declares, 'Scriptor Thebaidos uel Æneidos, qui libris in ipsis poetica lege de magnis maiora canunt, ex actibus huius uiri aeque magnum, plus dignum conficerent opus uera canendo' (The authors of the *Thebaid* or the *Aeneid*, who in their books sing of great events and exaggerate them according to the law of poetry, could make an equally great and more worthy work by singing truthfully about the actions of this man [William]).[159] While texts such as the *Gesta Guillelmi* and the *Carmen de Hastingæ* draw on classical models to present the Conquest in an epic light, later authors also look to vernacular traditions. William of Malmesbury is the earliest to describe the Normans heading into battle singing a *chanson de geste*:

> Tunc cantilena Rollandi inchoata, ut martium uiri exemplum pugnaturos accenderet, inclamatoque Dei auxilio prelium consertum bellatumque acriter, neutris in multam diei horam cedentibus.
>
> (Then [the Normans] struck up the song of Roland to fire them as they went into battle with the example of a heroic warrior, and calling on God's help came to grips and fought furiously, neither side giving way till a late hour.)[160]

The singing of the *Chanson de Roland* in this account crystallizes the difference between the English and Norman troops. The latter are, as Jane Gilbert writes, 'ennobled by absorption into a communal heroic tradition', and indeed one of the oldest and most influential traditions in the French vernacular.[161] Positioning themselves as the heirs to Roland and Oliver, the

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159 *GG*, pp. 136–37. William had earlier offered to decide the battle by single combat but Harold refused (*GG*, pp. 122–23).

160 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55. This event has been much commented on: see Taylor, 'Was There a Song of Roland?'.

161 Gilbert, 'The *Chanson de Roland*', p. 24. Gilbert shows how the various versions of the *Roland* come to function as *lieux de mémoire* in both the medieval and modern periods, and how the defeat at Roncevaux becomes an expression of French collective identity.

Normans claim not only the political high ground but also the moral one. They spend the night before the battle in prayer, take communion before the fight, and follow a gold-embroidered papal banner that leaves no doubt as to whose side God is on.[162] The English, in contrast, 'totam noctem insomnem cantibus potibusque ducentes' (spent a sleepless night in song and wassail), their drunken songs becoming a grotesque inversion of the patriotic Norman chant.[163] The very act of singing is itself an homage to Roland, who, in the Oxford version of the *Chanson*, is keenly aware of the importance of song in the crafting of one's posthumous reputation. As he famously declares to Oliver before the fight:

> Or guart chascuns que granz colps i empleit
> male cançun de nus chantét ne seit!
>
> (Now let each see to it that he employ great blows,
> So that bad songs not be sung about us!)[164]

The singing of the *Roland* appears in a variety of guises in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, but it was most likely William of Malmesbury's account that was known by Icelandic writers.[165] It is thought to have inspired Old Norse accounts of the doomed Battle of Stiklastaðir, at which the soon-to-be-martyred Óláfr Haraldsson asks the poet Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld to recite a poem to wake up the Norwegian troops.[166] The poem Þormóðr recites, *Bjarkamál in fornu* (the Old Speeches of Bjarki), describes, like the *Chanson de Roland*, the heroic last stand of its legendary

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162 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55.

163 *GRA*, I, pp. 452–53. William returns to the theme of drunkenness in his condemnation of the English people. Excessive drinking is, for William, one of many moral failings that led to the degeneration of England and left the country vulnerable to conquest: *GRA*, I, pp. 456–61. Wace similarly dwells on the contrast between the carousing English and the pious Normans: *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, pp. 156–57 (ll. 37313–48).

164 *La Chanson de Roland*, I, p. 151 (ll. 1013–14, laisse 79). This is the Oxford version, edited by Ian Short. Translation by Gerard J. Brault in *The Song of Roland*, p. 65. On the links between the Roland legend and the Norman Conquest, and an evaluation of the possible Normans origin for the *Chanson*, see Owen, 'The Epic and History'.

165 The singing of the *Roland* became conflated by Wace with the curious figure of Taillefer, the man credited by several early writers to have struck the first blow at Hastings. Variously described as a juggler, minstrel, warrior, or some combination thereof, Taillefer in the *Roman de Rou* petitions the duke for the right to strike the first blow of the battle; he then rides ahead of the Norman troops singing of Charlemagne, Roland, and Oliver: *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, pp. 183–85 (ll. 38013–78). An overview of the various accounts of Taillefer is given by Sayers, 'The Jongleur Taillefer'; see also Eley and Bennet, 'The Battle of Hastings'.

166 *Heimskringla*, II, pp. 361–62. The scene also appears in the *Legendary saga* and the *Greatest saga* of St Óláfr, along with the episode in which the king falls to the ground in the manner of William the Conqueror. These parallels led Klaus von See to argue that it was the author of the 'Oldest saga' of St Óláfr who added them to the narrative, likely drawing on some version of the *GRA*: von See, 'Hastings, Stiklastaðir und Langemarck', pp. 2–3.

protagonists, and its recitation at Stiklastaðir places the death of the Norwegian king within a broader tradition of celebrated defeats.[167] Indeed, the subject matter of *Bjarkamál* is arguably better suited to Stiklastaðir than *Roland* is to Hastings, given the victorious outcome of the Norman invasion. Saga authors seem to have found the ominous potential of this literary trope particularly appealing. Where Norman authors foreground the heroism of Roland, Oliver, and the army of Duke William as they follow in their footsteps, Norse authors focus on the unexpected nature of military defeat, and the traumatic consequences such a defeat has on the individuals caught up in it. The use of verse to chronicle Haraldr's unexpected death at the Battle of Stamford Bridge is a more subtle parallel than that of King Óláfr at Stiklastaðir, but it too speaks to this earlier tradition. Just as the recitation of the *Chanson de Roland* before the Battle of Hastings provides a heroic model of behaviour for the invading Normans, so the recitation of skaldic verse by King Haraldr in the moments before Stamford Bridge serves to galvanize his forces by invoking earlier traditions of bravery and artistic skill. And yet, as will be seen below, it also sets the king's death within a broader intertextual web of defeat, one that further emphasizes the chaotic and catastrophic consequences of the Norwegian invasion.

The Battle of Stamford Bridge forms the climax of the saga authors' accounts of the year 1066. As noted above, the day of the battle is warm and, as the Norwegian forces do not expect a fight, they leave their mailcoats (*brynjur*) behind on the ships. When the English troops appear outside the town of York, King Haraldr realizes their mistake and speaks a verse lamenting the missing mailcoats:

> Framm gǫngum vér í fylkingu
> brynjulausir und bláar eggjar.
> Hjalmar skína; — hefkat mína —
> nú liggr skrúð várt at skipum niðri.[168]
>
> (We walk forward in battle array, lacking mailcoats, under dark blades. Helmets shine — I don't have mine (i.e., my mailcoat) — now our equipment lies down at the ships.)

While not unknown, it is unusual for a king to chronicle his own exploits on the battlefield; this is what skalds are for. Haraldr, however, is an unusual king. A long-time patron of skaldic verse and a noted poet in his own right, Haraldr evidently had high standards when it came to verse,

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167 On Snorri's use of the *GRA* for this episode, see White, *Non-Native Sources*, p. 88. A version close to the Oxford *Chanson* was translated into Old Norse around the middle of the thirteenth century and forms part of the prose narrative known as *Karlamagnús saga*.

168 *SkP* II, pp. 54–55.

and he swiftly dismisses his own work, saying, 'Þetta er illa kvedit, ok mun verða at gera aðra vísu betri' (This is poorly composed, and it is necessary to make a second, better verse).[169] Accordingly, he speaks again:

> Krjúpum vér fyr vápna
> (valteigs) brǫkun eigi
> (svá bauð Hildr) at hjaldri
> (haldorð) í bug skjaldar.
> Hǫtt bað mik, þars mœttusk,
> menskorð bera forðum,
> Hlakkar íss ok hausar,
> hjalmstall í gný malma.[170]
>
> (We do not creep into the curve of the shield in battle because of the din of weapons; this is what the faithful valkyrie of the falcon-field (woman) commanded. The necklace-pole (woman) told me, in former days, to carry my helmet-seat (head) high in the clamour of metal (battle), where the valkyrie's ice (sword) and skulls met.)

This episode is often taken to demonstrate the difference in prestige enjoyed by stanzas composed in *fornyrðislag*, the looser, more flexible metre of the first stanza, and the formal, courtly *dróttkvætt* of the second.[171] The difference in metre is significant but it is not the whole story, nor is metre alone sufficient to make the second verse *betra* than the first. Focusing on the Norwegian forces' lack of armour, the first verse gives voice to Haraldr's dismay at the uneven nature of the impending conflict: *hefkat mina* (I don't have mine [i.e., my mailcoat]), he notes mournfully. The second verse attempts to turn necessity into heroic virtue, re-casting the lack of armour as a mark of the Norwegian forces' bravery. Here, Haraldr speaks of protective equipment not with longing but with scorn: *vér krjúpum eigi í bug skjaldar* (we do not creep into the curve of the shield). Haraldr also notes the importance of holding one's head high in battle, with the kenning for head, *hjalmstallr* (helmet-seat), ironically emphasizing the lack of the helmet that should rest upon it. In contrast to the shining helmets described in the first stanza, presumably worn by the advancing English forces, Haraldr's uncovered head in the second is a symbol of defiant courage: vulnerability is recast as heroism. Mythological references also emphasize the epic nature of the coming clash. The base-word in the kenning for woman, *Hildr*, is both a common noun meaning 'battle' and the name of a valkyrie; it is also the name of the woman who revives the

169 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 188.
170 *SkP* II, pp. 55–56.
171 See further Gade's comments in *SkP* II, p. 55.

dead at the end of each day in the never-ending battle of the Hjaðningar.[172] It is not always clear which meaning is intended when the word appears in verse, but its use in this stanza clearly implies a warlike female figure egging Haraldr on into battle. This is echoed in a second valkyrie name, *Hlǫkk*, used in the kenning for sword, *íss Hlakkar* (ice of Hlǫkk). It has been suggested that Haraldr is referring to an actual woman in this stanza, perhaps his mother,[173] but the use of valkyrie names and imagery imbues this figure with a mythological resonance that transcends her possible human identity.[174] Such language nods to traditional skaldic formulations for battle, and to earlier skaldic sequences in which the presence of valkyries serves to emphasize the valour of the king. The tenth-century poem *Hákonarmál*, for example, describes how two valkyries were sent by Óðinn to escort the doomed King Hákon inn góði ('the Good') Haraldsson to Valhǫll.[175] Hákon too fights without armour, but unlike Haraldr this is a choice that demonstrates his fearlessness:

> Hrauzk ór hervǫðum, hratt á vǫll brynju,
> vísi verðungar, áðr til vígs tœki.
> Lék við ljóðmǫgu — skyldi land verja —
> gramr inn glaðværi; stóð und gollhjalmi.[176]
>
> (The chief of the retinue (Hákon) threw off his war-clothes (armour); he hurled his mailcoat to the ground before he engaged in battle. The cheerful king played with his people — he was to defend the land. He stood under a golden helmet.)

Haraldr's stanza does not directly reference this early work, but the inclusion of valkyrie names and imagery links his second stanza to a much older poetic tradition, one that, in the case of *Hákonarmál* at least, demonstrates how fighting without armour can have heroic rather than negative connotations.[177] In this way, the second stanza is not only *betra* than the first

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172 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, p. 72.

173 *SkP* II, pp. 55–56.

174 A similar case may be seen in the anonymous sequence *Liðsmannaflokkr*, which chronicles the invasion of King Cnut fifty years earlier. See further Goeres, 'Being Numerous'.

175 Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson's *Hákonarmál* (*SkP* I, pp. 171–95). See also Þorbjǫrn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* (*SkP* I, pp. 91–119).

176 *SkP* I, p. 178 (stanza 4). Certain of the support of his father, St Óláfr, Magnús inn góði similarly removes his chainmail before the battle of Hlýrskógsheiðr (*Morkinskinna*, I, p. 61).

177 Haraldr's second verse also recalls the small but significant sub-genre of verse in which skalds address women. As Roberta Frank has shown, the implied presence of a female onlooker ensures appropriately martial, masculine behaviour on the part of the men she watches; the male poet in turn uses the presence of the woman to boast of his own accomplishments. See Frank, 'Why Skalds Address Women'. Haraldr is said to have composed one of the most prominent examples of that form, *Gamanvísur* (Jesting Verses) during his travels in the east: see *SkP* II, pp. 35–41.

in terms of its complex metre, but, more importantly, in the way Haraldr employs the conventions of the skaldic tradition to present the conflict in heroic and even mythic terms. The Norwegian king would no doubt agree with Roland's concern that a *male cançun* (bad song) not be sung about him. The juxtaposition of Haraldr's two stanzas suggests a similar preoccupation with poetic legacy, as the king attempts to reframe the difficult predicament in which he finds himself as a showcase for legendary bravery.

In so doing, King Haraldr emulates the Conqueror yet again, offering a further example of their entangled stories. Just as the Norwegian king's fall before the Battle of Stamford Bridge references William's well-known tumble on his arrival in England, so the episode of the mailcoat nods to a similar episode in the life of the duke. William of Poitiers is the earliest author to report that, as William of Normandy was arming himself for battle, his own mailcoat (*hauberc*) was put on back-to-front; however, the duke laughed the incident off and refused to consider it a bad omen.[178] Like Haraldr, William refuses to accept the negative implications of this situation and, like Haraldr, seeks to impose his own, more positive interpretation of it. The episode of the hauberk was retold by multiple authors in the centuries that followed and taken as further proof that William, by refusing to allow bad omens to stand in the way of conquest, walked in the footsteps of Caesar.[179] In the *Roman de Rou*, the hauberk incident parallels the episode of the fall, providing yet another opportunity for William to assert his mistrust of soothsayers: 'onque n'amai sortiseors/ne ne creï devineors', he declares, 'a Damledeu tot me commant' (I never liked soothsayers and never trusted diviners; I entrust myself fully to the Lord God).[180] The episode prompts William to issue a stirring call to arms in which he seizes on the hauberk as an image of change:

> Cha mon hauberc! N'alez dotant!
> Li hauberc, qui fu trestornez
> e pois me rest a dreit donez,
> senefie la trestornee
> de la chose qui iert muee;
> le non qui ert de ducheé
> verreiz de duc en rei torné,
> reis serai qui duc ai esté,
> n'en aiez mie altre pensé.[181]

178 *GG*, pp. 124–25.
179 Suetonius reports that Caesar ridiculed prophecies that did not favour him: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, p. 112 (§ 59).
180 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 164 (ll. 37519–21); *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 175.
181 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 164 (ll. 37522–30).

> (Give me my hauberk! Do not be afraid! The hauberk which was turned round and then given back to me the right way round signifies the turning round of things which will be altered. The name which was derived from 'duchy' you will see turned from duke into king. I who have been a duke will be a king. Do not have any other thoughts.)[182]

La trestornee, that is, the mutability of fate, objects, and people, lies at the heart of William's speech and indeed of the Conquest itself. As the duke becomes a king, the world itself is altered: England is drawn into the Norman realm. This change is, however, the product not only of military might but of language itself. The apparently negative implications of the reversed hauberk can be reframed as positive through a verbal utterance. The shift from duke to king is, at its heart, a linguistic one for William, who considers *le non qui ert de ducheé* and its evolution from *duc* to *rei*. Perhaps the greatest change language effects in this episode is not political but mental. William orders his men not to be afraid, *dotant*, but to change their very thoughts: *n'en aiez mie altre pensé*. Military victory relies on mental fortitude, and mental fortitude emerges out of the careful use of language by a talented leader.[183] This relationship between language, thought, and victory is brought out strongly in the *Roman de Rou*, but it is notable that Wace's depiction of the scene is a creative expansion of themes already present in his likely source, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum*. There, the duke similarly rejects the bad omen but declares more succinctly, 'Vertetur […] fortitudo comitatus mei in regnum' (We shall turn the strength of my duchy […] into a kingdom).[184] It is notable that in this text the omen of the hauberk directly precedes the singing of the heroic song. As William reports, 'Tunc cantilena Rollandi inchoata' (Then they [the Norman soldiers] struck up the song of Roland).[185] Linked through the deictic *tunc*, one verbal utterance seems to prompt the other: the duke's reframing of a seemingly bad omen — *vertetur fortitudo comitatus mei in regnum* — acts as a rallying call to the troops, who respond with the singing of the *Roland*. The duke's words demonstrate his personal

182 *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 175. *La Estoire* has a condensed version in which it is William himself who puts on the hauberk upside down, and his armourer who makes the comment about the duke becoming a king: *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 128 (ll. 4537–44).

183 While stirring, there is perhaps a subtle undercutting of Duke William in Wace's account. The speech about the hauberk follows a much longer and even more inspiring address by William to his troops, which is finally interrupted by one of William's nobles, who urges the duke to stop talking and arm himself for battle. Wace seems to hint that the duke would rather make fine speeches than engage in fighting.

184 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55.

185 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55.

courage and determination, while the singing of the *Roland* demonstrates — perhaps even creates — the same qualities in those he leads.

Given this context, what do the Norwegian troops make of their poetry-spouting, mailcoat-lacking leader? Telling the story of Haraldr harðráði, Old Norse authors seem to conflate these two episodes connected with Duke William. William's back-to-front *hauberc* becomes Haraldr's missing *brynja*; William's verbal reframing of this episode parallels Haraldr's recitation of the two skaldic stanzas, with the second reframing the Norwegians' lack of armour as an opportunity for traditional forms of heroic display. The Normans' singing of the *Roland* finds a further parallel in the sagas as Haraldr's recitation of verse generates a chorus of poetic answers. Choral recitation in the manner of the Normans singing the *Roland* would be unusual in a saga; even the analogous episode in *Óláfs saga helga* depicts only one skald reciting *Bjarkamál*, with the rest of the troops listening.[186] Like many kings in the Old Norse sagas, however, Haraldr travels with a retinue of poets, and their verses are cited in quick succession in the account of the battle that follows. In both *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna*, only a short phrase separates the king's second verse from that of his fellow poet: 'Þá kvað ok Þjóðólfr' (then Þjóðólfr spoke [a verse] too).[187] The Icelander Þjóðólfr Arnórsson had a close relationship with Haraldr and was known as his *hǫfuðskáld* (chief poet): the Oliver to Haraldr's Roland, perhaps, his is the obvious voice to answer the king's.[188] Þjóðólfr's stanza praises his 'snarráðr' (resolute) lord and vows to serve the king's young sons should he fall.[189]

Where the Normans sing in chorus, then, Haraldr's poets perform a medley. In *Heimskringla* two, and in *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* three, different poets chime in, adding their voices to the king's poetic performance.[190] Taking their cue from the second of the king's verses, they present him as the archetypal Scandinavian monarch: he is generous with treasure, a skilled leader, brave in the face of adversity. The Icelander Stúfr inn blindi echoes the characterization of the king as heedless of his own life in the 'ofrausn' stanza: the king 'vættki sparði fjǫr' (spared his life not at all); 'gekk í gǫgnum orrustu sem vind' and 'flýðit eld né it fellda jarn'

186 *Heimskringla*, II, pp. 361–62, as discussed above.

187 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 188. In *Fagrskinna* the text is 'Þá orti Þjóðólfr þessa vísu' (then Þjóðólfr composed this verse, p. 285).

188 See Þjóðólfr's biography in *SkP* II, pp. 57–58.

189 Edited by Whaley in *SkP* II, pp. 174–75 (st. 10). The same verse is cited in *Morkinskinna*, but slightly earlier in the narrative, before the conversation between King Harold and Tostig (*Morkinskinna*, I, p. 314).

190 This is, it should be noted, the impression given in the prosimetric context of the sagas. Unlike Þjóðófr's *lausavísur*, ostensibly composed in the moments leading up to and during the battle, the majority of these verses are taken from memorial poems composed about the king after his death.

(he went through the battle like wind; he fled neither fire nor purified iron).[191] Arnórr jarlaskáld paints a similar picture of the 'hlítstyggr hilmir' (mediocrity-shy prince) who 'hafðit lítit brjóst fyr sér' (had no small courage in himself).[192] The saga authors are likewise united in praising the king's courage and fighting ability, their descriptions no doubt indebted to the poetic sources. The *Morkinskinna* author goes so far as to paraphrase Stúfr, noting, 'Hafði hann báðar hendr blóðgar ok gekk svá milli óvina sinna náliga sem hann œði vind, ok sýndisk at hann hræddisk hvártki eld né jarn' (both his [Haraldr's] arms were covered in blood and he went through his enemies almost as though he rushed through the wind, and it seemed that he feared neither fire nor iron).[193] In all three sagas, Haraldr plunges into battle where the fighting is densest, the lack of a mailcoat proving no obstacle to his success on the field. Indeed, as Snorri relates, the reverse is true: 'Helt þá hvártki við honum hjálmr né brynja. Þá stukku frá allir þeir, er næstir váru' (Then neither helmet nor mailcoat stood against him. Then those who were closest all ran away).[194] While formulaic, such superlative descriptions of leadership and bravery form a noticeable parallel with those of Duke William at Hastings. Like Haraldr, the duke leads from the front and to him, too, weapons pose no hindrance. As Orderic Vitalis declares, 'Scuta, galeas et loricas irato mucrone moramque dedignante penetrauit, clipeoque suo nonnullos collisit, auxilioque multis suorum atque saluti sicut e contra hostibus perniciei fuit' (Shields, helmets, and hauberks were shattered by his angry blade; tirelessly his shield smote against the enemy; he brought help and encouragement to countless of his followers and death and destruction to the enemy).[195] William of Malmesbury similarly shows William plunging into the fray while urging on his men: 'Item Willelmus suos clamore et presentia hortari, ipse primus procurrere, confertos hostes inuadere' (William too encouraged his men by his shouts and by his presence, leading the charge in person and plunging into the thick of the enemy).[196] Both Haraldr and William spur their troops into battle through a combination of skilful words and conspicuous courage. The two leaders are bound by an intertextual dance that reveals the similarities between their circumstances, actions, and utterances. And yet — given their well-known fates — such parallels ultimately emphasize even further the gulf that separates Haraldr's defeat from William's victory.

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191 *SkP* II, p. 357 (st. 8 of *Stúfsdrápa*, ed. by Gade).
192 *SkP* II, p. 272 (st. 11 of *Haraldsdrápa*, ed. by Whaley).
193 *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 317–18.
194 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 189.
195 *HE*, II, pp. 176–77.
196 *GRA*, I, 456–57. Unsurprisingly, descriptions of William's military prowess run from the *Carmen* and the *Gesta Guillelmi* all the way through later works. For more on the life of the Conqueror, see Douglas, *William the Conqueror*; and Crouch, *The Normans*, pp. 59–128.

Haraldr fights like Duke William but he falls like King Harold. As the author of *Fagrskinna* relates:

> Þá var Haraldr konungr skotinn framan í óstina, svá at þegar kom út blóð at munninum. Þetta var hans banasár, ok því næst fell hann til jarðar.[197]
>
> (Then King Haraldr was shot from the front into the throat, so that blood immediately poured out of his mouth. This was his death-wound, and then he fell to the ground.)

The arrow that plunges into the eye of Harold Godwinson is perhaps one of the best-known moments in the history of 1066, and Haraldr's death via a spear to the throat is uncannily similar. The manner of Harold's death has been much debated and there is significant variation among the medieval sources.[198] It is notable that Snorri is the only one of the saga authors to state specifically that King Haraldr was hit by an arrow, perhaps drawing on the account given by William of Malmesbury:[199]

> Valuit haec uicissitudo, modo illis modo istis uincentibus, quantum Haroldi uita moram fecit; at ubi iactu sagittae uiolato cerebro procubuit, fuga Anglorum perhennis in noctem fuit.
>
> (This alternation of fortune, now one side prevailing and now the other, held as long as Harold lived; but when his brain was pierced by an arrow and he fell, the English fled without respite till the night.)[200]

Heimskringla also differs from *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* in its neglect to mention the blood pouring from Haraldr's mouth; this brings Snorri's account of the Norwegian king's death even closer to the stories of Harold. The detail of the blood in *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* is, however, evocative: it recalls the Old Norse myth of the mead of poetry, and particularly the Scandinavian conception of poetry as originally stemming from the bodily fluids of gods, giants, and dwarves, often spilled through

197 *Fagrskinna*, p. 287. The account in *Morkinskinna* is nearly identical: see *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 319. *Hemings þáttr* likewise describes Haraldr's death by a wound in the throat, but with the added detail that Hemingr first shot the king in the cheek with a barbed arrow so that Haraldr could be recognized: see *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 52–53.

198 Representations of Harold's death will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, pp. 196–230.

199 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 190.

200 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55.

violence.[201] The conflation of poetry, vomit, and blood appears frequently in both prose and poetic sources in Old Norse.[202] The gruesome chiasmus of the king who strides onto the field proudly proclaiming verse, but who leaves the battle with his mouth spouting blood, provides a fittingly tragic image for one who was equally skilled in poetry and war. These subtle differences in the three saga accounts place the death of the king in a different relationship with those he fights. While Snorri highlights the parallels between Haraldr and his English counterpart, the authors of *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* emphasize Haraldr's more 'Scandinavian' attributes. In the former, there is a sense of commonality between the two defeated leaders and their armies; in the latter, there is more overt differentiation between the Norwegians and their antagonists, and the dramatic death of the king is retold with a striking Scandinavian resonance. In this way, Haraldr emerges as a creative hybrid between the literary traditions of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia, with saga authors drawing upon all three in different measure. Haraldr becomes the vector between Harold and William; the literary motifs that bind the Scandinavian defeat to both the Normans and the English echo the relationships between them, and demonstrate further their entangled histories.

As Haraldr dies early in the day, saga descriptions of the latter part of the conflict are somewhat anti-climactic. Although Harold Godwinson makes an offer of peace to his brother, Tostig rejects it and leads the Norwegian forces until he is killed. Reinforcements from the Norwegian ships finally arrive, led by the chieftain Eystinn orri, but he too is killed. The saga prose is concise and matter-of-fact as it relates these events, concluding that, 'þessi orrosta fór sem ván var at, at þeir hǫfðu betra hlut, er aflit hǫfðu meira ok búnað betra með vápnum' (this battle went as was to be expected, that those who had the greater force and were better equipped with weapons had the better lot).[203] Praise, blame, and further analysis of the defeat are reserved for the skaldic verses cited throughout the episode. It is notable that, although Tostig and Eysteinn take on the leadership of

201 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, pp. 3–5. It should be noted that, as the myth is primarily recorded in *Snorra Edda*, there is some debate as to how far Snorri's thirteenth-century account reflects earlier understandings of it. See further Frank, 'Snorri and the Mead of Poetry', and Clunies Ross, *Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 91–95.

202 See for example *Egils saga*, which includes a memorable scene in which the drunken protagonist antagonizes his host, Bárðr of Atley, with verse and ends up stabbing him in the stomach. Blood pours from Bárðr's stomach as his companion vomits, and Egill escapes into the night: *Egils saga*, pp. 58–61.

203 *Fagrskinna*, p. 289; see also *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 321. Snorri re-works this comment slightly, noting instead, 'Var þat, sem ván var, at þar váru enn eigi allir jafnir, margir flýðu, margir ok þeir, er svá kómusk undan, at ýmissa báru auðnu til' (it turned out, as might be expected, that all were not the same: many fled, and there were many who escaped through various forms of good luck, *Heimskringla*, III, p. 192). *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* also note the diverse fates of the remaining Norwegian troops.

the Norwegian forces, the verse that punctuates the latter part of the battle continues to focus on King Haraldr. All three *konungasögur* juxtapose a verse by Arnórr jarlaskáld with one by Þjóðólfr Arnórsson to present contrasting interpretations of the king's death. Arnórr's stanza is taken from the memorial poem he composed about Haraldr after the king's death in battle. In keeping with its retrospective nature, the stanza is presented in an authenticating manner, offering poetic evidence to support the account given in the prose:[204]

> Eigi varð ins ægja
> auðligr konungs dauði;
> hlífðut hlenna sœfi
> hoddum reknir broddar.
> Heldr køru meir ins milda
> mildings an grið vildi
> of folksnaran fylki
> falla liðsmenn allir.[205]
>
> (The death of the fear-inspiring king was not without splendour;[206] spear-points inlaid with treasure did not protect the killer of thieves (king). Rather, all the retainers of the generous prince chose to fall around the battle-bold king, instead of wanting a truce.)

Praise of the king dominates this stanza, as does the figure of Haraldr himself. The eulogistic kenning *sœfir hlenna* (killer of thieves) reminds the audience of Haraldr's firm rule over Norway prior to the English expedition, while the adjective *folksnarr* (battle-bold) emphasizes his fighting prowess, both in this battle and in earlier encounters. The stanza offers a double perspective of the king in death: the opening lines show the king from the perspective of his enemies — he is *inn ægi konungr* (the fear-inspiring king) — while the second *helmingr* represents the view of his *liðsmenn*, or followers, who die by his side.

Þjóðólfr's stanza creates a different impression of events. This verse is presented in a situational context, composed by the poet during a lull in the fighting: 'Ok í þessi dvǫl, áðr en saman sigi fylkingar oðru sinni, kvað Þjóðólfr vísu þessa' (and in this pause, before the armies came together

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204 The stanza is introduced in all three sagas in classic 'authenticating' language: *Heimskringla* has 'Svá segir Arnórr jarlaskáld' (So says Arnórr jarlaskáld, *Heimskringla*, III, p. 191), and similar language is used in *Morkinskinna* (I, p. 319) and *Fagrskinna* (p. 287). The order of the two stanzas is reversed in *Heimskringla* when compared to *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* but overall their presentation is similar.

205 Edited by Diana Whaley in *SkP* II, pp. 274–75 (*Haraldsdrápa*, st. 13), and *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld*, pp. 292–93.

206 This translation follows Whaley. As she notes, there are four possible translations of this word, but only the sense of 'unadorned' or 'lacking splendour' is attested elsewhere.

a second time, Þjóðólfr spoke this verse).[207] Set in the heat of battle, Þjóðólfr's verse articulates the view of the king's retainers:

> Ǫld hefr afráð goldit
> illt; nú kveðk her stilltan;
> bauð þessa fǫr þjóðum
> þarflaust Haraldr austan.
> Svá lauk siklings ævi
> snjalls, at vér 'róm allir
> — lofðungr beið inn leyfði
> lífs grand — í stað vǫndum.[208]
>
> (People have paid a heavy penalty; now I declare that army quelled. Needlessly, Haraldr commanded the people on this journey from the east. Thus ended the life of the bold king, so that we are all in a difficult position. The praised leader suffered destruction of life.)

Criticism of Haraldr is strong in this stanza. The king is still the object of praise overall, but single-word adjectives like *snjallr* (bold) and *leyfðr* (praised) lack the wholehearted admiration of Arnórr's more complex poetic constructions. The real focus of this verse is *vér* (we), the king's retainers, on whose behalf the poet now speaks. Inverting the images of royal generosity in Arnórr's verse, Þjóðólfr declares that the people have paid too much in following the king to England. Whereas the king's death was *eigi auðligr* (not without splendour) in Arnórr's formulation, to Þjóðólfr the invasion has proven *þarflauss* (needless). Present-tense verbs lend this criticism an immediacy lacking in the past-tense verbs of Arnórr's retrospective text; although one may doubt that the poet did indeed compose this verse in the heat of battle, phrases such as *vér 'róm allir í vǫndum stað* (we are all in a difficult position) articulate the danger and uncertainty of that situation. In the context of the prosimetric saga, Þjóðólfr's verse undercuts Arnórr's heroic image of warriors dying for their lord, showing perhaps that those who remained had little choice to do otherwise, and that at least one of those retainers resented the position the king had left him in. Juxtaposed in all three *konungasögur*, the stanzas give voice to the contrasting ways in which poets responded to Haraldr's fall. They capture the chaos and uncertainty of the unexpected defeat and demonstrate the difficulties of encapsulating that experience within a univocal narrative. Just as Haraldr himself sought to reinterpret his lack of armour in two skaldic stanzas at the beginning of the conflict, so the

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207 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 320. Near-verbatim comments are made in *Heimskringla*, III, p. 190, and *Fagrskinna*, p. 288.

208 *SkP* II, pp. 175–76; *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 322–23.

saga authors demonstrate the diversity of perspectives provoked by this complex figure through the heteroglossic mingling of verse and prose.

Perhaps to offset this unflattering portrayal of the king, the author of *Morkinskinna* concludes his account of Stamford Bridge by citing three additional verses from Arnórr's memorial poem. As in the stanza just discussed, they present overall a positive depiction of the king as the poet focuses on his posthumous reputation; the section concludes with the poet assuring the reader that 'frægri hilmir hnígrat til moldar' (a more famous prince will not sink to earth).[209] Snorri, on the other hand, appends a chapter close to the end of his saga of Haraldr in which he summarizes the king's character, praising his wisdom, bravery and generosity.[210] This chapter concludes:

> Haraldr konungr var þá fimmtøgr at aldri, er hann fell. […] Haraldr konungr flýði aldrigi ór orrostu, en opt leitaði hann sér farborða fyrir ofrefli liðs, er hann átti við at eiga. Allir menn sǫgðu þat, þeir er honum fylgðu í orrostu ok hernaði, at þá er hann varð staddr í miklum háska ok bar skjótt at hǫndum, at þat ráð mundi hann upp taka, sem allir sá eptir, at vænst hafði verit, at hlýða myndi.[211]
>
> (King Haraldr was fifty years old when he died. […] King Haraldr never fled from battle, but often took precautions when he had to face an overwhelming force of men. All those men who accompanied him into battle and on raiding-trips said that when he was suddenly placed in great danger, he would follow the plan that all afterwards acknowledged to have been the most likely to work.)

In this passage, Snorri avoids direct reference to the king's invasion of England and his defeat at Stamford Bridge. And yet, the context of the king's death and the references to unexpected danger and an overwhelming enemy force cannot but bring that conflict to mind. Is the passage an apology for Haraldr? Is it an oblique acknowledgement that no one — not even the clever, daring, adventurer-king — could have succeeded in England? Or does Snorri protest too much, betraying his own misgivings about the king's character and, consequently, the reasons for his defeat? Snorri reminds his audience of the many ingenious plans the king hatched over the course of his life, while offering no resolution as to why the last,

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209 *SkP* II, p. 278 (st. 16).

210 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 198–200. Unlike the author of *Morkinskinna*, Snorri here cites three skaldic stanzas taken from Þjóðólfr Arnórson's memorial poem for the king, *Sexstefja*. The stanzas are offered as evidence of the portrait Snorri seeks to paint and there are numerous echoes between prose and poetry in this chapter. The stanzas are edited by Whaley in *SkP* II, pp. 138–40 (sts. 24–26).

211 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 200.

most daring plan of all failed. The ambivalence of this portrait of the king is striking, as is Snorri's seeming reluctance to close with his own assessment of Haraldr's character. He appeals rather to the testimony of Haraldr's followers, *þeir er honum fylgðu í orrostu ok hernaði* (those who accompanied him into battle and on raiding-trips). The remembrance of the king passes to those who were closest to him, the men who followed him into battle. And yet, given the scale of the defeat at Stamford Bridge, the identity of these men is unclear: how can it include those who followed Haraldr to England when so many died? Are the voices of those who fought there irrevocably lost? The totality of the king's defeat means that his final battle can never be remembered in full: is this why stories of other kings and other fights figure so prominently in his tale? To what extent can the story of Haraldr ever be told? The sagas of the king are woven from an array of different voices, stories, and cultural traditions: the history of Haraldr harðráði is not his own, to paraphrase Caruth, but a representation of the many ways in which he is implicated in the lives, conflicts, and traumas of others.

Whose is the corpse in the tomb? Whose is the body on the field? As stories ebb and flow between them, the three rulers entangled in the conflicts of 1066 embody multiple literary traditions and models. At times, William of Normandy is Roland, at others he is Caesar. Haraldr harðráði is both a Norman adventurer and a wandering skald; he also walks in the footsteps of Byrhtnoth and other early English heroes. Harold Godwinson is perhaps the most enigmatic figure of all: conqueror and conquered, sinner and saint. As the fates of the three kings rise and fall, their bodies do likewise, watched and witnessed by those around them. Where William and Haraldr reject the omen of the fall, seeking instead to rewrite the meaning of that event in their favour, Harold chooses to prostrate his own body before the Waltham Cross, and in so doing assures (we are told) a victory modelled on that of Christ himself. All three rulers seem to wrestle for control over their own narratives, and yet it is not the kings but their followers who write their tales and memorialize their deaths. From the Waltham monks and Icelandic poets to the Norman chroniclers and compilers of the sagas, multiple authors transmit the stories of each ruler. With each retelling, they gain the power to evaluate the rulers' moral and mental qualities, and to give new meaning to the actions and choices that brought them into conflict. Delving into a web of violence and aggression, medieval authors explore the shared histories of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia, and of the peoples entangled by invasion and conquest. In their works, the boundaries between Haraldr, Harold, and William blur, and the trauma of history unfolds.

CHAPTER 2

Dreaming of England

God turne us every drem to goode!
For it is wonder, by the roode,
To my wit what causeth swevenes
Either on morwes or on evenes,
And why the effect folweth of some
And of some it shal never come;
What that is an avisioun
And this a revelacioun,
Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
And nought to every man liche even;
Why this a fantom, why these oracles
I noot; but whoso of these miracles
The causes knoweth bet than I,
Devyne he.[1]

The narrator of *The House of Fame*, one of Chaucer's most famous and complex dream visions, claims not to understand the bewildering array of visions one might experience in sleep, and yet the poem itself is a testament to the deep learning and lively debates that underpinned the study of dreams in the medieval period. Dreams, *The House of Fame* reminds us, could appear in many forms. In medieval literature, dreams could be used to predict the future or rewrite the past. One dreamer might travel to a supernatural Otherworld, while another might visit the afterlife. Through dreams, one might come face-to-face with a loved one, a saint, or with God.[2] In medieval historiography, dreams are often used to foreshadow the success of a ruler or of a noble dynasty. The mother of King Æthelstan of England is said to have dreamt of a moon that shone from her body and

1 Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The House of Fame', p. 43 (ll. 1–14).

2 The scholarship on dream literature in the medieval period is vast, but see especially recent work such as Keskiaho, *Dreams and Visions*, and Barr, *Willing to Know God*, as well as classic studies such as Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, and Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*.

lit up the whole of England with its brilliance.[3] William the Conqueror's mother is reported to have dreamt of a tree emerging out of her body that grew large enough to shade Normandy and England.[4] A similar dream is said to have appeared to the mother of Haraldr hárfagri ('Fairhair'), an early king of Norway, while Haraldr's father, King Hálfdan inn svarti ('the Black'), dreamt that he had a luxurious beard, the different hairs symbolizing his many descendants.[5]

Dreams, however, could also presage conflict and death. In an inversion of the dream-tree that foreshadowed the birth of the Conqueror, Edward the Confessor is said to have foreseen the end of his dynasty when he dreamt of a tree severed from its roots. This vision came to play a central role in many of the literary depictions of Edward's death, and was rewritten and reinterpreted several times during the centuries that followed.[6] The earliest description of this dream dates from only a year or two after Edward's death and is found in the *Vita Ædwardi*. In this text, the dying Edward is visited in a dream by two monks, themselves deceased, whom he knew during his childhood in Normandy. The monks warn Edward that England's ruling elite are not what they seem, but rather the devil's servants. God has cursed England and intends to hand the country over to its enemies, 'peruagabunturque diaboli totam hanc terram igne, ferro, et depredatione hostili' (and devils shall come through all this land with fire and sword and the havoc of war).[7] Edward asks when England will be delivered from this nightmare and the monks reply with a curious prophecy:

> 'Tunc', inquiunt, 'si arbor uiridis a medio sui succidatur corpore, et pars abscisa trium iugerum spatio a suo deportetur stipite, cum per se et absque humana manu uel quouis amminiculo suo connectetur trunco,

3 *GRA*, I, pp. 224–27. The mother of King Sverrir of Norway is said to have had a similar experience: see *Sverris saga*, pp. 4–5. Such visions were particularly useful in cases of disputed parentage or legitimacy, as was the case for Æthelstan, William, and Sverrir.

4 Versions of this dream are repeated by Wace and Benoît: see *Rou*, ed. by Holden, I, pp. 267–68 (ll. 32859–68), and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Chronique*, pp. 335–36 (ll. 33723–42). On the intriguing suggestion that this dream reflects the suppressed horror of the mother's rape, see Rollo, 'Political Violence'. The motif of the dream-tree is widespread in medieval literature, both secular and religious, and is likely drawn from classical and biblical sources. See further Schach, 'Symbolic Dreams', and Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream'.

5 *Heimskringla*, I, pp. 90–91. Turville-Petre suggests Snorri may have understood French, or at least that he would have had access to French-language texts during his education at Oddi, and that the motif entered Old Norse via a twelfth-century work such as Wace's. See Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream', pp. 18–19. On the relationship between hair and masculinity in Old Norse literature, see Phelpstead, 'Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow'.

6 On this, see especially Brown, '"Cut from its Stump"'.

7 *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 116–17.

> ceperitque denuo uirescere et fructificare ex coalescentis su⟨c⟩i amore pristino, tunc primum tantorum malorum sperari poterit remissio'.
>
> ('At that time', they answered, 'when a green tree, if cut down in the middle of its trunk, and the part cut off carried the space of three furlongs from the stock, shall be joined again to its trunk, by itself and without the hand of man or any sort of stake, and begin once more to push leaves and bear fruit from the old love of its uniting sap, then first can a remission of these great ills be hoped for'.)[8]

While later writers largely interpret this vision in ways that are politically useful to their times — Aelred of Rievaulx interprets the tree's fruit as Henry II, while Matthew Paris equates it with the Empress Matilda and Henry III[9] — the author of Edward's earliest *vita* dwells on the paradox inherent in his deathbed vision: a tree cannot heal itself, and yet only when this healing occurs may England be saved. 'Vnde non inmerito demonstratur', writes the anonymous author, 'benedicto regi a nobis migraturo reuelatio impossibilitatis, ad similitudinem, inquam, nostrę infinitę et obdurate iniquitatis' (Hence there was revealed to the blessed king, when about to leave us, not undeservedly, a vision of something impossible, a symbol, I say, of our infinite and obdurate wickedness).[10]

This vision of the impossible, the *reuelatio impossibilitatis*, speaks to the trauma of the Norman Conquest, and perhaps even to the experience of Queen Edith herself, who commissioned the work. In the space of a few months, Edith's husband had died, her brothers had been killed, and her mother and sister had fled into exile.[11] William of Normandy had been crowned King of England, and lands that once belonged to the ruling elite had been parcelled out to his Norman followers, sometimes with the widows of the English dead.[12] Although Edith herself was treated with respect by the new regime, the severed tree is an eloquent symbol of the brutal end

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8 *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 119–20.

9 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, pp. 150–55, and *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, pp. 105–09 (ll. 3711–3858). The notable exception to these relatively optimistic interpretations is William of Malmesbury, who uses the description of the dream-tree as an opportunity to lament the state of conquered England: 'huius ergo uaticinii ueritatem nos experimur, quod scilicet Anglia exterorum facta est habitatio et alienigenarum dominatio. Nullus hodie Anglus uel dux uel pontifex uel abbas; aduenae quique diuitias et uiscera corrodunt Angliae, nec ulla spes est finiendae miseriae' (the truth of this, I say, we now experience, now that England has become a dwelling-place of foreigners and a playground for lords of alien blood. No Englishman today is an earl, a bishop, or an abbot; new faces everywhere enjoy England's riches and gnaw her vitals, nor is there any hope of ending this miserable state of affairs): *GRA*, I, pp. 414–17.

10 *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 120–21.

11 Elisabeth van Houts makes a similar point with respect to Edith's experience of the Conquest in van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, p. 127.

12 See van Houts' discussion of this in *Memory and Gender*, pp. 137–39.

of her family and of the kingdom they once ruled.[13] It is, however, more than just a political vision: it is a moral and emotional one. The miraculous healing of the tree does not herald England's freedom from conquest, but only the *hope* of such freedom: *tunc primum tantorum malorum sperari poterit remissio* (then first can a remission of these great ills be hoped for). The severed tree symbolizes not only a broken kingdom but a broken spirit: even hope has vanished. The emotional state of the conquered is one of despair, and it is perhaps the cruellest paradox of this vision that lack of faith is given as the reason for the Conquest itself. By turning from God the English have lost their kingdom and the ability to hope; and yet, hope is necessary to find God and thus to regain the realm. This is why the author of the *Vita* describes the wickedness of the English as not only obdurate but infinite: if healing is impossible, wickedness will last forever. Although the two monks of Edward's dream initially blame England's demise on the evil of the ruling elite, the possessive *nostre* expands this wickedness to encompass not only the author but also his audience and the whole of the English people. All are complicit in England's fall from grace.

The motif of the dream-tree is widespread in medieval literature, both secular and religious.[14] The image of the tree severed from its roots and then miraculously repaired is nevertheless uncommon, and Edward's vision is far more complex and unsettling than later authors would acknowledge. It is not just a political parable but a subtle meditation on the emotional consequences of conquest: it is a metaphor for the guilt,

13 Images such as the Tree of Jesse are evidence of the use of tree imagery to denote family and dynastic structures, found in manuscripts dating from as early as the ninth and tenth centuries. See further Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream', pp. 19–20. As Jennifer Brown has argued, the image in the *Vita Ædwardi* may hint at the chaste marriage between Edward and Edith, and at the lack of an heir that prompted the succession crisis. This theme would come to play a more prominent role in later versions of the king's life, as noted above. See Brown, '"Cut from its Stump"'. The dream of the 'family tree' plays a prominent role in Old Norse literature as well: see for example the dream of Queen Ragnhildr in *Heimskringla*, in which a dream-tree symbolizes the birth of Haraldr hárfagri and his many descendants (*Heimskringla*, I, 90). On this theme see further Bourns, 'Trees in the Saga Dreamscape'; and on the significance of trees in early medieval England generally, see Bintley, *Trees in the Religions of Early Medieval England*.

14 Analogues are found in classical and biblical texts, although Schach suggests it ultimately arrives from Babylonian mythology (Schach, 'Symbolic Dreams', p. 71). The closest analogue would seem to be the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which a tree severed from its roots predicts the king's madness and exile in the wilderness (Daniel 4). The saintly Edward is the polar opposite of Nebuchadnezzar, but the political consequences of losing (and then regaining) God's favour are similar. It is also notable that the severed tree in the biblical text likewise symbolizes a period of mental distress, albeit more explicitly than in the *Vita Ædwardi*. The Old English poem *Daniel* memorably elaborates on the madness of Nebuchadnezzar, suggesting it was a site of considerable interest for authors and audiences perhaps only a few decades prior to 1066.

despair, and confusion of the conquered. In this, the episode has much in common with writing about trauma from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[15] The importance of metaphor, symbol, and other forms of coded discourse in such works is widely acknowledged and thought to be linked to the inexpressible nature of traumatic experience.[16] Traumatic memories have been characterized as 'prenarrative'; they typically consist of images rather than words, and they lack a clear sense of chronology, interpretation, or even overt emotion on the part of the traumatized person.[17] As Catherine Clarke observes, 'trauma resists direct representation or articulation: it exceeds human reason and understanding, goes beyond language and defies conventional models of experience and reference'.[18] Metaphor is not only suited to the articulation of extreme experience; it is necessary when ordinary language fails. In the *Vita Ædwardi*, the image of the tree allows the author to attempt, at least, to represent the unrepresentable. The episode also demonstrates the disrupted chronology associated with trauma writing, as past, present, and future collapse. The two monks are figures from Edward's past, but the images they describe symbolize the future, which is now the present for the audience of the *Vita*. Time collapses in the world of the dream, as does space: the dream-monks are from Normandy, Edward's former home, which is also the site from which the aggressor will come to ravage the king's current home, England. The impossible miracle, in which the severed trunk is carried away from the roots and then re-joined without help, seems to be an image of healing but it also acknowledges the unstable nature of the land itself: distance is mutable as the earth folds in on itself, enabling an uncanny reunion. It is an unsettling reminder that, through conquest, geography too is ruptured, and the map of the world redrawn.

