Earl Godwine's ship

SIMON KEYNES AND ROSALIND LOVE

ABSTRACT

The *Vita Ædwardi regis*, written probably in the late 1060s, is a major source for our knowledge of the reign of King Edward the Confessor (1042–66). The discovery by Henry Summerson of the complete text of a hitherto incomplete poem in the *Vita Ædwardi*, describing a ship given to the king by Earl Godwine, on the occasion of the king's accession in 1042, contributes significantly to our understanding of the poem itself, and bears at the same time on the relationship between the *Encomium Emmae reginae* and *Vita Ædwardi*, and between the *Vita Ædwardi* and the later eleventh- or early-twelfth-century source common to John of Worcester's Chronicle and to William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*. These matters are pursued further, in a preliminary exploration of the wider significance of Dr Summerson's discovery.

The several poems interspersed throughout the anonymous *Vita Ædwardi regis*, introducing each of the two books, and following each of the first six chapters in Book I, are integral to the literary composition as a whole; but it has long been apparent that they present particular difficulties of interpretation.[1] In one case, the problem was exacerbated by imperfect transmission in the late-eleventh-century manuscript of the *Vita Ædwardi*.[2] The poem describing a ship given by Earl Godwine to King Edward the Confessor, in 1042, extended for twenty-two lines, at which point the loss of a bifolium from the manuscript deprived scholarship of its continuation and conclusion.[3] The discovery of the complete poem (comprising the first twenty-two lines followed by a further thirty-two lines of text), in a series of extended excerpts made

---

[1] The standard edition of the *Vita Ædwardi regis* [hereafter *VÆdR*] is *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster, Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin*, ed. F. Barlow, 2nd ed., OMT (Oxford, 1992); see also F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970), new ed. (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 291–300 ('The Purpose of the *Vita Ædwardi regis*'). Professor Barlow died on 27 June 2009, aged 98.

[2] For facsimiles of pages from the manuscript in question (London, British Library, Harley 526), see *Lives of Edward the Confessor*, ed. H. R. Luard, RS (London, 1858), frontispiece (38v), and *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966–1066*, ed. J. Backhouse, D. H. Turner and L. Webster (London, 1984), p. 146 (49r); see also *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, pp. xxxix–xli and lxxviii–lxxxi.

[3] *VÆdR*, i. 1 (*ibid*. pp. 20–1), from BL Harley 526, 40v.

185

in the sixteenth century from what would appear to have been a complete text of the *Vita Ædwardi*, is reported by Dr Henry Summerson elsewhere in this volume.[4] Our purpose in this article is to discuss aspects of the poem's historical and literary significance, now that the poem has been restored to its original form.[5]

NAUTICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

The immediate attraction of the poem is that it conjures up an image, in words, of what must have been an awesome if not unfamiliar sight in the first half of the eleventh century: a great ship, 'with the long curves of its sides drawn together to two high points', with the gilded figure of a dragon at the prow, the gilded figure of a lion at the stern, a purple sail decorated (in some way) with 'the succession of forebears' (*patrum series*), and provision for a ship's company of no fewer than 120 'menacing heroes'. We now learn, from the newly discovered text, that at the top of the mast there was a gilded and bejewelled figure of a bird, 'clasping a warrior with its beak and claws'; that each cross-beam [*singula . . . transtra*] was loaded (in some way) with twenty 'talents' of silver and four of gold, and each man provided with a helmet (*galea*), hauberk (*lorica*), lance (*lancea*), sword (*gladius*), 'Gallic' shield (*Gallicus umbo*), and 'Danish' axe (*Danica . . . securis*); and also (it seems) that there was a seat for the king himself, piled high with silver and gold. No less interesting, as an indication of the author's purpose, is the emphasis placed towards the end of the poem on wider contexts: the gift of the ship as a symbolic expression of Earl Godwine's loyalty to King Edward; Godwine's action as an example for other leaders (*principes*) to follow; the general rejoicing at Edward's return; and the ensuing harmony.

Nautical contexts

Earl Godwine's ship is to some extent the product of a fertile literary imagination, yet it is not difficult to see whence the author is coming.[6] Few would now ask how long or how large was a viking ship, and anyone who did so should expect to be told that a ship was as long as a piece of string (or its equivalent).

---

[4] H. Summerson, 'Tudor Antiquaries and the *Vita Ædwardi regis*', *ASE* 38 (2009), 157–84; the complete text of the poem is edited by Dr Rosalind Love, accompanied by a translation, in Dr Summerson's Appendix, Text 1 (pp. 170–2).