Through this vision, the *Vita Ædwardi* presents the king as the first person to 'bear witness' to the conflict even though, paradoxically, the

15 It is notable that the ancient image of the wounded tree has played an important role in modern formulations of trauma. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud discusses Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberate*, written in the late sixteenth century. He sees the repetition compulsion enacted through the wounding of a tree in which the soul of the hero's lover has been imprisoned, the woman herself having been killed by the hero earlier in the work: *SE*, XVIII, pp. 21–22. Cathy Caruth begins *Unclaimed Experience* with a discussion of Freud's reading of this episode (pp. 1–3), while Dominick LaCapra concludes *Writing History* with an analysis of both Caruth and Freud's analysis of the same (pp. 181–83).

16 On the limitations of language to communicate traumatic experience, see Berlant, 'Trauma and Ineloquence', and Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, pp. 122–24. On dreams and other forms of intrusive memory for those suffering post-traumatic symptoms, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 37–42.

17 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 175.

18 Clarke, 'Signs and Wonders', p. 56.

conflict can only occur after (and because of) Edward's death.[19] The metaphorical nature of the dream vision, however, means that the king does not bear witness to the mere facts of conquest — to the historical details of who, what, and when — but to the disruptive and destabilizing effects of conquest, on both the fabric of the land and the psyche of its people. It is a daring move for the author of the *Vita* and for Queen Edith, his patron. As Kalí Tal observes, bearing witness is a political act, and an aggressive one that can have dangerous consequences for those who engage in it:

> If 'telling it like it was' threatens the status quo, powerful political, economic, and social forces will pressure survivors either to keep their silence or to revise their stories. If the survivor community is a marginal one, their voices will be drowned out by those with the influence and the resources to silence them, and to trumpet a revised version of their trauma.[20]

As discussed in the Introduction, multiple narratives of the Conquest emerged in the years following 1066, many of which trumpet a version of events favourable to the Norman cause. The *Vita Ædwardi* is not one of these, although it is not a call for revolution either. It barely mentions the Conquest, and then only in the most oblique of terms, in a dream vision. And yet, dream visions by their very nature represent an alternative way of representing the world. Edward's dream represents a space in which the English survivors of the Conquest could think the unthinkable, and say the unsayable. Although it offers only the briefest of glimpses into this alternative narrative, the *Vita* demonstrates how one medieval author was able to use conventional narrative forms — history, hagiography, dream vision — to represent unconventional experience in a time and place that sought to silence such memories. This chapter will turn now to the dreams and visions used by Scandinavian authors to explore the events of 1066. It will argue that they too use the language of dreams to evoke the uncanny, troubling, and disruptive effects of that momentous year.

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19 Tal identifies the urge to bear witness as one of the strongest themes in trauma literature: see Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, pp. 115–53. See also Langer, *Versions of Survival*, p. 185. See also the extensive discussion of this concept in Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, especially pp. 57–74.

20 Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 7.

Dreams in the *konungasögur*

The importance of dreams in Old Norse literature has long been acknowledged.[21] Gabriel Turville-Petre once argued that, even in the context of the medieval period, dreams occupy a unique position in the Icelandic tradition: 'Among no people in Europe is the cult of dreams so deeply rooted. In no literature are dream-symbols more sophisticated, nor their interpretation more subtle and intricate'.[22] While Old Norse dreams, like their European counterparts, are varied and often ambiguous in meaning, a great many of them are said to foreshadow negative events to come, particularly conflict, exile, and death.[23] This is nowhere more true than in saga accounts of 1066 or, more specifically, in saga accounts of the days and weeks leading up to the Norwegian invasion of England. Although, as discussed above, both Haraldr and the Norwegian people are convinced of the legitimacy of their cause,[24] an atmosphere of foreboding descends as the fleet gathers off the coast of Norway to prepare for the invasion. *Fagrskinna* records that 'Þá er Haraldr konungr bjósk til þessar ferðar, þá urðu mǫrg vísendi sýnd mǫnnum í draumum' (As King Haraldr was preparing for this expedition, many things were made known to men in dreams).[25] *Morkinskinna* similarly reports that 'Þórir af Steig kom eigi, fyr því at hann hafði dreymt illa um konung' (Þórir from Steig did not come [on the expedition], because he had dreamt ominously about the king).[26] When a series of unsettling dreams interrupts the journey across the North Sea, the Norwegians' unease turns to dread, and the fatal end of the expedition is assured before they even reach land. The dreams function in a similar way to Edward's vision of the severed tree: they foreshadow not only the violent conflict to come, but also the mental and emotional cost of that conflict. Nevertheless, the saga accounts differ from the *Vita Ædwardi* in that they do not represent a first-hand witnessing of the conflict, or at least not directly. The dreams first appear in *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Heimskringla*, all thought to have been compiled in the early thirteenth century, and in *Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar*, a quasi-legendary

21 See nineteenth-century studies such as Vicary, *Saga Time*, pp. 16–52, and Henzen, *Über die Träume*, as well as the more literary accounts that began appearing in the early twentieth century, for example Haeckel, *Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes*, and Kelchner, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*.

22 Turville-Petre, 'Dreams in Icelandic Tradition', p. 30.

23 See for example the examples discussed in Lönnroth, 'Dreams in the Sagas'; Christopher Crocker, 'To Dream Is to Bury'; and Davidson, 'Dreams in Old Norse and Old Irish Literature'.

24 See Chapter 1, pp. 84–87.

25 *Fagrskinna*, p. 276.

26 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 303.

tale from perhaps a few decades later.[27] Although all four works draw on earlier material, their accounts of 1066 are mediated through a process of retelling, revising, and rewriting in the centuries that followed. Unlike the *Vita Ædwardi* they witness only indirectly the traumas of the past. Rather, in the context of trauma studies, we could say they engage with the process of 'mythologization', a form of cultural coping in which frightening and uncontrollable events are transformed into narrative. As Tal observes, 'Traumatic events are written and rewritten until they become codified and narrative form gradually replaces content as the focus of attention.'[28] This is what happens to Edward's dream vision in the texts that followed the *Vita Ædwardi* and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the process can likewise be seen in Old Norse accounts of the battles and politics of 1066. Dreams, however, are less easy to pin down. In fact, saga accounts of the dreams that accompanied Haraldr's expedition challenge the process of mythologization even as they enact it. They are uncanny, fantastical, and grotesque: with each iteration, dreams in the sagas stretch metaphor to the limit, disrupting the narrative and resisting the codification of traumatic experience.

Morkinskinna

The most straightforward of the saga accounts is found in *Morkinskinna*, perhaps the earliest of the three texts.[29] Here, the episode differs from those in other kings' sagas in that it describes only one dream, which occurs during the Norwegian voyage to England. It is a relatively conventional dream in which a respected figure, in this case Haraldr's half-brother Óláfr inn helgi, visits the dreamer, Haraldr, to warn of impending doom. As is common in Old Norse dream visions, the warning is couched in skaldic verse:

> Gramr vá frægr til feigðar
> flestan sigr enn digri;
> hlýtr þú, ef heima sætir
> heilagt fall til vallar.
> Uggik øfst ráð tyggja,
> yðr mun feigð of byrjuð;
> trolls gefið fǫkum fyllar
> fíks; ræðra Goð slíku.[30]

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27 *Hemings þáttr*.

28 Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 6.

29 As noted in the Introduction, questions remain around the dating of this text with respect to other *konungasögur*.

30 *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 305–06, and ed. by Gade in *SkP* II, pp. 822–23.

> (The renowned prince, doomed to die, won mostly victory, the stout man (Óláfr); you will receive a holy death on the battlefield if you remain at home. I fear the final undertaking of the lord; death will be in store for you. You (will) give filling food to the steeds of the greedy troll (wolves); God does not counsel (or decide) that.)

The warning is unambiguous: God does not support the invasion. Death itself is not presented as a problem in this verse: the royal saint Óláfr was also doomed to die, but through death he achieved martyrdom. Haraldr too can achieve a holy death if he acts in accordance with the dream-king's advice. However, the manner and location of one's death are crucial. Haraldr's death will be holy only if it takes place in Norway, promises Óláfr; abroad, it will serve merely to feed the scavengers of the battlefield. The stanza implicitly includes both Haraldr and the Norwegian troops in this sombre image as the dream-king switches from the singular (*þú*), addressed to Haraldr, to the plural (*yðr*), including his men in the second half of the stanza. By ignoring the dream Haraldr dooms not only himself but his entire army. In this, he falls short of other kings in his family. Óláfr himself was given a similar choice before his last battle, as was Óláfr's son Magnús.[31] Both chose to die in the holy manner advised by their dream visions. In choosing to ignore the advice of his dream-brother, Haraldr acts not only against his own self-interest but against a well-established tradition of good kingship. Rather than holy martyrdom, his decision will lead to widespread loss of life. Haraldr's choice to act against the advice of his dream-brother damns him, in the world of the saga, from this moment on. The invasion that follows is not only a military failure, but a moral one.

The bloody consequences of Haraldr's choice are vividly evoked by the kenning that presents his dead army as food for the wolves: *gefið fǫkum fíks trolls fyllar* (you will give filling food to the steeds of the greedy troll). The kenning is a conventional one that rests on the identification of the wolf as the steed of the trollwoman; the wolf is also one of the beasts of battle that haunt traditional Germanic verse. The image is nonetheless startling in a stanza that is otherwise light on the usual circumlocutions associated with skaldic battle-poetry.[32] It forms an unsettling contrast to the dream-figure of Óláfr inn helgi: dark figures from the distant past intrude even into the language of the royal saint. And yet, this image is far from a one-off in the context of *Morkinskinna*. Rather, Haraldr's dream follows a curious encounter with two women who appear off the English coast as the Norwegian fleet approaches. Like Óláfr, they speak ominous verses about death and defeat:

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31 *Heimskringla*, II, pp. 340–41, and III, p. 43.

32 See further Goeres, 'Skaldic Poetry'.

Skóð lætr skína rauðan
skjǫld es dregr at hjaldri;
brúðr sér Aurnis jóða
ófǫr konungs gǫrva.
Svipts í svarðar kjapta,
svanni, holdi manna;
ulfs munn litar innan
ólǫt konan blóði.[33]

(The dangerous being lets the red shield shine when it draws near to battle. The bride of Aurnir's offspring (giantess or trollwoman) sees the defeat of the king clearly. Lady, men's flesh is tossed into hairy jaws; the disorderly woman stains the wolf's mouth inside with blood.)

Vísts at allvaldr austan
eggjask vestr at leggja
mót við marga knútu
— minn snúðr es þat — prúða.
Þar á valþiðurr velja
— veit œrna sér beitu —
steik af stillis haukum
stafns; fylgik því jafnan.[34]

(It is certain that the all-powerful ruler (Haraldr) is urged westward from the east to arrange a meeting with many splendid knuckle-bones (warriors); that is my gain. There, the carnage-grouse (raven) may choose steak from among the hawks of the king's prow (warriors on the king's ship); it knows it has sufficient food. I always support that.)

The imagery of the two verses has much in common with that of the dream-Óláfr. The first stanza contains two references to wolves consuming men killed in battle and similarly predicts Haraldr's defeat. The second verse also describes the dead troops as food for scavengers, albeit for carrion-birds rather than wolves. There are clear thematic parallels between the three verses, with the notable exception that Óláfr's stanza tells Haraldr how to avoid this horrific fate, whereas the two female speakers exult in the impeding carnage as a *fait accompli*: the first woman 'sees the defeat of the king clearly' (*sér gǫrva ófǫr konungs*), while the second considers it 'certain' (*víss*). Unlike the stanza in the dream of King Óláfr,

33 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 304. The verse is edited by Gade in *SkP* II, pp. 821–22.
34 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 305, and ed. by Gade in *SkP* II, pp. 819–21.

these verses offer no choice at all: according to the two women, Haraldr's death is inevitable — and indeed to be welcomed.

The most striking difference, however, is that these two figures are presented as being physically present in the world of the saga: they are not dream visions but corporeal beings. Despite this, their precise nature remains ambiguous. In the prose text they are described simply as *konur* (women), qualified with the ambiguous statement 'at því er þeir ætluðu' (as far as they [the Norwegian troops] could tell).[35] While the violent imagery of the verses implies that the speakers *may* be trollwomen or giants, the women themselves are not described as such in the saga prose. They do not appear to be carrying weapons, nor do they physically threaten the Norwegian ships, although their appearance is considered inauspicious by Haraldr's men: 'þykkir mǫnnum vera ekki góð bending' (people thought it was not a good sign).[36] The Norwegian troops may be interpreting these figures as *fylgjur*, the 'fetches' or guardian spirits that can appear just before a person's death and who are associated with both dreams and verse.[37] Alternatively, the women might represent an English equivalent to the Icleandic *landvættir*, the spirits who protect the land.[38] The detail that the first woman 'kom ofan af landi ok á bjǫrgin fram, er váru við hǫfnina' (came down from the land and out onto the cliffs that were beside the harbour) certainly suggests a connection with the land, and perhaps indicates a protective function.[39] Their description thus gestures in many directions, but resolves into none. The women are both familiar and alien, humanoid but strange: they are uncanny prophets of the battle to come.[40]

While the women themselves are mysterious, the tenor of their verse is not. Like the dream-Óláfr, they lay bare the fate that awaits the Norwegian troops. There is an almost democratic quality to their warning, witnessed as it is by the entire fleet. Their appearance before the Norwegian ships stands in direct contrast to Haraldr's private dream about Óláfr, while their

35 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 304.

36 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 304.

37 *Hallfreðar saga* describes a large, armoured woman walking over the sea, whom the poet-protagonist recognizes as his *fylgja* (*Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 198–99); Glúmr in Víga-Glums saga likewise dreams of a gigantic, armoured woman described as his grandfather's *hamingja* (luck, guardian spirit), whose appearance is a sign of his grandfather's death (*Eyfirðinga saga*, pp. 30–31). See further a recent study of these figures by Stankovitsová, 'Following up on Female *fylgjur*'.

38 See further Kelchner's discussion of these and other protecting figures in Kelchner, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 17–40, as well as Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Landvættasagan'.

39 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 304.

40 As popularized by Freud, the uncanny (*unheimlich*) is the blending of the strange with the familiar, leading to feelings of confusion, anxiety, or fear: see his essay 'The "Uncanny"', *SE*, XVII, pp. 217–56. Yolanda Gampel, among others, demonstrates the applicability of Freud's concept to collective experiences such as widespread social violence. See Gampel, 'Reflections on the Prevalence of the Uncanny'.

public prophecy of doom makes a mockery of the choice Óláfr offers to his brother. Is holy martyrdom truly available, as the saint seems to suggest, or is that choice in fact illusory? Is violent conflict inevitable? Has history already been written? The dream-king appears to offer hope, but the warning of the women on the cliff invites only fear. Whose vision of the future is correct, and who has the power to decide? Bursting into the historically inflected narrative of the saga, the paranormal envelops the well-known events of 1066 in an atmosphere of uncertainty and dread.

Fagrskinna

As Theodore Andersson puts it, 'unlike the family sagas, which almost never tell the same story twice, the kings' sagas tell the same story [...] many times'.[41] The dream-sequence that precedes the Norwegian invasion is told over and over in Old Norse accounts, exhibiting both the 'disrupted, hiccupping form' and the 'inevitable repetitions' of traumatic narrative.[42] The nature of the disruption is, however, subtly different in each text. Compared to *Morkinskinna*, the narrative of *Fagrskinna* presents the dream-sequence as more terrifying, and the events it prefigures as inescapable. As is often the case in *Fagrskinna*, the episode is shorter and somewhat different to that in *Morkinskinna*. The text cites only one of the women's verses and the order of the verses is reversed. This means that the first dream-stanza quoted in *Fagrskinna* is the one attributed to St Óláfr; it is followed by the first of the women's stanzas cited above. Both, however, are different to the stanzas cited in *Morksinskinna*. Differences from the text in *Morkinskinna* are indicated in bold:

> Gramr vá frægr til **fremðar**
> flestan sigr enn digri.
> **Hlautk, þvít heima sǫtum**,
> heilagt fall til vallar.
> **Uggik ⟨enn⟩, at, tyggi;**
> yðr **es** feigð of byrjuð.
> Trolls gefið fǫkum fyllar
> fíks; **veldrat** guð slíku.[43]
>
> (The renowned prince, the stout man (Óláfr), won the most victories, ***to his honour. I gained*** a holy death on the battlefield ***because***

41 Andersson, 'Kings' Sagas', p. 197.
42 Berlant, 'Trauma and Ineloquence', p. 47.
43 *Fagrskinna*, p. 277. The final line is actually written *veldr atgerð* rather than *veldrat guð* in AM 303 4to (Fagrskinna A) and, as indicated, the *enn* in line 5 is supplied by the editor. See the full list of variations in *SkP* II, pp. 822–23.

> ***we (i.e. I) remained at home. Lord, I still fear*** that death ***is*** in store for you. You (will) give filling food to the steeds of the greedy troll (wolves); God does not **cause** that.)

Some variation is to be expected during the transmission of complicated verses but the degree of difference here is unusual. It is striking that in this stanza, the king describes only his own martyrdom on the battlefield (*hlautk heilagt fall*), whereas in *Morkinskinna*, the chance for a holy death was also offered to Haraldr (*hlýtr þú heilagt fall*). In this version of the stanza, holy death is not available to anyone but Óláfr himself. The change in the first line from *til feigðar* (doomed to die) to *til fremðar* (to his honour) further emphasizes the king's glory in heaven rather than his untimely end. Haraldr's death, however, has become more certain with the change of verb in line 6: death *is* (the verb is *vera*, to be), rather than a possibility in the future (the verb in *Morkinskinna* was *munu*, 'will'). This version of the stanza aligns more closely with the prophecy of death found in the women's verses in *Morkinskinna*: choice has disappeared, even for King Haraldr.

Whereas in *Morkinskinna* Haraldr's dream of St Óláfr formed a quasi-folkloric triad, following on from the verses of the two women, in *Fagrskinna* only one woman speaks. In this text, she has joined Óláfr in the world of dreams, becoming a monstrous inversion of the royal saint. No longer public, her prophecy is, like Óláfr's, delivered to only one man. As the prose text relates, 'En þá dreymði stafnbúa hans, at hann þóttusk sjá konu eina ok meiri en mennskir menn. Hón reið vargi ok hafði rauðan skjǫld ok kvað þetta' (And then his [Haraldr's] forecastle man dreamed that he seemed to see a woman, larger than human beings. She rode a wolf and held a red shield and spoke this verse).[44] Even before she speaks, the woman's non-human identity is established by her size and martial appearance: she is no guardian spirit but a creature of conflict and death. The prose does not state explicitly that she is a trollwoman, but that is the sort of creature that typically rides wolves into battle.[45] Such figures tend to inhabit the realm of myth and legend rather than the ostensibly realistic setting of the kings' sagas. Her relocation to the world of dreams is a clever move on the part of the saga author: set apart from the saga's historical setting, her appearance nonetheless connotes all the hostility, monstrosity, and horror of a more fantastical setting. As Margaret Clunies Ross has argued, the juxtaposition of real and marvellous elements often occurs at

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44 *Fagrskinna*, p. 277.

45 The distinction between trollwomen and giantesses is often unclear: on the taxonomy and characteristics of monstrous women in the Old Norse tradition, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 59–77, and Straubhaar, 'Nasty, Brutish, and Large'.

pivotal moments in the sagas, such as the conversion to Christianity or Iceland's loss of independence in 1262–1264. It signals

> some uncertainty as to the nature of reality, or where the social norms of the culture are subverted, or where the present confronts the past and the author needs to produce an explanation of how and why things have happened or people have acted in certain ways.[46]

The Norwegian invasion of England is another such pivotal moment, one for which the bare prose of the *konungasaga* was evidently deemed inadequate.

Trollwomen are known not only for violent acts but violent speech. Verse is attributed more frequently to monstrous women in the legendary sagas than it is to 'real' women in the kings' and family sagas.[47] Such verse is often hostile and marks a rise in tension or emotion, particularly when a male hero threatens the woman, her home, or her family. A verbal duel tends to foreshadow a physical one, although in *fornaldarsögur* texts this is often followed by the woman being maimed or killed.[48] Not so the trollwoman of *Fagrskinna*. Her large size dominates the dreamer physically, and her verse similarly looms over the rest of the episode: no answer is possible. In fact, verse seems to colonize the prose as language from the stanza seeps into the narrative text that surrounds it. The red shield the woman holds in the prose echoes the red shield described in the verse; the wolf the woman rides in the saga seems to grow out of the wolf-kennings in the stanza. It is as though the images of the verse have bled into the prose, the fantastic threatening to burst into the everyday world. The distinctions between word and speaker, verse and prose, real and fantastic are on the verge of collapse: what else might do the same? It is a grim foreshadowing of the political and military collapse to come. The woman's relocation to the world of dreams does not, therefore, lessen the force of her message; if anything, it has become more terrifying with the transformation of its speaker. Small changes have moreover been made to the language of the verse itself, here indicated in bold:

> Skœð[49] lætr skína rauðan
> skjǫld, en dregr at hjaldri.
> Brúðr sér Aurnis jóða
> ófǫr konungs gǫrva.
> **Svipt hefr sveiflandkjapta**
> svanni holdi manna.

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46 Clunies Ross, 'Realism and the Fantastic', pp. 449–50.

47 Straubhaar, 'Nasty, Brutish, and Large', pp. 108–10.

48 Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 65–67.

49 This is presumed to be an alternative spelling for *skóð*, used in *Morkinskinna*. Both are *hapax legomena* (see *SkP* II, p. 821, on this and other minor variations).

Ulfs munn litar innan
óðlǫt konan blóði.[50]

> The dangerous being lets the red shield shine when it draws near to battle. The bride of Aurnir's offspring (giantess or trollwoman) sees the defeat of the king clearly. **The lady has tossed** men's flesh **to the one with the swinging jaw (wolf).** The **frenzied** woman stains the wolf's mouth inside with blood.

This stanza is not only an account of what the supernatural being says, but a description of what she is and does. She herself is now the subject of the verb *svipta* (to toss, to throw), the active agent who tosses men's flesh to the wolves rather than merely the voice that describes such events. She has also become *óðlǫt* (frenzied, raving) rather than *ólǫt* (unmannered, disorderly), as in *Morkinskinna*: her behaviour is now as threatening as her words. Hers is a destabilizing and monstrous presence. Although a clear contrast to the sainted King Óláfr, her verse is aligned in its message with that of the dream-king, far more so than in *Morkinskinna*. Together, the two dreams establish the inescapability of the coming carnage: it is assured by both monster and saint. The intrusion of these dream-figures into the narrative disrupts the chronicle-like tone of the saga, inviting the audience to consider the visceral consequences of violent conflict — the dead bodies, the blood, the terror — rather than simply its political implications.

Heimskringla

In *Morkinskinna*, Óláfr and the two women appear off the coast of England, while in *Fagrskinna* the analogous dreams are dreamt in the open water as the Norwegian fleet crosses the North Sea. In *Heimskringla*, however, the dreams arrive even before the fleet has left Norwegian waters. As Haraldr's ships lie anchored in the Sólund Islands, dreams appear thick and fast, and in far more precise detail than in the two other texts. It is thought that Snorri drew on both *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* when compiling his text, and yet the sequence in *Heimskringla* is considerably expanded.[51] In *Heimskringla*, we are told who the dreamers are, where they are stationed, and exactly what they see. This added detail paradoxically insists upon the veracity of the visions even as they move into the realm of the truly incredible.

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50 *Fagrskinna*, pp. 277–78.
51 See further Goeres, 'Kings' Sagas'.

For the first of the dreams in *Heimskringla*, the verse changes little, but the prose expands compared to the other two versions of the episode:

> Þá er þeir lágu í Sólundum, þá dreymði mann þann, er var á konungsskipinu, er Gyrðr er nefndr. Hann þóttisk þar vera staddr á konungsskipinu ok sá upp á eyna, hvar trǫllkona mikil stóð ok hafði skálm í hendi, en í annarri hendi trog. Hann þóttisk ok sjá yfir ǫll skip þeira, at honum þótti fugl sitja á hverjum skipstafni. Þat váru allt ernir ok hrafnar.[52]
>
> > (When they lay anchored in the Sólund Islands, a man called Gyrðr who was on board the king's ship dreamed. He thought he was standing on the king's ship, and he looked up onto the island to where a great trollwoman stood and she had a short-sword in one hand and a trough in the other. He thought too that he looked over all of the ships and that it seemed to him that a bird sat on the prow of each ship. They were all eagles and ravens.)

This trollwoman speaks the second of the verses from *Morkinskinna*, the one left out of *Fagrskinna*: 'Vísts at allvaldr austan' (It is certain that the all-powerful ruler from the east). She declares that the king's journey will result in the death of many warriors, providing food for carrion-birds and good fortune for herself. No longer located on an English cliff but in the islands off the coast of Norway, she threatens the Norwegian fleet before they have even left; she is no longer a guardian spirit but a malevolent force in her own right. Her description in the prose evokes a range of well-known images from the wider saga corpus. In *Íslendinga saga*, for example, Hafliði Hǫskuldsson dreams that he sees an evil-looking woman dripping blood; she pulls off men's heads with a cloth and recites verse about it.[53] In *Víga-Glúms saga* Glúmr recounts a dream in which he sees two women holding a trough between them, sprinkling blood over the whole district.[54] The closest parallel to the *Heimskringla* episode is in *Laxdœla saga*, when Án svarti dreams that a repulsive-looking woman comes to him in the night, splitting his stomach open and placing brushwood in its place. Just like the woman in *Heimskringla*, she has a short-sword in one hand and a trough in the other.[55] In the first two cases, the dreams foreshadow conflict, although in *Laxdœla saga* the monstrous woman has a protecting function; her grotesque solution of replacing Án's entrails with brushwood saves his life soon after. It may be that the trollwoman in *Heimskringla*

52 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 176.
53 *Sturlunga saga*, I, p. 403.
54 *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, p. 71. For a detailed analysis of this dream, see Cochrane, 'Bright Dreams', pp. 207–14.
55 *Laxdœla saga*, p. 149. See further Cochrane's analysis of this figure in 'Bright Dreams', pp. 121–27.

is akin to Án's *fylgja* and is, like the women in *Morkinskinna*, a guardian spirit of England or the English. Nevertheless, her description is far more frightening than in the earlier texts.

As in *Fagrskinna*, this startling vision is extrapolated from the imagery of the verse, the 'I' of the poem (*þat es snúðr minn; fylgik jafnan því*) coming to life in the prose. Not only does the woman herself emerge from the poetic lines, but so too does the image of the king's warriors being eaten by carrion-birds: 'valþiðurr kná velja skeik af haukum stafns stillis' (the carnage-grouse can choose steak from the hawks of the prow of the leader). *Haukr* (hawk) is a common term for a young warrior and *stafn* is the prow of the ship, which here belongs to the *stillir*, the king, so the verse is referring to the king's warriors: carrion-birds will have their pick of the king's men, who are about to die. In the prose introduction to the verse, the king's *haukar* are made flesh in the image of a bird sitting on the prow of each ship — even the word for prow used in the verse, *stafn*, is echoed in the prose and made the literal perch of actual birds. The *valþiðrar* (corpse-grouses) likewise appear as the ravens and eagles that perch on the ships. The result is unsettling and ominous. If old kennings are brought to life in dreams, are dreams about to be brought to life too?

This merging of prose and verse happens again with the second stanza, which is cited in the context of a second dream. As *Heimskringla* relates:

> Þórðr er maðr nefndr, er var á skipi því, er skammt lá frá skipi konungs. Hann dreymði um nótt, at hann þóttisk sjá flota Haralds konungs fara at landi, þóttisk vita, at þat var England. Hann sá á landinu fylking mikla ok þótti sem hvárirtveggju bjoggisk til orrostu ok hǫfðu merki mǫrg á lopti, en fyrir liði landsmanna reið trǫllkona mikil ok sat á vargi, ok hafði vargrinn manns hræ í munni, ok fell blóð um kjaptana, en er hann hafði þann etit, þá kastaði hon ǫðrum í munn honum ok síðan hverjum at ǫðrum, en hann gleypði hvern.[56]
>
> (There was a man named Þórðr who was in the ship that lay a little way from the king's ship. He dreamed in the night that he seemed to see King Haraldr's fleet travel to a land, and he seemed to know that that was England. He saw a great army drawn up in battle array there, and it seemed that both sides were preparing for battle and they held many banners aloft, and in front of the troop of the inhabitants of that land a great trollwoman rode, and she sat on a wolf, and the wolf had a man's corpse in its mouth, and blood fell from its jaws, and when he had eaten one she threw another into his mouth and then one after another, and he gulped down each one.)

56 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 177.

The woman then speaks the verse cited in all three kings' sagas: 'Skóð lætr skína rauðan/skjǫld' (The dangerous being lets the red shield shine). In the prose, the description of this figure is breathless and vivid, a flurry of descriptive clauses strung together with *ok* and *en*. Skaldic metaphor — 'óðlǫt kona litar munn ulfs innan blóði' (the frenzied woman stains the wolf's mouth inside with blood) — comes to life as the trollwoman literally feeds bodies to the wolf. An important detail has also been added: riding at the head of an English army, the woman is clearly allied with the English troops the Norwegians are about to attack. Is the image an expression of the Norwegian dreamer's fear of the enemy, or a premonition of their strength? Just who *are* the people the Norwegians are about to confront, and what powers can they call upon? The image of the troll-led army suggests a fear of the unknown and the alien. Trolls are unquestionably 'Other' in the world of the sagas. Associated with the far north and other wild spaces, trollwomen seem to embody xenophobic anxieties about what lay beyond the settled areas of Scandinavia.[57] And yet, the English are not Other — are they? As noted in the Introduction, the links between the people of England and Scandinavia were long established, their culture, language, and even genetics shared to a considerable degree. By the middle of the eleventh century England was, from a Scandinavian perspective, both home and abroad, both enemy and friend. Although it seems strange to associate trolls with such a well-known territory as England, the image of the monster usefully encapsulates such contradictions. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has shown how trollwomen in the Old Norse tradition can be read through the lens of monster theory, which reveals how monstrous bodies express not only the fears but also the desires of a society. Monsters are both forbidding and alluring; they 'police the border of the possible', defining what is normal by embodying what is not.[58] As Jóhanna writes,

> Each [the monster and the normal] is reliant on the other for its meaning, which is thus provisional and unstable, and the porous boundaries and borders between the two ideas are always susceptible to being unsettled as a result of cultural confusion or terror. Fear of the monster is not just fear of the Other, the inhuman and abnormal, but of what is inherent in human beings, ourselves, and our corporeality [...] The monster is, if inspected more closely, fully within: it is man's deep-rooted fear of aspects of his own nature, and attributes potentially entailing a vulnerable state, that creates monsters.[59]

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57 Straubhaar, 'Nasty, Brutish, and Large', pp. 114–19; Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 65–66.

58 Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 60–61, drawing on Cohen's 'Monster Culture', pp. 3–25.

59 Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, p. 61.

Emerging from the metaphors of skaldic battle-poetry, the trollwoman personifies the violence to come. She embodies the contradictory impulses of fear and desire provoked by armed conflict, where the opportunity to win fame and fortune can so quickly turn into destruction or defeat. She is a reminder of the individual's vulnerability in the chaos of battle, where the warrior can become a dead body in the blink of an eye. To some extent, her presence seems to excuse the Norwegian attack: if the English are essentially monstrous, is it not the duty of the Norwegian troops to kill them? And yet, as noted above, the monster represents the violence within. The trollwoman reminds us that the Norwegians are the aggressors, not the English. They are the ones bringing violence to the shores of England; they are the ones who bring the troll to life.

The trollwoman speaks the same verse found in the other kings' sagas, with few changes apart from the final line. It is notable, however, that this line — *óðlǫt kona blóði* — is repeated, unusually for a skaldic verse. It is repeated in all extant *Heimskringla* manuscripts from the medieval period: this is no scribal error, but a deliberate change to the structure of the verse. There is an incantatory effect to this repetition, and indeed repetition of the final line is one of the chief characteristics of the metre known as *galdralag* (incantation metre).[60] Such repetition emphasizes the non-human, magical nature of the speaker and, moreover, her uncontrollable character: it is no coincidence that the line describing her *óðlǫt*, frenzied nature, is the one that breaks the regularity of the *dróttkvætt* stanza. Bursting through the constraints of the verse, the troll threatens to overwhelm the narrative with her violent frenzy. Thus, even as saga authors mythologize the trauma of 1066 — codifying the narrative through a series of well-established tropes and images — the dream-figures contained therein become increasingly disruptive. It is as though the more one seeks to contain the pain, the grief, and the guilt provoked by that now-distant event, the more they demand to break free.

Haraldr's dream of King Óláfr, when it finally appears, has been utterly upstaged by the images of unruly trollwomen on wolves. As an introduction to that final verse, the prose text states simply,

> Harald konung dreymði enn um nótt, at hann var í Niðarósi ok hitti Óláf konung, bróður sinn, ok kvað hann vísu fyrir honum [...] Margir aðrir draumar váru þá sagðir ok annars konar fyrirburðir ok flestir daprligir.[61]

60 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Háttatal*, p. 39. Judy Quinn has discussed the use of final-line repetition in the contemporary sagas, noting it is similarly associated with dream-speakers who are either supernatural or from the world of the dead. See Quinn, 'The Use of Eddic Poetry'.

61 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 178.

> (And then King Haraldr dreamed one night that he was in Niðaróss [Trondheim] and met with his brother, King Óláfr and he (Óláfr) spoke a verse to him […] Many other dreams were told there, and all kinds of appearances, many of them dismal.)

In *Heimskringla*, the appearance of King Óláfr offers little comfort after the horrors of the other two dreams. Indeed, his prediction that 'gefið fǫ́kum fíks trolls fyllar' (you will give food to the steeds of the greedy trolls) only confirms the truth of what has gone before. Such imagery creates an unsettling alliance between the trollwomen and the saint, further emphasizing the inevitability of what is to come. The episode ends with the uncomfortable spreading of visions throughout the entire company, and indeed the word *fyrirburðir* (visions, spectres) suggests that some of these sightings may no longer be confined to the world of dreams. There are now so many visions that the prose text simply stops enumerating them: they are unrepresentable through their sheer multiplicity. Dreaming has become a collective experience, much as the sighting of the non-dream-women was in *Morkinskinna*. In this text, however, the Norwegian troops are united through the experience of facing the monster within, rather than confronting the enemy without.

The Interpretation of Dreams

For the medieval reader, a dream is a text that necessitates interpretation. Dream-guides and classification systems were popular throughout much of the period, providing guidance on how to interpret the dream experience. The biblical Book of Daniel provided the ultimate model for the interpretation of dreams and a manual known as the *Somniale Danielis* was translated into multiple vernacular languages, including Old Norse.[62] The writings of Gregory the Great and Augustine provided key theoretical frameworks for the understanding of dreams, while one of the most influential scientific texts of the period remained Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, composed during the late antique period but widely read and referenced throughout medieval Europe, including Iceland.[63] Although accounts of Old Norse dreams do not fit perfectly into all of these models, Haraldr's dream of St Óláfr aligns with the most significant of Macrobius's 'true' dream-types, the *oraculum*. In such dreams, truth is revealed by a figure of authority: 'parens vel alia sancta gravisve persona seu sacerdos vel etiam deus aperte eventurum quid aut non eventurum,

62 Turville-Petre, 'An Icelandic Version of the *Somniale Danielis*'.

63 See Peden, 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature'; and for the Icelandic context, O'Connor, 'Astronomy and Dream Visions'.

faciendum vitandumve denuntiat' (a parent, or a pious or revered man, or priest, or even a god, clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid).[64] The dream-women, on the other hand, seem to fall into the category of the *somnium*, the 'enigmatic dream', which stands between the best and worst of dreams. This is the dream which 'tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur' (conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true information of the meaning being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding). Such dreams such can foretell the fate of public institutions or places, as well as changes to an individual's situation.[65] Stephen Kruger has likened this dream-type to fiction: the *somnium* appears at first to be deceptive, but through proper interpretation it can yield the truth.[66] Such is the case for the trollwomen: although strange and terrifying in appearance, they nevertheless reveal the horrendous reality of what is to come.

As in the *Vita Ædwardi*, the dream visions open up a space in which to accommodate images and ideas that do not sit easily within the 'real' world of the historical narrative, and yet which are crucial for the understanding of past experience. In the *konungasögur*, the separation between the real world and the dream world is further emphasized by the formal differences between prose and poetry, with each of the dream-figures communicating through the riddling discourse of skaldic verse. The *dróttkvætt* stanza is a form that requires considerable interpretative skill; understanding it is a notoriously difficult task and one that veils the meaning of the dreams with an extra layer of ambiguity.[67] In presenting multiple layers of interpretation the sequence calls attention to the act of interpretation itself: although the chronology of the saga presents the dreams as warnings of what is to come, from the perspective of the reader the dreams help elucidate the causes, meanings, and consequences of the past. The trollwomen in particular seem to embody the feelings of fear and guilt provoked by the conflict, externalizing such emotions so as to allow their confrontation

64 Latin text from Macrobius, *Opera*, II, p. 10; translation by William Harris Stahl in Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, p. 90.

65 Macrobius, *Opera*, II, p. 10, and Macrobius, *Commentary*, p. 90.

66 Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 23. Kruger likewise observes that both dreams and fiction offer a '"double" experience [...] capable of bridging the opposed terms of falsehood and truth': in both cases, the act of interpretation is key, either on the part of a dreamer or reader. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 133. Although Kruger's focus is the Middle English dream vision, the same may be said of dreams in the *konungasögur*. The similarity between Old Norse dreams and literary texts has long been noted; see for example a discussion of wordplay in dreams in Henzen, *Über die Träume*, pp. 44–49.

67 Compare, in particular, with Lindow, 'Riddles, Kennings, and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry'.

by dreamer and reader alike. In so doing, the dreams offer a means of 'working through' the trauma of conflict. As Dominick LaCapra explains:

> To work through problems requires acknowledging them. It also involves an attempt to counteract the tendency to deny, repress, or blindly repeat them, and it enables one to acquire critical perspective allowing for a measure of control and responsible action, notably including a mode of repetition related to the renewal of life in the present.[68]

Working through is a critical, reflective process, one that can counteract the repetitive tendencies associated with trauma by offering new possibilities for understanding. Through the dream-sequence, saga authors acknowledge not only the historical facts of the invasion but also its emotional repercussions; moreover, they demand that the reader join them in the search for meaning and renewal. The dreams offer a space through which the saga audience can witness the emotions of fear, horror, and guilt provoked by the conflicts of 1066, while at the same time joining in the process of working through them. The sequence demonstrates how multiple acts of interpretation — of dreams, of verse, of historical narrative — are vital to the understanding of a complex and traumatic past.

Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar

This emphasis on interpretation reaches new heights in one further account of 1066, found in the peculiar text known as *Hemings þáttr Áslákssonar* (the Tale of Hemingr Áslákson). A strange mix of history and legend, the tale recounts the life of a Norwegian hero, Hemingr.[69] Having run afoul of King Haraldr Sigurðarson, Hemingr is forced to seek refuge in England at the court of Edward the Confessor. He becomes a mentor to the young Harold Godwinson and eventually helps bring about the death

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68 LaCapra, *History and Memory*, p. 54, drawing on Freud's discussion in 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through', in *SE*, XII, pp. 145–56. Although terms such as 'working through' (and the related but contrasting impulse of 'acting out') are applied by Freud to the individual experience of trauma, Herman argues persuasively for their efficacy in a collective setting: Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 214–36.

69 The *þáttr* is not recorded complete in any early manuscript. Rather, the first part is found in two related versions in *Flateyjarbók* and in *Hrokkinskinna*, dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively. The second part is preserved in *Hauksbók*. It is written in Haukr Erlendsson's own hand and must therefore have been written before 1334, the year of Haukr's death. There are also numerous paper copies of the *þáttr*, as well as two sets of *rímur*, or ballads. Hemingr's adventures in England are mainly located in the second half of the *þáttr*. A useful overview of the text and its manuscripts is given in Fellows-Jensen, 'The Myth of Harold II's Survival'.

of King Haraldr at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The account of the Norwegian invasion in the *þáttr* is similar to that in the kings' sagas, drawing mainly on the narratives of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, interwoven with material from other kings' sagas, the family sagas, and sources of a more legendary and folkloric nature.[70] No doubt in part because of this eclectic mix, the play between the real and the fantastic is even more pronounced in this text than in the *konungasögur* discussed above. The events of 1066 are set within a broader legendary context involving unexpected miracles, unlikely coincidences, and hidden identities; it is in keeping with this setting that dreams, visions, and portents take centre-stage in the run-up to the Norwegian invasion of England, even more so than in the earlier texts. Dreams become the primary means through which King Haraldr's fateful decision to invade England is examined, and the traumatic consequences of that decision laid bare. The comparison between dream and literary text is nowhere more evident than in *Hemings þáttr*, where the dream-sequence is dense with literary allusions of all kinds, the visions themselves forming the heart of an intertextual web of literary references. It becomes clear — far more so than in the *konungasögur* — that the interpretation of these allusive visions plays a key role in the decision to invade England. Haraldr's failure in 1066 is explained by his inability to 'read' the texts the visions offer him. According to the author of the *þáttr* at least, this is due to the bad advice he receives from Tostig Godwinson.

Strangely, Hemingr himself is absent for much of this section, which focuses instead on the relationship between Haraldr and Tostig. Tostig is an enigmatic character in the narratives of 1066 and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. English sources tell of his high-handed rule as Earl of Northumbria and consequent exile by Edward the Confessor, while Scandinavian and some Norman sources attribute this exile to a conflict with his brother Harold.[71] Tostig is reported to have travelled to Flanders and Normandy in an attempt to find military allies for an attack on England, and is said to have rebuked William of Normandy for his failure to act in the wake of King Edward's death. Norse sources record that he travelled to Scandinavia on a similar mission. After failing to persuade Sveinn Úlfsson, King of Denmark, to launch an invasion, Tostig won the support of Haraldr Sigurðarson of Norway. Tostig is said to have fought with the Norwegian troops as they advanced across England, dying with the Norwegian king at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. In the *konungasögur* Tostig spends very little time at the court of King Sveinn, who excuses himself from the venture. In *Hemings þáttr*, however, Tostig's sojourn in

70 *Hemings þáttr*, trans. by Faulkes, pp. 6–7. For his part, the narrator explicitly identifies *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* as a primary source for the section dealing with the events of 1066: *Hemings þáttr*, p. 35.

71 For the background to this see Barlow, *The Godwins*, pp. 116–22.

Denmark forms an important preamble to his mission in Norway because it establishes the necessity of interpreting signs correctly.

King Sveinn does not immediately reject Tostig's request for help, but decides against the venture when an Aesopic fable comes to life before his eyes. On their way to a feast, Tostig and the king stop to rest beside a bridge. The king's dog has accompanied them, and the king gives the dog a loaf of bread. As in the classic fable, the dog runs onto the bridge and, when he sees his reflection in the water, jumps into the water in an attempt to steal the loaf from what he thinks is a rival dog. He returns to land wet and hungry, lacking not only the loaf he jumped in for, but also the one he was originally given. The king witnesses this event and tells Tostig that he has made up his mind not to support the invasion of England:

> kongur m(ællti) hundurinn þottist sia annann hund j uatninu. og hafa braud j munne og hugdist mundu fa burt tekit hleifinn en hann hliop epter skuga sinum. og hafdi huorki braudit a land. suo ueit eg at mier mun fara. ef eg fer nu til Einglandz. þa mun eg sia skuga minn en þo at eg komist hingad aptur. þa uera ma at Haralldur kongur se hier firer og nai eg þa ei þessu riki. uil eg nu gefa þier orskurd þins mals at eg kem ei til Einglandz þuiat j Danmork skal eg kongur uera medan gud uill þui þad hæfer mier nu at agirnast alldre meira.[72]
>
> (The king said, 'The dog thought he saw another hound in the water, which also had bread in its mouth. And he thought that he would be able to steal that loaf, but he jumped after his own reflection and brought neither loaf to land. So I know it will go with me if I travel to England: then I will see my reflection, and even if I return here afterwards, it is possible that King Haraldr will get here before me and then I will not rule either kingdom. Now I will give you a decision on your situation: I will not go to England because I intend to be king in Denmark as long as God allows it, as it does not befit me to covet anything more.')

The fable is itself about correct interpretation: blinded by greed, the dog fails to read the situation correctly and ends up with nothing. Sveinn, however, recognizes the reason for the dog's mistake and vows not to make the same error himself. Marvin Taylor has identified a number of Icelandic sagas which appear to use Aesopic material, including *Íslendinga saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga*, and *Egils saga*.[73] Although the Aesopic material is by no means as common in Old Norse as in some medieval literatures, Taylor argues that the centrality of the fable to the medieval curriculum makes it almost inevitable that it would appear in some Scandinavian texts. In this

72 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 36.
73 Taylor, 'Rúmr inngangs'.

instance, the fable is presented as something real, something which happened in a historical setting, and yet the use of one of the oldest and most widely cited fables must draw the audience's attention to the fictionality of the moment. The use of such material from the very beginning of the episode primes the audience to recognize the importance of reading events correctly. It emphasizes both the intertextual nature of the unfolding story and the potential for it to contain broader metaphorical meanings.

From this pan-European context of the fable, the *þáttr* then narrows in focus to relate a series of dreams and visions connected to the figure of Haraldr Sigurðarson. As noted above, *Morkinskinna* contains the cryptic remark that Þórir from Steig did not join the expedition to England because he had dreamt ominous dreams about the king (*hann hafði dreymt illa um konung*). Although this comment is not repeated either in *Fagrskinna* or in *Heimskringla*, *Hemings þáttr* unleashes its full literary potential by describing a dream that foreshadows Tostig's arrival in Norway and its unfortunate consequences. As the *þáttr* relates:

> Haust þat adur en Tosti kom til Noregs dreymdi Steigar Þorer draum ok sagdi sinum monnum og bad þa rada. hann sagde at hann þottist uera staddur a einu þingi. er Haralldur kongr uar a. hann sat a stoli so myklum. at hann tok um allan Noreg en kongur uar so mikill at hann tok alla uega ut af stolnum. madur þotti mier ganga at honum og minnast uid hann en mier þotti so mikil fluga fliuga ur munne þeim manne j munn kongi þuilikt sem hrafn. uid þad þotti mier uerda hrafns nef a kongi. med þui nefi þotti mier hann hogua j hofud þeim ollum er uoru a þinginu. utan oss Steigar monnum. þar af þotti mier marger deyia. en ollum uard *jllt af. eg uar þa hræddur um at hann mundi oss hogua Steigar menn.[74]
>
> (The autumn before Tostig came to Norway Þórir from Steig had a dream and he told it to his men and asked them to interpret it. He said he dreamed that he was at an assembly that King Haraldr was at too. He [Haraldr] sat on a chair so large that it covered all of Norway, and the king was so large that he spread out on all sides from the chair. 'It seemed to me that a man went up to him and kissed him, but that a great fly flew out of that man's mouth and into the king's, just like a raven. With that, a raven's beak appeared on the king and with that beak he seemed to strike the heads of all who were at the assembly, except us men of Steig. It seemed to me that many died, and everyone suffered from it. Then I was afraid that he would strike us men from Steig.')

74 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 36–37.

Although he initially asks for help in interpreting the dream, Þórir finds that after recounting it publicly he is able to interpret the vision himself. He declares that the dream signifies the king's greed and ambition, but that Haraldr will eventually become food for the ravens himself, and that many will die because of him. Þórir therefore urges his followers not to accompany the king on his journey abroad.

Þórir's dream offers an image of kingship that is diametrically opposed to that of King Sveinn. Whereas Sveinn explicitly states that he will not covet, *ágirnast*, the kingdom of England, Þórir interprets his own dream as a sign of Haraldr's *ágirni* (greed, ambition). The monstrous image of Haraldr with a raven's beak reflects the connotations of death and foreboding associated with that bird: sitting on the *veldisstóll* (seat of power), Haraldr becomes a grotesque parody of Óðinn on the high-seat Hliðskjálf, flanked by the ravens Huginn and Muninn. Indeed, the image references a wide range of supernatural episodes connected with kingship and the conquest of other lands. The closest analogue to this dream is one that was told about King Haraldr himself at the very beginning of his reign. *Morkinskinna* describes a vision that is seen by the followers of Magnús inn góði, Haraldr's nephew and co-ruler, as the younger king lies dying:

> Ok við þann svefn opnaðisk munnr hans, ok sýndisk mǫnnum sem fiskr renndi ór munni konungsins ok hafði gulls lit. Ok síðan vildi fiskrinn aptr hverfa í munninn ok náði eigi ok veik sér þá á munn Haraldi konungi, er hann sat nær konungi, ok sýndisk mǫnnum sem þá væri hann døkkr álits.[75]
>
> (As [Magnús] slept his mouth opened and it appeared to men as though a fish jumped out of the mouth of the king, and it was the colour of gold. And after this the fish wanted to go back into the mouth and it could not, and it turned then to the mouth of King Haraldr, who was sitting near the king. Then it seemed to men that it had a dark colour.)

In *Morkinskinna*, the fish represents the status of king that has passed from Magnús to Haraldr, but its dark colour foreshadows Haraldr's uneasy sole rule. In *Hemings þáttr*, the fly represents Tostig's dangerous invitation to Haraldr, and the kiss is like that of Judas, a betrayal masked by friendship. Like the wolf-riding trollwomen in the verses discussed above, the image of the king spreading over the world brings literal meaning to a clichéd skaldic image, in this case, that of the king who places the land under

75 *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 170–71.

himself.[76] This image of kingship is often a positive foreshadowing of future greatness. The Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, for example, describes a prophecy made about the young Óláfr, whose *fylgja* was thought to shed a light over the eastern world.[77] *Sverris saga* tells of a dream in which Sverrir becomes a bird whose wings covered the whole of Norway, prefiguring his accession to the Norwegian throne.[78] Steigar-Þórir's dream plays with this trope, and yet the image of the raven-beaked Haraldr inverts what is usually a positive portrayal of kingship. Here, the king becomes a grotesque blend of human and animal, and the image strikes so much fear into the heart of the indomitable Þórir that he is willing to disobey the king's summons to war. Þórir emerges in this episode as a perceptive dreamer, offering a model for how the saga audience should interpret the literary text. The episode relies on the reader being able to recognize key motifs from the world of Old Norse literature even when they are used in unusual or subversive ways. The reader is, moreover, expected to acknowledge the emotional consequences — in this case, the fear and suffering — of the events the dream foreshadows.

The episode also emphasizes the importance of discussing dreams publicly. As Christopher Crocker observes, dreams in Old Norse literature often have an overtly public function:

> Although the experience of dreaming in the sagas remains a personal and private matter, dreams are an important element in the public arena, and it is within and in relation to this arena that they usually derive their perceived function or meaning. That is, a dream will reveal its function or meaning only in its retelling and subsequent interpretation, which often [...] takes on a wider importance than the individual experience of the dreamer and his or her private feelings toward a given dream, although not always exclusively so.[79]

Strangely, none of the dreams in the kings' sagas discussed above are said to have been shared in the public arena. Although this is perhaps implied by their inclusion in the sagas, the dreams are not subject to the sort of collective discussion described in other texts. Focalized through the perspective of individual dreamers, they remain, at least ostensibly, a

76 See for example Hallfreðr vandrædaskáld Óttarsson's *Hákonardrápa* (*SkP* III, pp. 212–15), and the discussion of such imagery in Ström, 'Poetry as an Instrument of Propaganda', pp. 452–56.

77 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 150.

78 *Sverris saga*, p. 6. Sverrir's dreams have been much discussed: see for example Lönnroth, 'Sverrir's Dreams', and Ármann Jakobsson, 'King Sverrir of Norway'.

79 Crocker, 'To Dream Is to Bury', p. 266. See also a discussion of the requirement to share dreams publicly in *Sturlinga saga* in Quinn, 'Looking Ahead to What Is Long Past'.

private affair.[80] The dreams interrupt the narrative of the sagas with their arresting imagery and complex language, but the dreamers themselves make no comment on their meaning, and the reader is left to draw their own conclusions as to their import. In *Hemings þáttr*, however, the act of interpretation must be accomplished in the public sphere. It is only after recounting the dream to his men that Þórir is able to interpret it: the act of describing both the dream and its emotional effect on him gives Þórir the insight he desires. In this way the episode emphasizes the public nature of the dream vision and its significance for the well-being of the entire community. The message of the dream can be found not only in the images seen by the dreamer but in the experience of sharing those images with those around him. In the kings' sagas discussed above, dreaming is a solitary act that prefigures the breakdown of social order; in *Hemings þáttr*, it is a collective endeavour, one which enables some communities — in this case, that of Þórir and his men — to avoid annihilation.

When Tostig finally arrives at the court of King Haraldr, then, the relationship between the public interpretation of signs and the good of the wider community has been firmly established. The Norwegian king's decision to invade England likewise turns on his ability to interpret the many texts — both dreams and visions — that appear around him; however, his failure to do so stands in stark contrast to Sveinn and Þórir. This failure is in large part attributed to Tostig's ability to convince the king that what seem to be ominous signs are in fact the opposite. The dream of King Óláfr is a case in point. In the *þáttr*, St Óláfr speaks the same verse as in the kings' sagas, warning Haraldr that the expedition is doomed: 'Gramr va frægr til fremdar/flestan sigr en digri' (The renowned prince, the stout man, won the most victories, to his honour).[81] As in the case of Steigar-Þórir, negative emotion reinforces the dream experience, with Óláfr appearing 'miok reiðulegr' (very angry) to his half-brother.[82] However, when Haraldr describes his dream to Tostig, Tostig refuses to believe it:

> Tosti svarar eigi mvn Ol(afr) konvngr hafa kveðit visuna, helldr venti ek at se fiolkyngi enskra manna, þat venti ec segir konvngr, at engi se sva fiolkunigr at liki Ol(afs) konvngs bregði a sig, Goþr maðr var Olafr

80 The prose text of *Morkinskinna* hints at some sort of oral transmission and perhaps public discussion about King Haraldr's dream, but is at best ambiguous: 'Eigi vita menn hverr vísu þessa hefir kveðit fyr konungi, en Óláfi konungi ætla flestir menn vísuna' (People do not know who recited this verse to the king, but most people attribute the verse to King Óláfr, *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 306).

81 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 39–40.

82 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 39.

konvngr segir Tosti, en þo hafa fiolkunigir menn synz i þeiʀa manna likium er eigi eru uhelgari enn hann.[83]

> (Tostig replies that King Óláfr could not have spoken the verse: 'rather, I expect that it was due to the magic of English people'. 'I don't think', says the king, 'that anyone is so skilled in magic that he could take on the likeness of King Óláfr'. 'King Óláfr was a good man', replies Tostig, 'but nevertheless sorcerers have been seen in the shapes of men who are no less holy than he'.)

This threat of the English sorcerer adds a new layer to the interpretation of the holy dream, the seeming *oraculum*. Not only is Haraldr unsure whether to believe in the appearance of his brother, but Tostig raises a new possibility: false dreams may be part of the arsenal of the opposing force. Tostig's ability to convince Haraldr that the vision of his sainted brother might be the vehicle of false information demonstrates his power over the king, and over the king's ability to interpret the situation correctly. Tostig's subversion of what turns out to be a true warning casts this power in a particularly unsavoury and dangerous light. It also underscores the need to share dreams publicly rather than with only one man, whose interpretation may be biased or wrong.

The trollwomen also appear in the *þáttr*, but their appearance is preceded by additional uncanny episodes that further reinforce the gravity of Haraldr's mistakes. In the first, Haraldr heals a woman whose body has been invaded by a worm, luring the animal out of her mouth and burning it.[84] The woman cries out in pain, but in the end is cured. This sort of healing is a common motif in folklore and hagiography, and Haraldr himself was credited with a similar healing act while serving in the Varangian guard as a young man. *Morkinskinna* relates that Haraldr, already known to be a 'spakr maðr ok vitr' (wise and knowledgeable person), was asked to cure the wife of one of his fellow soldiers, and that he managed to banish a demonic snake-man who had become the woman's lover.[85] *Hemings þáttr* similarly uses the act of healing as an illustration of Haraldr's character. While gathering his fleet for the invasion of England, the king interrupts his journey down the coast of Norway at the request of another distraught

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83 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 40. Tostig's refusal to acknowledge the truth of the dream is an intriguing echo of Archbishop Stigand's actions in the *Vita Ædwardi* following Edward's vision of the tree. There, Stigand, 'infatuato corde submurmurat in aurem ducis senio confectum et morbo, quid diceret nescire' (with folly at heart whispered in the ear of the earl [i.e. Harold Godwinson] that the king was broken with age and disease and knew not what he said). Stigand here misleads Harold Godwinson in much the same way Tostig misleads King Haraldr: see *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 118–19.

84 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 40–41. See further the examples discussed in Bartlett, 'Medieval Miracle Accounts'.

85 *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 89–91.

husband. This man is not named, nor is his social position described; the implication is that he is unremarkable, one of Haraldr's many subjects who happens to find himself in trouble. The king's decision to help is portrayed as one of generosity and good kingship, although Haraldr is aware of how such acts help to enhance his royal reputation: if he helps the man, he notes, 'þa vitu þer at þer eiguð eigi konvng drambsaman, þo at harðr se kallaðr oc sinkr' (then you will realize that you do not have a proud king, even though he might be called severe and stingy).[86] Referencing his well-known (albeit posthumous) nick-name *harðráðr* ('hard ruler' or 'severe'), the king seems strangely aware of his own literary status. The episode hints at the alternative identities available to him. Is he still the heroic warrior from his early days in Byzantium or has he become the 'hard ruler' known to posterity? To what extent can the king control his own reputation, and through what sort of deeds: healing his subjects' bodies or exposing them to danger in pursuit of conquest abroad? The episode portrays Haraldr's readiness to help the unnamed couple in a positive light, and yet the image of the snake coming out of the woman's mouth is an unsettling call-back to the dream of Þórir of Steig, in which the king's own mouth became a raven's beak that struck at his subjects. In the first, the king kills; in the second, he cures. Both episodes nevertheless focus on the suffering caused by the eerie fusion of human and animal, which only Haraldr seems able to control. Is the king able to save the woman because he too has an animal lurking within?

While this episode poses more questions than it answers, it is balanced by another that makes clear the inevitable course of history. Shifting its focus from Norway to Iceland, the *þáttr* describes the dream of a priest named Hugi, in which the inhabitants of the local churchyard rise out of their graves and argue about who ought to be buried where. The episode centres on a naked female corpse, who approaches the priest and tells him where the various bodies should go. If the woman with the snake in her belly hovered dangerously close to death, the corpse-woman in this vision ventures uncannily close to life. And yet, her position within the supernatural realm gives her access to information no human could know.[87] When asked about the outcome of King Haraldr's expedition, the woman's answer is stark: 'fellr hann' (he falls/will fall).[88] Old Norse has no simple future tense: the king's fall seems to occur as the woman

86 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 40.

87 In this, she is similar to other female figures who dispense knowledge while seeming to hover between the realms of life and death. Consider the *vǫlva* raised by Óðinn in *Vǫluspá*, or the conversation between Brynhildr and the giantess in *Helreið Brynhildar*. See *Eddukvæði*, I, pp. 291–321, and II, pp. 349–51. On women and prophecy, see further Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 47–58.

88 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 44.

speaks, her words acting as both a statement of fact and a prediction of what is to come. Death, the vision implies, is both eternal and inescapable. The corpse-woman can moreover predict the length and nature of subsequent kings' reigns, further collapsing the separation between present and future. She uses nicknames such as 'Fri[ð]leifr' (Peaceful) and 'Styrlavgr' (Strife-ful) to refer to Haraldr's descendants and, although *Harðraði* is here applied to Sigurðr Jórsalafari rather than Haraldr himself, the list references the healing of the Norwegian woman and Haraldr's preoccupation there with his posthumous reputation. The female corpse thus becomes an uncanny inversion of the woman Haraldr had previously healed, a *memento mori* that demonstrates the limit of his powers and finite nature of his reign. While the healing episode looked back to Haraldr's early days as a hero in Byzantium, this episode gestures forward to another king, Sigurðr, who will follow in his footsteps to the east. Time is circular, the dream seems to suggest; kings come and go, each walking the same path, each telling the same tale. All will die.

Strangely, Haraldr is not told of Hugi's dream. Set apart from the chronology and even geography of the main narrative, it provides additional information for the reader but not the king himself. Nevertheless, as Haraldr continues on his way, yet another uncanny episode occurs, one that is clearly intended to warn him of the fatal outcome of his trip. As the Norwegian fleet gathers in the Sólund Islands a ship arrives from Greenland, captained by the ominously named Líka-Loðinn (Corpse-Loðinn), a man known for transporting the corpses of important men around Greenland. Questioned by the king about the passage to Norway, Loðinn relates a series of unfortunate events. Two days' sail from Greenland, he reports, the ship encountered a great fire burning on the water, followed by dark clouds that rained blood. It is a remarkable tale, and yet the visual evidence is still present, as he notes: 'oc ma þat bloð enn her sia, oc er nu samanlaupið siþan kolnaði, þviat varmt var þa er ofan kom' (and one may still see that blood here, and it has now congealed since it cooled, because it was warm when it came down).[89] Such phenomena nearly always foreshadow danger in Old Norse literature, and this is clearly how Haraldr is meant to interpret them.[90] In *Hemings þáttr*, however, fire and rain serve as an unsettling prelude to an even more fantastic event. As Loðinn relates:

> oc er ver hofðum enn siglt iij døgr, þa heyrðu ver gny mikinn. ver sam þa marga fugla fliuga sem ek veit þar nofn til i Noregi [...] varu þeir gullu oc klokꝛðu með mikilli gleði. þersi flꝛg vanz um eina eykt dags, sva at ei matti sia heiðan himin fyri oc flugo þo alldri enir somu, Siþan

89 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 42.

90 Consider the many parallels noted by Fellows-Jensen in *Hemings þáttr*, p. cxxxvi.

> sigldu ver i íj dægr aðr ver komum at landi i gærkvelld, þa sam ver ena somu fugla fliuga vestan […] varu þa brottu allir enir stærstu fuglarnir, flugu þeir þa allir þegiandi, oc sva sem sorgfullir, oc er þeir komu at landi dreifðuz þeir, oc settiz ser hverr.[91]
>
> (And when we had sailed again three days, we heard a great clamour. We saw then many birds flying, the kind whose names I knew in Norway. […] They shrieked and cackled with great glee. This flight lasted for three hours of the day so that we could not see a clear sky, and yet the same ones never flew past twice. After that we sailed for another two days before we came to land yesterday evening. Then we saw the same birds flying from the west. […] Then all the largest birds were missing. Then they all flew silently, and seemed sorrowful, and when they came to land they scattered, and each settled on its own.)

This flight of birds across the North Atlantic speaks again to Steigar-Þórir's vision of the raven-beaked Haraldr but emphasizes even more strongly the emotional consequences of the conflict in England: the returning birds are silent and sorrowful, each sitting apart. Like the leaders of the Norwegian army, the principal birds of the flock are killed, and those who survive are isolated by their grief. It is a moving image of what we would today identify as collective trauma. In the words of Kai Eriksen, this delivers

> a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. […] 'I' continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. 'You' continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But 'we' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body.[92]

The tragedy this vision predicts is more than the death of the army's leaders; it is the death of the army's sense of identity, the death of its collective soul.

Whereas Þórir's dream focused on the men of Steig, Loðinn's vision encompasses the whole of the Norwegian army: the sheer scale of the bird-army prefigures conflict on a massive, international scale. The birds are associated with Norway in this episode, and their flight across the North Atlantic, past a ship sailing from Greenland, is a direct parallel to the international character of Haraldr's proposed invasion. Greenland often functions as a marginal space in Old Norse literature. Its hostile environment is the site of strange occurrences, disease, and hardship, and

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91 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 42.

92 Eriksen, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', p. 460, drawing on earlier work in Eriksen, *Everything in its Path*.

the journey west is fraught with difficulties.[93] By associating the bird-army with the passage from Greenland, the *þáttr* invests it with an even more uncanny resonance. By locating the birds' flight in the perilous expanse of water between Norway and Greenland, Haraldr's journey to England is similarly portrayed as a risky venture into the unknown. One might even go so far as to draw a parallel here between England and Greenland: just as Greenland is subject to a 'marginalizing strategy', to use Jonathan Grove's phrase, in the sagas of Icelanders, in this episode England too becomes a land off the edge of the map.[94] It is fitting that, in a tale which chronicles the decline of Scandinavian involvement in England and the realignment of England towards mainland Europe, England is increasingly portrayed as a land on the very edge of the Scandinavian world: here be monsters. As we have seen already in the *konungasögur*, to face the monster is to face the horror of one's own vulnerability. The shocked silence of the bird-army suggests they have indeed faced this horror, and been traumatized by it.

Loðinn understands precisely what these events signify, and he warns the king not to continue with the expedition. Yet again, however, Haraldr asks Tostig for his interpretation, and Tostig replies: 'hefþi fyri merkan mann borið þa væri þetta nybreytni' (if it had occurred to a truthful person, then this would be remarkable).[95] Despite Loðinn's protests, the king accepts Tostig's reading of the situation and it is only when the fleet reaches England that Haraldr becomes convinced of the futility of his task. By that time, however, it is too late: the monster has arrived. As the Norwegian fleet anchors off the coast of Scarborough,

> þa fell veðrið i logn ok lagv þeir þar vm nottina. menn voknvðv við þat er kveðit var i lofti ok þotti hverivm sem yfir sinv skipi væri. allir lita i loftið ok sia eina trollkonv riða vargi i loftinv. hon hafði trog i kníam ser fvllt með bloði ok manna lima hon qvað visvr .iíj. þersar.[96]
>
> (then the wind fell deadly calm, and they lay there for the night. The men awoke as something was spoken in the air above them, and it seemed to each of them that it was over his own ship. They all look up and see a trollwoman riding a wolf in the air. She had a trough on her knees that was full of blood and the limbs of men. She spoke these three verses.)

This description is the logical continuation of the process begun in the *konungasögur*: the trollwoman becomes more monstrous and powerful with each retelling. In *Morkinskinna*, she seemed to be a *fylgja* or a

93 Barraclough, *Beyond the Northlands*, pp. 109–12, and Grove, 'The Place of Greenland'.
94 Grove, 'The Place of Greenland', p. 31.
95 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 43.
96 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 44.

landvættr; in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* she was identified as a troll-woman but confined to the world of dreams. In *Hemings þáttr*, the troll emerges in all her uncanny monstrosity into the human realm. Appearing in the moments between sleeping and waking, she challenges the boundary between the real and the supernatural. In Macrobian terms, she is like a *visum*, the dream that occurs in the moments between wakefulness and slumber: 'adhuc se vigilare aestimans, qui dormire vix coepit, aspicere videtur irruentes in se vel passim vagantes formas a natura seu magnitudine seu specie discrepantes variasque tempestates rerum vel laetas vel turbulentas' (In this drowsy condition the dreamer thinks he is still fully asleep and imagines he sees spectres rushing at him or wandering vaguely about, differing from natural creatures in size and shape, and hosts of diverse things, either delightful or disturbing).[97] The *visum* is typically a false prophet, but this creature speaks the truth; perhaps she is rather a macabre *oraculum*. She slips between dream-categories as she slips between worlds, her resistance to categorization another aspect of her monstrosity. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has argued:

> This refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things' is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.[98]

Challenging the boundaries humans construct to make sense of the world, the trollwoman is a monstrous embodiment of Haraldr's desire to dissolve the boundaries between Norway and England. She is, too, an ominous portent of the fear and violence such a crossing must provoke.

Just as the woman's physical body looms over the Norwegian fleet, her voice and verse overwhelm the episode. As the wind falls to a deadly calm, her voice is the only sound that can be heard; all attention is focused on her words. Unlike the *konungasögur*, *Hemings þáttr* does not break up the stanzas spoken by the trollwoman, but cites them together to create a poetic sequence that interrupts the prose for longer, and in a more sustained manner, than in other works. It is as though she demands a formal call for hearing, just like a court poet; the men can only listen, not respond. In the manuscript known as *Hauksbók*, the initial letter of each stanza is marked in red, further emphasizing the importance of the woman's utterance and its separation from the surrounding prose text.[99] The verses are, moreover,

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97 Macrobius, *Opera*, II, p. 10, and Macrobius, *Commentary*, p. 89.

98 Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 6.

99 Such marking is certainly not unusual in *Hauksbók*, but in comparison to the relatively unassuming way in which the same stanzas are presented in the *konungasögur* manuscripts, the emphasis is notable.

longer than in previous versions, with the last line of each repeated. As noted above, this effect appears first in a single verse in *Heimskringla*. It is here expanded to all three stanzas. Such repetition enhances the incantatory effect and emphasizes the unity of the poetic sequence. A new stanza is also added to the two verses from the *konungasögur*:

> Stór taka fjǫll at f*alla;
> ferr sótt of kyn dróttar;
> eyðisk friðr, en fœðisk
> fjandhugr meða*l* landa.
> Vesa munk yðr, sem ǫðrum,
> angrljóðasǫm, þjoðum
> — ylgr nemr suðr at svelgja
> sveita — Urðr of heitin;
> sveita Urðr of heitin.[100]
>
> Huge mountains begin to fall; disease travels throughout the race of men; peace is destroyed and enmity nourished between nations. I will be known to you, as to other people, as Urðr (Norn) full of sorrowful songs — in the south the she-wolf begins to swallow blood — known as Urðr of blood.

The apocalyptic imagery of this verse places the imminent defeat of the Norwegians within a truly cosmic context. The apocalypse is the subject of perhaps the most well-known and influential dream vision in western Christendom, the Book of Revelation. This verse mixes quasi-biblical language with Old Norse mythology: Urðr is one of the three principal *nornir*, the Fates, while falling mountains, disease, and widespread enmity herald the end of days in both traditions. There is, truly, no escape from the events presaged by this vision. The woman's *angrljóð* (sorrowful song) is not only Haraldr's funeral dirge, but that of his men and perhaps of the human race as well.[101]

The king asks Tostig for his opinion one last time:

> konvngr mællti þicki þer nockors vert vm þetta. enkis s(egir) T(osti). þa ertv davðr i hiartanv segir konvngr þvi at ek hefir i morgvm bardogvm verið ok sa ek alldri fyr slikar bendingar.[102]

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100 Cited from *SkP* II, pp. 820–21. See also *Hemings þáttr*, p. 45.

101 The episode is similar to the *Darraðarljóð* episode in *Njáls saga*, in which twelve women, presumed to be valkyries, are seen chanting verse as they spin on a grotesque loom composed of men's body-parts. The episode is understood to refer to the many deaths that take place at the Battle of Clontarf, another major conflict with an 'international' component (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, pp. 448–60). On the poem, see Poole, *Viking Poems*, pp. 116–56; on the broader visionary context of the episode, see Ingibjörg Eyþórsdóttir, '"Darraðarljóð"'.

102 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 45–46.

> (The king said, 'Do you think there is any meaning in this?' 'None at all', replies Tostig. 'Then you are dead at heart', says the king, 'because I have been in many battles and I never saw such omens'.)

This is the moment when the king finally realizes he is doomed, and that Tostig's interpretation of events is wrong. Haraldr has, to follow DaCapra, finally acknowledged the problem; Tostig, on the other hand, continues to deny, repress, and blindly repeat.[103] It is perhaps the shocking monstrosity of the trollwoman that has effected this change, as well as the overwhelming nature of the song she sings: the *angrljóð* both demands and enables Haraldr's interpretation. As Cohen argues, 'The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically "that which reveals", "that which warns", a glyph that seeks a hierophant'.[104] Neither we nor the king can pull apart the poetry from the vision; the interpretation of one is the interpretation of the other. Through the verse, Haraldr learns to read the monstrous body correctly. He moreover recognizes Tostig as a false hierophant whose emotional state renders him unable (or unwilling) to interpret such texts. Tostig, the king realizes, is *davðr i hiartanv* (dead at heart). Correct interpretation requires not only mental but emotional intelligence. Haraldr discovers that, although warnings may come from without, it is only by acknowledging the fear within that one may learn to heed them.

Haraldr has thus been awakened in more ways than one. The metaphor of 'waking up' to the truth is a common one, but it is more complex than might at first appear. The experience of being jolted awake by a figure in a dream plays a central role in Freud's so-called 'dream of the burning child', discussed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[105] There, he describes a father who has watched over his child, ill with fever, for many days. When the child dies, the father falls asleep in a nearby room, leaving the body surrounded by candles under the care of an old watchman. After sleeping for a few hours, the father dreams that the child appears next to him, asking 'Father, don't you see I'm burning?' The father wakes up and realizes that the watchman has fallen asleep and that a candle has fallen onto the wrappings around his child's body, partially burning them. Cathy Caruth, building on the interpretations of both Freud and Lacan, argues that awakening is itself a site of trauma, 'the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death'.[106] Like the vision of the trollwoman above, the dream of the burning child disrupts itself by waking

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103 LaCapra, *History and Memory*, p. 54.

104 Cohen, 'Monster Culture', p. 4.

105 *SE*, IV, pp. 509–10.

106 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 104. Caruth draws on Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*.

the dreamer, forcing him to confront the reality of death. And yet, this confrontation is a failure, as the child's body has already started to burn: the father fails to 'see' (and stop) the burning by the candle just as he failed to 'see' (and accept, acknowledge) the child's death from the fever.[107] The trauma of *not* seeing is repeated, both in the dream and, importantly, in the act of waking up from that dream.

How does this relate to *Hemings þáttr*, and to the depiction of events that occurred almost a millennium before the rise of psychoanalysis? Haraldr too fails to 'see' the death that surrounds him. In fact, he does so repeatedly, as dreams and portents enact, over and over again, the death that is to come. Like the sleeping father, Haraldr 'sees' the death of his men too late, and this failure dooms him to repeat it one last time: in battle, in the waking world. As his rebuke to Tostig makes clear, however, he has finally awakened. Indeed, the collective awakening of the army to the trollwoman's song suggests a collective realization of what is to come: both Haraldr and his men now 'see' their own deaths clearly. Tragically, they also 'see' how they have failed to prevent them. It is notable, however, that such an awakening brings with it the imperative to survive, argues Caruth, and to tell the story of '*what it means not to see*':[108]

> The implications of such a transmission will only be fully grasped, I think, when we come to understand how, through the act of survival, the repeated failure to have seen in time — in itself a pure repetition compulsion, a repeated nightmare — can be transformed into the imperative of a speaking that awakens others.[109]

The literary text becomes the vehicle through which such transmission occurs. Although Haraldr and many of his men die in the battle that follows, a few do survive: it is they who are called upon to bear witness, not only to the conflict, but to the failures of seeing that led up to it. Unlike the dream of the burning child, *Hemings þáttr* presents the imperative to awaken as collective rather than individual. The trollwoman calls upon the entire fleet to pass on the story of what they have seen, what they have failed to see, and what they have seen too late. The transmission of this trauma — of the failure to see — lies at the heart of the literary text. Trauma generates the cycle of retelling and re-'seeing' that manifests in the many iterations of the dream-sequence and the narratives that surround it. Trauma provokes the repetition that occurs both within individual texts — through dreams, visions, and verses — and across the saga corpus. The imperative to awaken, to tell the story, and to discover its meaning, spreads through the kings' sagas and, ultimately, into *Hemings þáttr*.

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107 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 102–03.
108 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 109 (emphasis original).
109 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 111.

As Yolanda Gampel observes, the experience of living through war and other forms of extreme violence causes survivors to question the very fabric of reality:

> Those who experience such traumas are faced with an unbelievable and unreal reality that is incompatible with anything they knew previously. As a result, they can no longer fully believe what they see with their own eyes; they have difficulty in distinguishing between the unreal reality they have survived and the fears that spring from their own imagination.[110]

Although written long before modern theories of the mind and trauma, the texts discussed in this chapter exemplify the confusion that can arise between the fears of the mind and those provoked by the horrors of war. Those who attempt to write about such experiences face an impossible task: to represent events that, by their very nature, resist representation; to witness experiences that seem to defy reality. Metaphor, symbol, and other forms of coded discourse are therefore used to write about traumatic experience in an oblique manner that parallels the confusing, indirect, and repetitive ways in which traumatic events are remembered. The *Vita Ædwardi* is an example of one such text, in which an impossible image — a tree severed from its roots and re-joined — encodes the despair of a ruptured family, the grief of a conquered people. Although writing long after the events of 1066, Norse authors likewise look to the power of metaphor to imagine the traumas of the past. The wolf, the raven, the trollwoman: well-worn figures of skaldic battle-verse burst into life in their texts, embodying the fear, grief, and guilt provoked by violent conflict. The unreal space of the dream vision allows the disruptive resurrection of such figures over multiple saga texts, as their authors seek, again and again, to make sense of the conflict, to explain and rationalize it into narrative form. This process reveals, however, a tension at the heart of the drive to mythologize, as the symbols of extreme emotion threaten to overwhelm the narrative from within. How stable is a narrative that seeks to represent the unrepresentable? To imagine the unimaginable? As dreams blur into waking life, the lines blur between verse and prose, real and fantastic, memory and history. The traumatic experience is, as Caruth has argued, ultimately incomprehensible, and yet the imperative to speak remains.[111] As saga authors attempt to work through the traumatic past, their repetitive, disrupted, and unstable narratives reveal the essential paradox that lies at the heart of that process, and acknowledge, perhaps, the impossibility of fully accomplishing that task.

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110 Gampel, 'Reflections on the Prevalence of the Uncanny', p. 50.

111 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 94–115.

CHAPTER 3

Fratricide in the North

Allas for syte, so may I saye,
My synne it passis al mercie,
For ask i[t] þe, lord, I ne maye,
To haue it am I nouȝt worthy.
Fro þe shalle I be hidde in hye,
Þou castis, me, lorde, oute of my kyth
In lande.
Both here and there oute-caste am I.[1]

So laments Cain in the York mystery play that dramatizes the first murder. As the many representations of this episode show, the killing of brother by brother is not only a family tragedy but a transgression against social and religious norms. It is a repugnant act, expressing hatred and division where there should be love and unity. So unpardonable is the rupture of the fraternal bond that it leads to Cain's exile from the human race: cast into the wilderness, he is severed for all time from human society and from God. Cain's killing of Abel is a powerful story about the dangers of intrafamilial conflict, and one which loomed large in the medieval imagination.[2] While Chapter 2 looked at the use of dream visions in the mythologization of 1066, this chapter explores how authors from across the medieval north examined the conflicts of that year through the lens of fratricide. As with the dream visions, the literary trope of kin-slaying provided a potent model through which to examine the traumatic conflicts that arose between the people of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia. As will be seen below, medieval authors focused on the struggles that took place within the English royal family itself, particularly those between Harold Godwinson and his brother Tostig. The depiction of 1066 as stemming

1 'The Glouerers', pp. 38–39 (ll. 118–25).

2 Scholarship on Cain in the medieval period is broad, encompassing not only the mystery plays but a wide array of literary and visual productions. For an introduction to these works, see especially Davidson, 'Cain in the Mysteries' (drama), and Voyer, 'Image de l'exclusion' (visual representations). Although not focused on the medieval period, Quinones's *The Changes of Cain* is an insightful analysis of the Cain and Abel myth over time.

from fraternal conflict plays an important part in the mythologization of the Conquest as a traumatic event. It exemplifies, as Tal describes it, '[t]he competing drives to resuscitate history and to generate myth'.[3] Tal examines the tension between the need to document the reality of frightening and uncontrollable experiences, on one hand, and the desire, on the other, to set traumatic events within a narrative that can be contained and understood. The latter drive, she observes, can have the aim of 'help[ing] us reformulate a myth we can live with', even if that myth is inaccurate, artificial, or politically self-serving.[4] Such is the myth of fraternal conflict in a number of Anglo-Norman accounts of 1066, as the strife between Harold and Tostig Godwinson becomes a parable for the moral failures of the English state and a justification for the Norman invasion. Myths, however, are slippery beasts, and their meanings are unstable. Despite the resonance of this myth for Anglo-Norman audiences, the spectre of fratricide is used in the Scandinavian sagas to condemn the conflict in a different way. Norse authors fly in the face of history when they expand the circle of Godwin's sons to include other members of the English nobility. When this expanded band of brothers find themselves on different sides of the conflict in all three of the major battles, they become living reminders of the heritage shared by so many others in England, Normandy, and Scandinavia. The conflict between them is a tragic reminder of how easily such ties are forgotten in the face of political difference, and the traumatic consequences of discord between kin.

'This was where their story began'

A key element in the myth of 1066 is the enmity between Harold and Tostig Godwinson. As seen in Chapter 2, Tostig is condemned in *Hemings þáttr* for the poor advice he gives to Haraldr Sigurðarson, which leads to the death of both men at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. English and Norman sources, however, focus on Tostig's conflict with his brother Harold, showing how the rivalry between the sons of Godwin leads to the downfall of the English state. An episode told in multiple *vitae* of King Edward dates this rivalry to the brothers' childhood, giving their conflict as adults a sense of inevitability: the story of the Norman conquest, these texts suggest, was assured long before its principal protagonists could even hold a sword. The tale is told by Aelred of Rievaulx in his *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*. Aelred draws on the *Vita* of Osbert of Clare, which in turn draws on the anonymous *Vita*

3 Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 61. On the mythologization of key moments during the Norman Conquest, see Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*, pp. 95–152.

4 Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 66.

discussed in Chapter 2.[5] It was, however, Aelred's version of Edward's life that formed the basis for most subsequent retellings; his work therefore played a crucial role in the mythologization not only of Edward himself but of the events that followed his death. Aelred describes how, as boys, Harold and Tostig were playing in the presence of the king and their father, Earl Godwin,

> cum unus ex illis amarius quam expetebat ludi suauitas insurrexisset in alterum, ludum uerterunt in pugnam. Et ecce Haraldus uehementius in fratrem irruens, capillis eius utramque manum inserit, prostratumque nisi citius eriperetur uirtute superior suffocasset.[6]
>
> (when one of them, more ill-natured than the pleasure of play called for, rose up against the other, turning their play into a fight. Harold rushed wildly at his brother, took his hair with both hands, and would have suffocated the prostrate boy if a greater strength had not quickly pulled him off.)[7]

Godwin, not unlike his son Tostig in *Hemings þáttr*, refuses to see anything of significance in this event, but King Edward prophecies the ill-feeling that will grow between the brothers in adulthood. Eventually, he predicts, it will affect the entire kingdom:

> primum circumuentione insidiisque priuatis quasi ludere uidebuntur, ad ultimum fortior infirmiorem proscribet, rebellantem prosternet et prioris mortem post modicum sequens alterius calamitas expiabit.[8]
>
> (first they will seem to be playing at deceit and private plots; at the last, the stronger will outlaw the weaker and will overwhelm the rebel, and shortly after the death of the one, an ensuing calamity to the other will expiate it.)[9]

In Aelred's formulation, the bad feelings between Harold and Tostig are responsible for the conflicts of 1066 and, ultimately, for the Norman Conquest of England. Private plots lead to public strife; private sin leads to public disaster. The boyhood scuffle between Harold and Tostig is both an omen of the unrest to come and the first step towards a war that will engulf the entire realm. As Aelred observes, 'Quae omnia sic completa tota Anglia teste probatur' (Then these things took place, all England bears witness).[10]

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5 On Aelred and his sources, see *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, pp. 69–84. See also *The History of Saint Edward*, pp. 3–11, for an overview of the various *Lives*.

6 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, p. 139.

7 *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 189.

8 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, p. 140.

9 *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 189.

10 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, p. 140; and *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 189.

In Aelred's tale the episode serves mainly to demonstrate the wisdom and prescience of King Edward. Later authors, however, expand on both the physical and emotional violence of the episode to emphasize the destructive effects fraternal strife has on the kingdom as a whole. In her vernacular adaptation of Aelred's text, *La Vie d'Edouard*, the Nun of Barking adds graphic details to the description of the brawl between Tostig and Harold:[11]

> Ces valez devant eous juerent,
> Mais lur giu en ire turnerent.
> Des puinz se sunt entreferuz
> E a tere puis abatuz.
> Harald turnat le giu en guere,
> Par force vint l'altre requere.
> Ses dous mains es chevos li lace,
> Ne li dunast de mort espace,
> S'il ne fust de lui desevré,
> Kar sun voil l'use il estranglé.[12]
>
> (These little boys were playing around the hall, but their game turned to anger. They beat each other with their fists, and knocked each other to the ground. It was Harold who turned the play to fighting, attacking the other with his strength. He got his two hands entangled in his hair, and would have given him death without respite had he not been hauled off him, for he wanted to strangle him.)[13]

Whereas Aelred's text is ambiguous as to which boy starts the fight, the Nun identifies Harold as the aggressor: *Harald turnat le giu en guere* (it was Harold who turned the play to fighting). He is impelled not by a sense of bitterness or ill-feeling (*amarus*), as in Aelred's account, but by pure rage (*ire*). Despite this increased intensity of feeling, the Nun repeatedly insists on the boys' youth: they are not only *valez* (young boys), as in the passage above, but also 'juvenes' (young) and 'petiz' (little).[14] Their status as children stands in alarming contrast to the ferocity of Harold's gesture and the anger that drives it, and the Nun moreover makes explicit the intention behind the onslaught: *sun voil l'use il estranglé* (he wanted to strangle him). The attempted fratricide is both vivid and shocking, enacted as it is by the hands of a child. It is in keeping with this emotionally heighted description

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11 For a discussion of the likely date of composition, see *La Vie d'Edouard*, trans. by Bliss, pp. 38–39.

12 *La Vie d'Edouard*, ed. by Södergård, p. 227 (ll. 3709–18).

13 *La Vie d'Edouard*, trans. by Bliss, pp. 136–37.

14 *La Vie d'Edouard*, ed. by Södergård, p. 227 (l. 3706).

that Edward's prophecy likewise dwells on the negative affects that will destabilize the kingdom:

> Ire e haür entre eus naistra,
> Ki l'un vers l'altre commuvra.
> Lur traïsuns e lur aguaiz
> Serrunt en liu de giu parfaiz.[15]
>
> (anger and hate will come between them, and one will rise up against the other. Conspiracy and treachery will take the place of the games they have done with.)[16]

The boys' *ire e haür* leads directly to the *traïsuns e aguaiz* of their adulthood, the doubled structure of these phrases further emphasizing the conflict that pits *l'un vers l'altre*.[17]

The Nun moreover makes an intriguing addition to Aelred's comment that England bears witness (*teste probatur*) to the truth of Edward's prophecy:

> Tut avint si cum li reis dist,
> Kar lur afaire issi se prist.
> Ço testimonie Engletere,
> Ki dunc cunsenti a lur guere.[18]
>
> (Everything came about as the king said, for this was where their story began. England witnessed it, and so England connived at their war.)[19]

Explicitly identifying this boyhood brawl as the beginning of *lur afaire*, the Nun portrays the enmity between the sons of Godwin as the ultimate starting point for the conflicts of 1066. Giving a brief sketch of Tostig's exile, the Norwegian invasion, and Harold's defeat at the hands of the Normans, she shows, like Aelred, how a childish quarrel eventually erupts into all-out war. Unlike Aelred, however, the Nun portrays England itself as complicit in that conflict. The poem draws a direct line between the act of witnessing (*testimonier*) and the act of consenting (*cunsentir*) to conflict: it is a bold and unsettling claim. Why does witnessing imply consent? Does witnessing imply a failure to act? If so, who has failed to act and in what way? It is unclear what *Engletere* means in this context: is it the land? The

15 *La Vie d'Edouard*, ed. by Södergård, p. 228 (ll. 3731–34).
16 *La Vie d'Edouard*, trans. by Bliss, p. 137.
17 This is typical of the Nun's work in general. On her use of doublets and other poetic techniques, see Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*, pp. 423–24.
18 *La Vie d'Edouard*, ed. by Södergård, p. 228 (ll. 3739–42).
19 *La Vie d'Edouard*, trans. by Bliss, p. 137.

people? The state? Does blame lie with those who first witnessed the boys' quarrel, that is, with Godwin and Edward? Or does *Engletere* encompass all those who lived through the conflicts that followed? Are the English themselves to blame for their downfall? *Engletere* is an expansive and nebulous term in this passage, one that threatens to draw even the reader into its orbit — for what is reading if not another form of witnessing? The repercussions of this unfortunate *afaire* extend, it seems, a very long way indeed.

If the *Vie d'Edouard* dwells on the emotional and moral consequences of fraternal strife, a second translation of Aelred's work foregrounds even more strongly the violence of the boys' quarrel. *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*, attributed to the prolific thirteenth-century chronicler Matthew Paris, describes the boys' scuffle thus:

> tan unt jüé
> K'andui sunt mut curu[c]é.
> L'un a l'autre teu coup dune
> K'abatu l'a e tut l'estune.
> Haraudz irez a dreiture
> Prent Tostin par la chevelure
> K'aval le trait par les chevoilz.
> Crever li vout andeus lé oilz.
> L'ensanglante e du poin bat,
> K'a terre le tint tut flat.
> Estranglé l'ust, ne fust rescus,
> Tant fu irez, ardantz, glettus.[20]
>
> (They played until both became cross, and one gave the other a blow that stunned him and knocked him to the ground. Naturally, Harold became angry. He grabbed Tostig by the hair and pulled him down; he wanted to put out both his eyes. He beat and bloodied him with his fists and got him flat on the ground. Harold was so angry, fired up, and bad-tempered that he would have strangled Tostig had Tostig not been rescued.)[21]

Although in this tale it seems to be Tostig who strikes the first blow, the episode is part of a broader condemnation of Harold Godwinson as violent and bad-tempered. Here, the boy Harold reacts with unparalleled and disproportionate violence. The poet emphasizes the vulnerability of Tostig's youthful body — his hair, his eyes, his prostrate position — while focusing on the power of Harold's hands, which beat, bloody, and strangle his brother. Despite this emphasis on the physicality of the struggle, the

20 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 89 (ll. 3145–56).
21 *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 94.

climax of the episode comes with the threefold description of Harold's overwhelming emotional state: he is *irez* (angered), *ardantz* (fired up) and *glettus* (ill-tempered). Negative emotion, not politics, is revealed to be the reason for their later conflict, and Edward's prophecy likewise dwells on the envy (*envie*) and hatred (*hahange*) that will blacken their adult relationship.[22]

As he moves on to describe the military conflicts of 1066, Matthew Paris continues to portray Harold as the aggressor. Streams of active verbs emphasize the king's unrelenting belligerence toward his brother:

> Haraud Tostin mut haï
> E l'enchaça e fors bani [...]
> Il l'enchaça e descumfist
> E exiler cum waif le fist.[23]
>
> (Harold hated Tostig deeply and chased him out, banishing him from the kingdom [...] He pursued and defeated him, and exiled him like a stray.)[24]

The killing of Tostig at Stamford Bridge is, in this text, an emotional tipping-point for Harold, whose hatred morphs into cruelty and arrogance at the very moment of victory over his sibling:

> El norht païs fu la bataille,
> Dunt reis des Engleis Haraud
> Devint tant crueus et tant baud.
> Pur sa pruesce e sa victoire
> Munta en orgoil e gloire.[25]
>
> (That battle, at which Harold, king of the English, became so cruel [and so bold], took place in the north country. His victory and battle skill caused his arrogance and sense of personal glory to grow.)[26]

Untrammelled negative emotion leads to Harold's downfall in Matthew Paris's work, not poor military tactics or a lack of troops. The arrogance provoked by the defeat of Tostig leads Harold to ignore his own laws and treaties, and the poet then traces the king's transformation into the perjured and faithless figure familiar from other Anglo-Norman texts. The killing of Tostig thus leads directly to the downfall of Harold's kingdom:

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22 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, pp. 90–91 (ll. 3183, 3194, and 3199).
23 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 91 (ll. 3199–204).
24 *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 95.
25 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 91 (ll. 3224–28).
26 *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 95.

the violent rupture of the sibling bond is a gateway to the widespread destruction of social, political, and religious ties. As King Edward observes, the boys' quarrel '[n]'est pas simple ju de enfance' (is not a simple game between children): 'Einz est estrifs feluns e fruitz' (It's a rather nasty and violent battle).[27] In the *Estoire*, the episode is far more than a symbol of the conflicts to come; the boyish scrap is, rather, deadly serious, the first battle in an internecine war. It is notable, however, that unlike the Nun and, to a lesser degree, Aelred, Matthew Paris does not include the people of England in his condemnation. Rather, blame for the conflict of 1066 rests almost entirely upon Harold Godwinson, whose moral degradation is evident even in childhood.[28]

The boyhood fight between Harold and Tostig is dramatically illustrated in the sole extant manuscript of the *Estoire*, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.3.59 (*c.* 1255).[29] This work is dominated by the colourful images that spread across the top of each page, illustrating key events described in the poem. The images are accompanied by stanza-like units of text that describe the scene; these rubrics are not part of the narrative poem *per se* but are set apart by their red ink and illuminated initial letters. The result is, as Victoria Jordan observes, 'the presentation of three different and yet connected versions of the story'.[30] The illustration of the fight between Harold and Tostig appears on folio 24^{v} (Fig. 3.1). As described in the poem, King Edward and Godwin are at dinner, surrounded by the other members of the court. Harold and Tostig are locked together on the floor below, grabbing at each other's hair and clothes, staring fiercely into each other's eyes. Tostig lies on the floor, frowning, and seems to speak; Harold smirks as he leans over his brother and pushes him to the ground with his foot.[31] A man leans over the table trying to separate the boys, while another points at them with a rod; he is perhaps trying to use this instrument to stop the fight, but the visual effect is to draw the reader's eyes directly to the unruly scene. The brothers' dishevelled hair and flailing

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27 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 90 (ll. 3177 and 3168); and *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 94.

28 On the negative portrayal of Harold in this work, see Fenster and Wogan-Browne's introduction to *The History of Saint Edward*, pp. 24–25, and Reader, 'Matthew Paris and the Norman Conquest'.

29 The manuscript may have been intended for Eleanor of Castille, who had recently married Edward, the eldest son of Henry III; see further *The History of Saint Edward*, pp. 27–28. The poem itself, however, states that the text and illustrations were originally conceived for Eleanor of Provence, wife of King Henry III; on this see Carter, 'Matthew Paris's Illustrated Life of Edward'. The entire manuscript has been digitized and can be viewed online at <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-EE-00003-00059/1> [accessed 14 February 2024]. It is not the work of Matthew Paris himself but is likely a copy of his work.

30 Jordan, 'The Multiple Narratives of Matthew Paris' *Estoire*', p. 79.

31 Strangely, the rubrics identify Tostig, not Harold, as the older brother, and thus the boy who is shown knocking his brother to the floor. This directly contradicts all other accounts, including the narrative poem by Matthew Paris himself, so is likely to be due to scribal error.