[5] SDK is responsible for 'Nautical and Historical Contexts', and RCL for 'Literary Associations'. We should like to express our gratitude to Dr Henry Summerson for offering his article to this journal, and thus for creating an opportunity for us to offer in return this preliminary discussion of its significance.

[6] For a recent survey, see J. Bill, 'Viking Ships and the Sea', *The Viking World*, ed. S. Brink with N. Price (London, 2008), pp. 170–80, with references; and *L'héritage maritime des vikings en Europe de l'ouest*, ed. E. Ridel (Caen, 2002), esp. pp. 173–98.

The modern perception of a viking-age longship owes much to the excavation, in 1880, of the thirty-two-oared Gokstad ship, from Vestfold, in Norway, complemented by the excavation in 1904–5 of the thirty-oared Oseberg ship, also from Vestfold; a replica of the Gokstad ship crossed the Atlantic in 1893, and the ships themselves have long been on display in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo. In the early 1960s the perception of a viking ship was modified, and extended, by the several ships raised from the Roskilde fjord, near Copenhagen; several more replicas have been built, including most recently one of the sixty-oared longship, designated 'Skuldelev 2', which sailed across the North Sea to Britain and Ireland in 2007–8, and which now rides at anchor again in the Roskilde fjord.[7] A ship of similar dimensions has been found more recently at Hedeby, and an even larger one at Roskilde.[8] One imagines that in the eleventh century the perception of a viking ship would have varied in accordance with a person's own experience, and that any representation of a ship, whether in art or in literature, would have pushed beyond that reality in various respects. The representation of Noah's Ark, as a longship, found in the eleventh-century 'Cædmon Manuscript' (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11), is an obvious case in point; and it suggests by analogy how a fertile imagination might have taken flight in a literary work of the same period.

Although the origins of the Royal Navy can be sought by process of wishful thinking in the reign of King Alfred the Great,[9] or in the reign of King Edgar,[10] the indications are that the provision of organized naval defence originated in the reign of King Æthelred the Unready, as part of the response to the Scandinavian invasions in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.[11]

[7] O. Crumlin-Pedersen, *The Skuldelev Ships, I: Topography, Archaeology, History, Conservation and Display*, Ships and Boats of the North 4.1 (Roskilde, 2002), 141–94; C. Etchingham, '"Sea Stallion of Glendalough": Skuldelev 2 and Viking-Age Ships and Fleets in Ireland' (forthcoming).

[8] O. Crumlin-Pedersen, *Viking-Age Ships and Ship-building in Hedeby/Haithabu and Schleswig*, Ships and Boats of the North 2 (Roskilde, 1997), 201; Crumlin-Pedersen, *Skuldelev Ships*, p. 191, with references.

[9] A contemporary chronicler famously reports that in 896 King Alfred had 'long ships' built to oppose the *askar* (Danish warships): 'They were almost twice as long as the others. Some had 60 oars, some more. They were both swifter and steadier and also higher [or more responsive] than the others.' For an excellent and wide-ranging discussion, see M. J. Swanton, 'King Alfred's Ships: Text and Context', *ASE* 28 (1999), 1–25.

[10] For the twelfth-century accounts of King Edgar's navy, see S. Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', *Edgar, King of the English 959–975: New Interpretations*, ed. D. Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 3–58, at 5.

[11] For a valuable review of the evidence, see N. Hooper, 'Some Observations on the Navy in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Norman Warfare: Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Military Organization and Warfare*, ed. M. Strickland (Wodbridge, 1992), pp. 17–27; see also R. Abels, 'Navy', *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (Oxford, 1999), pp. 330–1.

When the raids resumed, in the early 980s, provision must soon have been made for maintaining sufficient numbers of ships wherever they might be needed, although doubtless it was some time before the arrangements assumed the formality of a ship-tax. In the 980s a thegn known as Ælfhelm Polga bequeathed his 'longship' or 'warship' (*scegð*) to Ramsey abbey, 'half for the abbot and half for the community', perhaps signifying an expectation on his part that the abbey would be able to use his ship in discharging its obligations.[12] Unfortunately, we have no means of knowing what Ælfhelm's ship was like, beyond whatever may be inferred from his use of the word *scegð* (ON *skeið*).[13] As the threat increased, in the late 990s and in the early eleventh century, King Æthelred received bequests of at least two large ships; and one gets the impression in this context that ships of a length which required 60 oars, or more, had become something approximating to a norm for ships of a certain kind. Ælfric, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1005, gave the king 'his best ship (*his beste scip*) and the sailing tackle with it, and sixty helmets and sixty coats of mail'; he also granted a *scip* (of unspecified size) to the people of Kent and another to Wiltshire.[14] A few years later Ælfwold, bishop of Crediton, gave King Æthelred 'a sixty-four oared warship' (*ænne scegð lxiiii ære*), said to be 'quite complete, save alone that he would have fully equipped it in a fitting manner for his lord, had God granted it'.[15] A list of estates belonging to the see of London specifies how many 'ship-men' (*scipmen*) were supported, in some sense, from each of the estates in question, and thus suggests how the

---

[12] S 1487 (*Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), no. 13), from the archives of Westminster Abbey. In references to charters, S = P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography*, R. Hist. Soc. Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968), followed by the number of the charter; a revised and updated form of Sawyer's catalogue is available on the internet at <www.esawyer.org.uk>. Reference is also made where possible to an edition of the text, in accordance with the conventions suggested on the website of the British Academy/Royal Historical Society Joint Committee on Anglo-Saxon Charters, at <www.trin.cam.ac.uk/Kemble>.

[13] For the Norse word, see J. Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: the Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge, 2001), esp. pp. 123–6, with further references. Some indication of contemporary usage emerges from entries in the eleventh-century 'Abingdon Glossary' (Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, M.16.2 (47), with London, British Library, Add. 32246). Among glosses for some nautical words (themselves derived from Isidore), we find *pirata uel piraticus uel cilex* glossed *wicing uel scegðman*, and *scapha uel trieris* glossed *litel scip uel sceigð*. See L. Kindschi, 'The Latin–Old English Glossaries in Plantin-Moretus MS 32 and British Museum MS Additional 32,246' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Stanford Univ., 1955), pp. 56 and 187, and T. Wright, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 2nd. ed., ed. R. P. Wülcker, 2 vols. (London, 1884) I, cols. 111.26 and 165.40.

[14] S 1488 (*Abing* 133), in *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. Whitelock, no. 18, and *English Historical Documents*, *c. 500–1042*, ed. D. Whitelock, 2nd ed. (London, 1979) [hereafter *EHD*], no. 126.

[15] S 1492 (The *Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents now in the Bodleian Library*, ed. A. S. Napier and W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1895), no. 10), and *EHD*, no. 122.

bishop met an obligation to provide for about sixty men manning a ship;[16] while Æthelric, bishop of Sherborne, had cause to complain to Æthelmær, a prominent thegn at Æthelred's court, that since he was no longer receiving the requisite or expected contributions towards 'ship-scot' from certain estates, he was falling short overall of the 'three hundred hides that other bishops [i.e. his predecessors] had for their *scyre*', and thus asked for adjustment.[17] Nor is there any mistaking the intensity of arrangements made in what proved to be a brief lull between the departure of one viking army in 1007 and the arrival of another in 1009. In a royal assembly convened at King's Enham, in Hampshire, at Pentecost (16 May) 1008, the king and his councillors urged that the people were to be zealous 'about the supplying of ships . . . so that each may be equipped immediately after Easter every year', evidently in readiness for the new raiding season;[18] a person keeping a record of Æthelred's reign presumably had the same act in mind when he noted that in 1008 the king ordered 'that ships should be built unremittingly over all England, namely a warship (*ænne scegð*) from 310 [*or* 300] hides, and a helmet and corselet (*helm and byrnan*) from 8 hides'.[19]

As we move towards the middle of the eleventh century, and indeed precisely to the time of Earl Godwine's gift, evidence of a different kind comes into play. The kingdom of the English had been under Anglo-Danish rule for about twenty-five years, during the reign of Cnut (1016–35), the joint rule of his sons Harthacnut and Harold Harefoot (1035–7), the sole rule of Harold Harefoot (1037–40), and then the sole rule of Harthacnut (1040–2). The regime depended on the naval force created in the early days of the Danish

---

[16] For detailed discussion, see P. Taylor, 'The Endowment and Military Obligations of the See of London: a Reassessment of Three Sources', *ANS* 14 (1992), 287–312, at 293–300, and *Charters of St Paul's, London*, ed. S. E. Kelly, AS Charters 10 (Oxford, 2004), 192–201 (no. 25), at 193–4. For an effective summary, see P. Taylor, 'Foundation and Endowment: St Paul's and the English Kingdoms, 604–1087', *St Paul's: the Cathedral Church of London, 604–2004*, ed. D. Keene, A. Burns, A. Saint (New Haven and London, 2004), pp. 5–16, at 15.