Figure 3.1. Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.3.59, fol. 24^{v}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

limbs stand in stark contrast to the elegant figure of Edward, who gestures toward them as he explains the meaning of the fight to their father. Like the poem it accompanies, the illustration emphasizes both the unnatural violence of the fight and the disruption it brings to the peaceful setting of the court.

The image of Harold and Tostig fighting on the floor does not, however, appear in isolation, but is mirrored on the facing page by an illustration of the death of Earl Godwin, their father (Fig. 3.2). This episode is described by several authors, including both the Nun of Barking and Aelred of Rievaulx. Among the many questionable deeds attributed to Earl Godwin, the murder of King Edward's brother Alfred in 1036 was the most notorious. Writers such as William of Jumièges and Orderic Vitalis portray the killing as evidence of the moral degeneration of the English

Figure 3.2. Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.3.59, fol. 25^{r}. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

elite and, consequently, further justification for the Norman invasion.[32] William of Poitiers claimed Alfred as a member of the Norman ducal family whose death had to be avenged by his Norman cousins.[33] The link between Alfred's murder, Godwin's death, and the events of 1066 runs

32 *GND*, II, pp. 169–71, and *HE*, II, p. 176. See a discussion of this episode in Bosnos, 'Treason and Politics'.

33 *GG*, pp. 6–7. This is despite the fact that the killing of Alfred is ambiguous in William's telling, as the knife used to blind the ætheling appears to damage his brain accidentally. Other sources, such as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the D text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, attribute Alfred's murder to Harold Harefoot. Benoît de Sainte-Maure gives a particularly florid account of the killing in which he rails against Godwin as the traitor who lured Alfred to his death, and at Harold, the tyrant who ordered it: see Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Chronique*, pp. 404–09 (ll. 36171–336).

through the *Lives* of Edward as well, with the earl's death portrayed as divine retribution for his involvement in the killing.[34] As Aelred declares in his introduction to this episode:

> Sed quia iterato sermonem incidimus de Godwino, inserendum arbitror quemadmodum eum proditionum suarum donatum stipendiis diuini iudicii ultrix ira consumpserit, detestandique facinoris, quod in regem fratremque eius commiserat, populo spectante ipsam quam meruerat poenam exsoluerat.[35]
>
> (Having once again mentioned Godwin [i.e., in the description of his sons' fight], I think I should insert how the avenging wrath of divine justice consumed him when he was given over to the waves of treason. As the people looked on, he paid the penalty that he deserved for the detestable crime that he had committed against the king [Edward] and his brother [Alfred].)[36]

The Nun likewise dwells on the 'fel e suduiant' (wicked and treacherous) earl, while Matthew Paris describes the 'traisun,/Desevance e cuntençun' (treason, deception, and contentiousness) that led to the 'grant vengance' (great vengeance) God took against him.[37] All three texts describe the banquet at which Godwin, accused by Edward of killing Alfred, chokes to death while proclaiming his innocence. Following immediately on from the scuffle between Harold and Tostig, the episode offers a further example of the degradation of the Godwin family, and of the danger lurking at the heart of the royal court. The connection between the two episodes is articulated even more clearly in the illustrations of the Cambridge manuscript. As Jordan notes, there is often a 'visual flow' from left to right in the manuscript, and this is true of the images of the fight (on the left) and the death of Godwin (on the right). Indeed, the scene barely seems to change, with both images set at a banquet in Edward's hall. The table on the left seems to extend into the image on the right, where it is draped

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34 On the representation (or lack thereof) of this episode in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the *Encomium Emmæ Reginæ*, and the *Vita Ædwardi*, and the characterization of Godwin in these works, see Keynes and Love, 'Earl Godwin's Ship'.

35 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, p. 140.

36 *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 190.

37 *La Vie d'Edouard*, ed. by Södergård, p. 229 (l. 3781); *La Vie d'Edouard*, trans. by Bliss, p. 137 (l. 3781); *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 92 (ll. 3255–56); and *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 96. The illustrations in the Cambridge manuscript depict Godwin's betrayal of the ætheling in a series of four scenes spread over two facing pages, folios 5^{v} and 6^{r}. In the first, Godwin embraces Alfred, but in the second, a bound Alfred is delivered to King Harold Harefoot. The next scene depicts Alfred's torture and blinding, watched by King Harold, and the final scene spells out the implications of this act, showing a group of armed warriors attacking unarmed peasants and a monk. Alfred's murder is thus shown to be part of the broader pattern of oppression and lawlessness that characterized Harold Harefoot's reign.

in the same tablecloth and set with the same dishes. The same characters are also present in the two scenes: the king and the earl sit side-by-side in both; and in both they are surrounded by nearly identical courtiers. The notable exception to this is Harold and Tostig, who do not appear in the second image; there, the scene is focused on the figure of Earl Godwin. Although the manuscript is too worn for his face to be visible, his arms are raised, presumably in distress. King Edward gestures dramatically towards him. As the *Estoire* relates: 'Atant se escrie li rois:/"Treiez hors ceu chen punois!"' (The king cried out: 'Take this stinking dog out of here!').[38] Courtiers and servants grasp Godwin's arms and legs as they prepare to carry away his body, forming a macabre parallel to the image on the left, in which they grab at Harold's and Tostig's limbs in an attempt to stop the fight. The two images are a graphic reminder of the violence that accompanied the rise of Godwin and his sons, and of threat they posed not only to members of their own family, but to those they came into contact with as well. The enmity between Harold and Tostig becomes part of a wider cycle of violence and betrayal in which the fraternal bond is constantly under threat. Godwin's murder of Alfred is punished not only by his own unnatural death, but by the conflict that erupts between his sons. As the images of the Cambridge manuscript demonstrate, the sins of the father are visited on the children and, moreover, replicated by them to an even greater degree. Theirs is a genealogy of violence in which murder begets fratricide, and fratricide begets civil war.

There is a compelling psychology to the presentation of this episode that suggests a need to understand the mental and emotional processes that led (or might have led) to the traumatic conflicts of 1066. Complex political events are reimagined as a quarrel between individuals, with those individuals motivated by the all-too-human emotions of anger, envy, and arrogance. The conflict between Harold and Tostig is presented as inevitable, the product of flawed characters that manifest even in childhood. Their struggle to succeed the saintly King Edward paradoxically reveals their affinity to the evil Earl Godwin. He is their true father, not only in body but in spirit; he is the progenitor of the dark emotions that drive their actions and plunge England into war. Presented in this way, the tumultuous relationship between Harold and Tostig provides a narrative of the conquest that is both easily understood and relatively contained: according to these *Lives* of Edward, Earl Godwin and his family nursed the seeds of violence at the very heart of the royal court long before the year 1066. In these texts, trauma comes not from abroad, but from within.

38 *La Estoire de Seint Aedward*, p. 94 (ll. 3335–36); *The History of Saint Edward*, p. 97.

An Envious Cain

The anonymous *Vita Ædwardi* likewise condemns the conflict between Harold and Tostig, drawing parallels between the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and that between Polynices and Etocles, the twin sons of Oedipus.[39] These classical allusions are made in the poetic passages of the *Vita* and sound, as Elizabeth M. Tyler has argued, 'ominous, dark notes' that seem strangely at odds with the celebratory prose that surrounds them. The work presents fraternal strife as a tragedy that has befallen otherwise great men:

> Hi duo nubigenę clarissima pignora terrę,
> roboris Herculei, felicia robora regni,
> prestant Angligenis unito federe pacis.
>
> (These two great brothers of a cloud-born land,
> The kingdom's sacred oaks, two Hercules,
> Excel all Englishmen when joined in peace.)[40]

For many Norman chroniclers, however, the conflict between Harold and Tostig is the ultimate example of the moral abyss into which the elite of England had fallen. Indeed, several writers invoke the story of Cain and Abel to set the conflict between the Godwinsons on a mythic scale. One of the earliest accounts of the Conquest, the *Carmen* of Guy of Amiens, draws attention to this biblical parallel. In a rousing address to the Duke of Normandy, the poem's narrator reminds him of the need to punish the crime of fratricide:

> Rex Heraldus enim sceleratus ad ultima terrę
> Fratris ad exicium perfida tela parat;
> Non modicam regni partem nam frater adeptus,
> Tecta dabat flammis et gladiis populum.
> Marte sub opposito currens Heraldus in hostes,
> Non timuit fratris tradere membra neci.
> Alter in alterutrum plus quam ciuile peregit
> Bellum, set uictor (proh dolor!) ipse fuit.
> Inuidus ille Caïn fratris caput amputat ense,
> Et caput et corpus sic sepeliuit humo.
> Hęc tibi preuidit qui debita regna subegit:
> Criminis infesti quatinus ultor eas.
>
> (Harold, the wicked king, was preparing treacherous weapons for a brother's destruction at the farthest end of the land, because this

39 *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 58–61 and 84–89; Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi*', p. 143.
40 *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 58–59.

> brother — having gained no small part of the kingdom — was putting houses to the torch and people to the sword. Rushing upon the enemy in arms, Harold did not fear to do his brother to death. Each waged on the other a worse than civil war, but he, alas, was victor. That envious Cain hewed off his brother's head, and thus he buried head and body in the earth. He who subdued the destined realms foresaw this mission for you: that you should go as the avenger of a violent crime.)[41]

Just as Abel's blood cries out from the earth demanding justice for his murder, so William of Normandy is called upon to invade England and avenge the death of Tostig Godwinson. Harold's killing of Tostig not only justifies the Norman invasion; it demands it. As another early Norman chronicler, William of Poitiers, apostrophizes Harold: 'tu fraterno sanguine maduisti, ne fratris magnitudo te faceret minus potentem [...] Traxit igitur te clades contracta per te' (you have stained yourself with your brother's blood, for fear that his power might diminish yours [...] So you have brought down on your own head the disaster you yourself had prepared).[42] Both Orderic Vitalis and the author of the *Warenne Chronicle* describe Harold's killing of Tostig at Stamford Bridge as a reprehensible example of *fratricidium* (fratricide), while for William of Malmesbury it is *parricidium* (kin-killing).[43] Such language presents Harold as a medieval Cain who must be driven out of the kingdom. William becomes the hand of God whose duty is to restore order, justice, and good government.

The discourse of fratricide offers a potent form of propaganda. As Carolyne Larrington has shown, the story of Cain and Abel had a profound effect on the medieval imagination: 'For medieval Christians, human history began with a fraternal killing. [...] Fratricide and the impulses which underlie it can never be eliminated, for fear of replacement by the brother, the one who is the same as you, that one who can take your place, is deeply embedded in the psyche'.[44] Larrington demonstrates that the fraternal bond was one of the most important relationships in medieval literature, and that mutual respect and support were central to the conception of brotherhood during the period. Before the institution of primogeniture, however, fraternal strife among royal families was a constant threat, with brothers and half-brothers all potentially eligible to inherit the throne, and

41 *Carmen*, pp. 10–11 (ll. 129–40). The *Vita Ædwardi* likewise references the myth of Cain and Abel but only as further evidence of the scale of the tragedy; this text does not figure William as the divine avenger (*The Life of King Edward*, pp. 58–59).

42 *GG*, pp. 140–41.

43 *HE*, II, p. 170; *The Warenne (Hyde) Chronicle*, p. 22; and *GRA*, I, p. 450, respectively.

44 Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 104.

apt to use violence to enforce their claim.[45] Chronicles of the medieval period record numerous fratricides in the histories of Europe's ruling families. Geoffrey of Monmouth dwells on the killing of Malin by his brother Mempricius, an early king of Britain, as well as the murderous conflict between the brothers Ferreux and Porrex, sons of King Gorbodugo. Gregory of Tours describes not only the killing of Abel by Cain, but numerous examples from early Frankish history.[46] The spectre of fratricide similarly hung over the reign of Æthelred II of England, who had succeeded to the throne after his half-brother, Edward the Martyr, was killed in dubious circumstances.[47] In the Norse context, *Ynglinga saga*, the first saga in the compendium *Heimskringla*, tells the story of the brother-kings Alrekr and Eiríkr, who beat each other to death with riding equipment; the killing of the god Baldr by his brother Hǫðr looms over the whole cycle of Norse mythology and may be seen as the beginning of Ragnarǫk, the doom of the gods.[48] The breakdown of fraternal ties threatened the social fabric of the entire community. The end of the world is imagined as one of fratricide and kin-killing in the mythological poem *Vǫluspá*:

> Brœðr munu berjask
> ok at bǫnum verðask,
> munu systrungar
> sifjum spilla;
> hart er í heimi,
> hórdómr mikill,
> skeggǫld, skálmǫld,
> skildir ro klofnir,
> vindǫld, vargǫld,
> áðr veröld steypisk.[49]
>
> (Brothers will fight and become each other's killers, cousins will break the bonds of kinship; it is difficult in the world, [there is] great depravity, axe-age, sword-age, shields are split, wind-age, wolf-age, before the world falls to ruin.)

45 Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 114–16. It should be noted that both Harold and Haraldr inherited their thrones by virtue of being brothers (or, in the case of Harold, the brother-in-law) of a king, while William was orphaned at a young age and had to assert his authority through force.

46 See Larrington's discussion of these and other examples in *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 111–16.

47 See for example the lurid account in Byrhtferth, *The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, pp. 137–41.

48 These examples, and others, are discussed by Larrington in *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 107–16. See also a discussion of fratricide in Old English literature in Hodges, 'Cain's Fratricide', pp. 31–56.

49 *Vǫluspá* stanza 44 in *Eddukvæði*, I, p. 302.

When medieval writers focus on the conflict between Harold and Tostig Godwinson, they are placing it within a much broader cultural context of fratricide. The killing of Tostig by Harold is not just the killing of one man by another: it represents wholesale social breakdown along historical, mythic, and religious lines.

Norman propagandists like Guy of Amiens and William of Poitiers employ the fratricide topos to present the destruction of the English as both self-inflicted and necessary, but other writers are more nuanced in their use of it. Orderic Vitalis examines the mental and emotional processes that underlie sibling rivalry, setting the conflict between Harold and Tostig within a broader exploration of how fraternal division can redraw the political landscape. Orderic is not as vituperative in his description of Harold Godwinson as some of his predecessors,[50] but he is clear about the depraved character of this would-be king. Harold is, according to Orderic, a 'uafer tirannus' (cunning tyrant) who lies to King Edward and breaks his promise to Duke William.[51] He seizes the crown secretly during Edward's funeral and '[m]ox ipse regnum quod nequiter inuaserat, horrendis sceleribus maculauit' (in a short time the kingdom which he had nefariously seized was polluted with crimes too horrible to relate).[52] Orderic sees Harold as weakening England from within; his misrule leaves the kingdom vulnerable to (and perhaps even desirous of) attack from abroad. Orderic moreover presents both the English and the Normans as victims of Harold's sinfulness: 'Iniusta nempe inuasio nimiam inter quasdam gentes dissensionem commouit, multisque matribus filiorum et coniugibus maritorum necem et luctum peperit' (His [Harold's] unjust usurpation had brought about warfare between peoples, and had plunged many mothers into mourning for their sons and wives for their husbands).[53]

In contrast to the faithless Harold, Orderic's Tostig is the epitome of honour and loyalty. There is no banquet-hall brawl in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Rather, it is Tostig's integrity that leads to the schism between the brothers:

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50 William of Poitiers's description of the English king is perhaps the most eloquent, while also the most vehemently partisan of all the Norman chroniclers. He characterizes Harold as a 'uesanus Anglus' (mad Englishman) for having seized the crown, and further declares him 'luxuria foedum, truculentum homicidam, diuite rapina superbum, aduersarium aequi et boni' (soiled with lasciviousness, a cruel murderer, resplendent with plundered riches, and an enemy of the good and the just): *GG*, pp. 100–01 and 114–15. Orderic names both William of Poitiers and Guy of Amiens as sources (*HE*, II, pp. 184–86) but moderates his presentation of their material.

51 *HE*, II, pp. 136–37.

52 *HE*, II, pp. 138–39.

53 *HE*, II, pp. 134–35.

> Tunc Tosticus Goduini comitis filius aduertens Heraldi fratris sui præualere facinus, et regnum Angliæ uariis grauari oppressionibus: ægre tulit, contradixit, et aperte repugnare decreuit. Vnde Heraldus patris consulatum quem Tosticus quia maior natu erat, longo tempore sub Eduardo rege iam tenuerat: ei uiolenter abstulit, ipsumque exulare compulit.
>
> (But Tostig, Earl Godwin's son, seeing that the wickedness of his brother Harold had prevailed, and that the kingdom was groaning under every kind of oppression, took the matter to heart, resolved to oppose him, and openly declared war on him. At this Harold in anger deprived him of their father's earldom which Tostig, the elder by birth, had held for a long time under King Edward, and forced him into exile.)[54]

The contrast between the two brothers is marked, and it exemplifies the dualistic principles encapsulated by the myth of Cain and Abel. As Ricardo Quinones observes: 'brothers are suited to represent not only individuals in contention but individuals with basically different attitudes toward the very conditions of existence'.[55] Harold embodies tyranny and perjury, while Tostig stands up for the rule of law and royal legitimacy. Psychologists today might also identify Tostig's decision to oppose his brother as 'borderwork'. As Larrington writes,

> the establishment of the boundaries of identity, the deliberate selection of different roles or personality traits to distinguish oneself from one's siblings, is crucial to identity formation. [...] Brothers and sisters exist in an eternally present relationship, patrolling the boundaries of sameness and difference with respect to one another.[56]

This process of differentiation is an emotional affair for Tostig and Harold, who react sorrowfully (*aegre*) and furiously (*uiolenter*) to each other's behaviour. The act of differentiating oneself from one's sibling can provoke hostility even when the government of a kingdom is not at stake,[57] but in the case of Harold and Tostig, the brothers' contrasting opinions as to how to run the country quickly turn to open war. Tostig's banishment from England is the inevitable consequence of the conflict between them — England can, after all, have only one king — but it is also a symbol of the mental and emotional gulf that exists between the two. Tostig's departure from the land of their birth makes visible the rupture that occurs within

54 *HE*, II, pp. 138–39.
55 Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 11.
56 Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 6.
57 See further Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 7–8.

the Godwinson family as the brothers pursue opposing routes through the process of identity formation.

The psychological work of differentiation is consolidated in this way through the crossing of geographical boundaries, with land and family linked in Orderic's account. Driven out by Harold, Tostig and his wife take refuge with her family in Flanders. A quiet retirement is not, however, what Tostig wants. He continues on alone:

> Deinde festinus Normanniam adiit, et Willelmum ducem cur periurum suum regnare sineret fortiter redarguit; seque fideliter si ipse cum Normannicis uiribus in Angliam transfretaret regni decus optenturum illi spopondit. Ipsi nempe iamdudum se inuicem multum amauerant; duasque sorores per quas amicicia sæpe recalescebat in coniugio habebant.
>
> (He himself [Tostig] hurried to Normandy, boldly rebuked Duke William for allowing his perjured vassal [i.e. Harold] to rule, and swore that he would faithfully secure the crown for him if he would cross to England with a Norman army. For some time, they [Tostig and William] had been close friends and by marrying two sisters had strengthened the bonds between them.)[58]

Tostig's vow to support William's claim to the English throne echoes the oath of allegiance Harold swore to the duke during his own trip to Normandy a year or two earlier: 'ipse Heraldus apud Rotomagum Willelmo duci coram optimatibus Normanniæ sacramentum fecerat; et homo eius factus omnia quæ ab illo requisita fuerant super sanctissimas reliquias iurauerat' (Harold himself had taken an oath of fealty to Duke William at Rouen in the presence of the Norman nobles, and after becoming his man had sworn on the most sacred relics to carry out all that was required of him).[59] The two oaths are separated by only a few paragraphs in Orderic's text and the parallel could not be clearer; nevertheless, the quality of William's relationship with each of the two Englishmen is markedly different. Whereas Harold vows to become William's vassal (literally 'his man', *homo eius*), Tostig and William become friends and brothers-in-law. Not only does Tostig oppose the faithless Harold, but he appears to have fractured the fraternal bond entirely, constructing in its place a new brotherly relationship with the Duke of Normandy. This blurring of the

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58 *HE*, II, pp. 140–01.

59 *HE*, II, pp. 134–37. The story of Harold's oath seems to have a Norman origin, or was at least popularized in Normandy soon after the Conquest. It appears in early Norman sources such as *Carmen*, pp. 291–300 (ll. 239–40), and *GG*, pp. 70–73; it also occupies pride of place on the Bayeux Tapestry. It is, however, notable by its absence from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and other early English sources. See further *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 220–29, and Higham, 'Harold Godwinesson'.

personal with the political reminds us that borderwork cannot remain an internal, psychological process when the brothers in question are lords of the realm. Tostig's differentiation from Harold leads him to find not only a surrogate brother but a replacement king. Tostig's realignment with his surrogate brother William works to realign the borders of their two kingdoms as well.

Tostig is not alone in the redrawing of personal and political boundaries, however. Harold too seeks support from outside his immediate kin-group when he marries into the family of the Earls of Mercia. Orderic observes that the sons of Earl Ælfgar, Edwin and Morcar, 'Heraldo familiariter adheserunt, eumque iuuare toto conamine nisi sunt: eo quod ipse Edgiuam sororem eorum uxorem habebat' (were close friends and adherents of Harold and gave him every help in their power; for he had taken to wife their sister Edith).[60] Just as Tostig aligns himself with his brother-in-law, Duke William, so Harold comes to rely on his allegiance with the sons of Ælfgar. Orderic notes this fact immediately preceding his account of Tostig's rebellion and exile, implying that it was Harold who first sought to prioritize his brothers-in-law over his natural sibling. That Tostig himself had repeatedly come into conflict with Earl Ælfgar's family can only have fanned the flames of fraternal ill-will: not only does Harold shift his allegiance away from Tostig, but he does so in favour of his brother's long-standing enemies. In Orderic's work, then, Tostig is exiled not only from his country but from his own family. It is in keeping with this double exile that he should look to William to fill the gap.

Orderic's Tostig is, admittedly, not entirely noble or consistent in his actions after he leaves Normandy. Blown off course on his way back to England, Tostig arrives in Norway where, as discussed in the previous chapter, he persuades Haraldr harðráði to invade his brother's kingdom. Orderic presents Tostig's actions here as a matter of expediency, a ruse meant to save his own skin rather than a betrayal of his promise to Duke William. In this text, Haraldr of Norway is no substitute for William of Normandy: he is, as noted above, both covetous (*auidus*) and a tyrant (*tirannus*), just like Harold Godwinson.[61] Nevertheless, the Norwegian invasion assures the Norman success, drawing Harold's troops away from the southern coast so the Norman fleet can land unopposed. The Norwegian campaign is not described in detail, but the slaughter at Stamford Bridge offers a dramatic finale to this story of fraternal conflict:

> Deinde pugna utrinque acerrima commissa est: in qua nimius sanguis ex utraque parte effusus est, et innumerabilis hominum bestiali rabie

60 *HE*, II, pp. 138–39. On the historical background to this, see van Kempen, 'The Mercian Connection', esp. pp. 15–18, and Higham, 'Harold Godwinesson', pp. 29–32.

61 *HE*, II, pp. 144–45.

> furentium multitudo trucidata est. Denique instantibus Anglis uictoria cessit, et Heraldus Noricorum rex cum Tostico et omnibus copiis suis occubuit. Locus etiam belli pertranseuntibus euidenter patet, ubi magna congeries ossuum mortuorum usque hodie iacet; et indicium ruinæ multiplicis utriusque gentis exhibet.
>
> (Then the battle was bitterly contested on both sides; terrible bloodshed took place, and in the mad fury of the contending parties a countless multitude of men lost their lives. In the end, victory came to the relentless English, and Haraldr king of the Norwegians with Tostig and all his forces fell on the field of battle. Travellers cannot fail to recognize the field, for a great mountain of dead men's bones still lies there and bears witness to the terrible slaughter on both sides.)[62]

As noted above, Orderic earlier condemns Harold for causing mothers and wives on all sides of the conflict to mourn: his description of Stamford Bridge brings that comment to life in graphic and horrific detail. The passage dwells repeatedly on the magnitude of the opposing armies (*innumerabilis*, *multitudo*, *omnes copiae*) and on the inhuman nature of the conflict: the two sides fall on each other in an animal-like frenzy (*bestiali rabie*), while the descriptions of excessive bloodshed (*nimius sanguis*) and the giant pile of bones (*magna congeries ossuum*) further suggest the work of ravening beasts rather than men. There is something almost sacrificial about the image of the bone-mountain, and indeed the theme of fratricide has long been linked to the myth of the foundation sacrifice associated with the birth of a city or state.[63] Augustine himself links the killing of Abel with that of Remus and the founding of Rome.[64] Fratricide lies at the heart of numerous foundation myths, where it symbolizes civil war and the internal struggle for power that accompanies the rise of a new, improved state.[65] For Orderic, the struggle between Harold and Tostig is no different: his account shows how the realm of England is destroyed by the fractures at the heart of the royal family and yet, like Rome, how a new polity can rise from the bloodshed. The bones of the dead are a monument (*indicium*) that, even in Orderic's day, reminds both readers and passing travellers of England's violent history. That history is, however, consigned to a mythic past in favour of the stability offered by Norman rule.

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62 *HE*, II, pp. 168–69.

63 Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, pp. 10–12; Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 111–16.

64 Augustine sees Cain as the founder of the earthly city, Babylon, as opposed to Abel, associated with the City of God. See further Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, book 15, ch. 5. See also a discussion of this theme in medieval representations of Cain in Voyer, *'Image de l'exclusion'*, *pp. 393–99*.

65 See the many examples discussed in Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 111–16.

In this way, the slaughter at Stamford Bridge symbolizes the passing of the English state even before the Battle of Hastings. The two events are linked in Orderic's text, which foregrounds the mental state of Harold Godwinson as he moves from one to the other:

> Anglicus autem tirannus effuso fratris et hostis sanguine letus intumuit; et peracta multiplici strage uictor Lundoniam rediit. Verum Heraldus quia prosperitas mundi ut fumus ante uentum cito deficit; imminente grauioris tribulationis pondere lætitiam feralis trophei cito perdidit. Nec de fratricidio diu gaudere uel securus esse potuit; quia legatus ei Normannos adesse mox nunciauit. Ipse uero ut Normannos in Angliam ingressos esse audiuit; iterum se ad agonem uiriliter præparauit.
>
> (After shedding the blood of his brother and his enemy, and causing fearful slaughter, the English tyrant, triumphant and elated, returned victorious to London. But in truth, since worldly fortune is driven away like smoke in the wind, Harold soon forgot the joy of his fatal victory in the face of grave danger, and had only a little space to feel proud and safe after his fratricide; for a messenger came bearing the news of the Norman landing. As soon as he learned that the Normans had invaded England, he made haste to prepare himself for a fight to the death.)[66]

The killing of Tostig gives Harold an emotional boost. No longer angry, as he was when Tostig first rebelled, he is now joyful (*letus*) and free from care (*securus*) as he basks in the victory. It is here that Orderic first uses the term 'fratricide' (*fratricidium*) to describe Tostig's killing, the biblical overtones of that crime emphasized by his allusion to Psalm 67 and the image of fortune blowing away like smoke.[67] The ominous description of the killing as a *feralis trophei* (fatal victory) reveals the cost Harold will soon be forced to pay for his crime. This phrase also evokes the vivid image of the bone-pile, with *tropheum* denoting not only victory but a monument to the vanquished enemy: the phrase could also be understood as 'Harold soon forgot the joy of the funeral monument'.[68] There is something ghoulish

66 *HE*, II, pp. 170–71. Writers such as William of Malmesbury (*GRA*, I, p. 423) and Wace (*Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, pp. 132–33 (ll. 36675–710)) also note the increase in Harold's arrogance after the Battle of Stamford Bridge, but the impression they give is of a king rejoicing over having repulsed his enemies in general rather than a brother specifically.

67 See *HE*, p. 171 n. 3. Psalm 67.3 reads: 'Sicut deficit fumus, deficient; sicut fluit cera a facie ignis, sic pereant peccatores a facie Dei' (As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God): *Vulgate Bible*, pp. 322–23.

68 *Feralis* can suggest the funereal as well as the fatal, while *tropheum* originally denoted a tree hung with the arms of the defeated enemy, and later a stone monument decorated in a

about the idea of Harold rejoicing over the memory of the bone-pile, but it is in keeping with the fierce emotion his conflict with Tostig has provoked. As Quinones observes,

> Brothers are true intimates, coevals and cohorts into whose elementary unity a terrible division and separation must intrude. The sacrificed brother has thus greater possibilities for indicating a lost portion of the self, a self that is abandoned, sundered, the twin, the double, the shadowy other, the sacrificed other that must be gone and yet can never be gone. The sacrificed brother is thus better able to express all the dimensions of some lost portion of life that the foundation sacrifice in its fullest meaning acknowledges.[69]

In Orderic's telling, the memory of Tostig, the shadowy other, hovers in Harold's thoughts just as the pile of bones looms over the field at Stamford Bridge. Tostig is gone and yet not gone: his invitation to William comes to fruition only after his death, as the Norman forces land at Pevensey. In killing the honourable Tostig, Harold has symbolically killed what is good in himself, further weakening the kingdom from within. A double sacrifice is needed: Harold too must be killed so that William, the brother who is not a brother, can avenge his surrogate sibling, restoring order and legitimacy to the realm. The pile of bones becomes not only a monument to the slain, but a premonition of the final battle to come.

In this way, Orderic rewrites the story of the Conquest as an emotionally compelling narrative that pits right against wrong, setting the familiar tropes of family strife within a mythic context of fratricide and the foundation sacrifice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this account of Tostig's exile and rebellion almost completely ignores the evidence of contemporary sources. The C manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* suggests that Tostig's exile was due to his misrule of the earldom of Northumbria:

> ac eall hys earldom hyne anrædlice forsoc ⁊ geutlagode ⁊ ealle þa mid hym þe unlage rærdon, forþam þe <he> rypte God ærost ⁊ ealle þa bestrypte þe he ofermihte æt life ⁊ æt lande.[70]
>
> (but all his earldom unanimously deserted and outlawed him and all those who committed injustice with him, because he plundered God first and stripped all those he ruled of life and of land.)

The *Chronicle* states that it was Tostig's subjects, not his brother, who drove the earl out, and that they demanded Earl Ælfgar's son Morcar be

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similar manner. See further the examples collated at Goldenberg and others, eds, *Logeion*, under 'tropaeum'.

69 Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 11.

70 *ASC* C, p. 118.

appointed in his place.[71] John of Worcester, who follows the *Chronicles*' account closely, adds that Tostig treacherously ordered the murder of various northern earls and that he levied a heavy tribute on the region.[72] These events are said to have taken place in 1065, that is, before the death of King Edward, and both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and works based on them record that Edward himself sent Harold to negotiate peace between Tostig and his rebellious subjects. As John of Worcester relates, however, 'omnes unanimi consensu contradixerunt, ac eum cum omnibus qui legem iniquam statuere illum incitauerunt, exlegauerunt' (all unanimously spoke against it and they outlawed him [Tostig] and all who had encouraged him to establish his iniquitous rule).[73] Here, the high-handed Tostig is a far cry from the hero of Orderic's tale; it is rather Harold who is presented as the defender of good government and the English people.[74] John of Worcester is no less partisan than his Norman counterparts, but this alternative narrative demonstrates the process of myth-making at work in the different accounts of the Conquest. The dangers of fraternal strife loom particularly large in Norman-leaning accounts of the invasion, with writers like Orderic Vitalis skilled in teasing out the moral and religious implications of the traumatic conflict between Tostig and Harold Godwinson.

It is, however, Henry of Huntingdon who fully exploits the literary potential of this struggle between brothers. Henry embraces the mythical and indeed the macabre in his account of Harold and Tostig's relationship. Dating their enmity to an episode that took place three years prior to their encounter at Stamford Bridge, Henry describes an altercation between the brothers that is reminiscent of the boyhood brawl recounted in the *Lives* of Edward. Many of the details are, however, unique to Henry.[75] Notably, in Henry's account, the altercation is provoked by Tostig rather than Harold. As Harold serves wine to King Edward in the royal hall at Windsor, Tostig reaches out and grabs his brother by the hair. It is a seemingly unconscious manifestation of hatred, as Henry explains:

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71 This is also related in the D and C versions: see *ASC* C, pp. 117–18, and *ASC* D, pp. 77–79. A similar story is related in the *Vita Ædwardi*, although the narrator equivocates about whether Harold stirred up the rebels against his brother: see *The Life of King Edward*, pp. 78–81.

72 John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, II, pp. 598–99. William of Malmesbury tells a similar tale, declaring it was Tostig's harsh rule that led to the rebellion. *GRA*, I, pp. 364–65.

73 John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, II, pp. 598–99.

74 See John's elaborate description of Harold as pious, humble, and law-abiding (John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, II, pp. 600–01), in contrast to William's avarice, harrying of the north, and depriving Englishmen of their offices — in spite of his coronation oath (John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, III, pp. 11–19).

75 It is unclear what Henry's ultimate source for this episode is. Close parallels appear only in later writers who draw on Henry's work: see *HA*, p. 383 n. 148.

> Inuidie namque et odii fomitem ministrauerat, quod cum ipse Tosti primogenitus esset, arcius a rege frater suus diligeretur. Igitur impetu furoris propulsus, non potuit cohibere manus a cesarie fratris. Rex autem pernitiem eorum iam appropinquare predixit, et iram Dei iam non differendam.
>
> (For Tostig nourished a burning jealousy and hatred because, although he was himself the first born, his brother was higher in the king's affection. So driven by a surge of rage, he was unable to check his hand from his brother's head. The king, however, foretold that their destruction was already approaching, and that the wrath of God would be delayed no longer.)[76]

The scene is a subtle nod to the story of Cain and Abel, and particularly to the complex psychology encoded in that narrative. Like Orderic Vitalis, Henry is unusual in presenting Tostig as the elder of the two brothers, and this detail is key to their characterization in the *Historia Anglorum*.[77] Just as God favours Abel, the younger brother, over the elder, Cain, so Edward makes clear his preference for Harold. Tostig's grievance is not just that Edward prefers his brother but that he prefers his *younger* brother. To Tostig, Edward has betrayed the natural hierarchy of birth. The difference between the two brothers is less overt in Henry's work than in that of Orderic Vitalis, and Edward's actions evoke what Quinones identifies as the tragic heart of the Cain and Abel story, 'the arbitrariness of preference':

> Difference between brothers is rendered more grievous by what I call the arbitrariness of preference, the fact that some arbiter, divine or paternal, but always fatherly — and hence authoritative and decisive — is rendering judgement vis-à-vis the difference. The tragedy of differentiation is aggravated by the arbitrariness of preference, the pathos of which is increased by the sense of earlier unity and unsuspecting innocence.[78]

Edward is clearly the arbiter in this scene, his status as soon-to-be saint infusing his political role with a near-divine level of authority. As king and saint, he slips easily into the paternal role, and it can be no accident that the scene is set more than a decade after the death of Earl Godwin, allowing Henry to focus on the fraught triangle of emotions flowing between Edward, Harold, and Tostig. Unlike the account in Genesis, however, this triangle of emotions is exposed in a painfully public manner as Edward

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76 *HA*, pp. 382–83.

77 Most other sources confirm that the first-born son of Godwin was called Sveinn, and that Harold was the second. Tostig was younger than both. For an overview of this generation of the Godwin family, see Barlow, *The Godwins*, pp. 71–92.

78 Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 12.

signals his preference for Harold by accepting wine from him at a royal banquet. As Quinones points out, it is 'the moment of the *offering*' (emphasis original) that makes the preference of the paternal arbiter so clear.[79] In the Bible, it is God's acceptance of Abel's offering over that of Cain that so enrages his older brother; in Henry's work, Tostig's anger is likewise sparked when Edward accepts the wine-cup from his younger brother. In this moment, emotion overcomes the physical body and Tostig's hand lashes out on its own.

In contrast to the boyhood brawl in the *Lives* of Edward, the tension of this scene rests not in the physical struggle between Harold and Tostig — Harold's reaction to the hair-pulling is not even mentioned — but between Tostig's evident desire to keep his negative emotions hidden and Edward's ability to recognize them. Indeed, Edward's public explanation of Tostig's interior state to the watching court seems to inspire the gruesome acts that follow. As Henry relates, Tostig storms off in anger 'a rege et a fratre suo' (from the king and from his brother) following the king's prophecy that the brothers will shortly come to blows.[80] Heading directly to Hereford, where Harold has prepared a second banquet, he dismembers his brother's servants and scatters their limbs through the drinking vessels. Tostig's actions are a response to all that has angered him about the first banquet: where Harold served Edward wine in the royal hall, Tostig now poisons the drink in his brother's home; where Tostig's hand betrayed his thoughts during the first banquet, he now severs the hands of Harold's servants. Tostig moreover mocks Edward's prophecy with a public utterance of his own: 'Mandauitque regi quod ad firmam suam properans cibos salsatos sufficienter inueniret, alios secum deferre curaret' (And he sent to the king, saying that when he came to his farm he would find enough salted food, and that he should take care to bring the rest with him).[81] The defiance in Tostig's message makes clear that his provocative acts are aimed only indirectly at his brother; King Edward is the true target of his rage. One might even see Tostig's killing of the servants as the compulsive repetition of the traumatic moment in which he was betrayed by this surrogate father: that is, when Edward chose his brother over himself and, moreover, publicly revealed the negative emotions Tostig sought so hard to conceal. The ostentatious killing of Harold's servants is likewise a public declaration of Tostig's inner turmoil, but it functions as a challenge to the king: I, not you, will reveal my heart to the world. Tostig's revenge is both a rejection of King Edward and a cry for his attention. It is fitting, therefore, that the attention he receives likewise comes in the form of rejection: 'Rex ergo eum ob scelus adeo infinitum delegari et exulari precepit' (For

79 Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 9.
80 *HA*, pp. 382–83.
81 *HA*, pp. 382–83.

such an immeasurable crime the king commanded him to be outlawed and exiled).[82] Although the violence of Tostig's revenge seems designed to assert his power and independence from the paternal arbiter, the dismembered limbs remain an eloquent reminder of the vulnerability of the human body, and of the way in which Tostig's own body let him down in the first place. As Larrington notes, dismemberment also speaks to the conceptual metaphor that likens the members of a family to the limbs of a body, and Tostig's gruesome scattering of Harold's servant's body-parts is a flamboyant statement about the fragmentation of his own family.[83] The king's banishment of Tostig's unruly body from England demonstrates the futility of Tostig's protest in the face of royal power. And yet, this banishment too is futile: the episode also functions as an eerie warning of the violence that will soon engulf the body politic itself.

As Kelly De Vries observes of this episode, 'Henry of Huntingdon appears to be lost in Greek mythology with a hagiographical twist'.[84] Revenge via dismemberment, cannibalism, and the drinking of polluted alcohol are likewise motifs found in early English and Scandinavian mythology.[85] Henry is not lost, as such, but infusing an overtly mythic resonance into a chronicle of important political events. His macabre digression into the world of myth does not seem to be meant in a strictly literal sense. The 'real' story of Tostig's exile is in fact told in the next chapter of Henry's work. As the text relates, 'Edwardi anno uigesimo quarto, Nordhymbri hec audientes, Tosti consulem suum, qui multas eis cedes et clades ingesserat, fugauerunt' (In Edward's twenty-fourth year [1065–1066], when the Northumbrians heard of these events, they drove out Tostig, their earl, who had brought much slaughter and ruin upon them).[86] It is an ingenious segue back to the version of the story recounted elsewhere, which blames Tostig's exile on his exploitative rule of Northumbria. Henry follows the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, one of his principal sources,[87] as he describes the uprising of the Northumbrians; their demand that Tostig be replaced by Earl Morcar; and the flight of Tostig and his wife to Flanders. It is a

82 *HA*, pp. 382–83.

83 As Larrington observes, dismemberment also speaks to the conceptual metaphor that likens the members of a family to the limbs of a body (*Brothers and Sisters*, p. 100). There is perhaps an analogue to this in the otherwise unattested comment in the *Warenne Chronicle* that the decapitated heads of Haraldr and Tostig were brought to Harold after Stamford Bridge (*The Warenne (Hyde) Chronicle*, p. 20).

84 DeVries, *The Norwegian Invasion*, p. 189.

85 Consider for example the Old Norse Eddic poem *Vǫlundarkviða* and its pictorial representation on the Franks Casket. See further examples in Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 99–100 and 115–16.

86 *HA*, pp. 382–85.

87 Greenway estimates that up to 40 per cent of his material is drawn from the *Chronicles*, making them the most important source for his work. Henry seems to have used a version closest to the extant MS E. See Greenway's introduction to *HA*, pp. lxxxv and xci–xcviii.

strange juxtaposition. There is no explanation of how Tostig apparently came to be banished twice (first for the dismemberment of Harold's servants and then for his mismanagement of Northumbria), nor is there any acknowledgement of the evident contradiction between the two accounts. Rather, the two versions sit side-by-side in Henry's work, offering different perspectives on the interactions between Tostig, Harold, and Edward. The first is a self-consciously mythologizing account that moves beyond the realm of historical narrative to explore the workings of human emotion: love, jealousy, anger, and hate all contribute to a toxic familial relationship with traumatic consequences. The second, in contrast, presents 'what happened' according to contemporary evidence. The first sets history on a mythic plane as a way of exploring the psychology of the men involved; the second dwells on the political consequences of Tostig's misrule and Edward's weak grasp on the north of England. Together, they explore the interior struggles that underpin violent acts, and show how social discord erupts out of the mental and emotional upheaval of individual minds: individual trauma provokes collective trauma. The double narrative of Tostig's exile moreover exposes the constructed nature of Henry's text and reminds the reader of the ways in which stories of the past are conceived, transmitted, and retold in the present. Like the *Carmen*, the *Gesta Guillelmi*, and other works discussed above, Henry's text contributes to the mythologization of 1066 and particularly to the conceptualization of sibling rivalry as a catalyst for the catastrophic conflicts of that year. It does so, however, in a subtly self-conscious and self-critical manner that invites the reader to reflect on how the disturbing events of the past work to generate narrative and, ultimately, myth.

We Band of Brothers

Norse sources do not overtly frame the struggle between Harold and Tostig as an instance of Cain-and-Abel-like fratricide. Although the brothers still reflect the duality of siblinghood expressed in that myth, authors of the three major kings' sagas present the conflict between them as less personal and more political.[88] There is less emphasis on the morality of their actions in these texts; rather, Harold and Tostig seem to embody alternative ways of wielding power at the medieval court. In *Heimskringla*, for example, Tostig is made the leader of the royal army, while Harold gains control of the royal treasury. While Tostig is responsible for defending the kingdom's borders, Harold remains at court: '[hann] var jafnan innan hirðar inn næsti maðr um alla þjónostu' (he was always within the

88 The account in *Ágrip* is broadly in line with the other *konungasögur* but it is very short and adds little to the argument presented here. For the relevant passage, see *Ágrip*, pp. 39–40.

court and the nearest person for all attendance [on the king]).[89] One form of power is public, the other private; one relies on military might, the other on a close personal relationship with the monarch, backed up by financial clout. The two brothers are differentiated by their contrasting political roles, but the arbitrariness of preference remains. More overtly than Henry of Huntingdon, Snorri describes a quasi-parental relationship between Harold and the king: 'unni konungr honum geysimikit ok hafði hann sér fyrir son, því at konungr átti ekki barn' (the king loved him [Harold] very much and treated him like a son, because the king had no children).[90] Harold's attendance on the king ensures his presence at Edward's deathbed, and this is what allows him to secure his own succession so quickly.[91] The saga authors note the surprising swiftness with which Harold was crowned, but unlike many of the Anglo-Norman sources they do not present his power grab as duplicitous or even illegitimate. On the contrary, the sagas present the English people as happy to accept the arrangement: 'Gengu þá allir hǫfðingjar til handa honum ok allt fólk' (then all the chieftains and all the people pledged allegiance to him [Harold]).[92] In *Heimskringla*, only Tostig himself objects to Harold's appointment, although *Morkinskinna* presents this sentiment as more widespread, noting 'var þat margra mál at Tósti væri vitrari maðr ok eigi verr til konungs fallinn en Haraldr bróðir hans' (that many said that Tostig was the wiser man and no worse qualified to be king than his brother Harold).[93] Although Tostig attempts to muster support — 'beiddisk at allir landshǫfðingjar ok allr lýðr skyldi þann þeira til konungs kjósa er allir vildi heldr hafa' (he asked that all the chieftains and all the people should choose the one they all wished to have as king)[94] — Harold is already in possession of the palaces and treasury, and his accession to the throne is a *fait accompli*. In both *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, Tostig's banishment is presented as a natural consequence of this unsuccessful attempt to oust his brother: 'Ok er konungr fann áhuga bróður síns þá þrøngvir hann honum þar til er hann stǫkk ór landi' (and when the king learned of his brother's intentions, he

89 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 170–71.

90 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 168.

91 *Heimskringla* repeats Harold's claim, common to many of the English and Norman sources discussed above, that Edward appointed Harold his heir as he lay dying (III, p. 171). This is not included in the more concise accounts given in other kings' sagas: see for example *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 300, and *Fagrskinna*, pp. 274–75.

92 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 171.

93 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 300. In *Heimskringla* it is Tostig himself who expresses this sentiment (III, p. 171).

94 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 300.

forced him to flee the country).[95] *Heimskringla*, in contrast, records that Tostig left of his own accord, Harold having stripped him of the powers he enjoyed under Edward. Here, perhaps, is a hint of the ill-feeling seen in other versions of the tale: Harold mistrusts Tostig because of the latter's close relationship with the other chieftains, while Tostig himself 'vildi þat fyrir engan mun þola at vera þjónostumaðr bróður síns samborins' (would in no way suffer to be the serving-man of a brother who was his equal in birth).[96] Overall, though, the brothers' actions are presented as alternative but basically legitimate ways of operating in the political arena. While Tostig follows what Norbert Elias would term a 'charismatic' style of leadership, building up his relationships with other noblemen and pushing for a process of collective decision-making, Harold leans toward an 'absolutist' style of rule, working to maintain his position at the heart of power and quick to sniff out any challengers.[97] Neither approach is presented as morally superior or as cause for ill-will, as in the Anglo-Norman or English sources. The question is merely which approach enables each brother to better assert his claim to the throne; the answer, at least for a time, is Harold.

Norse authors diverge in a more dramatic fashion from their English and Norman counterparts in their presentation of the Godwin family. As Snorri describes them:

> Eaðvarðr konungr átti Gyðu dróttning, dóttur Guðina jarls Úlfnaðrssonar. Brœðr Gyðu váru Tósti jarl — hann var ellstr — annarr Mǫrukári jarl, þriði Valþjófr jarl, fjórði Sveinn jarl, fimmti Haraldr — hann var yngstr.[98]
>
> (King Edward married Queen Edith, daughter of Earl Godwin, son of Wulfnoth. Edith's brothers were Earl Tostig — he was the eldest — the second was Earl Morcar, the third Earl Waltheof, the fourth Earl Sveinn, the fifth Harold — he was the youngest.)

Here, and in the other kings' sagas, the family circle of the Godwins is widened to include two prominent members of the English nobility, Earls Morcar and Waltheof. It is a peculiar statement, and one that flies in the

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95 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 300; a similar comment is made in *Fagrskinna*, p. 274. On Tostig's movements and subsequent events in the saga tradition, see Gade, '*Morkinskinna* and 25th September 1066'.

96 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 173. This despite Snorri's earlier comment that Harold was the youngest of Godwin's sons; relative age seems not to make a difference in their relationship in this work (III, p. 168).

97 Norbert Elias here follows the work of Max Weber in Elias, *The Court Society*, pp. 117–32. Matthew Townend uses these terms in the context of the reign of King Cnut: Townend, 'Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*'. On the role of the royal assembly (*witan*) in the election of a new king, see Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, pp. 164–67.

98 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 168. See also *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 306, and *Fagrskinna*, p. 279.

face of most English and Norman sources. As noted above, Morcar was the son of Earl Ælfgar of Mercia and had played a leading role in the Northumbrian uprising against Tostig. He was appointed Earl of Northumbria after Tostig's banishment and eventually became Harold's brother-in-law. Waltheof was the son of Siward, a previous Earl of Northumbria; he was not Morcar's brother but another rival for that position. He was, however, too young to succeed to the title when his father died and instead acquired property in the east midlands. Waltheof surrendered peacefully to William in 1066 but became caught up in subsequent rebellions and was executed on the Conqueror's orders in 1076.[99] It was Morcar and his brother Edwin who led the English resistance at the Battle of Fulford. Despite the defeat of their army, the two earls survived the battle and indeed the Conquest itself, with Morcar living as a Norman prisoner into the reign of William Rufus.[100] Despite this well-known history, saga authors identify both Morcar and Waltheof as the sons of Earl Godwin and brothers to Harold. Thus, they are also the sons of Godwin's Danish-born wife Gyða. Gyða was Cnut's sister-in-law and a powerful figure in her own right.[101] Her marriage to Godwin helped secure the English earl's allegiance soon after the Danish conquest: as Saxo puts it, Cnut was 'gentem genti animis atque affinitate conserere cupiens' (keen to link one race with another in hearts and kinship).[102] Their children embodied the blended heritage of the Anglo-Scandinavian state that reached its apogee with the family of Cnut, and they continued to wield significant power in the decades following his death. In the sagas, this expanded band of brothers — Tostig, Harold, Morcar, and Waltheof — are the living products of the conquest of 1016. Their mixed parentage is a reminder that the roots of 1066 lie in the struggles of fifty years before, and that England was, by 1066, a hybrid realm with strong links not only to Normandy and Flanders, but to Denmark and Norway as well. It is unknown whether the identification of Morcar and Waltheof as the sons of Godwin is due to misinformation or to a deliberate change on the part of saga authors, but their inclusion in the Godwin family here further emphasizes the internecine element of the conflicts of 1066. Fraternal conflict is endemic in the Old Norse accounts, with all four brothers finding themselves on different sides of the many battlefields. Godwin's sons become a symbol of the complex web

99 The fate of Waltheof will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

100 Van Houts has suggested that Morcar's memories of 1066 might have informed the account of William of Poitiers, who knew the family responsible for hosting him while in Normandy: van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 132–33.

101 On Gyða, see Stafford, 'Women in Domesday'. *Morkinskinna* gives the names of her Danish father and brother as Þorgils sprakaleggr and Jarl Úlfr Þorgilsson, respectively (I, p. 299). Edith, Godwin's daughter and the wife of King Edward, is also called Gyða in the Old Norse, further emphasizing her Danish heritage as well.

102 *Gesta Danorum*, I, pp. 748–49.

of allegiances that bound eleventh-century England to many states across northern Europe, and a reminder of the shared heritage of those who came into conflict after King Edward's death. The struggle between the four brothers exemplifies that between the people of England, Normandy, and Scandinavia: it is traumatic precisely because of their shared history and kinship.

In the sagas, the events of 1066 coalesce around this expanded band of brothers. The first of the three battles of that year, the Battle of Fulford, pits Tostig and his Norwegian allies against his (alleged) brothers, Morcar and Waltheof. Fulford thus becomes the first battle in which the Norwegians come face-to-face with the royal family of England, heightening its political importance. Indeed, saga authors describe the Battle of Fulford in far more detail than even the Battle of Hastings. Offering the Norse audience a tantalizing glimpse of what victory against the English might have looked like, it functions both as a prelude to and an inversion of the Norwegians' ultimate defeat at Stamford Bridge. The opening descriptions of the battle tell a remarkably similar story to that of Stamford Bridge. At Fulford, the Norwegians face an 'óvígr herr' (invincible army) led by Morcar and Waltheof; the same phrase is twice repeated of King Harold's troops as they approach Stamford Bridge.[103] The effect in both cases is to cast Haraldr's and Tostig's troops as the daring underdogs, taking on the might of a great English army. At Fulford, as at Stamford Bridge, the English attack the Norwegians first, as 'þeir ætluðu, at Norðmenn mundu flýja' (they expected the Norwegians to flee).[104] The danger of flight on both sides is likewise demonstrated at Stamford Bridge, where the Norwegian troops break formation to pursue their apparently fleeing adversaries, but are caught in a trap and slaughtered. At Fulford, in contrast, the English troops are the ones who are routed, and the ignominy of their flight compounded by the fact that it is led by Earl Waltheof, who leaves his brother Morcar to die:

> en flýði hann upp með ánni, ok þat eina komsk undan liðit er honum fylgði. Mǫrukári jarl fell ok svá þykkt menn um hann at díkit var fullt af dauðum mǫnnum, þar sem inn mesti flóttinn hafði til komit, ok váru þar felldir á út, en sumir stangaðir spjótum er hljópu á díkit, ok varð þat því fullt af líkum.[105]
>
> (and he [Waltheof] fled up along the river, and only the troops that were with him escaped. Earl Morcar fell and so many men around him that the ditch was full of dead men in the place where most of

103 See also *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 179, 183, and 186.

104 *Fagrskinna*, p. 279, with similar sentiments expressed in *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 307, and *Heimskringla*, III, p. 180.

105 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 307; see also *Fagrskinna*, p. 279, and *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 180–81.

> the fleeing troops had run, and they were killed there in the water, and those who jumped into the ditch were stabbed with spears, and it was thus full of bodies.)

The saga authors exult in the Norwegian victory, citing a series of skaldic verses that describe in gruesome detail the river clogged with English corpses. '[D]rengr lá ár of ungan/ófár Mǫrukára' (not a few warriors soon lay around young Morcar), exclaims Steinn Herdísarson.[106] 'Vísi rauð jǫrn á Englum' (the king reddened iron on the English) recounts Arnórr jarlaskáld; 'mannkyn hefr þann morgun at minnum' (mankind holds that morning in memory).[107] Running men drown in running water; blood mingles with mud; and so many bodies clog the ditch that the Norwegians can cross without wetting their feet.[108] The corpse-clogged dike is a memorable image, and one that recalls the pile of bones in Orderic's account of Stamford Bridge. As in that text, the consequences of fraternal conflict are both visceral and visible: the body-parts of the dead overwhelm the natural world and transform it into a terrifying spectacle of human violence. Such images expose the far-reaching consequences of fraternal conflict, reminding the reader that the brothers themselves are far from the only victims. The corpse-filled ditch does not in itself have the permanence of the bone-mountain — there is no suggestion, as in Orderic's work, that the bodies remain in the water for a significant amount of time afterwards — but the prosimetric style of the kings' sagas builds a literary monument to the dead through the citation of skaldic verse. *Morkinskinna*, in particular, is dominated by verse during this episode, citing six separate stanzas, but *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* also employ poetry to provide a memorable conclusion to this grisly fight.

Saga authors also stress the political consequences of the victory. While the Norse sources are unique in declaring that Morcar died at Fulford — and that Waltheof was in any way involved — the Norwegians' victory over these ostensibly royal adversaries demonstrates the political ambitions of the advancing force: this is no viking raid but a serious attempt to wrest control of the kingdom from its ruling family. Waltheof's flight reveals the weakness of the fraternal bond and the devastating consequences this has on the nation as a whole. Just as Tostig predicts, the Battle of Fulford prompts large numbers of Englishmen to join Haraldr's army:

> Fór þá svá sem hann hafði sagt Haraldi, fyrr en þeir fyndisk, at fjǫlði manns dreif til þeira í Englandi. Þat váru frændr ok vinir Tósta jarls, ok

106 From *Óláfsdrápa*, ed. by Gade, in *SkP* II, pp. 368–69 (st. 1).

107 From *Haraldsdrápa*, ed. by Whaley, in *SkP* II, pp. 268 (st. 7) and 270–71 (st. 9). Citations from these two verses are here cited in prose word-order for clarity.

108 This picturesque detail is noted by Snorri: see *Heimskringla*, III, p. 180.

> var konungi þat mikill styrkr liðs. Eptir þessa orrostu, er áðr var frá sagt, gekk undir Harald konung lið allt um in næstu herǫð, en sumt flýði.[109]
>
> (It turned out then as he [Tostig] had told Haraldr, before they met [in England], that a multitude of people would rush to them in England. They were the kinsmen and friends of Earl Tostig, and it was a great help for the king's army. After this battle, which has just been recounted [i.e. the Battle of Fulford], troops from all the surrounding districts submitted to King Haraldr, and some fled.)

Waltheof's desertion of Morcar, it turns out, is only the first of many. Self-interest is a powerful motivator here, just as it was when Waltheof fled from Fulford; the northern men's shift in allegiance from Harold Godwinson to Tostig mirrors, on a larger scale, Waltheof and his men's desertion of Morcar. The Battle of Fulford is a bleak demonstration of the consequences of intrafamilial strife for the entire realm: a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.

Fraternal rivalry comes to a head five days later at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The internecine nature of this second conflict is even more pronounced in the Norse sources than in the English and Norman traditions. The defeat at Fulford prompted Harold Godwinson to rush north with the rest of the English army, ambushing the Norwegian-led troops outside the city of York. The preamble to the battle is, in the sagas, almost as important as the battle itself. As the two armies approach each other, a delegation from the English lines rides ahead to speak with the leaders of the invading force. The conversation that follows forces a suspenseful pause in the action: as the two armies stare into each other's eyes, their leaders probe each other's motivations, weaknesses, and characters, exploring the possibilities for peace and acknowledging the conflicts that have brought them to that moment. Perhaps inevitably, this dramatic exchange revolves around the fraternal nature of the conflict.

The scene is repeated almost verbatim in the three major compendia. Twenty horsemen break off from the English lines and ride across to the Norwegian troops. One, whose name is not given, asks whether Tostig is present, and Tostig declares that he is. Their exchange begins in a ceremonial manner with the horseman offering Tostig not only a formal greeting but a truce:

> Haraldr, bróðir þinn, sendi þér kveðju ok þau orð með, at þú skyldir hafa grið ok Norðimbraland allt, ok heldr en eigi vilir þú til hans hneigjask, þá vill hann gefa þér þriðjung ríkis alls með sér.[110]

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109 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 182.

110 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 186; for this scene see also *Fagrskinna*, pp. 283–84, and *Morkinskinna*, I, pp. 315–16.

> (Harold, your brother, sends you greeting and with these words says that you shall have peace and all of Northumbria and, as you do not wish to pay homage to him, he will then grant you a third of the kingdom to hold alongside him.)

It is a handsome offer, and one which would give Tostig significantly more power and wealth than he enjoyed even under King Edward. Tostig, however, rejects both the content and the tone of the invitation: 'Þá er nǫkkut annat boðit en ófriðr ok svívirðing sem í vetr. Hefði þá verit þetta boðit, þá væri margr maðr sá á lífi, er nú er dauðr, ok betr mundi þá standa ríki í Englandi' (then is something different offered than the hostility and disgrace of last winter. Had this been offered then, many a man who is now dead would be alive, and the kingdom of England would be in better condition).[111] Tostig's peevish response shows that the bad blood between the brothers cannot be rectified by a purely political compromise. The dishonour (*svívirðing*) of banishment still rankles; enmity (*ófriðr*) is not lightly forgotten. Tostig's emotional response rejects the studied formality of the king's offer and places the blame for the recent violence squarely upon his brother's shoulders: not only Tostig, but all the men now dead have suffered because of Harold. This response seems to render the English offer void, for when Tostig then asks what Harold would be willing to offer his Norwegian namesake, the reply is deliberately inflammatory: 'sjau fóta rúm eða því lengra sem hann er hæri en aðrir menn' (a space [i.e. grave] seven feet long, or as much more as he needs because he is taller than other men). Stationed next to Haraldr harðráði himself, Tostig cannot accept this arrangement. Instead, he proudly proclaims his allegiance to the Norwegian king:

> Farið nú ok segið Haraldi konungi, at hann búisk til orrostu. Annat skal satt at segja með Norðmǫnnum en þat, at Tósti jarl fari frá Haraldi konungi Sigurðarsyni ok í óvinaflokk hans, þá er hann skyldi berjask í Englandi vestr. Heldr skulu vér allir taka eitt ráð, deyja með sœmð eða fá England með sigri.[112]
>
> (Go now and say to King Haraldr that he should prepare for battle. Another truth will be told among the Norwegians than that Earl Tostig would go from King Haraldr Sigurðarson into the army of his enemies, when he was supposed to fight, west in England. Instead we shall all take the same course: to die with honour or win England with victory.)

With this speech, Tostig positions himself beside Haraldr harðráði and against both his brother and the majority of his own countrymen. His

111 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 186–87.
112 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 187.

answer does, however, conclude on a fatalistic note in which the identity of 'we' (*vér*) is uncertain. When Tostig warns that *skulu vér allir taka eitt ráð* (we shall all take the same course), is he referring to himself, to Haraldr, and to the Norwegian troops? Or does this phrase include Harold and the English army as well? Who will die and who will win? *Vér allir* hangs in the air between the two speakers, threatening violence and accepting the possibility of death for both sides. The English horsemen make no reply, and return to their line.

The exchange between Tostig and the unnamed Englishman serves to reinforce the political and emotional gulf between the two brothers, but the sweeping nature of Tostig's final statement acknowledges the shared nature of their situation. If not a reconciliation as such, it is at least a rapprochement, and it is perhaps no surprise when Tostig reveals the identity of the Englishman to his Norwegian companions: the king's envoy was in fact Harold Godwinson himself. When King Haraldr demands why Tostig did not reveal this sooner — allowing them to kill the enemy king on the spot — Tostig answers with another fatalistic utterance. In *Heimskringla*, he says 'vil ek heldr, at hann sé minn banamaðr en ek hans' (I would rather that he be my killer than I his).[113] The *Morkinskinna* version of this statement highlights the brotherly bond even more explicitly: 'betra er at þiggja bana af brœðr sínum en veita honum bana' (it is better to receive death from one's brothers than to kill them).[114] There is a strong prohibition against fratricide in Old Norse literature, and almost no descriptions of it in the saga corpus.[115] Acknowledging the importance of the fraternal bond even in the face of open war, Tostig's words are in keeping with the taboo nature of fratricide in these works. There is moreover a gnomic quality to his speech that recalls the mythological poem *Vǫluspá*, discussed above, in which kin-slaying is emblematic of the end of the world. Despite their hostility, then, the Tostig and Harold of the sagas are a far cry from their counterparts in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. Their final exchange is, in fact, surprisingly intimate, consisting almost entirely of the dialogue between Harold and Tostig. Here, the two brothers are able to voice their grievances and discuss the events that have led them

113 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 187.

114 *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 316. This may be compared to an example discussed by Larrington, in which the mortally wounded outlaw Grettir is protected by this brother Illugi: 'Berr er hverr á bakinu nema sér bróður eigi' (Bare is the back unless one has a brother), he declares, as Illugi covers him with his shield (cited in Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 46).

115 While there are many examples of fratricide in mythic and legendary contexts, William Ian Miller has noted that neither the *Íslendingasögur* nor the *samtíðarsögur* depict the killing of one brother by another: see Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, pp. 159–61. Drawing on Miller's work, Larrington argues that this reflects both the strength and importance of the fraternal bond during the medieval period, even during times of profound social unrest; see Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 60.

to the battlefield. Although they now stand on opposite sides, they can acknowledge their similarities as well as their differences. It is clear that neither wishes to kill the other in the manner of Cain and Abel: Harold offers Tostig a truce, while Tostig protects Harold from the Norwegian king. As Larrington writes, however, 'Whether as portent of catastrophe or as symptom of disaster, the fragmentation of sibling relationships figures social breakdown, heralding worse calamities as [yet?] to come'.[116] Tostig's loyalty to his brother in the moments before the Battle of Stamford Bridge is honourable but ultimately futile: the argument between the brothers has already engulfed the entire country in war. Although this iteration of the brothers' story shies away from an overt depiction of fratricide, sibling rivalry remains the catalyst for the wholescale destruction of a family, their kingdom, and their allies.

The death of Tostig is noted only briefly in *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna*; it is not even recorded in *Heimskringla*.[117] In all three, however, Tostig bows out of the saga not as an Englishman but as the leader of the Norwegian troops, fighting beneath the royal standard after Haraldr harðráði has been killed. Although Harold Godwinson offers quarter to the Norwegian troops after the death of their king, they reject the offer: 'En Norðmenn œpðu upp allir senn ok sǫgðu svá, at fyrr skyldi hverr falla um þveran annan en þeir gengi til griða við enska menn, œpðu þá heróp. Tóksk þá orrosta í annat sinn' (and the Norwegians all cried out together and said that each man should fall across the other rather than that they should accept a truce with the Englishmen; then they shouted a war-cry. Then the battle began a second time).[118] The Norwegian war-cry seems to engulf Tostig's English identity; he speaks no more and dies soon after with his Norwegian allies. As noted above, however, the tale told in the kings' sagas has a stranger, more fantastical counterpart in the later *Hemings þáttr*. In this version of the story, it is Tostig himself who rejects the offer of peace: 'T(osti) þrifr þa merkið ok segir at þat skvlv þeir finna at eigi erv allir Norðmanna hofþingiar fallnir meðan ek ma vega ok helldr Tosti nv vpp bard⟨ag⟩anvm vm stvnd' (then Tostig grasps the standard and says that 'they will find that not all Norwegian chieftains have fallen as long as I am able to fight', and now Tostig keeps the battle going for some time).[119] Identifying himself as one of the leaders of the Norwegian

116 Larrington, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 15.

117 *Morkinskinna* gives the most detail (I, p. 320): 'Jarlinn bersk vaskliga ok fylgði merkjunum, ok áðr en létti fell hann þar með mikilli prýði ok góðum orðstír' (the earl fought valiantly and stayed with the standard, but before it ended he fell there with much bravery and great renown). See also the brief comment in *Fagrskinna*, p. 289.

118 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 191. See also *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 319, and *Fagrskinna*, p. 287.

119 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 52–53.

army, Tostig rejects his English identity at a pivotal moment in the battle sequence: like Haraldr harðráði, he is now a foreign invader.

Hemings þáttr shows the further evolution of the myth of fratricide among the Godwin family: in this version of the narrative, blame for the conflicts of 1066 rests almost exclusively with Tostig himself. The pride, violence, and ill-will displayed by various actors in other versions of the story are here concentrated in Tostig, who becomes almost a personification of the conflict itself. Nevertheless, his negative portrayal allows for a more sympathetic exploration of the other Godwinsons, particularly of his brother Waltheof. Although in *Hemings þáttr* Tostig's evil nature brings about the ruin of the English state, the actions of his brothers offer a form of atonement, perhaps even redemption, for the destruction their family conflict has caused. How so? The *þáttr* differs from the other Norse sagas in presenting Harold as the eldest of the Godwinsons, with Tostig as the second-born, followed by Morcar and Waltheof.[120] Initially, the three brothers are united in their desire to rule England: 'Tosti og adrer brædur Haralldz Gudna sonar uilldu hafa rikit j Einglandi med honum og feingu ecki' (Tostig and the other brothers of Harold Godwinson wanted to wield power in England with him [i.e. Harold], but did not get that).[121] The *þáttr* presents Tostig as the leader of the younger brothers, all of whom object to Harold taking sole command of the kingdom. Attempting to muster support in Denmark, Tostig promises King Sveinn that 'eg og brædur miner' (I and my brothers) will support an invasion, on the condition that all three of the younger Godwinsons be made kings of England if the invasion is successful.[122] This seeming solidarity between brothers quickly breaks down with the Norwegian invasion. As in the three compendia, Morcar and Waltheof lead the English defence at the Battle of Fulford. Morcar fights valiantly but is killed in the water; in contrast to the *konungasögur*, however, Waltheof does not desert his brother, but is captured by King Haraldr. At this moment Tostig shows his true colours, urging the Norwegians to kill Waltheof: 'lati þa eina for fara brœðr' (let the brothers take the same path [i.e., in death]).[123] His demand is a grim echo of the brothers' seeming unity at the start of the episode and reveals the gulf between Tostig's expectations and the reality in which he finds

120 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 31. As noted above, this accords with most English and Norman sources. Both Henry of Huntingdon and Orderic Vitalis are unusual in their presentation of Tostig as the first-born.

121 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 35.

122 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 35. Saxo similarly declares that the younger sons of Godwin opposed Harold together, and that they all chose exile rather than support his rule: *Gesta Danorum*, II, pp. 798–99. It is unclear whether this element of the story was part of a distinctly Scandinavian version of the events of 1066, or whether the correspondence between two accounts that are otherwise quite different is merely coincidence.

123 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 46.

himself: although Tostig had envisioned a joint invasion that would see the three younger brothers expel the eldest, the Battle of Fulford demonstrates the unwavering loyalty of Morcar and Waltheof toward Harold. Their encounter reveals a bitter fracture at the heart of the Godwin family: Tostig is not only Harold's rival for the kingdom but also for the affection and support of his siblings. Fulford is a rude awakening for Godwin's second son, and his vicious call for Waltheof's death is not a military decision but an emotional and highly personal one.

Waltheof, on the other hand, emerges as a paragon of integrity in *Hemings þáttr*. Unlike the dualistic structure that pits Harold against Tostig in many other accounts of the conflict, the *þáttr* has a triadic format — particularly after the death of Morcar — that emphasizes the contrasting characters of Tostig, Harold, and Waltheof. In keeping with the folkloric overtones of the tale, only the youngest of the three surviving Godwinsons is able to negotiate the complexities of invasion and conquest with his honour intact. He does so, also in a folkloric vein, through a series of three trials of character set during the three battles of 1066. The first of these takes place during the Battle of Fulford, as Tostig clamours for his blood. Although King Haraldr refuses Tostig's request, the king demands that Waltheof swear not to fight against the Norwegian troops, and that he spy for them on his brother Harold. Even with his life at stake, Waltheof refuses to betray Harold, but does offer to inform the Norwegian king if any treachery is planned against him.[124] This proposal is both canny and courteous. Waltheof asserts his right to fight in defence of his brother, but his offer to warn the Norwegians of treachery suggests he is under no illusions about Harold's character. Waltheof makes no apology for his integrity, proudly asserting his right to hold even his own brother to the highest possible standard. The contrast with Tostig could not be more stark, and when King Haraldr agrees to Waltheof's terms, Tostig's response verges on the nihilistic: 'forvm með her varvm til Lvndvna ok eyðvm landit með elldi ok iarni ok gefvm ⟨engvm⟩ manne grið hvarki konvm ne bornvm' (let us go now with our army to London and ravage the land with fire and iron, and let us spare no one, neither women nor children).[125] Tostig's desire is now for vengeance, not conquest. Dissociating himself from both the land and the people of England, he urges a level of violence that threatens even non-combatants. Waltheof, in contrast, remains loyal to the kingdom even in the face of death.

Waltheof's second trial comes just before the Battle of Stamford Bridge. As in the *konungasögur*, the English army has ridden north unexpectedly, and the people of York have broken their promise to support the Norwegian cause. This, for Waltheof, constitutes treachery. He therefore

124 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 46.
125 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 47.

keeps his promise to King Haraldr and rides ahead of the English army to warn the Norwegians of their approach. Tostig again reacts belligerently and, as Waltheof approaches the Norwegian line, exclaims 'þar er nv Valþiofr broðir mín ok ðrepi hann' (there now is my brother Waltheof — kill him).[126] Tostig's words are as shocking as they are direct. Calling for Waltheof to be killed almost to his brother's face, Tostig reveals the utter depravity of his own character at the very moment Waltheof demonstrates his own integrity. King Haraldr is deeply impressed by Waltheof's act and allows him to return to the English camp: 'far vel Valþiofr', he says, 'ok fylg vel broðor þinvm ok hefir þv vel halldit þin orð' (farewell, Waltheof, and accompany your brother well; you have kept your promise well).[127] Despite the somewhat capricious nature Haraldr displays elsewhere in the *þáttr*, the Norwegian king is apparently inspired by Waltheof's character to achieve new moral heights of his own. Waltheof does go on to fight in the battle — in contrast to the *konungasögur*, which are ambiguous on this point — and his warning to the Norwegian king is therefore completely contradictory to his own well-being, as is Haraldr's decision to allow him to leave. Their exchange allows both men to rise above their political differences and to display a generosity of spirit that is notably lacking in Tostig.

Waltheof's third and final test occurs during the Battle of Hastings. Harold and Tostig are dead; Waltheof alone remains of the Godwin family, holding the English line. Finally, William of Normandy offers to spare his life in exchange for a pledge of loyalty. Waltheof refuses to swear a formal oath to the invader, 'en heita man ek þer tvnaði ef þv efnir þetta' (but I will promise to be loyal to you if you honour this).[128] He secures the safety of those fighting with him, and submits to William. The eponymous Hemingr, who is included in these arrangements, warns Waltheof not to trust the duke, but Waltheof declares, 'betra er at ver veltvm en trva engvm ok eigi skvlv fleiri lataz fyri minar sakir' (it is better for us to be overthrown than to trust in no one, and no more men will die for my sake).[129] Idealistic perhaps to the point of naïveté, Waltheof has become the moral centre in the drama of conquest. His integrity acts as the standard by which other men are judged: the evil in Tostig's nature emerges most strongly while he is interacting with his younger brother, while King Haraldr is moved by Waltheof's example to emulate his honourable acts. The duke of Normandy is no exception to this pattern. Despite his offer of a truce, William is more like Tostig than Haraldr. Mistrustful of Waltheof's refusal to swear allegiance, the duke soon sends men to ambush the last of the

126 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 48.
127 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 48–49.
128 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 55.
129 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 56.

Godwinsons. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, Waltheof's betrayal by William is described by many writers and in many ways, but in *Hemings þáttr*, the episode cements Waltheof's reputation as a man of such honour that he approaches sanctity: 'Valþiofr ste af baki ok fyribavð sinvm monnvm at veria sig. hann geck til einar kirkiv ok var þar drepin ok þar er hann iarðaðr ok hygia menn hann goðan mann' (Waltheof dismounted and forbade his men to defend him. He went to a church and was killed there, and there he is buried. And men consider him to be a good man).[130] William, on the other hand, is revealed to be a faithless leader from the very moment of victory, his betrayal of Waltheof an ominous warning of more to come.

Waltheof's death is tinged in this way with martyrdom, but what of Tostig's? The author of *Hemings þáttr* expands on the *konungasögur* in his description of Tostig's death to explore the moral quagmire presented by this conflict between brothers. Whereas in the *konungasögur* the final exchange between Harold and Tostig acknowledges the tragedy of their shared situation, the same episode in *Hemings þáttr* demonstrates how keen both men are to claim the moral high ground for themselves. Disguised as the anonymous Englishman, Harold once again offers Tostig quarter, adding half of England and the title of king.[131] He moreover offers to compensate the people of England for the damage Tostig has brought on them, and not to seek compensation for the killing of his brother Morcar. The language of compensation seems to transpose the brothers' conversation to the world of the family feud, and by this standard Harold's offer is generous in the extreme.[132] In the *Íslendingasögur* such an extravagant offer would smack of desperation as much as munificence, but its function here is to make Tostig's refusal even more surprising. There is no offer, the *þáttr* implies, that can tempt Tostig to change sides now. As he says with a hint of regret, 'of seint hafa þersi boð fram komit' (these offers have come too late).[133] Tostig's alliance with the Norwegians is unshakeable, and he seems far more worried about what his new allies think of him than his relationship with his brother: 'þat hefir ek heyrt Norðmenn oft mæla ef mer væri goð boð boðin at ek mvnda þegar við þeira mal skiliaz en nv skal þat eigi vera' (I have often heard the Norwegians say that if a good offer were made to me, I would immediately desert their cause, and that is not going to be the case now).[134] Tostig reveals,

130 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 56.
131 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 49.
132 On the role of financial compensation in the peacemaking process, see Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, pp. 259–99. Harold does, however repeat the offer of a grave for Haraldr Sigurðarson that we find in the *konungasögur*.
133 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 50.
134 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 50.

perhaps unwittingly, how shaky his alliance with the Norwegians really is; he knows his commitment to the invaders is stronger than theirs is to him. Harold's offer, however, gives Tostig the opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty in a clear and public manner, and he takes it. His words are aimed not at his brother but at the watching Norwegian troops. Harold likewise seems to address a wider audience as he places the full weight of what is to come on Tostig's shoulders: 'þer bað konvngr þa alla abyrð a hendi binda' (the king declares then that all responsibility [for this] lies in your hands).[135] This exchange is a far cry from the intimate conversation seen in the *konungasögur*. It is, rather, a performance in which the two brothers seek to justify their actions to their respective sides, blaming the other for the coming slaughter. Tostig's later self-identification as a *hǫfþingi Norðmanna* (chieftain of the Norwegians) is explained by this interaction: Norwegian-ness is not something he has acquired easily but is, rather, an unstable affiliation he must constantly work to reinforce. Identification with the Norwegian troops is attractive because it allows Tostig to assert his loyalty to a cause and a people. Perhaps because this was the very thing he forfeited when he abandoned Harold, it is now what he most desires. The murderous scorn Tostig shows for Waltheof may also be explained as the wish to emulate his brother's loyal character, coupled with the shame of failing to do so. Tostig's hatred of Waltheof stems from his hatred for himself. Once again, the catastrophic events of the Conquest seem to flow from the tortured emotional experience of sibling rivalry.

Harold's stern words to Tostig are likewise more performance than reality. He is reluctant to kill his brother during the battle, despite happily shooting Haraldr Sigurðarson himself.[136] Hemingr is amazed by the king's hesitation:

> Hemingr svarar þat er vndarlegt er þer vilið lata drepa niðr menn yðra ok senda man ek hanvm eina sending ef þer fyri bioðit eigi. konvngr s(egir) eigi man ek nv mannhefnd lata fyri koma þo at hanvm se geigr vnnin. þa skytr Hemingr i avga Tosta. þa mællti T(osti) er hann feck skotið þersi markaði mik gvði ok do þegar.[137]
>
> (Hemingr answers, 'It is astonishing that you are willing to let your men be cut down, and I will now send him a message if you do not forbid it'. The king says: 'I will not demand blood-vengeance now, even if serious harm is done to him'. Then Hemingr shoots Tostig in the eye. Then when Tostig felt the shot, he said, 'This marks me for God', and he died immediately.)

135 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 50.
136 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 52.
137 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 53.

The conversation between Harold and Hemingr is riddled with euphemisms: the arrow is merely a *sending* ('message' or even 'present') that may or may not cause harm (*geigr*). Even in the heat of a battle against one's sibling, it seems that the explicit discussion of fratricide remains taboo. The king's oblique offer not to seek revenge for Tostig's death further accentuates the difficulties of the situation. Harold should, according to the conventions of feud, kill or seek compensation from the man who kills his brother, but such strictures are necessarily thrown into confusion in the event of fratricide. As noted above, Old Norse myth explores the difficulties of that situation when the god Baldr is accidentally killed by his brother Hǫðr. The poem *Vǫluspá* describes the miraculous birth of another son, born to take revenge for the killing, while an analogue in the Old English poem *Beowulf* depicts the father of two brothers, one killed by the other, paralysed by grief and eventually dying of a broken heart.[138] Here, the killing of Tostig by an arrow may be indebted to the well-known fate of Harold Godwinson — although Harold's death by an arrow in the eye is not included in *Hemings þáttr* itself — but it also nods to a third version of the Baldr myth, that found in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*.[139] There, the blind god Hǫðr is tricked by Loki into shooting his brother in a scene Heather O'Donoghue has linked to exegetical traditions about the death of Cain.[140] The apocryphal account of the blind huntsman Lamech, who shot Cain by mistake, became increasingly popular from the twelfth century onwards.[141] As O'Donoghue explains,

> Lamech came to be viewed as the figure through whom Cain's sin in killing Abel was vindicated, while his own sin could only be redeemed by the blood of Christ seventy-seven generations later, for he had taken upon himself all the sins of the world. Thus Lamech was seen as a crucial pivotal point in the whole salvific scheme.[142]

The correspondence between the Lamech episode and the death of Baldr is not exact, as O'Donoghue notes; she argues rather that Snorri turned to a 'newly popular, even topical' narrative motif to explain certain difficul-

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138 *Eddukvæði*, I, p. 299 (sts. 31–33), and *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 83–85 (ll. 2435–72). There are, admittedly, multiple versions of this tale, and the element of fratricide is not always present to this degree. See a discussion of this episode in O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?'.

139 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, pp. 45–46.

140 O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?', pp. 92–99.

141 O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?', pp. 95–96. It appears in numerous written and visual sources, as O'Donoghue observes. See also the many examples given in Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain*.

142 O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?', pp. 96–97. O'Donoghue here follows Reiss, 'The Story of Lamech'.

ties posed by the Baldr myth.[143] The author of *Hemings þáttr* may also have found inspiration in that tale. Hemingr and Lamech are both noted archers, and King Harold seems to indulge in a kind of self-imposed blindness when he asks so evasively for his brother to be killed.[144] Family tragedy is likewise part of the Lamech story. As a descendant of Adam, Lamech is related to Cain, whose killing then prompts Lamech to kill his own son, who helped guide the arrow.[145] The staging of the scene in *Hemings þáttr*, in which two men collude in the shooting of a third, evokes both the tale of Lamech and Snorri's account of the death of Baldr. Most striking, perhaps, is Tostig's comment in *Hemings þáttr* when he feels the arrow hit his body: 'þersi markaði mik gvði' (this marked me for God).[146] Cain too is marked, as the Old Norse translation of Genesis relates: 'Lagdi gud þa eitt audkent mark upp aa Kayn' (God then lay a distinguishing mark on Cain), and it is this mark that the blind Lamech is unable to see.[147] There is, nevertheless, an important distinction between them: whereas Cain's mark condemned the first murderer to wander the world as an outcast, and protected him (until Lamech) from death, Tostig is marked for death immediately. In this, Hemingr's shot is analogous to Lamech's, releasing Tostig from his exile just as Cain was released from his. The parallels are suggestive rather than exact; they do not serve to map a legendary context onto a historical situation, but rather to evoke the difficult questions provoked by that situation: what are the limits of the fraternal bond? Can fratricide ever be justified? Is revenge always necessary? To what extent can the man who kills his brother achieve forgiveness, or even redemption?

The debate over whether Cain was able to repent before his death was a lively one in the Middle Ages, and it is likewise unclear whether Tostig falls in a state of sin or repentance.[148] His killing moreover implicates Harold

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143 O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?', p. 99. O'Donoghue suggests different ways the myth might have reached Iceland, but the popularity of Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* seems an undeniable factor. An Old Norse translation of Peter's account of Lamech is extant in the Icelandic manuscript known as *Stjórn*. See *Stjórn*, pp. 46–47.

144 Lamech is called 'hinn mesti bogmaðr' in *Stjórn* (p. 46), while Hemingr's skill with a bow and arrow is established during the first half of the *þáttr* when he beats King Haraldr in an archery competition (*Hemings þáttr*, pp. 14–17).

145 In some versions of the tale the boy is his grandson. See O'Donoghue, 'What Has Baldr to Do with Lamech?', pp. 92–95.

146 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 53.

147 *Stjórn*, p. 43. The exact nature of Cain's mark is left ambiguous in Genesis and therefore occasioned considerable discussion among medieval commentators. The question of whether God marked Cain in order to prolong or to mediate his suffering was also much discussed. See Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain*, pp. 14–21. On the importance of the mark and its link to the Lamech episode in medieval drama especially, see Eyler, 'Cain's *Marke*', pp. 359–62.

148 Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain*, pp. 5–13.

and Hemingr in a cycle of murder and vengeance. Lamech's killing of Cain may have vindicated the death of Abel, but the killing itself was an even greater sin, one that could only be redeemed by the death of Christ. *Hemings þáttr* presents the death of Tostig as justified punishment for his attempted invasion, but at what cost to the souls of his killers? Although Harold and Hemingr both survive the Battle of Hastings, neither wishes to continue the fight. Harold, saved from the battlefield in quasi-miraculous circumstances, retires to a cell in Canterbury and lives as a hermit for three more years.[149] There is more than an echo of Edward himself in this conclusion to Harold's life, as bells ring at his death and his sweet-smelling corpse reveals that 'hann var sanheilagr maðr' (he was a very saintly man).[150] Hemingr then takes over the cell and likewise lives as a hermit for the rest of his days.[151] Although neither mentions Tostig explicitly, both men feel strongly the call to penance. Their adoption of the hermit's cell allows them to atone for their role in the conflicts of 1066 and, implicitly, for the killing of the king's brother. In this way, the deaths of all three Godwinsons reveal the consequences of their different responses to the problem of kin-strife. Waltheof acts with integrity towards all and dies a martyr. Tostig is faithless even towards his own family and is killed in battle by his brother's proxy, Hemingr. Harold, a usurper and tyrant, achieves salvation through the loss of his kingdom and renunciation of the world. All three are, in their own way, 'marked by God': by martyrdom, by the arrow, by the sweet-smelling corpse. Together, they demonstrate the different strategies one can adopt when faced with a world of violence and conflict, and the ways in which one might aspire to rise above the trauma of fraternal strife to achieve salvation.

'What if this cursed hand', asks Claudius, 'Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,/Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens/To wash it white as snow?'[152] The horror of fratricide echoes down the centuries as writers from many times and many places wrestle with the question of what happens when sibling rivalry turns to murder. To Claudius's question, the author of *Hemings þáttr* would perhaps answer yes: penance and the renunciation of the world can wash away even the stain of fratricide. For Guy of Amiens and William of Poitiers, however, fratricide places the sons of Godwin beyond redemption; vengeance is the only possible response, and the Norman invasion is a justified reaction to the moral degradation of England's ruling family. For those writing the *Lives* of King Edward, the corruption of Harold and Tostig is evident even from childhood. Violence

149 The myth of Harold Godwinson's survival after the Battle of Hastings circulated for some time after his death. It will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

150 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 58.

151 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 59.

152 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III.3, ll. 43–46 (p. 247).

runs in their blood and the conflict between them is assured decades before it happens. Orderic Vitalis and Henry of Huntingdon are more nuanced in their depiction of fraternal strife. Although both condemn the act of fratricide, they delve into the mental and emotional processes that underlie conflict between siblings, exploring how negative emotion affects political reality. Finally, authors of the kings' sagas take a different approach, widening the circle of Godwin's sons to encompass four brothers, all of whom find themselves on different sides of the conflict. This expanded family group embodies the mixed heritage of eleventh-century England but also demonstrates the competing loyalties that can result from such a complex history. They are a reminder that many in England, Normandy, and Scandinavia were themselves related through family, history, language, and culture, and that the conflicts of 1066 were a form of intrafamilial strife writ large. This context perhaps made the fratricide topos all the more compelling in the mythologization of that tumultuous year. It allowed medieval writers to distil complex international events into contained, easily understood narratives about intrafamily strife, while engaging with wider issues such as the trauma of social fragmentation; the use of power and violence to create new states; the morality of killing within the same community; and the possibilities for forgiveness after violent conflict. For the medieval audience, fratricide offered a compelling and emotionally resonant framework through which to explore traumatic events. It spoke, like all myths, to the experience of being human.

CHAPTER 4

Enigmas of Survival

On Active Service
Godwinson — Harold, King of England, killed in action near Hastings October 14, 1066. Mourned by Godwine, Edmund, Magnus and Ulf.

–Private notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 14, 1957

The circumstances of Harold Godwinson's death are both widely known and much contested. The Bayeux Tapestry vividly depicts the king pulling an arrow from his head before he falls — or does it? The arrow itself is likely to be a reconstruction from the nineteenth century and questions remain as to which of the embroidered figure or figures are meant to represent the king.[1] Early Norman accounts such as William of Jumièges's *Gesta Normannorum* and William of Poitiers's *Gesta Guillelmi* contain few details about the nature of Harold's death, while the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* exhibit the 'stunned silence' typical of contemporary English accounts.[2] In contrast, the *Carmen de Hastingae* describes in graphic detail how Harold was killed, not by an arrow but in close combat with Duke William and three of his knights:

1 On the nature of Harold's death see further Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings*, pp. 206–13 and 231–42, and Brown, 'The Battle of Hastings', pp. 17–18. Martin Foys offers a robust refutation of the suggestion that the Bayeux Tapestry depicts Harold Godwinson dying with an arrow in the eye, as well as a useful summary of the sources for his death and the growth of this legend in Foys, 'Pulling the Arrow Out'. An alternative view is that of David Bernstein, who argues that the arrow is original to the medieval period but that this element was invented by the makers of the tapestry in order to invoke the biblical story of the blinding of Zedekiah, the faithless vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. See Bernstein, 'The Blinding of Harold'. On the arrow as part of a 'founding myth' of British identity, see Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*, pp. 57–58 and 97–99.

2 This is the phrase used by van Houts in 'The Trauma of 1066', p. 11. The D and E manuscripts note only that Harold 'wearð ofslægen' (was killed, D) and 'feoll' (fell, E) with his two brothers, giving no specific details. (*ASC* D, p. 80; *ASC* E, p. 87).

Per clipeum primus dissoluens cuspide pectus,
Effuso madidat sanguinis imbre solum;
Tegmine sub galeę caput amputat ense secundus;
Et telo uentris tertius exta rigat;
Abscidit coxam quartus; procul egit ademptam:
Taliter occisum terra cadauer habet.

> (The first [William], cleaving his breast through the shield with his point, drenched the earth with a gushing torrent of blood; the second [Eustace of Boulogne] smote off his head below the protection of the helmet and the third [Hugh of Ponthieu] pierced the inwards of his belly with his lance; the fourth [Giffard] hewed off his thigh and bore away the severed limb: the ground held the body thus destroyed.)[3]

As Robert Stein observes, this account is not 'a random shot by an anonymous archer but a choreography of noble vengeance'.[4] The conflict between William and Harold is up-close and personal in the *Carmen*, the duke and his soldiers enacting with graphic violence the traumatic dissolution of the English state upon the king's dismembered body.[5]

The motif of Harold's death-by-arrow is both cleaner and more dramatic. As William of Malmesbury describes it, the English and Norman forces were for the first part of the battle evenly matched: 'Valuit haec uicissitudo, modo illis modo istis uincentibus, quantum Haroldi uita moram fecit; at ubi iactu sagittae uiolato cerebro procubuit, fuga Anglorum perhennis in noctem fuit' (This alternation of fortune, now one side prevailing and now the other, held as long as Harold lived; but when his brain was pierced by an arrow and he fell, the English fled without respite till the night).[6] Shot from a distance, the arrow does not implicate the Conqueror personally in Harold's death: it arcs suddenly out of the sky

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3 *Carmen*, pp. 35–37 (ll. 545–50). On the identity of the four knights, see *Carmen*, Appendix D, pp. 116–20. The story of the knight who hacks off a piece of Harold's thigh and takes it away also appears in the *GRA*, although in that text the duke is horrified by this act and strips the offending soldier of his knighthood: *GRA*, I, p. 456. The *Carmen* identifies the knight as Giffard (*Gilfardus*), and there is thus a tantalizing possible link between this character and the protagonist of the Old Norse *Giffarðs þáttr*, featuring a cowardly Norman knight called Giffarðr. See *Morkinskinna*, II, pp. 51–56.

4 Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', p. 184. See also a revised version of this article in Stein, *Reality Fictions*, pp. 65–87.

5 Something like this event is also found on the Bayeux Tapestry to the immediate right of the famous 'arrow' scene. There, a mounted Norman knight slashes at the thigh of a falling figure, likely Harold. As noted above, several later authors describe Harold's death as a combination of the arrow and this subsequent attack, perhaps drawing on the Tapestry itself (see pp. 105–06).

6 *GRA*, I, pp. 454–55.

as though directed by God. There is a fated quality to this type of death that portrays the Conquest as both inevitable and legitimate. As William concludes, 'Illa fuit dies fatalis Angliae, funestum excidium dulcis patriae, pro nouorum dominorum commutatione' (That was a day of destiny for England, a fatal disaster for our dear country as she exchanged old masters for new).[7] As Martin Foys and others have shown, however, the story of the arrow did not fully develop until the middle of the twelfth century; historical accuracy was likely not of primary concern to those who promoted it.[8] The story of the arrow seems, rather, to have offered a greater range of literary possibilities than the more brutal account in the *Carmen*. There are clear parallels to Virgil's *Aeneid* in the language used both by William of Malmesbury and by Baudri de Bourgueil in his *Adelae Comitissae*, an ekphrastic poem describing the episode.[9] The arrow also works as a symbol of Norman military superiority. As described by Henry of Huntingdon, William rallies his troops before the Battle of Hastings, pouring scorn on their enemies as 'gens nec etiam sagittas habens' (a people who do not even possess arrows).[10] In the *Roman de Rou*, Wace extends the motif of the arrow through several hundred lines, nearly the entire narrative of the conflict. He portrays William holding a hunting-bow in his hands as the news arrives in Normandy that Harold has been made King of England: 'encordé l'aveit e tendu/e entesé e des*tend*u' (he had strung it and stretched it, pulled it and shot it).[11] Crossing the Channel, the Duke commands that his ship be adorned with the figurehead of a child holding a strung bow, aimed at England.[12] At the Battle of Hastings itself, Harold is one of many English soldiers hit with Norman arrows. The shot weakens him and, when he finally falls, his death is the culmination of an ominous aggregation of portents, centring on the symbol of the arrow.

Even for Wace, however, the actual moment of death remains a mystery. Harold is overpowered by a throng of Norman soldiers, and no one knows who struck the fatal blow. Wace dwells on the uncertainty of this pivotal event:

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7 *GRA*, I, pp. 456–57.

8 The arrow in the eye is mentioned by late-eleventh-century authors Baudri de Bourgeuil and Amatus of Monecassine, and is a notable feature on the Bayeux Tapestry. It is likely through these works that the motif entered the chronicles of William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Wace. See further a comparison of the relevant literary sources in Foys, 'Pulling the Arrow Out', pp. 160–07.

9 Foys, 'Pulling the Arrow Out', pp. 163–64.

10 *HE*, pp. 392–93.

11 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 103 (ll. 35843–44), and *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 156.

12 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 124 (ll. 36453–60).

Ne sai dire, ne jo nel di,
ne jo n'i fui, ne jo nel vi,
ne *a* maistre dire n'oï
que le rei Heraut abati
ne de quel arme il fu nafrez,
mais od les morz fu morz trovez;
mort fu trové entre les morz,
nel pout garir ses granz esforz.[13]

> (I cannot say, and do not say, nor was I there and did not see it, nor have I heard any authority say who felled King Harold or with which weapon he was wounded. But he was found dead along with the other dead bodies. He was found dead amongst the dead; his great efforts could not save him.)[14]

The ornate patterning of these dramatic lines mark them out from the surrounding text. The repetition of end-rhyme over the first four lines builds up, like a skaldic *helmingr*, to the name of the poet's subject, *le rei Herault*, who has been struck down, *abati*.[15] Nevertheless, the dense repetition of negative particles *ne* and *nel* infuses the section with an alliterative drumbeat of uncertainty: the poet did not witness the moment or manner of the king's death, nor did anyone else. Wace makes clear the *fact* of this death in the chiastic climax to this section — *od les morz fu morz trovez;/mort fu trové entre les morz* — and yet the repetition of *morz* and *mort* only emphasizes the anonymity of the dead: the king is but one corpse among many. Even his *granz esforz* could not save Harold from the inevitable fall and resulting obscurity.

While conflicting or missing details about the manner of Harold's death have led to considerable debate in the post-medieval period, the question of where his body was interred arguably attracted more attention in the centuries immediately following his defeat. As discussed above, early Anglo-Norman texts record that William had Harold buried by the seashore,[16] but an alternative tradition later placed the king's body at

13 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 215 (ll. 38851–58).

14 *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, pp. 190–91.

15 Compare with, for example, stanza 20 of Hallfredr vandræðaskáld's memorial poem for King Óláfr Tryggvason, in which the first four lines build up to the name of Óláfr's father: '†Samr† vas ǫrr of ævi/oddbragðs, hinns þat sagði,/at lofða gramr lifði,/læstyggs burar Tryggva' (The messenger of the movement of the weapon-point (warrior) was *samr*, the one who said that the lord of warriors was alive, the guileless son of Tryggvi). The meaning of *samr* is unclear; see the editors' notes in *SkP* I, p. 429. The correspondence between Óláfr's death and Harold's will be discussed in more detail below.

16 *Carmen*, pp. 36–39 (ll. 577–92); *GG*, pp. 140–41; also *HE*, II, pp. 178–79. See the discussion in Chapter 1 at pp. 56–59.

Waltham Abbey in Essex.[17] Wace reiterates the lack of reliable information in this context as well:

> Li reis Heraut en fu portez,
> a Wat*e*han fu enterrez,
> mais jo ne sai qui l'enporta
> ne jo ne sai qui l'enterra.[18]
>
> (King Harold was taken away and buried at Waltham, but I do not know who took him and I do not know who buried him.)[19]

The interleaving of the verbs *(en)porter* and *enterer*, repeated on alternate lines, weaves together the acts of carrying and burying Harold's body in a quatrain that reminds Wace's audience of the inherent uncertainties in Harold's tale. The passive construction of the first two lines — *fu portez*, *fu enterrez* — denies any knowledge of who performed those acts, while the assertion *jo ne sai*, repeated in the third and fourth lines, rejects the privileged omniscience claimed by so many a chronicle narrator. Stein observes that Wace often interrupts the narrative to discuss which aspects of the history he is uncertain about, and that he takes this to extremes in the presentation of Harold's death and burial:

> What is striking about this narrative sequence as it stretches over hundreds of lines is the accumulation of confessions of ignorance around Harold's body: Wace says he does not know who shot him, who killed him, who disfigured the body, who took him from the field, or who buried him. This amounts to a wholesale dismissal of the significance both of Harold's death and of the victory, a victory for which no one is responsible and no one can claim credit.[20]

As Stein goes on to argue, Wace portrays Duke William's real assumption of power as taking place in the council chamber, not on the battlefield. When, after the Battle of Hastings, a joint council of Norman and English noblemen choose to adopt the laws of King Edward, the Conqueror's reign becomes a continuation of the Confessor's; Harold, the interim king, 'has disappeared into a cloud of speculation'.[21] In the *Roman de Rou*, the

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17 This is the location given in *GRA*, I, pp. 460–61; *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 219 (ll. 38967–68); and of course the *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 54–57. Harley 3776, the manuscript that contains both the *Waltham Chronicle* and the *Vita Haroldi*, also includes two 'Versus Circa Tumbam Haroldi Regis' (Verses upon the tomb of King Harold), implicitly located at Waltham. See *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 90–91, and Chibnall's discussion of the verses in the introduction to this edition at pp. li–lii.

18 *Rou*, ed. by Holden, II, p. 219 (ll. 38967–70).

19 *Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 192.

20 Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', pp. 193–94.

21 Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', p. 196.

uncertainty surrounding Harold Godwinson's death becomes part of a broader strategy to legitimize Norman rule in England. The trauma of conquest is all but erased in this account, as the very process of conquest itself disappears.

The uncertainty surrounding Harold's death and burial nevertheless exerted considerable imaginative force during the post-Conquest period, offering an alternative narrative to the Norman consolidation of power and a space in which to investigate the trauma of the English loss. Rumours that Harold survived the Battle of Hastings seem to have circulated orally, finding their way into texts written in England, Normandy, and Scandinavia.[22] Aelred of Rievaulx is one of the earliest authors to allude to this legend in his *Vita Ædwardi*: 'Eodem anno Haroldus ipse regno spoliatus Anglorum aut misere occubuit aut, ut quidam putant poenitentiae tantum reseruatus euasit' (In the same year Harold himself, despoiled of the kingdom of the English, either met a miserable death or, as some think, escaped, saved only for repentance').[23] Gerald of Wales, writing near the end of the same century, locates the king's final resting place at Chester, 'ubi sancta conversatione cujusdam urbis ecclesiæ jugis et assiduus contemplator adhærens, vitamque tanquam anachoriticam ducens, viæ ac vitæ cursum, ut creditur, feliciter consummavit' (where it is believed that he led the life of an anchorite, passing his days in constant attendance in one of the local churches and so came contentedly to the end of life's journey).[24] The author of the *Waltham Chronicle* states that Harold lies at Waltham, 'quicquid fabulentur homines quod in rupe manserit Dorobernie et nuper defunctus sepultus sit Cestrie' (whatever stories men may invent that Harold dwelt in a cave at Canterbury and that later, when he died, was buried at Chester).[25] The strength of the Chronicler's denial reveals how persistent such *fabulae* must have been, and Harold is not alone in this respect. Arthur, Charlemagne, Richard II of England, James IV of Scotland, and Czar Alexander I of Russia have each been figured as a *rex quondam rexque futurus* (former king and king to come), not to mention Norway's patron saint, Óláfr inn helgi, and its first Christianizing king,

22 Stein finds traces of the rumour in at least ten texts composed during the twelfth century ('The Trouble with Harold'). See also Ashe, 'Harold Godwineson', and Ashe, '*Mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*'.

23 *Vita Sancti Ædwardi*, p. 140, and *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 190.

24 Latin text from Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, p. 140; English from Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Journey through Wales*, pp. 198–99. As Stein observes, this reference to Harold immediately precedes a series of stories about monstrous and legendary creatures: Harold's is one of many absent, monstrous, or hybrid bodies in this passage. See further Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', p. 197.

25 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 54–57.

Óláfr Tryggvason.[26] For Marc Cohen, such tales offer a 'combination of national tragedy and mystery' that prove irresistible to writers and historians alike.[27] As Margaret Ashdown observes, with these tales 'we enter a strange world of intrigue and credulity, where self-deception and genuine conviction are hard to distinguish'.[28] Such stories are compelling because they resist narratives of conquest or regime change. By its very existence the living body of the defeated king challenges the new ruler's claims to victory. Rumours of his survival offer supporters hope that regime change may be reversed, justifying their reluctance to integrate into new political structures. The king himself becomes a witness to the violent or murky circumstances through which he was deposed, and his testimony has the potential to disrupt the narratives of those who replaced him. Although defeated, a king who survives can become a dangerous and destabilizing figure in the eyes of those who succeed him. The legends of his survival offer in this way a potent mix of alternative history and disruptive political strategy.

Such legends are hopeful, in a way, but they can also give voice to the trauma of losing a beloved leader. Caruth has argued that two of Freud's works, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*, together articulate a theory of trauma as 'the peculiar incomprehensibility of human survival'.[29] In the former, Freud links the origins of 'traumatic neurosis' (now known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD) to an individual's survival of a catastrophic event.[30] Escaping 'apparently unharmed' from a situation that nearly results in the loss of life, the individual begins to experience nightmares, flashbacks, and other symptoms of trauma some time after the event itself.[31] Such reactions are caused, Freud argues, by the mind's inability to recognize the threat in the moment it occurs; recognition happens only afterwards. As Caruth explains, '[t]he shock of the mind's relation to the threat of death is thus not the direct experience

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26 Margaret Ashdown notes the relative ubiquity of such tales in Ashdown, 'An Icelandic Account'. The legends surrounding the survival of Óláfr Tryggvason will be discussed in more detail below.

27 Cohen, 'From Throndheim to Waltham to Chester', p. 144.

28 Ashdown, 'An Icelandic Account', p. 133.

29 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 60.

30 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is in *SE*, XVIII, and *Moses and Monotheism* in *SE*, XXIII. On the concept of 'traumatic neurosis' see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 9–10. As Trembinski observes, terms like PTSD are imprecise and in a constant state of refinement. It is now acknowledged that Western models of trauma do not fully capture the experiences of people living in other parts of the world, and we cannot expect them to capture fully the experience of people living in medieval societies that were so different to our own. See further the important caveats she raises about the use of such terms in Trembinski, 'Trauma as a Category for Analysis', pp. 15–21.

31 DSM-5-TR similarly acknowledges 'delayed expression' if symptoms occur at least six months after the traumatic event ('Posttraumatic Stress Disorder').

of the threat, but precisely the *missing* of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced *in time*, it has not yet been fully known'.[32] In nightmares and flashbacks the traumatized person is forced to confront repeatedly not only the moment of danger but also the impossibility of grasping that moment of danger itself, that is, 'the *missing* of this experience'.[33] For this reason, Caruth argues, the 'urgent and unsettling' question posed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is '*What does it mean to survive?*'[34] Linking this question to the broader consideration of Jewish history in *Moses and Monotheism*, she argues that we must read Freud's formulation of individual trauma within the context of historical trauma to 'understand the full complexity of the problem of survival at the heart of human experience'.[35] Trauma, she argues,

> is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally an enigma of survival. It is only by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience.[36]

This formulation is useful when examining stories of those who survived the conflicts of 1066. We cannot access the individual experience of figures like King Harold but, as Wace's description above reveals, the concern with 'missing' the moment of his death resonates in medieval texts as well as modern ones: *ne sai dire, ne jo nel di*. As the rest of this chapter will show, medieval authors were likewise gripped by the 'paradoxical relationship between destructiveness and survival' and its implications for individual and collective responses to traumatic events. Focusing on two key figures in the conflict, King Harold Godwinson and Waltheof, Earl of Northumbria, we will see how this paradox echoes through post-Conquest narratives, and consider how medieval authors approached in their own way that urgent and unsettling question: what does it mean to survive?

Survival in the *Vita Haroldi*

Somewhat ironically, given its preservation in the same manuscript as the *Waltham Chronicle*, the *Vita Haroldi* contains the lengthiest and most complex account of Harold's life after Hastings. Exemplifying the Chronicler's worst fears about the invention of stories around the king's survival,

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32 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 64, emphasis original.
33 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 64.
34 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 62, emphasis original.
35 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 60.
36 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 60.

Harold's adventures after the English defeat occupy a significant portion of the text, blurring in exuberant and chaotic fashion the conventions of chronicle, hagiography, and romance.[37] Chronology too is blurred in this text, as the narrative jumps back and forth in time, interweaving the events of the 1060s with numerous short tales and digressions. These include: an account of the rise of Earl Godwin; a description of the discovery of the Waltham Cross; a list of Harold's gifts to Waltham Abbey; several sermon-like passages filled with biblical quotations, apostrophes to God, and general moralizing; accounts of the author's life and working process; and lengthy rebuttals of previous authors' versions of the same material. The *Vita* itself is preceded in the manuscript by a preface and appended by the testimony of Harold's servant and companion; both texts variously repeat and differ from elements in the *Vita* proper.[38] The result is a heteroglossic, meandering work in which events are replayed, characters doubled, and linear time fractured. As discussed above, this disrupted, hiccupping chronology is characteristic of literature about trauma, and the *Vita Haroldi* may be seen in this light as an investigation into the traumas of 1066, crafted from the perspective of the early thirteenth century. This is not to argue that the author of the *Vita* modelled the text according to modern understandings of trauma, but rather that the text offers a complex psychological investigation of what it *might* have been like for Harold to have survived the catastrophic experience of conquest. The lens of modern trauma studies offers a useful framework for understanding how and why the author imagined Harold's experience in the way he did, and illuminates the process through which that imagining became the text we have today.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the *Vita* author focuses on Harold's body as it revolves through cycles of pain and healing. In the first part of the *Vita*, the king's body is laid low three times by pain, and three times healed by the miraculous Cross of Waltham. Harold's body mirrors in this way the fate of the kingdom as he engages in three military confrontations: first with the Welsh; then with the Norwegians; and finally with the Normans. In keeping with this correspondence between the king's body and the kingdom, the *Vita* author repeatedly describes the wounding of Harold during the Battle of Hastings. Indeed, this has already been seen in the passages cited above, in which the metaphorical rising and falling of the king's body mirrors the ebb and flow of fortune:

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37 Matthews argues that the *Vita* makes 'perfect sense' as a hagiography while also noting its relationship to the chronicle tradition; see Matthews, 'The Content and Construction', pp. 65 and 70–71. Stein and Ashe discuss the structures and tropes the text shares with the romance genre: see Ashe, 'Harold Godwineson'; Ashe, '*Mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*'; and Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', pp. 200–02.

38 On the structure of the *Vita* and the overall manuscript context, see Matthews, 'The Content and Construction', pp. 70–73.

> Sic et Haroldus noster [...] tanquam super ventum subito elevatur et repente eliditur valide. [...] Manus conserit: et concidit congreditur et consciditur. Consciditur quidem et concidit . set numquid ad perniciem vel ad insipienciam sibi? Num hoc sustinebit manus illa regis crucifixi . qua obstetricante egressus est coluber tortuosus? ea quidem permittente tetigit ossa ejus . et singula fere membra hostilis framea . carnem quoque ejus graviter vulneravit.[39]
>
> (And thus also [like the biblical Joseph] our Harold [...] is promptly lifted up by the wind, as it were, and all of a sudden violently thrown down. [...] He joins battle and falls; he attacks and is cut down. He is cut down and fallen indeed, but is it to his ruin or his folly? Will the hand of the crucified King, from which came forth a writhing serpent, sustain him? Indeed, that hand permitting it, the enemy's spear pierced his bones and almost every limb, wounding him seriously.)[40]

Harold falls four times in the space of as many lines, the repetitive force of defeat building up to a graphic description of the wounds that brought him down. Like the fall, the wounds too are multiplied: although there is only one spear it seems to stab repeatedly, reaching every bone in the king's body. Harold lies on the battlefield, pierced by the spear like a butterfly pinned to a mounting board. Strangely, the narrator pauses the narrative at his pivotal moment. He departs from the scene to muse first on the divine purpose behind the king's death, and then wanders into a long digression about the life of his principal source, the hermit Sæbeorht. As the wounded Harold hovers between life and death, the narrative of battle freezes and the story of Sæbeorht unfolds. This man, we are told, was Harold's most devoted follower, known in old age by the author of the *Vita*. Sæbeorht is thus a direct eyewitness to Harold's life, and yet the story that interrupts the Battle of Hastings is explicitly linked to Harold's death. As the narrator explains, only when the former king 'ut ille de mundo recessit . et quia ad Deum abiit miraculorum indiciis patenter declaravit' (passed from this world and it was evident from his miracles that he had gone to heaven) did Sæbeorht decide to follow his example and embark on pilgrimage.[41] Sæbeorht travelled abroad for many years before returning to England and confining himself as a hermit, eventually becoming an object of veneration for the local people. This peculiar interruption to the narrative of the battle occupies three pages in the modern printed translation, the *Vita* itself spanning only thirty-six pages in total. It is thus a substantial deviation from one of the most climactic moments in the narrative. And

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39 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 28. Part of this passage was cited in Chapter 1, pp. 79–82.

40 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 10.

41 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 30; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 11.

yet, as becomes clear, this deviation is also the story of Harold himself. Sæbeorht, declares the narrator, copied Harold in doing good, '[c]upiens quippe quo ille pervenerat et ipse pervenire: studebat quam similius potuit sicut ille ambulaverat : et ipse ambulare' (wishing to arrive at such a point as he [Harold] had attained, and strove to pursue a similar walk of life to that in which he [Harold] had walked).[42] Sæbeorht departed on pilgrimage because he knew Harold ('quod Haroldum noverat') had done so; he wept at the holy sites as Harold had done ('ut fecerat Haroldus'); he returns to his native land like Harold returns to his ('ad patrium ut Haroldus solum revertitur').[43] Telling the story of Sæbeorht in this way, the narrator also recounts the story of Harold, but at one remove. Sæbeorht's life is a replica of Harold's following the Battle of Hastings, and yet in the chronology of the text — suspended at the height of the battle itself — this period in Harold's life has not yet arrived. Sæbeorht's journey is both a repetition of Harold's and a pre-enactment of events that have, for the reader, not yet occurred. Interrupting the moment in which Harold's life hangs in the balance, the tale of Sæbeorht gives away the ending — Harold will not die at Hastings — while offering a new one: Harold will die a holy man many decades later. It both rejects and confirms Harold's death in the very moment of his near-fatal wounding.

The *Vita* author himself acknowledges the surprising direction in which the narrative has gone, concluding this section rather disingenuously: 'Verum hec seriatim inferius prosequemur : nunc a digressionis excessu ad ordinem cepte narracionis stilo currente accedamus' (But I will tell these things in their proper order. Let's now move on from this excessive digression without more ado to the story already begun).[44] Calling attention to his narrative peregrinations in an almost playful manner, the author invites the reader to return with him to the events of 1066 and to remember where the narrative broke off. As if to jog the reader's memory, he describes again the moment of Harold's wounding: 'Prostrato igitur ac superato in primo congressu a Normannis exercitu Anglorum Rex Haroldus plagis confossus innumeris inter mortuos . et ipse prosternitur' (When the English army was overcome and beaten by this initial Norman onslaught, King Harold was thrown to the ground amongst the slain, pierced through with innumerable blows).[45] Harold has now fallen a sixth time in the same moment of battle, and been pierced through again by the enemy's spears. Only now, however, having given away the ending via the story of Sæbeorht, does the *Vita* author confirm that Harold will survive: 'Nec poterant tamen quamlibet multa . quamlibet letalia vulnera vitam

42 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 30; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 11.
43 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 30–31; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 11.
44 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 33; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 13.
45 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 34; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 13.

funditus viro adimere : quem pietas salvatoris ad vitam et victoriam felicius disposuit reparare' (But his wounds, although many and deadly, could not entirely deprive of life one whom the goodness of the Saviour had happily destined to restore to life and victory).[46] Pierced by the spear, Harold has fallen half a dozen times by this point, and yet the reader knows he will survive for many decades after. Time seems to collapse as the near-death at Hastings happens over and over, superimposed by the real death of the elderly Harold a lifetime later.

The reader knows, therefore, that Harold will live, but as the narrative resumes he hovers in the space between life and death. He is found 'exanguis [...] et vix palpitans' (stunned and scarcely breathing) by a group of women searching the battlefield for survivors.[47] Conveyed in secret to a cellar in Winchester, the wounded king steps straight into the world of popular romance: 'Hic biennio latebras in quodam cellario fovens a quadam muliere genere Saracena artis cirurgice peritissima : curatus est . et Altissimi cooperante medicina : ad integerrimam perductus sanitatem' (Here, keeping to a secret hiding-place in a certain cellar for two years, he was healed in secret by an Arab woman who was particularly skilled in the art of surgery; and with the co-operation of the medicine of the Most High, he was restored to undiminished health).[48] Despite her racial otherness, the Arab woman appears happy to collaborate with the Christian God, *Altissimus*, in her healing of Harold. If time raced in circles during the battle itself, it comes to a halt for Harold during this prolonged period of recovery; it is as though he has been spirited away to a supernatural Otherworld in which time flows differently while his body heals. The king emerges from the cellar ready to fight the Normans again, but the world has moved on. His allies in England have been killed, exiled, or subjugated; his allies on the Continent have come to terms with the Norman regime. The war is over for all but Harold, but the king remains mentally and emotionally in the year 1066. Travelling to the Continent to muster support for another invasion, the king relates the story of his own wounding and attempts to make sense of why the English lost. The *Vita* here focuses on the surprise nature of the Norman attack, which Harold describes to the German court as a disaster that occurred suddenly and unexpectedly. His plea for support reveals how mentally unprepared he was to entertain the possibility of defeat:

> Vincere enim assuetus et vinci nescius victum me ait credidissem . si paulo segnius novande inimicis victoriam retulissem. Cesis namque

46 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 34; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 13.

47 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 34; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 13.

48 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 35; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 13. The woman's skill in surgery is reminiscent of female healers found in the *Lais* of Marie de France and related works. See further McCracken, 'Women and Medicine'.

> favore divino a nobis cum rege suo Norwagicis qui regni nostri fines ab aquilone irruperant: exercitibus et ducibus nostris ad propria dimissis repente a regione australi supervenere Normanni. Quibus et ipse cum paucis repentinus occurrens non inferior viribus aut animis . sed numero minor compressus . tandem cecidi non victus cessi.[49]
>
> > ('Accustomed to victory as I am, and unacquainted with defeat', he said, 'I should have thought myself beaten if I had been slow to gain a fresh victory over the enemy. For when, by divine grace, the Norwegians and their king, who had invaded our borders from the north, were slain by us, and our armies and generals had been dismissed to their own homes, the Normans suddenly came upon us from the south. And meeting them hastily with a small force, not inferior in courage or spirit but only in numbers, I eventually fell. But although beaten I didn't surrender'.)[50]

Both the suddenness of the Norman attack and Harold's confidence in his own abilities led him to assume that he would triumph — but he did not. Harold's description of being taken by surprise speaks to the idea of 'missing' a catastrophic experience. As Caruth observes, the traumatic response is linked to 'the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly'.[51] The English are unprepared for the Normans just as Harold is unprepared for defeat. Harold experienced the threat too late, and cannot now accept the reality of that event. Two years after the battle, Harold does not consider himself beaten because he missed the moment in which that happened. He has not, in his own mind, surrendered, and yet for the rest of the world he has lost. The incongruence of his expectations with the reality of the situation causes profound mental distress when he is unable to secure foreign support: 'primo quidem graviter anxie mentis fluctibus estuare cepit . vehementerque addici' (he was at first disturbed and then gave himself up to the agitations of great anxiety).[52] The trauma of Harold's experience is thus linked not only to his brush with death on the battlefield but to the sudden dislocation he experiences, two years later, from the rest of the world and indeed from time itself.

The anxiety provoked by this dislocation seems to cause the temporary departure of Harold's mind from his body, but it is also this moment of

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49 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 36.

50 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 14.

51 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 64. Freud emphasizes the 'factor of surprise, of fright' in the development of traumatic neurosis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 9. His subsequent observation that 'a wound or injury inflicted simultaneously works as a rule *against* the development of a neurosis' is, however, a notable difference to medieval descriptions of the battle, in which the wounds Harold receives at Hastings are a central part of his experience.

52 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 36; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 14.

confusion and dislocation that prompts the beginning of his transformation from king to holy man:

> Tandem vero in se reversus Haroldus et quasi a fantastico quo diucius sompnio sibi redditus ad cor suum totus convertitur. Intelligit vel sero obsistentem sibi in via hac qua inaniter ambulabat Deum . suique fuisse angeli quem intus exteriusque in se sue tam pertinaciter cedentem pertulisset gladium. Apertisque mentis sue oculis aliud de cetero sibi genus eligendum videt preliorum alia requirenda presidia.[53]
>
> (Eventually, coming to himself and returning from his fantastic dream, as it were, Harold had a complete change of heart. He realised, albeit belatedly, that it was God who was opposing him in the way he was so profitlessly going, and that it was His angel's sword which had been carried against him in his obstinate efforts. And the eyes of his understanding being opened, he saw that he must choose another kind of warfare, and that other kinds of defences would be required.)[54]

What is this *fantasticum sompnium* that takes Harold away from himself? Is it a flashback, a nightmare, a moment of unconsciousness? As noted in Chapter 2, the *somnium* is the 'enigmatic dream' of medieval dream theory; although ambiguous and at times deceptive, it can with proper interpretation yield the truth.[55] The term *fantasticum* (imaginary, visionary) only enhances the uncanny, out-of-body nature of this experience, suggesting that Harold's mind cannot fully grapple with the reality of his situation. Hovering near death in a state of unconsciousness, the king has missed both the moment of defeat and the two years of Norman colonization that have followed. He has missed the Conquest and as such, in Caruth's words, 'it has not yet been fully known'. As the description above shows, Harold grasps the significance of his experience only belatedly (*sero*), that is, after a period of latency. The end of the latency period provokes something akin to the mental distress we would now associate with PTSD, which can include similarly intrusive and involuntary memories, dissociation from the present moment, flashbacks, and physiological markers of distress.[56] But it is also something more. In the medieval text, trauma leads not only to suffering but also to enlightenment, and to religious transformation. Through this enigmatic dream Harold begins to wrestle with the enigma of his own survival. The *fantasticum sompnium* is a moment of departure and return: Harold's agitated mind departs into the world of vision or

53 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 38.
54 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 14.
55 See Macrobius, *Opera*, II, p. 10, and Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 23.
56 See the full list of symptoms in DSM-5-TR, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder'.

nightmare, and when it returns his identity as King of England has likewise vanished. Relinquishing the dream of re-conquering England, he resolves to follow in the footsteps of Christ. He resolves to emulate one who has also departed and returned.

Resurrected, in this way, not as a king but as a pilgrim, Harold is transformed. As the *Vita* author proclaims: 'Mutater itaque in Haroldo hominis repente exterioris habitus . et interiorus affectus' (Thus Harold's outward appearance and inward disposition are both suddenly changed).[57] While formerly his chest swelled with the cries of battle, it now trembles with sighs; the eyes that once glowed with the light of command now shower with tears.[58] In what is perhaps a nod to the motif of Harold's arrogance, discussed in Chapter 1, the *Vita* author also observes that now '[n]il jam elatum cervicosum nichil aut truculentum os supercilia . et cervix pretendebant' ([h]is neck displays no pride, his face no cruelty, his brow no haughtiness).[59] The text dwells at length on his outward appearance, particularly the contrast it presents between his past and present incarnations:

> Fulcit quam armare consuevit manum . curtata in baculum hasta . pro clipeo : pera collo appenditur . filtro vertex adumbratur : quem munire galea . ornare diadema solebat. Pedes et tybie pro sandaliis et ocreis vel nudantur funditus vel semicinciis obvolvuntur.[60]
>
> > (The hand which was accustomed to bear weapons he supports with a spear cut down to form a staff. Instead of a shield, a pilgrim's wallet hangs from his neck. His head, which he was accustomed to equip with a helmet and adorn with a crown, is shaded with a cowl. In place of boots and greaves, his feet and legs are either completely bare or wrapped in thin leggings.)[61]

The substitution of Harold's battle attire for that of a pilgrim proclaims his new identity to the world, and yet the power of that identity comes precisely from its contrast to the old. The refashioning of the spear into a pilgrim's shaft is an eloquent symbol of Harold's own transformation: a weapon formerly used to kill has been made into an instrument of support. Nevertheless, the object also embodies the memory of the trauma that has prompted this transformation: the spear-shaft is a reminder not only of Harold's former identity as a warrior but also of the spears that wounded his body so badly during the battle. The transformation of Harold's mail-

57 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 40; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 15.
58 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 42.
59 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 42; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 17.
60 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 40.
61 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 15.

coat operates in the same way, with the king now using it to mortify the body that has so recently been healed:

> Nam humeris lacertis . lumbis et lateri : lorica solum . solita non adimitur . sed proprius admovetur. Abstracta siquidem et abjecta interula : nude carni calibis duricies copulatur. Sic vigilans non armatus sed incarceratus incedit ferro . sic dormientem non thorus excipit . sed thorax includit.[62]
>
> > (The coat of mail is not thrown off from his shoulders, arms, loins, and sides; but it is brought even closer to the body; for the underclothes being taken off and cast aside, the roughness of the metal comes next to the bare flesh. Thus while awake he marched not armed but imprisoned in iron. Thus when asleep he did not lie supported by a bed but enclosed in a breastplate.)[63]

Although transformed into a pilgrim, Harold remains gripped, literally, by the markers of his traumatic past. The mailcoat, that object which was supposed to protect his body, now wounds it on a daily basis, repeating the trauma of injury and reminding Harold of the unexpected, unaccepted nature of that experience. Like a flashback, the constant scraping of metal against flesh forces Harold not only to relive his near-death experience at Hastings, but to confront repeatedly the enigma of his own survival. The penance Harold chooses for himself is both physical and mental. Enclosed in the painful memories of the past, the character of Harold seems to ask not only 'what does it mean to survive?' but also 'what does it mean to repent?' Can repentance heal the wounds of trauma, or is repentance itself a repetition of the traumatic experience?

Harold's actions in the decades that follow suggest that both may be true. For many years the king's transformation into a pilgrim appears to be successful. He wanders Europe visiting holy sites and pilfering relics to bring back to England. Seemingly at peace with this new occupation,

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62 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 40.

63 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 16. See also the discussion of this passage in Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', p. 199. As Ashe shows, the use of a mailcoat to mortify the body is also found in the near-contemporary lives of two English hermits, Godric of Finchale and Wulfric of Haselbury, with which the *Vita Haroldi* shares other similarities. The figure of the saint as the *miles Christi* (soldier of Christ) has parallels on the Continent as well: Ashe, '*Mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*', pp. 162–65. Harold differs from such figures, however, in that he served as a soldier before his transformation into a holy man, and it is *his* armour that becomes the instrument of a self-injury that is mental and emotional rather than purely physical. As noted in Chapter 1, the motif of the leader's mailcoat runs through several accounts about 1066. One might contrast Harold's repurposing of the mailcoat into an emblem of his holiness to William's quick thinking when faced with the reversed mailcoat before the Battle of Hastings, and to Haraldr harðráði's poetic response to the missing mailcoat before Stamford Bridge. See above, pp. 98–104.

'[g]audit se ab hominibus victim . dum mundum dum seipsum vincendo : victus quoque melius de Diabolo didicit triumphare' (he rejoices that he has been conquered by man since, although conquered, by conquering the world and himself he has learned how to triumph more gloriously over the Devil).[64] Eventually, however, Harold realizes that the ultimate victory is to conquer the conquerors (*vincere victores*), that is, to pray for his enemies in the very lands they have taken from him.[65] His return to England decades after the Conquest is presented as a pious act, and yet his subsequent movements through his former kingdom suggest that the trauma of defeat still lingers. Disguised and calling himself 'Christian', Harold spends ten years in a cave near Dover '[n]on vero multum a loco ubi regnum terrenum pene moriendo pridem ipse amiserat' (not far from the place where he had formerly lost his earthly kingdom and nearly met his death).[66] Having spent so many decades travelling Europe as a pilgrim, it is as though, near the end of his life, Harold is finally ready to perform a pilgrimage to his own experience. Harold's return to the site of his defeat offers the opportunity for spiritual victory precisely because of the mental and emotional anguish it provokes. Just as the repurposed mailcoat rubs insistently on his body, so the landscape in which he was defeated wears on his eyes and, through them, on his mind and heart. This daily confrontation with the past, and its contrast with the inescapably changed present, lies at the heart of his new struggle:

> Hic ergo paciencia hic et clemencia viri vires suas exercebant et perdebant . ubi et preteritus suus suorumque lapsus . presensque hostium fastus . memorie necnon . et aspectui suo quo frequencius ingerebatur.[67]
>
> > (For here where both his own and his nation's past misfortunes and the present arrogance of the enemy was brought forcibly to mind and eye so frequently, the man's patience and humility were exercised and his strength consumed.)[68]

The compulsion to return to the scene of a traumatic experience or to re-create elements of that experience is well documented among people suffering post-traumatic symptoms.[69] Drawn to the site of his defeat and injury, Harold similarly forces himself to confront the memory of all he

64 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 42; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 17.
65 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 69.
66 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 70; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, pp. 28–29. On the importance of disguise in this text, see especially Stein, 'The Trouble with Harold', pp. 203–04.
67 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 70.
68 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 29.
69 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 39–42.

has lost, and to do so repeatedly over the course of a decade. It is his version of the flashbacks, nightmares, or compulsive repetition we would now associate with the traumatic response: having missed the moment of his own near-death, Harold is drawn back to the place where this 'missing' occurred, perhaps in the hope of finally confronting it. While the narrator presents Harold's return to England as a key element in his spiritual victory over the Normans, the decision to test himself in this way suggests that the Conquest still retains a powerful and unsettling hold over his mind and memory. As Herman writes, 'There is something uncanny about reenactments [of past trauma]. Even when they are consciously chosen, they have a feeling of involuntariness. Even when they are not dangerous, they have a driven, tenacious quality'.[70] This is precisely the quality suggested by Harold's return to Dover.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Norman Conquest of England is not the only conflict described in the *Vita*. Harold too was a conqueror, and the next stage of his journey ventures further into the landscape of the past as he travels to Wales. Unlike his decade-long sojourn near Dover, Harold leads a peripatetic existence in Wales, his wandering through the countryside a faint echo of his triumphant military campaign so many decades before. It was, as will be remembered from Chapter 1, the totality of his victory over Wales that consolidated Harold's position at the court of King Edward and placed him in such an advantageous position after the king's death. And yet, it will also be remembered that the *Vita* describes Harold's victory in Wales as particularly bloody, resulting in the near annihilation of the Welsh people.[71] Indeed, if the reader has not remembered the nature of Harold's relationship with Wales, the *Vita* provides a quick summary at this point: 'Fuit hec quando adhuc comes tanta eos virtute perdomuit . peneque delevit' (For this was the region which, while still an earl, he had completely subjugated and almost annihilated by his bravery).[72] The nature of Harold's spiritual journey in that region is therefore different from that in Kent. Whereas the torment Harold suffered in England was mental and emotional, the torment he undergoes in Wales is viscerally physical:

> Paciendi namque servens amore quasi parum reputans quicquid ipse sibi carnifex asperitatis intulisset corpori et inedie effere gentis libenter adivit contubernium . a qua etsi quominus crucifigendum variis tamen modis se noverat affligendum. Nec secus quam sperabat et optabat : ab infidis ferinisque homunculis pertulit . verberibus namque sevissimis a latrunculis eorum sepius vehementer attritus quibus etiam

70 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 41.

71 See above, Chapter 1, pp. 76–78.

72 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 91; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 36.

possent dampnis afficiebatur. Fraudabant eum viatico . veste spolibant utque peccunias quas non habebat exhiberet nimiis et exquisitis eum cruciatibus et injuriis contorquebant.[73]

> (Consumed with a love of suffering, as if he thought all the hardship and fastings he brought on his own body all too little, becoming his own torturer, he willingly made a common dwelling with a barbaric race at whose hands he knew he should be subjected to all sorts of afflictions if not crucifixion itself indeed. In fact, he suffered from these treacherous and savage little men just what he expected and looked for, inasmuch as he was often violently beaten with severe lashings by brigands, at whose hands he suffered every possible injury. They stole his provisions and robbed him of his clothing; and to get him to cough up money — which he didn't have — they tortured him with excessive and exquisite torments and injuries.)[74]

In the medieval context, this suffering has a higher purpose and is essential both to Harold's sanctification and to the narrative arc that likens the life of 'Christian' to that of Christ. The Welsh are Harold's faceless and malevolent persecutors; their function is to provide him with a crucifixion-like experience that supports the *Vita* author's case for sanctity. And yet, the Welsh are also a nightmarish extension of Harold himself. In his obsessive desire to imitate the sufferings of Christ, Harold seeks out ever more extreme forms of suffering until he cannot even administer an appropriate level of torment to himself. Physical suffering is a well-established path to sainthood in medieval hagiography, but the desire to become his own tormenter (*ipse sibi carnifex*) also speaks to modern studies of self-harm by veterans and other sufferers of PTSD.[75] Self-harm can serve as a coping strategy to distract from intrusive memories, counteract feelings of numbness, or release negative emotion.[76] It is no coincidence that Harold chooses Wales, the site of his own bloody victory, as the place to engage in such destructive behaviour. As many studies have shown, the violation of human connection is strongly associated with PTSD, and 'is highest of all when the survivor has been not merely a passive witness but also an active participant in violent death or atrocity'.[77] Studies of Vietnam War veterans have found that symptoms of PTSD increase substantially

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73 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 73–74.

74 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 30.

75 While the context clearly suggests that *carnifex* has the sense of 'torturer', as translated by Swanton, it also commonly means 'murderer' or 'executioner', a connotation that resonates with the widely documented association between PTSD and suicide. On this see further Jobes and others, 'Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention'.

76 See further Mastin and others, 'Nonsuicidal Self-Injury in Veterans'.

77 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 54.

in veterans who witnessed atrocities during the war, and even more so in those who committed atrocities themselves.[78] It is both fitting and psychologically plausible that Harold should return to Wales to orchestrate his own physical suffering, and to invite punishment from the people upon whom he himself had formerly inflicted so much pain.

It should be noted that the *Vita* does not present the brutality of the Welsh as revenge for Harold's conquest of their country. Indeed, Harold is even more careful than in England to conceal his identity there. The violence of the Welsh is said rather to stem from their savage (*efferus*) and bestial (*ferinus*) character.[79] It is striking, however, that no such comments were made about the Welsh earlier in the text, when they were presented as suffering from the violent military incursions led by Harold. It seems that only in the aftermath of the English and Norman Conquests has Wales become a lawless country populated, according to the *Vita*, by sub-human thieves and torturers. As the leader of the Welsh campaign, Harold is implicated in the transformation of the region and its people: violence begets violence. The brutal legacy of multiple conquests comes full circle in the torture of Harold's body by those he had previously oppressed. Harold's suffering in Wales demonstrates that there is no single answer to the question 'what does it mean to survive?' Although for Harold the experience of surviving violent conflict opens up a route to repentance and even sanctity, for the already abject Welsh it offers only further degradation.

A different sort of conquest is needed to facilitate the redemption of the Welsh, and this too comes through the figure of Harold Godwinson. As the *Vita* author observes, Harold wins over the Welsh through his suffering and meekness:

> mulcebat predones beneficiis . mitigabat tortores : miraculo inaudite lenitatis. Congerebat perinde de camino multe caritatis carbones ignis super capita eorum . unde mol[l]ita eorum duricia medullitus demum liquefacta colere cepit . et honorare quem solebat illudere et flagellare.[80]
>
> (He softened the hearts of robbers by kindness, made tormentors gentle by marvellous and unheard-of meekness. And similarly, from the furnace of a great love he heaped coals of fire upon their heads, so that their hardness softened to the core and finally melted,

78 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 54, discussing work by Laufer and others, 'Symptom Patterns Associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', and Breslau and Davis, 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

79 For more on medieval views of the Welsh and their role in the *Vita Haroldi*, see Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands*, pp. 159–70.

80 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 74.

> and they began to respect and admire him whom they had been accustomed to mock and scourge.)[81]

The *Vita* author alludes here to the well-known image from Romans 12. 20, in which the apostle Paul, quoting in turn from Proverbs 25. 22, urges Christians to show love to their enemies in the hope of provoking shame, remorse, and repentance.[82] This is indeed what happens to the Welsh, as the narrator observes: 'Pellebat namque et fugabat spiramen diabolicum nebulosi furoris : a precordiis brutorum licet hominum illapsa sensibus eorum fragrancia suavis sancte illius opinionis' (For the sweet fragrance of his saintly reputation gliding into their senses drove out and put to flight the devilish raging cloud from the hearts of these brutish, but human, beings).[83] The curious mixing of metaphors in this section plays on the contrasting images of softness and hardness that have previously been used in the text to describe the miracle of transformation. When the narrator compares the Welsh to inflexible metal that only Harold's piety can melt, he makes a subtle comparison between this transformation and the miracle of the Waltham Cross. There too hard metal becomes soft as the Christ-figure bows to the king, who likewise softens, 'liquefactis intimis precordiorum medullis' (his innermost heart melting).[84] The melting of the king's heart is now matched by that of the Welsh; Harold effects their spiritual transformation just as the Waltham Cross transformed for him, and he for it. In this way, the trauma of military occupation is replaced by the gentle yoke of spiritual conquest: the 'savage' Welsh regain both their humanity and their spirituality. The double conquest of Wales bookends in this way the story of Harold's life; their transformation is also his. Once the brutal oppressor of the Welsh, Harold later becomes their saviour, although both Harold and the *Vita* narrator are wary of claiming this unorthodox position too explicitly. Indeed, it is the fear of too much veneration that drives Harold to leave Wales and to travel to his final destination, the city of Chester.

As Laura Ashe observes, it is fitting that Harold should end his days in a hermit's cell in Chester, a border town and a 'land apart, neither English nor Welsh'.[85] Located between the two conquered lands, Chester was the site of both military aggression and violent repression. Harold likely used

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81 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 30.

82 This seems to be the meaning in the *Vita Haroldi* although, as John W. Martens observes, some medieval and modern commentators also read the image as an allusion to God's punishment of the unrepentant enemy, and suggest that it is, rather, a form of revenge. On this debate see further Martens, 'Burning Questions in Romans 12:20'.

83 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 75; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, pp. 30–31.

84 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 57–58; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 22. On the miracle of the Waltham Cross, see above, pp. 78–82.

85 Ashe, 'Harold Godwineson', p. 74.

Chester as his base from which to launch the Welsh campaign, but the town had also suffered severe retaliation from the Normans following the rebellion of 1069–1070.[86] Like Harold, Chester is a town of mixed identities and conflicting experiences, playing host to both victims and perpetrators in a long-running cycle of conquest and loss. Fittingly, it is here that Harold speaks again about his own involvement in the traumatic events of 1066, but he does so only in the most oblique of terms. The people of Chester repeatedly ask the mysterious hermit 'an bello ubi rex Haroldus occubuisse ferebatur interfuisset' (whether he was present at the battle in which King Harold was said to have been killed), but Harold's reply is brief: 'Interfui plane' (I was certainly there).[87] His statement confirms his presence at the battle but little else: his role and rank, which side he fought for, or whether he fought at all are all left unclear. Pressed by the more inquisitive of his audience, he adds: 'Quando apud Hastingas dimicatum est : nullus Haroldo me carior habebator' (At the time of the Battle of Hastings there was nobody dearer to Harold than myself).[88] The *Vita* narrator celebrates Harold's statement as deliberately ambiguous — it is 'ancepes' (uncertain, having two meanings) — but the lack of detail reminds us that Harold himself does not know what happened on the battlefield. He does not refuse to answer the people of Chester out of choice, but out of necessity. In marked contrast to his plea for support from the Germans so many decades before, Harold now accepts that he cannot tell his own story — or, perhaps more accurately, he cannot tell the story of Harold the king. He cannot tell the story the people of Chester wish to hear, which is the narrative of the battle itself. He can, however, tell the tale of his own transformation. Harold's curious response to their questioning, *Quando apud Hastingas dimicatum est : nullus Haroldo me carior habebator*, acknowledges the spiritual journey he has been on. Although Harold may have held himself dear at the time of the Battle of Hastings, the *Vita* demonstrates that this is no longer the case in the years that follow. By the time Harold arrives in Chester, self-love has been replaced by an absolute devotion to the divine.

The dialogue between Harold and the people of Chester brings to the fore the tension between the writing of collective history and that of individual experience. The people of Chester assume Harold to be a key witness to the momentous events that have occurred, but he is not. Wounded, unconscious, and hidden in a cellar for two years following the Battle of Hastings, the former King of England missed the changes sweeping his country; he can speak only to his own internal experience. For Harold, to survive is to transform, but this transformation is necessarily

86 Ashe, 'Harold Godwineson', p. 74. See also Thacker, 'The Cult of King Harold'.
87 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 78; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 32.
88 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 78; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 32.

individual; he cannot speak to the collective transformation of his people, however much they might wish it. Perhaps for this reason, the *Vita* concludes with a lengthy discussion about the different stories told about the king's alleged death and rumoured survival. The *Vita* narrator takes particular issue with William of Malmesbury's account, juxtaposing his lengthy description of Harold's death with that of Aelred of Rievaulx, who, as noted above, mentions the existence of a legend about Harold's survival.[89] The narrator likewise dwells on the conflicting reports that were said to have confused both the monks of Waltham and Harold's lover, Edith Swanneck, wrongly convincing them of the king's death in battle.[90] Uncertainty swirls through the final pages of the text as chronicles, rumours, and eyewitness testimonies jostle together. The story they tell is both repetitive and contradictory: the record of the past is, it seems, as elusive as Harold himself. The enigma of Harold's survival lies like a blank space at the heart of the *Vita*, and it is fitting that his tomb is likewise rumoured to be empty. As noted above, the nature and location of Harold's tomb is central to early Norman depictions of William's conquest.[91] Nevertheless, it has been observed that one of the reasons the *Vita Haroldi* 'fails' as a hagiography is because it does not provide a resting place for the saint's body.[92] Harold does not seem to lie at Chester, but neither is he at Waltham. One of the final witnesses called in the *Vita* is Harold's brother Gyrth, said to have been a child in the year 1066 and therefore too young to have fought at Hastings. Questioned by the Waltham monks during the reign of Henry II, an aged Gyrth is clear: 'non hic jacet Haroldus' (Harold is not lying here).[93] Where then is Harold? Is he anywhere? The *Vita* is, ultimately, about a missing body, a missed experience, and the unknowability of the past.

Survival in Old Norse Literature

The uncertain fate of Harold Godwinson was evidently of interest to Anglo-Norman audiences of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it is perhaps no surprise that the legend found its way to the Nordic world as well. Saga descriptions of the Battle of Hastings are brief, particularly in

89 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 79–82.
90 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, pp. 83–84. See further the discussion of Edith Swanneck below, pp. 000–000.
91 Chapter 1, pp. 55–59.
92 Cohen, 'From Throndheim to Waltham to Chester', p. 150. On this point see also Stein, *Reality Fictions*, p. 80, and Matthews, 'The Content and Construction', p. 65.
93 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 86; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 35.

contrast to the lengthy account of Stamford Bridge. Snorri's version of the battle is one of the longest:

> Fundr þeira Haralds konungs ok Viljálms jarls varð suðr á Englandi við Helsingjaport. Varð þar orrosta mikil. Þar fell Haraldr konungr ok Gyrðr jarl, bróðir hans, ok mikill hluti liðs þeira. Þat var nítján nóttum eptir fall Haralds konungs Sigurðarsonar.[94]
>
> (The meeting of King Harold and Earl William was in the south of England at Hastings. There was a great battle. There fell King Harold and his brother Gyrth and a great part of their troop. That was nineteen nights after the fall of King Haraldr Sigurðarson.)

Old Norse authors are primarily interested in the life and death of Haraldr Sigurðarson, and the effect his death had on the politics of the northern world. In contrast to his vivid presence, both Harold and William are faintly drawn. Nevertheless, stories about the survival of Harold Godwinson crept into the saga corpus. The author of *Játvarðar saga*, for example, states that Harold was killed at the Battle of Hastings — 'Þar féll Haraldr konungr ok Gyrðir bróðir hans' (there fell King Harold and his brother Gyrth)[95] — but he also notes the existence of an alternative account:

> Þat er sögn Enskra manna, at um nóttina eptir orrostu þeirra Viljálms ok Haraldz, hafi nokkurir vinir Haraldz konungs farit til valsins ok leitað eptir líki hans, ok fundu hann lifanda ok fluttu til lækningar; var hann græddr á laun. Ok er hann var heill, vildi hann eigi stríða með Viljálmi til ríkis. Ok er þat margra manna sögn, at hann hafi lifat allt á daga fram Heinreks hins gamla.[96]
>
> (It is said by English people that during the night after the battle between William and Harold, certain friends of King Harold went to the dead and looked for his body, and they found him living and took him to be healed; he was cured in secret. And when he was well, he did not want to fight with William for the kingdom. And

94 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 194. See also *Fagrskinna*, p. 293, and *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 329.

95 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 397.

96 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 397. This is the text in Stockholm Perg. fol. 5. The somewhat later *Flateyjarbók* account is slightly longer and includes the details that Harold decided not to fight William again because it would contravene God's wishes, and that he decided to become a hermit. In this version, the *sögn* is said to be *sannorð* (truthful), although the description of the king's death at Hastings remains. See *Flateyjarbók*, III, p. 469. On the legend of Harold's survival in Scandinavia, see Fellows-Jensen, 'The Myth of Harold II's Survival', and Ashdown, 'An Icelandic Account'. Christine Fell links the comment about Harold living as a hermit to a similar one in the *Chronicon universal anonymi Laudunensis*, likely written in north-eastern France. She has argued that a version of the *Chronicon* must have been known to the author of *Játvarðar saga*; see Fell, 'The Icelandic Saga', and Fell, 'English History and Norman Legend'.

that is the report of many people, that he has lived all the way into the days of Henry the Old.)

In this text, the legend of the king's survival is presented as a story-within-a-story: it is the report (*sögn*) of the English, seemingly passed down through multiple generations and numerous retellings. In this version of the tale, the narrator makes no comment as to the veracity of the report; he merely records its existence while juxtaposing it with his own account of the king's death in battle. The reader is left to weigh up these two possibilities on their own. A longer account of this episode is also appended to an Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's life of the Norwegian king Óláfr Tryggvason.[97] There, the wounded Harold is taken from the battlefield by a peasant couple and healed in secret. As in *Játvarðar saga*, Harold concludes that it is not God's plan for him to challenge William again for the kingdom: 'ok hugði at dœmum Óláfs konungs Tryggvasonar, ok tók hann þat ráð at hann vildi eigi snúask til ríkis síns' (and he thought of the example of King Óláfr Tryggvason and decided that he did not want to return to his kingdom).[98] Filled with the Holy Spirit, Harold becomes a hermit. When he dies, William brings his body to London and buries it with honour.

It is presumably this link between Harold Godwinson and Óláfr Tryggvasson that captured the imagination of the Norse writers.[99] Rumours about the survival of Óláfr Tryggvason circulated widely during the medieval period. The king was thought to have drowned during the Battle of Svǫlðr in 1000, having leapt from his ship in full armour. Nevertheless, his body was never found and rumours about a possible escape began circulating almost immediately after the battle. The Icelandic poet Hallfreðr vandrædaskáld ('Troublesome Poet') Óttarson was not present at the battle, but when he heard about Óláfr's death he is said to have composed a memorial poem about the king. In that sequence, Hallfreðr comments on the conflicting rumours he has heard about the king's fate:[100]

Veitkat hitt, hvárt Heita
hungrdeyfi skalk leyfa
dynsæðinga dauðan
dýrbliks eða þó kvikvan,
alls sannliga segja

97 Oddr's is the oldest extant saga of Óláfr's life, dating from around the end of the twelfth century. It was originally written in Latin but is preserved only in Icelandic translations. On Oddr's work, see further the introduction to *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. lxxx–clxxxv, and Oddr Snorrason, *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, pp. 1–30.

98 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 361.

99 See further Cohen, 'From Throndheim to Waltham to Chester', pp. 143–53.

100 The story of Hallfredr's relationship with the king is told most fully in *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, with his composition of the poem described in *Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 191–95.

– sárr mun gramr at hvǫru –
– hætts til hans at frétta –
hvárttveggja mér seggir.[101]

> (I don't know whether I should praise, dead or still living, the blunter-of-hunger of seabirds of the noise of the light of the beast of Heiti (warrior), because all men are telling me both as truth. The king must be wounded either way; it is dangerous to obtain information about him.)

Like Wace nearly two centuries later, Hallfreðr dwells on the uncertainty surrounding the king's death and the consequent difficulties of commemorating his fall in verse.[102] Like the Waltham Chronicler, Hallfreðr is suspicious of the 'veifanarorð manna' (wavering words of men), repeating and yet simultaneously rejecting rumours of the king's survival.[103] Hallfreðr's sequence is infused with grief as he attempts to come to terms with the traumatic loss of the king, who was also his godfather, patron, and friend. The uncertainty of the king's fate frustrates the poet's attempt to memorialize his death, and the sequence demonstrates how quickly this state of unknowing became part of the narrative of the king's defeat. The event was memorable not only because it represented a dramatic political upset, but because the very uncertainty of what had happened was so distressing. Hallfreðr's verse shows how a lack of information about a king's final moments, and indeed his ultimate resting place, could contribute to the trauma of losing him. As in *Játvarðar saga* and the *Vita Haroldi*, the memory of this unsettling uncertainty itself became part of the historical record.

This theme of uncertainty envelops the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason in many of the prose works composed during the following centuries. Oddr Snorrason records multiple accounts of the king's final moments: some say he vanished from the battle in a shower of divine light; others think he swam away from his ship while hiding under his shield; yet others report seeing the king wounded but are unsure whether he succumbed to those wounds.[104] A generation or two later, Snorri Sturluson likewise

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101 Ed. by Heslop in *SkP* I, p. 425 (*Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, st. 18). See further my discussion of this sequence in Goeres, *Poetics of Commemoration*, pp. 74–84.

102 See above, pp. 197–98. On Hallfreðr's memorial sequence for Óláfr, see also Goeres, *Poetics of Commemoration*, pp. 74–84. On his relationship with King Óláfr see also Goeres, 'The Many Conversions'.

103 *SkP* I, p. 432 (st. 22). See also the Waltham Chronicler's complaint that people have been telling false stories about the king, discussed above, pp. 200–01.

104 See this section in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. 345–52. As White observes, Oddr's descriptions of Óláfr's wounds are close enough to the *Vita Haroldi*'s descriptions of Harold's wounds to suggest that the former is borrowed from the latter. White summarizes these and other correspondences between the two works in *Non-Native Sources*, p. 77. Brief

notes that 'var þat þegar rœða margra manna' (it was soon the report of many people) that Óláfr had escaped,[105] while the author of *Fagrskinna* offers an almost psychological reading of the phenomenon, observing: 'Svá mikit gerðu menn sér um at vingask í allri umrœðu við Óláf konung, at mestr hlutr manna vildi eigi heyra, at hann myndi fallit hafa, nema létu, at hann var í Vinðlandi eða í Suðrríki' (so greatly did people care about building friendship in all interactions with King Óláfr, that most people did not wish to hear that he might have fallen, but rather claimed that he was in Vinðland or the south).[106] This author would presumably agree with Ashdown, quoted above, that the legend of Óláfr's survival emerged out of a mix of intrigue and credulity, self-deception and conviction.[107] By the early fourteenth century the legend had flowered into a mini-saga of its own, dominating the concluding chapters of the compendious *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (the *Longest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*).[108] This version of the saga compiles multiple rumours about the king's survival and adds a detailed account of how Óláfr escaped from the battle; how he was healed in the east and departed on pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem; and how he took holy orders and retired to a monastery in Syria. Like Harold in the *Vita Haroldi*, Óláfr rejects his friends' offers to attack the kingdom he once ruled; he concludes that God does not intend him to be king any longer, and exchanges his political identity for a spiritual one. Multiple travellers from northern Europe are said to encounter the former king in his monastery in the east, and they carry tokens from him back to Norway, including a book about his miraculous escape and subsequent adventures. In person, however, the retired Óláfr remains as vague about his former royal identity as Harold is in the *Vita*. As he tells one traveller nearly fifty years after the Battle of Svǫlðr, 'Eigi eigna ek mer vegh e(ðr) konungs nafn Olafs' (I do not claim either the honour or the name of King Óláfr).[109] The saga concludes with the surprising assertion that no less a person than Edward the Confessor was responsible for disseminating the story of Óláfr's survival in England: the king is said to have read Óláfr's saga aloud to his court on a yearly basis. As if to forestall the

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references to the legend of Óláfr's survival are also found in the synoptic histories, which date from around the same time. Andersson provides translations of the relevant sections in an appendix to his translation of Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. 151–65.

105 *Heimskringla*, I, pp. 367–68.

106 *Fagrskinna*, p. 160.

107 Ashdown, 'An Icelandic Account', p. 133.

108 Many of the passages relating to Óláfr's survival and life after Svǫlðr in this saga are thought to be drawn from the version of Óláfr's life written by Gunnlaugr Leifsson. Gunnlaugr likely composed his version of the tale not long after Oddr, but his work is now extant only in the *Longest saga*. See further White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 77–78. For the text of this section, see *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar en mesta*, II, pp. 275–96, 319–21, and 340–49.

109 *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar en mesta*, II, p. 345.

inevitable protests of a doubting reader, the saga author declares that Ormr Þorljótsson, 'vítr maðr ok rett orðr' (a wise and truthful man), witnessed Edward reading from the very book sent to England by King Óláfr.[110] In the closing lines of the saga, King Edward himself takes over the narrative of Óláfr's life:

> Æ eínu ære las konungr fyrir hǫfþingium sinum ok allri hirð vm bardagann æ Ormínum. ok sagði þar alt æ einn uegh sem aðr er rítat vm braut kvamu Olafs konungs ok vm ferðir hans vt yfir haf til Iorsala. ok hann hefði stað fest sik i klaustri nǫckuru i Syr landi. Ok þa sagði Jathuarðr konungr sinum mǫnnum andlat Olafs Tryggua sonar er þeir menn hǫfðu sagt konungi er þa voro ny komnir til Englandz af Syr landi.[111]
>
> (One year the king read before his chieftains and all his retinue about the battle on the Serpent. And he spoke there about all the events that have earlier been written [i.e. in the saga] about King Óláfr's escape and his travels abroad over the sea to Jerusalem, and how he had settled down in a certain monastery in Syria. And then King Edward informed his men about the death of Óláfr Tryggvason, which people who had just arrived in England from Syria had reported to the king.)

The story of Óláfr concludes, in this way, in England. One royal storyteller passes the baton to another; one royal holy man marks the passing of his counterpart. It is unclear whether the legend of Óláfr Tryggvason's survival influenced that of Harold Godwinson or vice versa, but the author of the *Longest saga* imagines a direction of influence flowing from Scandinavia (via the Holy Land) to England.[112] Like Harold, Óláfr's missing body creates a historical vacuum into which the creativity of romance, legend, and hagiography could flow. The king is wounded — or is he? The king has fallen — or has he? The king escapes — but where is he? Just as the author of the *Vita Haroldi* wrestles with the question of what it means for Harold to survive, Old Norse authors ask what it means for Óláfr's story to survive, and to reach and influence traumatized audiences across the northern world.

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110 *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar en mesta*, II, p. 349.

111 *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar en mesta*, II, p. 349.

112 Cohen gives a useful overview of this debate while arguing that different aspects of the legends seem to have developed in a series of distinct stages, and that some elements of one legend may have drawn on the other, and vice versa, at different times: Cohen, 'From Throndheim to Waltham to Chester'. For the argument that the Harold legend may have influenced that of Óláfr Tryggvason, see Lönnroth, 'Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga', pp. 78–83, and the discussion in White, *Non-Native Sources*, pp. 75–79.

The King's Body and *Hemings þáttr*

Hemings þáttr brings together the legends of these two men, Harold Godwinson and Óláfr Tryggvason, and the two traditions of their respective lands. This is particularly noticeable in the *þáttr*'s account of Harold Godwinson's survival, which centres on the image of the king's wounded body. As noted above, medieval sources offer a confusing and conflicting account of Harold's wounds that does more to obscure than to reveal. The precise nature of the injuries Harold received at Hastings is unclear in many texts, but the unrecognizability of his mutilated corpse is a theme repeated in numerous works. The *Waltham Chronicle* reports that the monks Osgod and Æthelric, sent by the community at Waltham to retrieve the king's body, were unable to identify it after the battle. As the Chronicler explains, rather laconically, 'quia corpus hominis exangue non consueuit mortuum formam prioris status frequenter exprimere' (this is because the body of a man when dead and drained of blood does not usually have the same appearance as when alive).[113] Their solution is to bring Harold's first wife, Edith Swanneck, to the battlefield to identify the secret markings (*secretiora*) on his body that could only be known by a lover; Edith does so and the monks are then able to transport the body to Waltham.[114] This episode is part of a broader argument made by the *Chronicle* author that bodies are reliable signs through which to interpret the world. Despite the difficulties of recognition, Harold's corpse remains intelligible for those with the knowledge to read it and, as noted above, the Waltham monks can still witness the indelible wounds that mark the king's bones centuries after his death.[115] It is perhaps no surprise, however, that tales of Harold's survival after the battle tell a different story. Both the *Vita Haroldi* and *Hemings þáttr* present bodies as unreliable and changeable markers of identity. In these texts, the concealment of the king's body is essential to his safety, and yet it is also an unignorable witness to the trauma he has endured, and to the sanctity he eventually achieves.

Like the *Waltham Chronicle*, the *Vita Haroldi* reports that the monks asked Edith Swanneck to identify the king's body. Although the author of the *Vita* describes her as 'sagacis animi femina' (a woman of shrewd intellect), in this text Edith is no more able than the monks to find the king.[116] Unlike the *Chronicle*'s almost clinical description of Harold's corpse as *exangue* — pale, bloodless — the bodies of the *Vita* are black, mutilated, and beginning to decompose. Edith wanders through a night-

113 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 54–55.
114 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 54–55.
115 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 56–57. See above, pp. 74–76.
116 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 83; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 34.

mare landscape of unrecognizable body-parts. It is no wonder, the *Vita* author observes, that she made a mistake:

> Inter hec mulieris errorem non mirandum . que desecti . cruentati . jam denigrati . jam fetentis corporis speciem minus discernere valens : pro estimacione publica truncatum cadaver cum aliud non inveniret quod cercius agnosceret regis proprium : rapuit et secum attulit alienum.[117]
>
> (So we should not be surprised at the mistake of the woman who, unable to distinguish the features of the body, hacked about as it was, covered with blood, already turning black and decomposing; and unable to find one which she could be certain was the king's, seized upon and carried away with her the mutilated corpse of another man for the sake of appearances.)[118]

Confused by rumours of the king's defeat and overwhelmed by the piles of rotting bodies, Edith grabs a corpse and hurries away. There is an air of panic and even desperation in this act, as if Edith recognizes the futility of her search and simply wants to leave the field as quickly as possible. The intimate knowledge of a lover's body cannot counteract the carnage of battle, and there is perhaps a hint of dark humour in the fact that the celibate monks do not recognize this. However, the scene is also, like the descriptions of bloodshed and bone-mountains at Stamford Bridge, a disturbing reminder of the human cost of the conflict, and of the distressing scenes even non-combatants have been forced to witness. The episode is, moreover, set near the end of the *Vita* and forms part of the narrator's long tirade against those who claim that Harold was buried at Waltham. Edith's confusion offers further support for the alternative narrative the *Vita* presents: if rumours of the king's death and the carnage of the battlefield were enough to confound even his lover, is it any wonder that others were likewise misled?

In contrast to the confusingly decomposed body of the *Vita*, Harold's body is dangerously identifiable in *Hemings þáttr*. This version of the legend relates how, in the night following the battle, a peasant couple are busy stripping the dead when they see a bright light glowing in the field: 'þav talaz við ok segia at þar man vera heilagr maðr in valnvm' (they discuss this and say that there must be a holy man among the dead).[119] This is in marked contrast also to the story appended to Oddr Snorrason's saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, which emphasizes how many bodies are piled on top of the king, and how difficult it is to see and hear him among

117 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 84.
118 *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 34.
119 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 56.

the slain.[120] This light, however, would seem a deliberate reference to the legend that Óláfr disappeared in a shower of divine brightness, although in *Hemings þáttr* the light reveals the location of the king's corpse rather than obscuring his escape.[121] There is nevertheless some ambiguity as to the source of the light. When the peasants clear the corpses from the spot indicated by the light, they discover a man's arm wearing a large gold ring, and it is unclear whether the light has in fact been radiating from the metal. The light is both an unmistakable sign, in that it draws the peasants straight to the royal body, and yet uncertain in its meaning: does it signify the king's holiness, as the peasants first assume, or his political status, as such a high-status ornament typically suggests? The ambiguity of the light symbolizes well Harold's double identity after Hastings. Here, as in the *Vita Haroldi*, he is both a king and a saint. The enigma of his survival is directly linked to the puzzle of his uncertain identity, and the way that identity is manifested by his wounded — but illuminated — body.

In keeping with this aura of uncertainty, Harold remains as secretive about his name and rank in this text as in the *Vita*. Although the two peasants guess that they have found the king, Harold himself affirms only, 'lifi ek' (I live).[122] The imperative to hide the king's identity is more pronounced in the *þáttr* than in other versions of the legend because his body is constantly in danger of discovery. Not only the light but a trail of blood reveals Harold's whereabouts, as the peasants load the wounded king onto their cart and take him to their home. Harold's bleeding body leaves an unmistakable path for his enemies to follow, and they do. When a group of Norman soldiers trace the king's blood to the peasants' hut, they ask the husband 'hvi hann hefir flvtt til sin Haralld konvng lifanda eða davðan' (why he has taken King Harold to his home, either living or dead).[123] In this version of the legend, even the Normans suspect that Harold has not been killed, thanks to his dangerously revealing, wounded body. As in the *Vita*, however, the king is rescued by a woman, although the exotic Arab healer of that text is replaced by a figure at once more prosaic and more terrifying: the peasant woman.[124] It is the wife, not the husband, who

120 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. 360–61.

121 *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 345. The beginning of Óláfr's rule in this saga is also heralded by a miracle in which a beam of light leads people to the head of a holy man on the island of Selja: pp. 214–17. As Lars Lönnroth notes, such beams of light are commonly associated with the bodies of saints, including that of Óláfr Haraldsson: see Lönnroth, 'Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga', p. 69.

122 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 56. Harold similarly refuses to confirm his name and family in the continuation to Oddr's saga, but the narrator steps in at this point to assure the reader of his identity: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 361.

123 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 57.

124 A woman often figures in the stories of these escapes. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* Óláfr escapes to Wendland on the ship of Ástríðr Búrizláfsdóttir, who also oversees his

comes up with a scheme to protect the king from his own damaged body. The woman orders her husband to mutilate their horse, which allows him to explain the trail of blood to the Norman soldiers as the damage wrought by a wolf to the horse's body. There is perhaps a wry parable in this story: if the body of the horse stands in for the wounded Harold, the Normans are implicitly likened to the wolves that allegedly tore its flesh. The image of wolves attacking a horse is a gruesome metaphor for the ravaging of Harold's body, and indeed of the English realm in general. That the recent battle is imagined as disturbingly violent can also be seen in the second of the wife's ruses, when she pretends to have been driven mad by the sounds of battle. When the soldiers enter the hut the woman acts out her own version of a post-traumatic stress response: 'þa sat kerling við arin og att kol og er hon ser mennina leypr hon vpp ok þrifr skalm eina ok bannaz vm ok segir at hon skal drepa þa' (then the old woman sat by the hearth and she ate coal, and when she sees the men she leaps up and grabs a sword and swears and says that she will kill them).[125] As in the *Vita Haroldi*, the violence of armed conflict begets violence elsewhere, although admittedly the threat of violence is feigned in this case. The woman does not actually hurt the soldiers; they simply retreat, laughing, and search no further. The scene is both absurd and horrifying. The soldiers do not acknowledge the mental distress simulated by the peasant woman; to them she is a figure of fun. Although the woman is pretending, her use of this ruse suggests that the medieval author recognized the distressing effects violent conflict could have on the mental health of those who witnessed it, and that he expected his readers to do likewise. Nevertheless, the clever peasant who makes a fool of his or her social superiors is a staple of medieval comedy, and the episode features motifs from the broader Old Norse-Icelandic context that complicate her portrayal. The image of the woman eating coal references the figure of the *kolbítr* (coalbiter), a lazy young man who lounges around the kitchen unwilling to work. Despite his inauspicious beginning, a *kolbítr* can, like the peasant woman, transform into a hero.[126] Pretending to be mad is also a staple of the cunning saga protagonist, as when the outlawed Gísli Súrsson mimics the 'fífl' (simpleton, fool) Helgi Ingjaldsson to evade his pursuers.[127] Although set in a semi-legendary context, the episode in *Hemings þáttr* suggests that the author may have

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healing and offers military support: see *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar en mesta*, II, pp. 286–90 and 318–19. The peasant woman, rather than her husband, is also the brains behind the plan to rescue Harold in the continuation to Oddr Snorrason's work, albeit without the elaborate stratagems described in *Hemings þáttr*: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, pp. 360–61.

125 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 57.

126 Compare with the examples discussed in Cronan, 'The Thematic Unity'.

127 *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Vestfirðinga sogur*, pp. 81–84. On this episode see further Ármann Jakobsson and others, 'Disability before Disability', pp. 444–51. On intellectual disability in the medieval period more generally, see Metzler, *Fools and Idiots?* Madness is also a recurring

seen parallels between the (simulated) trauma of living through violent conflict and other mental states perceived as socially disruptive or different from the norm.

The woman's actions are nevertheless more threatening than comparisons with the *kolbítr* or *fífl* might suggest. The woman brandishes a *skálm* which, as discussed in Chapter 2, denotes the short-sword typically carried by trollwomen.[128] Recall the vision seen by one of Haraldr harðráði's sailors as the Norwegian fleet sets sail in *Heimskringla*: 'Hann þóttisk þar vera staddr á konungsskipinu ok sá upp á eyna, hvar tr̨ollkona mikil stóð ok hafði skálm í hendi, en í annarri hendi trog' (He thought he was standing on the king's ship, and he looked up on the island to where a great trollwoman stood and she had a short-sword in one hand and a trough in the other).[129] There are further parallels between the peasant woman and the trolls. As her husband explains: 'kona min varð œr af þvi at hon ⟨heyrði⟩ lvðra ok heropit' (my wife became mad when she heard trumpets and the cry of war).[130] The trollwomen discussed in Chapter 2 also went into a frenzy at the sounds of war, and their characterization as *ólr̨t* (disorderly) or *óðlr̨t* (frenzied) is similar to that of the peasant woman, here described as *œr* (mad, furious).[131] Although taken by the Norman soldiers as a figure of fun, the woman herself is deadly serious, and possibly dangerous. The woman protects King Harold from his Norman trackers just as the trollwomen of Chapter 2 protected England from the Norwegian invaders. Living through the traumas of war, she has become, like those figures, an uncanny blend of the monstrous and the heroic.

Healed in secret in the peasant hut, Harold regains his strength and eventually sends the woman to fetch his friend Hemingr, the eponymous hero of the *þáttr*. In this text it is Hemingr rather than the king who wants to challenge William for the kingdom. Harold, in contrast, looks to his Scandinavian predecessor:

> se ek at þetta ma fram ganga en of margr verðr þa eiðrofi ok vil ek eigi at sva illt leiði af mer. nv vil ek gera eftir dœmvm Olafs konvngs Tryggva s(vnar) at siþan er hann for vsigr fyri Vinlandi þa villdi hann eigi fara

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theme in the romance genre, although simulated madness is less common. See further the examples discussed by Curtis, 'Tristan forsené'.

128 See above, pp. 125–27.

129 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 176. See above for more examples of trollwomen wielding *skálmir*. Fellows-Jensen follows this reading in 'The Myth of Harold II's Survival'.

130 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 57.

131 On the various Old Norse terms used to denote madness, see Høyersten, 'Madness in the Old Norse Society', p. 325. *Oerr*, he notes, typically refers to a state of acute mental confusion. For a good introduction to studies of madness in medieval Europe, see Trenery and Horden, 'Madness in the Middle Ages'.

> aftr til rikis sins helldr for hann vt ⟨i⟩ Grecia ok þionaði þar gvði meðan hann lifði.[132]
>
> (I realize that this [i.e. regaining the kingdom] might be possible but then too many would become oath-breakers, and I do not want such evil to happen because of me. Now I will follow the example of King Óláfr Tryggvason who, after he was defeated off the coast of Vinland, did not wish to return to his kingdom, but rather travelled out to Greece and there served God for the rest of his life.)

As in *Játvarðar saga* and in Oddr's saga of King Óláfr, the author of *Hemings þáttr* imagines the story of Óláfr Tryggvason influencing that of Harold Godwinson. Harold does not follow in Óláfr's footsteps precisely, however. Although he knows of Óláfr's departure abroad, he does not leave England, choosing instead to settle at Canterbury. There, as he says, 'ek mega sem oftaz sia Vilialm konvng i kirkivnni' (I will be able to see King William as often as possible in the church).[133] This decision differs from that in the other Old Norse texts and echoes instead the *Vita Haroldi*, in which Harold decides to return to Dover and live in a cave near the site of the battle. As discussed above, in the *Vita Haroldi* Harold repeatedly forces himself to confront the traumatic consequences of defeat — 'preteritus suus suorumque lapsus . presensque hostium fastus' (both his own and his nation's past misfortunes and the present arrogance of the enemy) — and therefore to exercise his own patience and humility.[134] *Hemings þáttr* does not spell out in this way the mental or emotional effects of seeing the new king at church, but they are implied. The Old Norse text focuses on the figure of William, and on his replacement of Harold as King of England. Harold's desire to see the new king as often as possible makes national defeat a personal affair; there is an intimate, almost voyeuristic relationship between the two men, bound by their conflict with each other.

It is fitting, therefore, that William is central to the dramatic reveal of Harold's long-hidden body. When the former king dies three years after Hastings, church bells ring throughout the town. Hemingr announces the monk's true identity and the fact that he has been hiding Harold under the king's very nose. An irate William demands to see the body of his predecessor:

> ef þat er satt segir konvngr þa skal þat vera þin davði en sia viliv ver lik hans. gengr hann siþan i kofan þar er likit la. var þat þa berað. kendv þa allir Haralld konvng. likit var fagrt ok þeckileg⟨t⟩ ok kendv menn þar

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132 *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 57–58.

133 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 58.

134 *Vita Haroldi*, ed. by Birch, p. 70; *Vita Haroldi*, trans. by Swanton, p. 29. See also above, pp. 210–12.

> sœtan ilm sva at allir vndir stoðv þeir er hia varv at hann var sanheilagr maðr.[135]
>
> ('If that is true', says the king, 'then it shall be your death, but I wish to see his body'. Then he goes into the cell where the body lay. It was then uncovered. Then everyone recognized King Harold. The corpse was fair and handsome and people noticed there a sweet, pleasant smell so that everyone who was there realized that he [Harold] was truly a saintly man.)

The miraculous body speaks the truth the king requires: Harold is now a saint, a 'truly holy' (*sanheilagr*) man. William forgives Hemingr for his deception and allows him to retire to the cell recently occupied by Harold. William then has Harold's body clothed 'með konvngs skrvða ok let gera hans vtferð sem sœmelexta ok var hann iardaðr með enne merstv sœmð' (with a king's garments and ordered a most fitting funeral for him and he was buried with the greatest honour).[136] This public display of honour recognizes both Harold's former role as king and his more recent status as holy man. In marked contrast to the missing body in the *Vita Haroldi*, Harold's corpse becomes an object of wonder and veneration with the full support of the new regime. The interment of Harold in the *þáttr* is more like that in the *Waltham Chronicle*, in which William allows the Waltham monks to return Harold's body to the abbey, and moreover offers to pay for the funeral.[137] This episode in turn seems to reference the tale of Harold's burial by the sea in early Norman works such as the *Carmen* and the *Gesta Guillelmi*.[138] As in these texts, William's control over his predecessor's body is a declaration of Norman power, but the hagiographic resonance of *Hemings þáttr* places Harold's death within a broader Christian context that transcends the traumatic conflict between English and Norman. The honour William pays to Harold after his death effects a reconciliation between the two men. William acknowledges the former king's political position, while Harold's sweet-smelling corpse seems to bless the new regime. The actions of the Norwegian hero Hemingr add further to this conciliatory conclusion, as Hemingr rejects William's offer of land and power, withdrawing instead to the hermit's cell. In so doing, Hemingr echoes the actions of Sæbeorht, Harold's companion in the *Vita*, who emulates the king by retracing his pilgrimage route and similarly retiring to a cell after his death. Unlike the English Sæbeorht, however, Hemingr's status as a Norwegian hero reminds us of the Scandinavian involvement in the conflicts of 1066, and incorporates this group into the

135 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 58.
136 *Hemings þáttr*, p. 59.
137 *Waltham Chronicle*, pp. 52–54.
138 See Chapter 1 above, pp. 55–59.

resolution of hostilities: not only are English and Norman reconciled in this tale, but English, Norman, and Norwegian. If the missing, wounded, and hidden body of the *Vita Haroldi* offers the tantalizing prospect of resistance to Norman rule, the glowing, sweet-smelling body of *Hemings þáttr* is precisely the opposite: it offers the opportunity for all three peoples to come together after the Conquest, to transcend the traumas of conflict by joining in Christian community. To survive is, in *Hemings þáttr*, to rise above ethnic and political difference and to embrace a common religious identity.

Waltheof, Earl and Saint

The desire to transcend conflict echoes through the tales of another survivor of 1066.[139] Waltheof, Earl of Northumbria, was one of the few pre-Conquest noblemen to survive the fighting and re-establish himself successfully within the Norman regime. Although descended from English nobility on his mother's side, Waltheof was of mixed Anglo-Scandinavian heritage: his father, Earl Siward of Northumbria, was likely of Danish origin and had risen to prominence in England during the reign of King Cnut.[140] At the time of the Conquest Waltheof held the southern part of his father's earldom, but there is no record of his having fought at Hastings. He appears to have submitted to William peacefully, although he later participated in the northern rebellion of 1069–1070. Following a second reconciliation with William, Waltheof married the king's niece and regained his English holdings. Their eldest daughter later married the Anglo-Norman earl Simon of Senlis, and then King David of Scotland. Despite this apparently successful integration in the new regime, Waltheof became involved in the so-called 'Bridal Rebellion' of 1075, said to have been planned during the bridal feast of Emma, daughter of the Norman nobleman William fitz Osbern, to Ralph, Earl of Norfolk and Suffolk and Lord of Gaël in Brittany. Earl Ralph and Emma's brother Roger, Earl of Hereford, reportedly recruited Waltheof into a conspiracy against King William during the wedding feast. The rebels secured support from Breton and Danish troops, but the uprising was unsuccessful. Ralph fled to Brittany, while Roger and Waltheof were imprisoned on the orders of

139 An earlier version of this section was published as Goeres, '"No Good Song"'.

140 Waltheof's mother was Ælfflæd, a noblewoman descended from the English house of Bamburgh, who had held Northumbria before Cnut's invasion. An overview is given in Scott, 'Valþjófr jarl', pp. 78–80. On the legends surrounding the family's origins, see Parker, *Dragon Lords*, pp. 102–38; and on Waltheof in particular, see Parker, *Conquered*, pp. 127–54. Background to the rebellion of 1075 is given by Stafford in *Unification and Conquest*, pp. 101–13.

King William. After several months in prison, Waltheof was executed near Winchester on 31 May 1076. Shortly afterwards his body was moved to Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire, where a local cult, promoted by the monks, grew up around his tomb.[141] Even as a saint, however, Waltheof remained a controversial figure. Although he had survived the early years of conquest by collaborating with the new regime, he was subsequently branded a rebel and traitor. For the medieval authors who chronicle Waltheof's life, the enigma of survival is an enigma of identity: who was the Earl of Northumbria? Was he a hero or a traitor, a rebel or a saint? Whose side was he on? Waltheof's affiliations with so many competing groups — English, Anglo-Scandinavian, and Norman — do not simply blur the boundaries between them; his story reminds us that such boundaries were in fact blurred from the earliest days of the Conquest, and in many cases long before. It is notable, in this context, how often medieval authors employ a combination of verse and prose to tell Waltheof's story. In English, Norman, and Scandinavian texts, different literary forms combine as though to mark the heterogeneous nature of Waltheof's heritage, and the multiple identities attributed to him during the tumultuous first decade of the Conquest. As will be seen below, to survive is, for Waltheof, to navigate these shifting identities and, at times, to offer a means of reconciliation between them.

Rebellion in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*

The earliest account of Waltheof's death is found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. Both the D and E manuscripts give an account of Waltheof's involvement in the conspiracy of 1075 and of his execution the following year. In both, the episode is punctuated by short, verse-like fragments, the first of which predicts the deaths of the conspirators.[142] Describing the bridal feast at which the plot was hatched, the D text proclaims: 'þær wæs þæt brydealo, þær wæs manegra manna bealo' (there was that bride-ale, there was harm to many men).[143] While not quite in keeping with classical

141 Watkins, 'The Cult of Earl Waltheof'.

142 The presence of poetry in the *Chronicles* has long been acknowledged, but the status of specific verses or verse-like passages has been the subject of some debate. Thomas Bredehoft makes a compelling case for acknowledging the poetic qualities of a much broader range of passages in the *Chronicles* than has often been the case, including the verse-like fragments describing the rebellion of 1075. See Bredehoft's useful summary of this debate in his *Textual Histories*, pp. 73–78. Bredehoft draws in turn on O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*.

143 *ASC* D, p. 87. The E version reads: 'þær wes þet brydeala mannum to beala' (There was that bride-ale harm to men); see *ASC* E, p. 91. Further discussion of the differences between these verses, as well as those that conclude the episode, may be found in Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 84–85.

Old English metre, the poetic quality of the phrase is clear, both in the alliteration of *brydealo/bealo* and *manegra/manna*, and in the repetition of *þær wæs* at the start of each half-line. Diction too marks a shift into the poetic register: *bealu* (evil, harm, destruction) occurs predominantly in poetry while the compound *brydeala* ('bride-ale', i.e. marriage feast) occurs in Old English only in these two *Chronicle* entries.[144] Set near the beginning of the chronicle account, the verses have a prophetic quality. They interrupt the prose narrative to signal both the significance and inevitability of the tragedy to come.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the prominence he would assume in later accounts of the conspiracy, Waltheof himself is a minor character in this narrative. His death and burial are described succinctly: as D has it, '⁊ her wæs Walþeof eorl beheafdod on Wincestre on sancte Petronella mæssedæg, ⁊ his lic wearð gelæd to Crulande, ⁊ he þær is bebyrged' (and here was Earl Waltheof beheaded in Winchester on the feast-day of St Petronella, and his body taken to Crowland, and he is buried there).[145] A second verse placed near the conclusion of the episode focuses instead on the punishments suffered by Earl Ralph's Breton supporters:

sume hi wurdon geblende. ⁊ sume wrecen of lande.
⁊ sume getawod to scande.
þus wurdon þæs kyninges swican genyðerade.[146]

(Some of them were blinded. And some banished from the land.
And some brought into disgrace.
Thus were traitors to the king laid low.)

The use of verse in this episode marks it out from the surrounding narrative, marking it as both exceptional and memorable. Here, the rhyme across *geblende/lande/scande* emphasizes the three-part structure of the

144 *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*. The compound (which gives us the modern English 'bridal'), became common only in the later medieval period: see Lewis and others, eds, *Middle English Dictionary*, under 'brīd-āle'.

145 *ASC* D, p. 88. E reads simply, '⁊ Walþeof eorl \wes/beheafdod on Winceastre, ⁊ his lic wearð gelead to Cruland' (and Earl Waltheof was beheaded in Winchester, and his body taken to Crowland): *ASC* E, p. 91.

146 *ASC* D, pp. 87–88. This is the layout and punctuation proposed by Bredehoft in *Textual Histories*, p. 84. The lines are printed as prose in the collaborative edition. The E version shows considerable variation: 'sume hy wurdon ablænde ⁊ sume of lande adrifene,/swa wurdon Willelmes swican geniðrade' (some of them were blinded and some driven from the land./Thus were traitors to William laid low): *ASC* E, p. 91. This edition prints the lines as verse. As Bredehoft observes, it is impossible to know which, if either, of the versions is original. The 'Death of Alfred' poem of 1036 contains similar wording in the description of Godwin's attack on the ætheling's followers: 'sume hi man bende, sume hi man blende,/sume hamelode, sume hættode' (some of them were bound, some of them were blinded, some hamstrung, some scalped), in *ASC* C, p. 106.

lines, as does the triple repetition of the subject *sume*. This triad of half-lines about punishment and suffering builds to a climax with *þus*: thus is the king's power manifested against those who sought to betray him. The tale of the conspiracy is, in this way, set apart from the prose narrative, its inception marked by a poetic foreshadowing of defeat, the bloody conclusion by a versified moral about the consequences of rebellion. Verse interrupts the prose history of the Conquest, and the episode reads like a literary parable, an exemplum on the dangers of attempted regicide. Although the *Chronicle* does not focus on Waltheof in the way later writers would, the episode gestures towards the broader questions of loyalty, personal agency, and the dangers of contesting royal power that would become so important in later retellings of his tale. Even in this early version, however, there is a suggestive universality in the language of both verse and prose that transcends the division between English and Norman, conquered and conqueror. The verses themselves never identify the ethnic or linguistic affiliations of their subjects: phrases like *manegra manna* and the thrice-repeated *sume* emphasize the number, not the identity of those involved. The prose narrative moreover emphasizes the heterogeneous make-up of the conspiracy. In addition to the Anglo-Danish Waltheof, the *Chronicles* remind us that Earl Ralph had a Breton mother and an English father, while Earl Roger was William's kinsman, and therefore a representative of the Norman inhabitants of England.[147] The Conqueror himself is identified by his political role rather than his territory of origin: in D he is the conspirators' 'kynehlaford' (liege-lord), in E their 'cyng' (king).[148] Such language emphasizes the wider implications of the conspiracy: despite the recent traumas of Conquest, this is a revolt against the person who is now the conspirators' rightful lord. It must be punished as such. The ominous little verses that bookend the episode call attention to the broader issues that underpin the new king's relationship with the diverse population that now makes up his realm. In this way, the entry for 1075 transcends the historical moment, and particularly the divisive nature of the recent conflicts. Although written in Old English, the episode is notably supra-English in its outlook.

Memories in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*

In contrast to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Anglo-Norman chroniclers unpack fully the significance of Waltheof's life and death in the traumatic

147 *ASC* D, p. 87, and *ASC* E, p. 91. On the status of the Bretons in post-Conquest England, see Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and the Normans'. On the ethnically mixed nature of William's invading force, see also Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp. 32–41.

148 *ASC* D, p. 87, and *ASC* E, p. 91.

context of the English defeat.[149] Principal among these is the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis, a monk of the Norman monastery of Saint-Évroul who had visited Waltheof's tomb at Crowland.[150] While there, Orderic was commissioned to write a verse epitaph for the tomb, along with a prose narrative of the earl's life. He later integrated these two texts into Book IV of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Unlike the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Orderic's account focuses squarely on the life and death of the rebel earl. Waltheof's honour, piety, and loyalty in the years after Hastings stand in marked contrast to the squabbling Normans, who care only to consolidate their new holdings in England. Unlike the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Orderic presents the rebellion of 1075 as an opportunistic power grab on the part of Earls Ralph and Roger. With King William abroad in Normandy, the earls leap at the chance to unseat him. Addressing their fellow Norman lords, they offer a dizzying array of reasons for revolt: William's illegitimacy, his erratic rule, his failure to reward sufficiently those who helped him conquer England.[151] Speaking to Waltheof, however, they appeal to what they assume must be the earl's English sensibilities, promising vengeance on William for his enslavement of the English people and a return to the pre-Conquest era:

> Ecce peroptatum tempus O strenue uir modo uides: ut tibi recuperes exemptos honores, et accipias iniuriis tibi nuper illatis debitas ultiones. Adquiesce nobis et indesinenter inhere: et terciam partem Angliæ nobiscum sine dubio poteris habere. Volumus enim ut status regni Albionis redintegretur omnimodis: sicut olim fuit tempore Eduardi piissimi regis. [...] Eia nobilis heros, consultus obserua tibi generique tuo commodissimos, omnique genti tuæ quæ prostrata est salutiferos.
>
> (See, gallant lord, now is the appointed hour for you to recover your lost fiefs and take just vengeance for the injuries you have suffered. Join our party and stand with us; we can promise you

149 Notably William of Malmesbury in both the *Gesta regum Anglorum* and in the *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, as well as John of Worcester, Henry of Huntingdon, Simeon of Durham, and the author of the *Warenne Chronicle*. Gaimar also gives a brief account in Anglo-Norman verse in the *Estoire des Engleis*. A thirteenth-century manuscript thought to originate from Crowland Abbey, now known as Douai, Bibliothèque municipale MS 852, includes a dedicated *Vita et Passio Venerabilis Viri Gualdevi* that incorporates part of Orderic's text, along with related works on the earl's martyrdom, family, and posthumous miracles. Timothy Bolton gives a detailed discussion of this manuscript in 'Was the Family of Earl Siward and Earl Waltheof a Lost Line?'. See also Robert Stein's discussion of many of these texts in *Reality Fictions*, pp. 90–103.

150 On Orderic's visit and his contribution to the promotion of Waltheof's cult, see Watkins, 'The Cult of Earl Waltheof'. See also Stein's reading of the Waltheof episodes through the lens of Orderic's childhood trauma of being sent away from England to study in Normandy: Stein, *Reality Fictions*, pp. 97–103.

151 *HE*, II, pp. 311–13.

> a third part of England. We wish to restore all the good customs that the realm of Albion enjoyed in the time of the virtuous King Edward [...] Come, noble lord: respect the counsels that hold out the greatest hope for you and your descendants, and will bring salvation to your people, now sunk in slavery.)[152]

Their rhetoric is as slippery as their loyalty, but Waltheof remains unmoved by their arguments. Neither the promise of vengeance nor the suffering of the English persuades him to rebel; the offer to share rulership over the kingdom does not even seem to tempt him. In contrast to the traumatized Harold of the *Vita Haroldi*, Waltheof seems strangely unaffected by the Norman takeover. William is now his king, he protests, and 'integra fides in omnibus gentibus ab omni homine domino suo seruanda est' (every man in every country owes absolute loyalty to his liege-lord).[153] Citing the biblical traitors Achitophel, Judas, and Satan, Waltheof appeals to an ideal of loyalty that transcends ethnic affiliation.[154] Loyalty is part of Waltheof's identity as a Christian, not an Englishman; as such, it permits him to acknowledge even a Norman lord as king of England. This is what allows him to survive — both physically and emotionally — when so many others did not.

Ralph and Roger swear Waltheof to secrecy and continue with their plans. While in this text Waltheof does not actively help the rebels, neither does he hinder them by telling the king about their plot. This is in contrast to several other accounts, in which Waltheof quickly regrets his involvement in the conspiracy and travels to Normandy to confess to William in person.[155] It is possible that Orderic's source material did not include this detail, or perhaps it seemed unnecessary because Waltheof's innocence is so comprehensively established by his long speech rejecting the arguments of Ralph and Roger. Nevertheless, Waltheof remains implicated in the

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152 *HE*, II, pp. 314–15.

153 *HE*, II, pp. 314–15.

154 *HE*, II, pp. 314–15.

155 The D version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, along with John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, all give some version of this episode. The D version of the *Chronicles* states that 'Walþeof eorl ferde ofer sæ, ⁊ wreide hine sylfne, ⁊ bæd forgyfenysse, ⁊ bead gærsuman' (Earl Waltheof travelled over the Channel, and confessed, and asked for forgiveness, and offered treasure): *ASC* D, p. 87. Waltheof's trip to Normandy is not mentioned in the E version, however. John of Worcester gives a similar but more elaborate account, stating that that the conspirators forced Waltheof to swear allegiance to them, but that on the advice of Archbishop Lanfranc he travelled immediately to Normandy to confess the whole affair to William soon after (John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, III, p. 25). In the *GRA* William of Malmesbury presents the conspiracy as the product of drunken excess that most of the conspirators regret the morning after, and there too Waltheof immediately confesses to William on the advice of Lanfranc (*GRA*, I, pp. 472–73).

conspiracy and the king eventually orders his imprisonment.[156] Forced to spend a year in prison, Waltheof begins his journey to sanctity, transforming, like King Harold, from soldier to holy man. He repeatedly confesses and repents of his sins, chanting daily all 150 psalms. Orderic praises Waltheof both as 'uir corpore magnus et elegans' (a handsome man of splendid physique) but also '[d]euotus Dei cultor, sacerdotum et omnium religiosorum supplex auditor; æcclesiæ pauperumque benignus amator' (a devoted Christian who showed humble obedience to all priests and monks and truly loved the Church and the poor).[157] Waltheof becomes the ideal lay saint, a person of physical and spiritual beauty who challenges neither the political nor the spiritual hierarchy. Just as he acknowledges William as his rightful lord, he humbly acknowledges the supremacy of the church. As Joanna Huntingdon observes, 'Orderic's Waltheof was a layman who knew his place in the Christian infrastructure'.[158] His words and deeds in prison affirm the power and legitimacy of the society from which he has been cut off. Venerated by English and Norman alike, the imprisoned Waltheof offers the possibility of reconciliation after trauma through the adoption of a common Christian identity. He is ultimately executed not because of his political activities but because of the greed of others. Although he is ostensibly condemned for having plotted against the king, there is a group of Normans who, writes Orderic, 'prædia eius et largos honores adipisci cupiebant' (coveted [his] wealth and wide fiefs).[159] This group leads him out of the city gates early in the morning so as not to be disturbed by the inhabitants of Winchester. Like Ralph and Roger at the bridal feast, they view Waltheof primarily as an Englishman, even though he himself continues to emphasize his Christian identity:

> Cumque carnifices trepidarent, ne ciues exciti præceptum regis impedirent; et tam nobili compatriotæ suo suffragantes regios lictores trucidarent, 'Surge' inquiunt prostrato comiti; 'ut nostri compleamus iussum domini'. Quibus ille ait, 'Paulisper expectate propter omnipotentis Dei clementiam; saltem ut dicam pro me et pro uobis orationem dominicam'.
>
> (But since the executioners feared that the citizens would wake and prevent them carrying out the royal will, and show sympathy for their noble fellow countryman by murdering the royal guards, they

156 Orderic's text is unusual in stating that the charge of treason was supported by a deposition from Waltheof's wife Judith; her role in the trial is not mentioned in any other source. Little else is said of Judith at this point, although she is later instrumental in moving his body to Crowland, and therefore cannot be completely vilified.

157 *HE*, II, pp. 320–21.

158 Huntingdon, 'The Taming of the Laity', p. 93. Huntingdon sets this within the context of the struggle between lay and clerical leaders that dominated the first half of the twelfth century.

159 *HE*, II, p. 321.

> addressed the prostrate earl in these words: 'Get up', they said, 'so that we may carry out our lord's orders'. To this he replied, 'Wait a little longer, for the love of almighty God, at least until I have said the Lord's prayer on your behalf and mine'.)[160]

Waltheof distributes his clothing and goods to those watching and begins to recite the Lord's Prayer. At the last line he chokes with tears and is unable to continue until the executioner, impatient to finish the job, cuts off his head. In the first of the posthumous miracles associated with Waltheof, the severed head completes the prayer. Waltheof's final concern, then, is not the conflict between English (or Anglo-Danish) and Norman, nor even his own survival. He focuses instead on the unifying power of Christian ritual. Even the separation of head and body cannot prevent him from completing the prayer. In contrast to the wounded bones of the *Vita Haroldi*, which keep alive the memory of Harold's traumatic defeat, Waltheof's damaged corpse becomes a symbol of textual and religious unity. The wounding of the earl's body paradoxically offers a route to healing for all those who have experienced the traumas of the recent conflict.

As if unnerved by this uncanny event, the executioners throw Waltheof's body into a ditch and quickly cover it with turf. Disinterred two weeks later, it is found to be incorrupt, 'cum recenti cruore asci tunc idem uir obisset erat sustulit' (with the blood as fresh as if he had just died).[161] The open wound remains in this way a bloody, startling reminder of Waltheof's sudden end, demanding proper commemoration before it can be healed. Unlike the blood-sweating ground of Battle Abbey, however, such commemoration is possible: it comes when the body is transferred to Crowland Abbey and interred in the chapter house with the permission of the king.[162] Miracles proliferate around the tomb until finally, in the early years of the twelfth century, Abbot Geoffrey of Crowland receives a vision in which a risen Waltheof appears by his own coffin, healed and dressed in white. He is flanked by Guthlac, the patron saint of Crowland who had made a similar transition from warrior to holy man in the eighth century, and by the apostle Bartholomew, Guthlac's own spiritual patron and protector.[163] Together, they speak:

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160 *HE*, II, pp. 322–23.

161 *HE*, II, pp. 322–23.

162 See above, pp. 230–31.

163 Guthlac's story is told in Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci*, the two Exeter Book poems *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*, and in a number of later sources. On these, and especially on Guthlac's relationship with Bartholomew, see Clarke, *Writing Power*, pp. 11–43, and Jones, 'Ghostly Mentor'.

> Apostolus uero ut uidebatur caput comitis corpori redintegratum accipiens dicebat, 'Acephalus non est'. Æcontra Guthlacus qui ad pedes stabat respondit, 'Comes hic fuit'. Apostolus autem inceptum monadicon sic perfecit, 'Ad modo rex est'.
>
> (The apostle, so it seemed, perceiving that the earl's head was joined once more to the body, said, 'Headless no more'. Guthlac who was standing at the foot of the coffin said in reply, 'That was earl heretofore', and the apostle completed the verse with the words, 'Now is king evermore'.)[164]

Just as the severing of Waltheof's head from his body was marked by the miraculous recitation of the Lord's Prayer, so the rejoining of the head to the body is distinguished by the interweaving of text and voice. The two saints together proclaim Waltheof's sanctity and — pointedly — his new status as king in heaven. The violence of his death assures his transformation into a saint, and it should be remembered in this context that the Latin term 'martyr' also means 'witness': Waltheof's death bears witness to the truth of the Christian faith.[165] Through this death he has grown in power, influence, and agency. Like that of Harold, Waltheof's story blurs with that of Christ even as it remains rooted in local tradition and engaged with the political fall-out of the Conquest. This engagement is, however, conciliatory rather than divisive: it is only with King William's permission that Waltheof's body is removed to Crowland, and the vision announcing his new status appears to Abbot Geoffrey, a Frenchman from Orléans.[166] The quintessentially English saint Guthlac confirms his sanctity, while the apostle Bartholomew represents a fellowship of holy men stretching back to the time of Christ. Generations of saints join in community in the Crowland fens, transcending time-period, ethnicity, and political affiliation. The wound heals and the body is restored: it is a powerful image of unity that offers the hope of a post-traumatic reconciliation for English and Norman, lay and religious alike.

According to Orderic, then, Waltheof is a saint who survives in order to transcend ethnic divisions, and the epitaph with which Orderic concludes this episode dwells on the promise that such transcendence is likewise available to those who worship at the earl's tomb. The vision of Abbot Geoffrey centres on Waltheof's coffin, and many other miracles take place

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164 *HE*, II, pp. 348–49.

165 The Latin in turn derives from the Greek *μάρτυρ* (witness) and is used in the New Testament to describe some of the earliest Christians to die for their faith. The *OED* notes that the origins of this word remain obscure, but that it may descend from the Indo-European base *smṛi-*, which has the sense of 'remembering' or 'bearing in mind'. See further Middleton, 'Martyrdom and Persecution'.

166 *HE*, II, p. 346.

near the tomb.[167] The epitaph Orderic composed for this monument concludes his account in the *Historia*. In that verse, Orderic dwells on the centrality of the tomb in the ongoing commemoration of Waltheof the saint. It has become a *lieu de mémoire*, encapsulating both the Christian identity embodied by the earl and offering to those who worship at it a means of participating in that identity:[168]

> En tegit iste lapis hominem magnæ probitatis,
> Danigenæ comitis Siwardi filius audax
> Walleuus comes eximius iacet hic tumulatus.
> Vixit honorandus, armis animisque timendus.
>
> (Beneath this stone a man of highest virtue –
> The valiant son of Siward, earl and Dane –
> Waltheof, most glorious earl, lies nobly buried.
> Honoured in war, revered by all, he flourished.)[169]

In these, the opening lines of the verse, Orderic dwells on the materiality of the tomb (*iste lapis*) and the location of Waltheof's body (*hic*). This is interspersed with superlative descriptions of the earl himself: he was *audax* (valiant) and *eximius* (glorious), a man of *magnæ probitatis* (highest virtue). The physical monument is, in this way, metaphorically adorned with the literary descriptions of Waltheof's virtue. Following a brief account of Waltheof's downfall, the closing lines of the epitaph likewise reveal the full significance of the monument: although the 'gleba Crulandia aquosa' (marshy soil of Crowland) holds the earl's body, his spirit resides 'in ætheris arce' (in the citadel of heaven).[170] Orderic reminds his reader that the tomb is a mediator between the body interred below and the soul risen above; it symbolizes the earl's journey between earth and heaven and invites the viewer to marvel at Waltheof's transformation from pious mortal to immortal saint. Whereas William used the mound by the seashore to mock his defeated rival, King Harold, Orderic takes the mute symbolism of the tomb and endows it, through this epitaph, with a voice: the physical and the literary monuments join together to urge worshippers to look beyond the division between England and Norman, and to privilege instead their membership of the wider Christian community. For Orderic,

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167 See further Watkins, 'The Cult of Earl Waltheof', pp. 105–06.

168 Nora, 'Between Memory and History'.

169 *HE*, II, pp. 350–51 (ll. 1–4). It should be noted that Waltheof is far from the only figure so honoured in Orderic's text: the *Historia Ecclesiastica* incorporates direct citations from over one hundred other documents, spanning theological, literary, legislative, and diplomatic texts. Of these, Orderic includes thirty-eight funerary epitaphs, nine of which he composed himself. See further Debiais and Ingrand-Varenne, 'Inscriptions in Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica*'.

170 *HE*, II, pp. 350–51 (ll. 11–13).

Waltheof's survival of the Battle of Hastings is important because it allows a conciliatory death ten years later. Waltheof's martyrdom offers a means of healing the traumatic divisions between ethnic, linguistic, and political groups caused by the Norman Conquest.

Betrayal in the *konungasögur*

In contrast to other medieval accounts, Old Norse authors set Waltheof's death during the events of 1066 rather than 1075.[171] This is part of the overall abridgement in Old Norse-Icelandic accounts of the Norman Conquest: as noted above, the *konungasögur* dwell at length on the Norwegian invasion led by King Haraldr Sigurðarson but note almost in passing the defeat of the English army at the Battle of Hastings. As discussed in Chapter 3, however, Norse authors are also unusual in expanding the English royal family to encompass not only the 'real' sons of Godwin — Harold, Tostig, Gyrth, and Sveinn — but also the leaders of the English army at the Battle of Fulford, Earls Morcar and Waltheof.[172] In the sagas, it is Waltheof's flight from Fulford that leads to Morcar's death, and this event demonstrates the fragility of the fraternal bond and the disastrous consequences internecine strife has on the country as a whole. It is in this context of fractured sibling relations and an ignominious retreat that the Norse Waltheof returns to fight at Hastings, and his elevation to the highest ranks of the English nobility fundamentally alters the role his death plays in these texts. In the sagas, it is Waltheof rather than Harold who offers a doomed but heroic resistance to the Norman incursion; his survival in the years after Hastings allows for some measure of redemption from the betrayal of his brother at Fulford. Two texts in particular, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, are notable for the pre-eminence they grant Waltheof over Harold, and for the way in which Waltheof's survival of the Battle of Hastings allows further exploration of the traumas of 1066.[173]

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171 In the Old Norse-Icelandic tradition, Waltheof, known as Valþjófr, appears in all the major *konungasögur*, including *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, and *Morkinskinna*, as well as later texts such as *Hemings þáttr* and *Játvarðar saga*. For a useful overview of the main texts and the differences between them, see Scott, 'Valþjófr jarl', pp. 83–89. In addition to the stanzas discussed in this chapter, Waltheof is also mentioned in the one extant stanza of *Haraldsstikikki*, an anonymous verse commemorating the Norwegian victory at the Battle of Fulford.

172 This is noted in all the major *konungasögur*: *Heimskringla*, III, p. 194; *Fagrskinna*, p. 279; and *Morkinskinna*, I, p. 306. See also above, pp. 177–81.

173 As discussed in Chapter 3, Waltheof is also a prominent character in the latter part of *Hemings þáttr*, with the saga author portraying him as a paragon of faithfulness in contrast to his brothers, Harold and Tostig. His death, however, is much compressed when compared to *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* and will therefore not figure prominently in this discussion. For the relevant section, see *Hemings þáttr*, pp. 54–56.

Following the death of Harold at Hastings, Waltheof and his men retreat. This retreat is entirely unlike that from Fulford. When Waltheof encounters a group of Normans on the way, his response is immediate and violent: he burns them alive in the woods. As the text of *Fagrskinna* relates, 'hann gætti, at engi kœmisk á brott ór skóginum' (he made certain that none might escape from the wood).[174] The last of Godwin's sons may be defeated, but he exacts a terrible vengeance on those who have taken his country. Strangely, when William becomes King of England, he seems to forget this violent act, granting Waltheof not only a truce but also the earldom of Northumbria. Welcoming Waltheof to his court, William gives him a 'bréf ok innsigli' (letter and seal), signifying their new relationship as lord and vassal.[175] The agreement is concluded publicly and in person, seeming to cement Waltheof's integration within the new regime; however, the performance is but that. As Waltheof rides home, he is set upon by a group of knights, and the saga author is clear as to who has organized the ambush: 'Þessa riddara hafði Vilhjálmr konungr sent eptir hónum at láta drepa hann' (King William had sent these knights after him to have him killed).[176] The Norse text makes no mention of the bridal conspiracy nor of any trial or imprisonment: unlike the Latin chronicles, *Fagrskinna* depicts the attack as an extra-judicial act of revenge.

Outnumbered and lacking armour, Waltheof is decapitated as he lies on the ground, his arms outstretched in the shape of a cross.[177] The text briefly acknowledges his later sanctification,[178] but the focus of the narrative is firmly on the political conflict between king and earl. The episode closes with the citation of half a stanza from the now-fragmentary sequence known as *Valþjófsflokkr*, neatly encapsulating the fatal relationship between the two men:

> Víst hefr Valþjóf hraustan
> Viljalmr, sás rauð malma,
> hinn, es haf skar sunnan
> hélt, í tryggð of véltan.[179]

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174 *Fagrskinna*, pp. 293–94. As Scott observes, it is more likely that this event (or something like it) took place during the rebellion of 1069–1070, during which York was burned: Scott, 'Valþjófr jarl', p. 90.

175 *Fagrskinna*, p. 294.

176 *Fagrskinna*, p. 294.

177 This motif dates back to the early Christian martyrs and is associated with a number of martyr-like deaths in the Old Norse tradition. See further Haki Antonsson, *St Magnús of Orkney*, pp. 177–81.

178 'Af hans blóði fengu margir menn bót, ok er Valþjófr jarl sannheilagr maðr' (from his blood many men receive healing, and Earl Waltheof is a truly holy man). *Fagrskinna*, p. 294.

179 *Valþjófsflokkr* is attributed to the otherwise unknown poet Þórkell Skallason. It is edited by Gade in *SkP* II, pp. 382–84. These lines form the first *helmingr* of the second stanza, as reconstructed there. See also *Heimskringla*, III, p. 295. Judith Jesch makes a compelling case

> (William, who reddened weapons, who cut the frosted sea from the south, has certainly betrayed brave Waltheof while in a truce.)

As Heather O'Donoghue observes, the citation of a skaldic stanza is often employed by saga authors to structure the narrative and 'to create striking interludes or neat climaxes'.[180] *Valþjófsflokkr* provides such a climax here, drawing on both the stylistic and thematic qualities of the skaldic form. The names Waltheof and William are bound together by the *v*-alliteration of the first two lines, along with the idea of certainty (*víst*). They are likewise joined by the uncomfortable final word of the stanza, *véltan*. Coming as it does at the very end of the verse, the concept of betrayal presents a sudden and jolting reversal of the positive imagery that precedes it. William, the subject of the stanza, is described in positive, albeit conventional, phrases that emphasize his agency and daring: like so many Scandinavian princes, he has reddened weapons in blood and travelled the frosty sea. The poet's praise of Waltheof is more muted, focusing on the intrinsic quality of bravery (he is *hraustr*). The two descriptions are, nevertheless, linked stylistically, with *hraustan* — describing Waltheof — alliterating with words associated with William: *hinn*, *haf*, *hélt*. Indeed, *hraustan*, located at the end of the first line and alliterating with the primary stressed syllables of the third and fourth lines, is a mirror to the word *véltan*, located at the end of the fourth line and alliterating with the stressed syllables in the first and second lines:

Víst Valþjóf **h**raustan
Viljalmr
hinn **h**af
hélt véltan

This alliterative interlace pattern is not required of the *dróttkvætt* metre in which the stanza is composed; rather, it forms an extra, ornamental emphasis, binding the four lines closely together and emphasizing the apparent closeness between king and earl. The juxtaposition of *hraustan* and *véltan*, however, exposes the differences between the two men: just as the noble quality of courage is intrinsic to Waltheof, so, the poet implies, is the ignoble urge to betrayal intrinsic to William. While the verse appears at first glance to be no more than a simple reiteration of the events related in the prose, it offers in fact a subtle meditation on the characters of the two men, and of the troubled relationship between them.

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for the English provenance of the *flokkr*, which she dates to the late 1070s in Jesch, 'Skaldic Verse in Scandinavian England', pp. 321–23.

180 O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, p. 61.

Fagrskinna concludes the episode by reiterating the consequences of William's invasion for all the children of Godwin, including Waltheof: 'Þetta sama haust lét Haraldr konungr líf sitt Goðinasonr ok fjórir brœðr hans' (this same autumn King Harold Godwinson lost his life along with his four brothers).[181] There follows a chapter detailing the descendants of the only remaining members of their family, Harold's daughter Gyða and Tosti's son Skúli.[182] Although Godwin's sons are dead, their offspring marry into the royal families of Scandinavia, Russia, and Poland, and their descendants include many figures who would come to influence the history of the northern world. Reminding the audience of the illustrious family of which Waltheof was said to be a part, the author of *Fagrskinna* does not portray the earl's death as the end of a dynasty but merely the remarkable conclusion to one man's life. The international consequences of Waltheof's death are only implicit in this text. Rather, it is Snorri Sturluson who fully exploits the possibilities of the prosimetric form to make clear the consequences of Waltheof's story for the defeated Anglo-Scandinavian community.

Although Snorri's prose account of the death of Waltheof is terser than that in *Fagrskinna*, his citation of two full stanzas from *Valþjófsflokkr* — indeed, the only two now extant — substantially alters the tenor of the narrative. Fully one third of the text relating to the death of Waltheof in *Heimskringla* is in verse, contrasted with just over one-twentieth in *Fagrskinna*.[183] Poetry dominates Snorri's telling of Waltheof's tale, where it serves not only to summarize the conflict between the two men but to explore the traumatic consequences of that conflict in the years to come. Snorri cites the first stanza of *Valþjófsflokkr* as he recounts the episode of Waltheof burning Normans in the woods.[184] This verse casts the conflict between Waltheof and the Normans as one of heroic, almost mythical, proportions:

> Hundrað lét í heitum
> hirðmenn jǫfurs brenna
> sóknar Yggr, en seggjum
> sviðukveld vas þat, eldi.
> Frétts, at fyrðar knǫ́ttu
> flagðviggs und kló liggja;

181 *Fagrskinna*, pp. 295.

182 *Fagrskinna*, pp. 295–96.

183 This section in *Fagrskinna* comprises approximately 324 words, 18 of which are contained in the stanza (thus 5.6 per cent of the total passage). The same section is only 200 words long in *Heimskringla*, but 67 of those words are found in the two verses from *Valþjófsflokkr* (thus 33.5 per cent of the passage).

184 *Heimskringla*, III, pp. 194–95.

ímleitum fekksk áta
óls blakk við hræ Frakka.

> (The Óðinn of battle (Waltheof) made one hundred and twenty of the lord's retainers burn in hot fire, and that was a roasting evening for men. It is heard that the men did lie under the claw of the trollwoman's steed (wolf); from the corpses of Frenchmen nourishment was given to the dark-coloured horse of the (?)trollwoman (wolf).)[185]

In this stanza Waltheof is the quintessential Nordic hero. The kenning *sóknar Yggr* is a classic poetic circumlocution for 'warrior', referencing no less a figure than the god of war, Óðinn, himself. The singular construction *lét brenna* attributes responsibility for the burning to Waltheof alone: the earl's men are never explicitly referenced by the poet, an omission that implies Waltheof was the sole vanquisher of the Norman troops. Were this not dishonour enough for the doomed invaders, the *hapax legomenon sviðukveld* (roasting evening) plays on the more prosaic compound *sviðueldr* (roasting fire, cooking fire), implying that Waltheof's enemies are not only being burned alive but ignominiously roasted like meat for dinner.

For whom is Waltheof preparing this dish of crispy Frenchmen? The second *helmingr* provides the answer in the form of two wolf-kennings: *flagðvigg* (trollwoman's steed) and *ímleitr blakkr óls* (dark-coloured horse of the trollwoman). The wolf was a well-known scavenger of the battlefield, appearing in both Old Norse and Old English poetry. These two kennings emphasize the scale of the carnage Waltheof has caused, while the combination of poetic language for Óðinn and wolves, set against the backdrop of fiery death, also hints at the ultimate conflict at the end of the world, Ragnarǫk. Referencing both wolves and trollwomen, the kennings likewise nod to the very beginning of Snorri's account of 1066. As discussed above, the Norwegian king and his soldiers witness a series of nightmarish visions as they set off to invade England.[186] One of the king's men dreams that the English army is led by a great trollwoman riding on a wolf, 'ok hafði vargrinn manns hræ í munni, ok fell blóð um kjaptana' (and it had a man's corpse in its mouth, and blood fell from its jaws).[187] Tossing corpses to the wolf as she rides, the trollwoman acts as a grotesque *landvættr* (guardian of the land) challenging the oncoming Norwegian army. Her monstrous form provokes both fear and desire on the part of the advancing Norwegians,

185 This translation follows Gade's in *SkP* II, pp. 382–83. As Gade notes, *ól* does not usually denote 'trollwoman', but that seems the only possible meaning here.

186 See above, pp. 117–47.

187 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 177.

and symbolizes the overwhelming violence of the conflict to come. Like the peasant woman in *Hemings þáttr*, the kennings of *Valþjófsflokkr* in *Heimskringla* echo the same moment sixteen chapters later, as England faces a second wave of invaders under William of Normandy. As the last surviving Godwinson, Waltheof himself steps into the role of the land-guardian, using the natural environment — the burning wood — in a last-ditch attempt to protect the realm. In this way, the horrific imagery of ravening wolves and murderous trollwomen bookends Snorri's account of 1066. Neither Waltheof nor the trollwoman can ultimately prevent the Conquest of England, but the inclusion of poetry in Snorri's account of 1066 makes their attempts to do so as memorable as they are macabre. The verses also function as a sober reminder of the human cost of the invasions of 1066: the struggle for England was not simply a political dispute but a series of bloody battles resulting in widespread carnage for English, Norwegian, and Norman alike. Waltheof, in this stanza, is not only a victim of the bloodshed but a contributor to it.

In contrast to *Fagrskinna*, Waltheof and William do not meet in person in *Heimskringla*. The lord–vassal relationship is never solemnized in Snorri's text; it is, rather, the bait that lures Waltheof to his death. Snorri relates that William 'sendi boð Valþjófi jarli, at þeir skyldi sættask, ok selr honum grið til fundar' (sent word to Earl Waltheof that they should be reconciled, and grants him safe passage for a meeting).[188] As the reciprocal verb *sættask* implies, the offer is of a meeting between noblemen, if not equals; and yet Waltheof's death is described as that of a common criminal. Travelling to meet the king, the earl is arrested by two *ármenn* (king's officers, stewards) who place him in chains and execute him.[189] There is no mention of Waltheof fighting, of forgiving his killers or the king, or of lying on the ground in the shape of a cross. The presence of the *ármenn* and the manacling of Waltheof's body expose the duplicity of the king's offer to come to an agreement: Waltheof has been condemned without ever knowing he was on trial. The episode nods to the judicial process described in the Anglo-Norman sources, but in this saga the king's justice is sudden and arbitrary. It is not a formal process but the means through which to dispose of a dangerous rival to the throne. Both his violent revenge and his membership of the English royal family make him far too dangerous to William in this narrative. He can never become a symbol of reconciliation in this text; as such, the king cannot allow him to survive.

Outrage at the king's treachery is evident in the verse that follows, with Snorri citing the full stanza from Þorkell's *Valþjófsflokkr* from which the *helmingr* in *Fagrskinna* was taken. Snorri is particularly skilled in the deployment of skaldic verse, and the use of this stanza in *Heimskringla* signals

188 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 196.
189 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 196.

a dramatic shift in tone unlike that in *Fagrskinna*.[190] As discussed above, the first *helmingr* condemns William for his betrayal of Waltheof and implies that treachery is as much a part of William's nature as bravery is of Waltheof's. In the context of *Heimskringla*, the verse also serves to make explicit William's role in the killing, which is only implied in the prose. In the second *helmingr*, the poet explores Waltheof's betrayal in the broader context of the Norman Conquest. He explains more forcefully than either of the prose accounts the long-term consequences of Waltheof's death:

> Satts, at síð mun létta,
> snarr en minn vas harri,
> — deyrat mildingr mærri —
> manndráp á Englandi.[191]
>
> (It is true that — my lord was brave; a more famous, generous prince will not die — slaughter will be slow to cease in England.)

Together, the two half-stanzas form a delicately balanced verse. The second *helmingr* follows an almost identical structure to the first. Both start with an expression of certainty in the first line (*sátts* and *víst*); both close with the ominous concepts of betrayal (*véltan*) and slaughter (*manndráp*). In this way, the opening and closing lines of both *helmingar* emphasize the certainty of the terrible things that are happening; and in both, this idea encloses the intercalary clauses that describe the two men involved, William and Waltheof. The rhetoric of the verse relies not only on the similarities, but also the differences between the two men. Praise of William in the first *helmingr* gives way to praise of Waltheof in the second, and notably in a far more superlative vein: no more famous lord will live. Such an assertion is just as conventional as the images of William reddening weapons and cutting the sea with his ship, but the poet leaves his audience in no doubt as to who is superior. The scale of William's crime likewise intensifies from one half-stanza to the next, as the betrayal of Waltheof in the first *helmingr* becomes a symbol — perhaps even the catalyst? — of widespread slaughter in the second. The ominous final line suggests that, while Waltheof's death may have brought to an end the conflict between the Godwinsons and the Duke of Normandy, his killing is only the beginning of a coming wave of violence.

Noting the compression of time implicit in this stanza, Laura Ashe argues that the verse 'holds the audience in a traumatic "present"' that lasts

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190 On Snorri's skill in integrating skaldic verse into his prose, see O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, pp. 63–68.

191 This follows the text in *SkP* II, pp. 383–84, rather than *Heimskringla*, III, p. 196, which emends 'en' the second line to 'an'. That emendation gives a slightly different sense to the second and third line: 'a more famous, generous prince than my lord was will not die'.

from 1066 to the death of Waltheof in 1076.[192] The stanza encapsulates, in the laconic and allusive manner of the skalds, a decade marked by multiple invasions and the violent suppression of English resistance to Norman rule. In the prose context of *Heimskringla*, this traumatic present extends even longer, with Snorri concluding his account with the brisk observation that 'Viljálmr var síðan konungr á Englandi einn vetr ok tuttugu ok hans afkvæmi jafnan síðan' (William was then king in England for twenty-one years and his descendants ever after).[193] The traumatic present of Waltheof's death thus extends in the prosimetric saga not only from 1066 to 1076, but to the end of William's reign and into that of his descendants. In this way, *Valþjófsflokkr* casts a long shadow of betrayal over the decades that follow the death of the earl. Whereas in *Fagrskinna* the genealogy of the Godwins pointed to the continuation of Waltheof's family and its political influence outside England, *Heimskringla* shows that survival is impossible. Snorri presents the death of Waltheof in a stylized, almost mythic manner: his killing marks the end of a dynasty and the beginning of new traumas to come.

In this way, medieval authors resist the straightforward identification of Waltheof with any one of the ethnic or linguistic groups jostling for power during the late eleventh century. Rather, they reveal the many competing affiliations that, although responsible for the earl's downfall, also ensured that people from across the medieval north would seek to tell his tale. In Old English, Anglo-Norman, and Old Norse-Icelandic works alike, Waltheof's survival past the Battle of Hastings opens up a space in which to explore the complexities of the historical moment and the ways those caught up in the aftermath of that traumatic conflict found to navigate them. Waltheof's struggle becomes a locus for the exploration of broader concerns about loyalty, sanctity, and memory. Just as stories of Harold's survival blend elements of hagiography, chronicle, and romance, the heteroglossic play between verse and prose in such different accounts of Waltheof's tale gives voice to the complex and often contradictory perspectives of this troubled time. Examining the incomprehensibility of survival in the murky political landscape of the late eleventh century, medieval authors remind their readers that, just as there was no one story of Harold's or Waltheof's lives, there was likewise no one story of conquest.

192 Ashe, *The Oxford English Literary History*, I, p. 12.
193 *Heimskringla*, III, p. 197.

Conclusion

Departures

Játvarðar saga, the Norse adaptation of the *Vita Ædwardi*, concludes with a curious story of post-Conquest migration:

> Þá er höfðingjar Enskir urðu vísir, at Danir vildu ekki liðsinna þeim mótí Viljálmi; — en þeir vóru ráðnir til at þeir vildu eigi under hans ríki búa, — þá létu þeir óðul sín, ok flýðu brott af landi með mykinn her. Þar vóru fyrir þrír jarlar ok átta barúnar; var mest fyrir þeim Sigurðr jarl af Glocestr. En þeir höfðu hálft fjórða hundrað skipa ok þar á bæði mikit lið ok frítt.[1]
>
> (When the English chieftains became certain that the Danes did not wish to help them against William — but they were determined that they did not want to live under his rule — they left their ancestral estates, and fled away from the country with a great army. They were led there by three earls and eight barons; foremost among them was Sigurðr, earl of Gloucester. They had 350 ships and a force both large and splendid.)

Unlike Earl Waltheof, who found a way of (temporarily) integrating into the new regime, these English noblemen decide that leaving England is their only option after the Conquest.[2] Their departure is both total and irreversible. I have translated the word *óðul* here as 'ancestral estates' but it connotes far more than just a piece of property. An *óðal* is the land passed down through a family for generations, becoming entwined with the family's identity, social position, and sense of place in the world.[3] In medieval Scandinavia, the act of leaving one's *óðal* was not an act to be entered into lightly, and it is significant that the text uses this word to describe the lands left behind by the emigrating English: they are not merely leaving their homes, but their homeland. That Earl Sigurðr and his followers are willing to pull up their roots rather than live under the Conqueror's rule shows the strength of feeling against the new regime; it also signals the irrevocability of their departure.

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1 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 398.

2 On the possible historical background to this migration and a discussion of the sources, see Ciggaar, 'L'émigration anglaise à Byzance'; Shepard, 'The English and Byzantium'; and Fell, 'The Icelandic Saga of Edward'.

3 Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, pp. 206–07.

As Caruth shows, however, 'history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas'.[4] In *Játvarðar saga* the dispossessed soon become the dispossessors. The flight of the English transforms into a triumphant crusade as they enter Muslim territory, killing and looting as they go: 'þeir drápu [þar] fjölda manna heiðinna; en tóku svá mikit fé í gulli ok silfri, at þat var allt meira enn þeir höfðu brott ór Englandi' (they killed there many heathen people; and they seized there so much wealth and gold and silver, that that was more than they had brought out of England).[5] The fleet sails through the Mediterranean and on to Constantinople, where they free the imperial city from a besieging Muslim army. A grateful Byzantine emperor invites the English to stay and serve in his garrison, but the group's leaders refuse. Their aim is not to seek service with a foreign lord but to replace the homeland they have lost. As the text relates:

> En Sigurði jarli ok öðrum höfðingjum þótti þau oflítil forlög sín, at eldaz þar með því móti, at þeir hefði ekki ríki til forráða, ok beiddu konung fá sér borg nokkura eðr stað, þann er þeir mætti eiga eðr þeirra erfingjar.[6]
>
> (But to Earl Sigurðr and the other chieftains it seemed too insignificant a fate, to grow old there without a kingdom to rule over, and they asked the king to grant them a certain city or place, one which they or their heirs might possess.)

Like *óðal*, the term *erfingjar* (heirs) has specific legal and social connotations related to ancestry and inheritance.[7] The English chieftains are requesting land for the long term; they want a homeland to replace the one they have lost. Unwilling to deprive his own followers of their lands, the emperor offers the English a piece of land to the north of his realm, perhaps the Crimean Peninsula; this land had once been controlled from Constantinople but has by this point been taken over by the Muslims. If the migrating English can win back the land, the emperor declares, it will be theirs.[8]

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4 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 25.

5 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 398.

6 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 399.

7 Grønvik, *The Words for 'heir', 'inheritance' and 'funeral feast' in Early Germanic*; and Harris, *'Erfikvæði* — Myth, Ritual, Elegy'. On the social function of the *erfikvæði*, see Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*, especially pp. 11–14.

8 The thirteenth-century *Guta saga* (Saga of the Gotlanders) contains an interesting analogue to this journey when a third of the inhabitants are forced to leave the island because of over-population. Making their way to Byzantium, they trick the emperor into letting them settle in the land permanently. See *Guta saga*, pp. 2–5, and a short discussion of this episode at pp. xxv–xxvii.

Travelling north, the English troops fight until they have retaken the land promised to them, 'en ráku á brott allt folk þat er áðr bygði' (and they drove away all the people who had earlier lived there).[9] Their acquisition of this new realm is even more total than that of the Normans in England: only the complete expulsion of the former population will do. The narrator makes no comment on the morality of this conquest; the English have, after all, reclaimed a territory that was once part of the Byzantine Empire. Their non-Christian opponents are both faceless and nameless, their function in the text to conquer and be conquered. The land the English win is a contested space, scarred by a history of violence and successive waves of colonization. Like the Normans they have fled, the English have no genealogical claim to their new realm: might makes right. Fleeing the conquest of England, they replicate the same pattern of conflict and conquest in the east. Victory gained, they settle down in their new home:

> Siðan bygðu þeir þat land, ok gáfu nöfn; ok kölluðu England. Borgum þeim er í landinu vóru, ok þeim er þeir reistu, gáfu þeir nöfn staðanna of Englandi; kölluðu bæði Lundunam ok Jork, ok annara höfuð-borga [nöfnum] í Englandi.[10]
>
> > (After that they settled that land, and gave it names; and they called the land England. To the towns that were in the land, and to those that they established, they gave the names of places in England; they called them both London and York, and by the names of other major towns in England.)

The author of *Játvarðar saga* thus depicts the English chieftains fleeing the Norman Conquest establishing similar territories on the eastern border of Europe. Even the towns left behind by the land's previous inhabitants are subsumed into this new 'English' identity, re-named and surrounded by 'English' settlements. The emigrants seek not only to replace the *óðul* they have lost, but to replicate them exactly. It is a deeply nostalgic endeavour, one that seeks to challenge the very fact of the Conquest itself. As Svetlana Boym observes,

> At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time — the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or

9 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 400.

10 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 400. On the parallels between this settlement narrative and that of Iceland in Old Norse literature, see further Goeres, 'Exile and Migration'.

> collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.[11]

Naming the new land after the one they have lost, the English seek to turn back time, to resurrect the pre-Conquest realm in which they, not the Normans, were in charge. Like Harold in the *Vita Haroldi* emerging from the cellar two years after the Battle of Hastings, the English refuse to accept the loss of their country. The settlement in eastern Europe becomes an imagined England in which the Norman Conquest did not happen. In this way, the author of *Játvarðar saga* reframes traumatic departure as a triumphant homecoming. Assuring his readers that 'hefir þetta fólk þar jafnan síðan bygt' (these people have lived there ever since),[12] the saga author shows how the wandering English stage a nostalgic rebellion not only against the Norman Conquest, but against time itself.

There is, nevertheless, a traumatic repetitiveness to the tale, filled as it is with multiple conquests, multiple losses and, finally, multiple Englands. The resurrection of a pre-Norman England on the fringes of Europe seems to deny that any loss has occurred, and yet the saga is, ultimately, a story of departure. The English migration echoes that of the Jews in Exodus: Earl Sigurðr becomes a secular Moses and William the Conqueror a latter-day Pharaoh. The importance of the biblical narrative for the creation of early English identity is well established and, as Caruth has shown, was likewise foundational to Freud's early conceptualization of trauma.[13] In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud interprets the exodus from Egypt as the moment at which the Hebrew people became the Jewish nation: the act of leaving captivity becomes, Caruth observes, 'no longer simply a return [to Canaan] but is rather, more truly, a departure'.[14] Caruth argues that Freud's central question is, therefore, '[i]n what way is the history of a culture, and its relation to a politics, inextricably bound up with the notion of departure?'[15] This is the question likewise posed by the author of *Játvarðar saga*: in what way is the history of the English people bound up with the notion of departure? Does the act of leaving signal the end of 'England' in its pre-Conquest sense or does it herald a new beginning far from England itself? What of the English who stay in Norman England, or those who take up service in the Varangian guard: does acquiescing to foreign rule constitute a departure from English culture and identity? Is departure an inescapable experience for those who suffer conquest from abroad?

Despite the replication of 'England' in eastern Europe, the trauma of departure permeates *Játvarðar saga*. Moreover, as noted above, it is a

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11 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. xv.
12 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 400.
13 See for example Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, and Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*.
14 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 14.
15 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 14.

trauma that entangles and engenders others: the establishment of New England is possible only through the conquest and dispossession of those already living in the region. The area's Muslim population is killed or driven away; the re-christening of their settlements with English place names expunges even the memory of their presence in that land. It is notable that Freud's argument in *Moses and Monotheism* likewise turns on the repression of memories of violence. In a speculative (and contentious) rereading of Jewish history, Freud argues that the Jews murdered Moses after their escape from Egypt, and then repressed the memory of that violent act. The figure of Moses the liberator became assimilated with another Moses, priest of the god Yahweh, and the beginning of Jewish history thus becomes available 'at best indirectly', as Caruth writes, 'through the experience of a trauma'.[16]

It is possible to extend such entanglements yet further. As Caruth shows, the act of exploring historical trauma was, for Freud, tied to the political context of his own time. Begun in 1934, Freud's analysis of Jewish history was in part an attempt to explain the Nazi persecution of the Jews; it was also a response to his own forced departure from Vienna in 1938. His desire, as he wrote in a letter to his son, was 'to die in freedom', and he concluded the book in London the following year.[17] To this final part of the work Freud added an account of the difficulties he had faced in writing *Moses and Monotheism*, characterizing the book as 'an unlaid ghost' that required multiple revisions and publications.[18] Caruth argues that Freud's writing of the book became in this way 'the site of a trauma' that unconsciously repeated the very history he sought to write.[19] This perspective is useful when reading *Játvarðar saga*, and particularly when considering what role this curious tale of English emigration might have played in the context of fourteenth-century Iceland. Can the saga text likewise be seen as the repetition of a traumatic history? While ostensibly focusing on the eleventh-century exodus from England, the episode also echoes tales of the Icelanders' own emigration from Norway in the ninth and tenth centuries. The territory offered to the English in *Játvarðar saga* 'liggr sex dægra haf í ætt austrs [beggja] ok land-norðrs frá Miklagarði' (lies six days' sail both to the east and north-east from Constantinople);[20] this description is reminiscent of the discovery of Iceland, which is said to lie 'sex dœgra sigling í norðr frá Bretlandi' (six days' sailing to the north of

16 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 16.
17 Letter to Ernst Freud, May 1938, cited in Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 24.
18 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 20–21, citing Freud's 'Summary and Recapitulation' in *SE*, XXIII, pp. 103–04.
19 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 21.
20 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 400.

Britain).[21] The author of *Játvarðar saga* praises the quality of the new land in eastern Europe — 'ok er þat hinn bezti landkostr' (and that is the most excellent land)[22] — in language similar to that found in the Icelandic settlement narratives.[23] The most notable parallel is that in *Játvarðar saga* the English leave their *óðul* because they cannot bear to live under William's tyrannous regime, and a similar reason for the settlement of Iceland is given in several saga narratives: elite Norwegian families are said to have fled for Iceland to escape the heavy-handed rule of King Haraldr hárfagri. The first chapter of *Eyrbyggja saga* is but one example: 'Þetta var í þann tíma, er Haraldr konungr inn hárfagri gekk til ríkis í Nóregi. Fyrir þeim ófriði flýðu margir gǫfgir menn óðul sín af Nóregi' (That was at the time when King Haraldr hárfagri came to power in Norway. Because of that conflict many noble men fled from their ancestral properties in Norway).[24] The king's assumption of power (*gekk til ríkis*), the noble status of the emigrants (*margir gǫfgir menn*) and the ancestral properties they leave (*óðul sín*) are all echoed in *Játvarðar saga*. The departures from England and Norway are thus analogous acts of political resistance. There is a clear ethical gulf between the position of these elite groups and that of religious minorities in the twentieth century; nevertheless, it is striking that the goal of both the English and the Norwegians is, like Freud's so many centuries later, 'to die in freedom'.

There is, however, a darker parallel between the two accounts. Like the murder of Moses in Freud's work and the expulsion of the Muslims in *Játvarðar saga*, narratives about the migration to Iceland similarly hint at a cycle of violence and repression. Although Iceland is often claimed to have been uninhabited before the arrival of the Scandinavian settlers, texts such as Ari Þórgilsson's *Íslendingabók* (Book of the Icelanders) describe a mysterious group known as the *papar*, likely Irish monks who had sought

21 This is from the first sentence in *Landnámabók*, the Icelandic book of settlements: see *Íslendingabók: Landnámabók*, I, p. 31.

22 *Játvarðar saga*, p. 400.

23 In *Bárðar saga*, for example, the protagonists 'urðu á þat sáttir at leita Íslands, því þaðan váru sagðir landakostir góðir' (agreed to seek out Iceland, as there was said to be good-quality land there): see *Bárðar saga*, p. 107. In *Vatnsdœla saga* 'sótti liðit upp í dalinn ok sá þar góða landakosti at grǫsum ok skógum; var fagrt um at litask' (the people set off up into the valley and saw there good-quality land with grass and woods; it was beautiful to look at): see *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 41. On this see further my discussion in Goeres, 'Exile and Migration', pp. 82–84.

24 *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 3. The settlement of Iceland and its depiction in the sagas has been much discussed; a useful overview is given in Byock, *Medieval Iceland*. It is likely, however, that the trope of Haraldr's despotism is more literary motif than historical fact, and indeed there has long been confusion in the medieval sources between Haraldr inn hárfagri and Haraldr inn harðráði. See further Jesch, 'Norse Historical Traditions'; Crag, 'Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt'; and Avis, 'The Social Mythology of Medieval Icelandic Literature', pp. 33–51.

isolation in the north Atlantic for religious reasons.[25] They are said to have been living on the island when the first Norwegians arrived but left, according to Ari, because 'þeir vildu eigi vesa hér við heiðna menn' (they did not want to be here with heathen people).[26] Ari presents the decision to leave Iceland as the choice of the *papar* themselves — not unlike the English nobles' decision in *Játvarðar saga* — but the *Historia Norwegie* gives a different account. There, the *papar* are said to inhabit the Orkney Islands and are more exotic in character: 'Affricani fuerunt iudaismo adherentes' (they were from Africa and clove to the Jewish faith).[27] In this text, they are both ethnic and religious others, and the *Historia* presents the colonization of their land not as peaceful settlement but as military conquest:

> Istas itaque naciones in diebus Haraldi Comati, regis uidelicet Norwegie, quidam pirate, prosapia robustissimi principis Rogwaldi progressi, cum magna classe Solundicum Mare transfretantes de diuturnis sedibus exutas ex toto deleuerunt ac insulas sibi subdiderunt.
>
> (In the days of Harald Fairhair, king of Norway, certain vikings, descended from the stock of that sturdiest of men, Ragnvald jarl, crossing the Sólund Sea with a large fleet, totally destroyed these peoples [ie, the *papar* and their fellow inhabitants of the islands] after stripping them of their long-established dwellings and made the islands subject to themselves.)[28]

To what extent does *Játvarðar saga* echo this barely remembered trauma? To what extent is the memory of the *papar* imagined, and to what extent repressed? Are such narratives a challenge to the dominant myths of settlement, or a justification of that process? What are the moral implications of the desire 'to die in freedom' when that freedom is bought by the violent expulsion of others? *Játvarðar saga* offers no clear answer to these questions, but it does offer another example of how the traumatic echoes of violence and conquest continued to reverberate throughout the Middle Ages.

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25 On the *papar* see, among others, Thomson, 'The Orkney *Papar*-names'; Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Ireland and the Irish in Icelandic Tradition'; and Grønlie, 'Conversion Narrative and Christian Identity'.

26 *Íslendingabók*, I, p. 5. The formal conversion of the Icelanders to Christianity did not happen until around 1000.

27 *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 66–67.

28 *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 66–67. The *Peti* (Pents) are also said to live in the Orkneys; they are described in the *Historia* as pygmies with miraculous building powers (pp. 64–65). See Richard Cole's intriguing comparison of this episode (with careful caveats) to the reported Nazi plan to build a 'Museum of The Extinct Race' after the eradication of the Jews in Europe: Cole, 'Towards a Typology of Absence', pp. 144–45.

As the texts discussed in this book have shown, the events of 1066 remained 'unlaid ghosts' for many centuries after they occurred. Authors working in an array of languages, genres, and cultural traditions continued to explore the conflicts of that year throughout the medieval period. Indeed, as Siobhan Brownlie has demonstrated, the Norman Conquest retains a powerful hold over collective memory in modern-day Britain.[29] The events of 1066 continue to be explored in a range of written texts, not only in academic circles but in novels, newspapers, popular magazines, and children's books.[30] Paintings, sculpture, embroidery, and cartoons have all been produced by artists looking back to this climactic year.[31] There is great variety in the manner and complexity with which such works engage with the conflicts of 1066, but it is undeniable that the events of that year remain a cultural, historical, and political touchstone.[32] The traumas of invasion likewise provide a compelling theme for many artists. Perhaps one of the most sophisticated uses of this storied sequence is found in Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*.[33] There, the Battle of Hastings becomes a ghostly vision witnessed by a young girl named Rosa Diamond:

> — Once as a girl on Battle Hill, she was fond of recounting, always in the same time-polished words, — once as a solitary child, I found myself, quite suddenly and with no sense of strangeness, in the middle of a war. Longbows, maces, pikes. The flaxen-Saxon boys, cut down in their sweet youth. Harold Arroweye and William with his mouth full of sand. Yes, always the gift, the phantom-sight. — The story of the day on which the child Rosa had seen a vision of the battle of Hastings had become, for the old woman, one of the defining landmarks of her

29 Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*.

30 Brownlie discusses a number of examples in *Memory and Myths*, pp. 45–59. For examples from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, see Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*.

31 In addition to Brownlie, see also the examples discussed in Musgrove and Lewis, *The Story of the Bayeux Tapestry*, pp. 306–23.

32 As Brownlie observes, the Conquest has also functioned as a political benchmark for Anglo-French relations since at least the fourteenth century and, more recently, is often raised in the context of Britain's relationship with the European Union: Brownlie, *Memory and Myths*, pp. 62–72. Brownlie's work was, however, published three years before the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, and it would be interesting to see a follow-up study on how the Brexit process has affected popular discourse around the Norman Conquest. See, for example, the editorial by Boris Johnson on then-Prime Minister Theresa May's 'soft' Brexit deal, with its provocative title: Johnson, 'The Irish Backstop Is a Monstrosity that Wipes Out our Sovereignty; Theresa May's Plan would Mean that our Leaders Accept Foreign Rule for the First Time since 1066'.

33 Although published in 1988, this novel continues to provoke debate in the twenty-first century. Rather grimly, sales of *The Satanic Verses* surged in the wake of the attack on Rushdie on 12 August, 2022: Shaffi, 'UK Sales of *The Satanic Verses*'.

> being, though it had been told so often that nobody, not even the teller, could confidently swear that it was true.[34]

Rosa's tale, polished — as with so many of the narratives of 1066 — over decades of telling and retelling, takes on a life of its own; the words, rather than the event itself, become her primary memory of this ghostly experience. Then, as an elderly Rosa wanders the beach near her home, the phantom soldiers become flesh and blood. Falling from a hijacked plane that has exploded over the Channel, two Indian film stars, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, arrive on the shores of England. As Gibreel comes to his senses he re-enacts the famous stumble suffered by Duke William upon his own arrival in England: 'on the winter seashore, Gibreel Farishta awoke with a mouth full of, no, not sand. Snow'.[35] Gibreel and Saladin's tumble from the sky takes William's fall in the chronicles to surreal, magical extremes. As Rushdie plays with our expectations of how the story should go, the phantom figure of the invading Norman blurs into that of the unwelcome immigrant; the traumas of empire, migration, and cultural dislocation mingle with the traumas of the medieval past.[36] The episode reminds us once again how, in Caruth's words, 'history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, [...] history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas'.[37] As Rushdie's novel shows, we, as modern subjects, remain implicated in the traumas of the past, just as we continue to be entangled by the traumas of the present.

The Satanic Verses is both playful and searing in its depiction of Gibreel and Saladin's experiences in twentieth-century Britain. Their status as racial and cultural Others is vividly dramatized when Saladin's body transforms into that of a devil and he is detained by the British authorities in a mysterious institution that is part house of horrors, part medieval bestiary. Inhabited by a manticore and other human-animal hybrids, it is a prison for foreigners who have been transformed into monsters by those who cannot see their humanity. 'They describe us', explains the manticore to Saladin, 'That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct'.[38] What other pictures might we construct now, in the twenty-first century? Perhaps surprisingly, the study of trauma

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34 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 130.

35 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 130. On William's fall, see above, Chapter 1, 65–69.

36 The traumas of the past are more fully explored, of course, in the interwoven narrative of the life of Mohammed and the early history of Islam. On this, see for example Langlois, '"A Punishment of Dreams"', and Allington, 'Theorising Postcolonial Reception'.

37 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 25.

38 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 168. See also in this context James Plumtree's recent discussion of the similarities between the medieval stories of the 'Green Children of Woolpit' and contemporary refugee narratives: Plumtree, 'Placing the Green Children of Woolpit', pp. 202–24.

offers new ways of recognizing the humanity of those who initially appear separate from us, differentiated by race, class, gender, or, as demonstrated in this book, time. It is well known that those who survive a traumatic experience often feel marked, set apart from the rest of their community; nevertheless, the act of sharing that experience with others can serve as a powerful source of commonality and healing.[39] Traumatic experience rips away one's sense of self, and yet it is this very experience of alterity that unites those who survive it. The process of acknowledging, sharing, and working through traumatic events can benefit not only individuals but whole societies. As Jeffrey Alexander argues:

> It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but 'take on board' some significant responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others. Is the suffering of others also our own? In thinking that it might in fact be, societies expand the circle of the we.[40]

In *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin and his fellow prisoners are excluded from the circle of the we, and thereby rendered monstrous in the eyes of those who draw it. The study of trauma — of our own and that of others — is one way of expanding this circle. The medieval authors discussed in this book are not afraid to consider the traumas of others, including those distanced from them by time, place, culture, gender, or social position. Chroniclers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries describe the sufferings of those in the eleventh. Writers in Norway and Iceland explore the catastrophes of armed conflict in England. Monks imagine the mental lives of kings, and of their bereaved lovers, sisters, and mothers. Poets give voice to defeated soldiers. In so doing, each author widens the circle of the we. Modern readers can do the same as we learn to understand the mental and emotional lives of medieval people, and the strategies they employed to navigate difficult experiences. These texts do not represent the experience of everyone affected by the conflicts of 1066, of course; they inevitably foreground the lives of the political elite who played such a central role in those events. Nevertheless, if we can learn to see our commonalities with those separated from us by hundreds of years, might we also increase our capacity to recognize the sufferings of those closer to home? Might we also learn to expand the circles of the present?

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39 Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', pp. 458–59. See also Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 175–236.

40 Alexander, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma', p. 1.

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