[17] S 1383 (Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, no. 63). For discussion of this evidence, see *ibid.* pp. 266–8 and 483, and Taylor, 'Military Obligations of the See of London', p. 300.

[18] *V Æthelred*, ch. 27, and *VI Æthelred*, ch. 33. For this legislation, see S. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12', *ASE* 36 (2007), 151–220, at 177–9, with references.

[19] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* [hereafter *ASC*], MSS CDE, s.a. 1008 (ed. O'Keeffe, p. 92; ed. Cubbin, p. 54; ed. Irvine, p. 66). In MS F, *ænne scegð* is rendered *unam magnam nauem* (ed. Baker, p. 101). For the translation, see *EHD*, no. 1 (p. 241). The manuscripts of the *ASC* are cited as necessary from the modern editions, abbreviated in the conventional way: *MS A*, ed. J. M. Bately, AS Chronicle 3 (Cambridge, 1986); *MS B*, ed. S. Taylor, AS Chronicle 4 (Cambridge, 1983); *MS C*, ed. K. O'B. O'Keeffe, AS Chronicle 5 (Cambridge, 2001); *MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin, AS Chronicle 6 (Cambridge, 1996); *MS E*, ed. S. Irvine, AS Chronicle 7 (Cambridge, 2004); and *MS F*, ed. P. S. Baker, AS Chronicle 8 (Cambridge, 2000).

conquest, seen for example in 1018 when '40 ships remained with King Cnut'.[20] So, when Harthacnut arrived at Sandwich in June 1040, he is said by a contemporary chronicler immediately to have imposed a severe tax for his force of sixty or sixty-two ships, levied at 'eight marks *æt ha<melan> / æt hamelan / æt ælcere hamulan*', i.e. for each thole (or rowlock), i.e. per oarsman, resulting in a payment of 21,099 pounds.[21] A sum of this order, distributed to a force of sixty-two ships, would imply a reckoning of roughly 340 pounds per ship, which at eight marks for each *hamele* (reckoning a mark at eight troy ounces and a pound at twelve) would be sufficient for about sixty-four *hamelan* per ship.[22] In reality, the basic form of calculation ('8 marks for each thole') must have been adopted as a matter of convenience; some ships in a fleet would have had more *hamelan*, others less, and some might have carried additional men for particular purposes, who would also have required remuneration.[23] The ship designated 'Skuldelev 2', from the Roskilde fjord, which is believed to have been built in the Dublin area in the early 1040s, is thought to have had a crew of sixty oarsmen, which with the helmsman and additional crew-members would raise the ship's company to about sixty-five. The evidence seems fairly consistent, and to suggest that the basic conception of a ship's crew in the eleventh century remained in the order of sixty men per ship. The complement of 120 'menacing heroes' imagined by the author of the *Vita Ædwardi regis*, in the 1060s, for the ship given by Earl Godwine to King Edward, in 1042, is thus likely to owe something to the requirements or expectations of literary hyperbole; yet while a complement of, say, sixty-four might have been normal for the period, one could hardly discount the possibility that some additional men might have made the company seem that much more menacing.

The context in 1042

Whatever their size and capacity, ships symbolized the way in which the Danes had seized control of the kingdom of the English in 1016; and a force of well-equipped ships, in the king's service, would have come in the 1020s and 1030s

---

[20] *ASC*, MSS CDE, s.a. 1018.

[21] *ASC*, MSS CD, s.a. 1040 (ed. O'Keeffe, p. 107; ed. Cubbin, p. 66), and MSS EF, s.a. 1039 for 1040 and 1040 for 1041 (ed. Irvine, p. 77; ed. Baker, p. 116).

[22] S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready' 978–1016: a Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 225, n. 25. For a different calculation, see M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: the Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), p. 177, with some further references.

[23] For further discussion, see N. A. M. Rodger, 'Cnut's Geld and the Size of Danish Ships', *EHR* 110 (1995), 392–403, stressing the danger of assuming (for example) that there was any simple correlation between a reckoning of the number of *hamelan* per ship and the actual size of the ship's company.

to show how the new regime maintained and indeed projected its power. A gift by an earl to the king of a well-equipped and fully financed ship would have represented a significant contribution to the political order, both in its own right and as a public display of the earl's loyalty to the king; and for his part the earl might see in such a gift the means of securing his own political position, and thereby sustaining his power in the kingdom. Yet Godwine was no ordinary earl. The origins of his power lay in the establishment of Cnut's rule in England, following the death of Edward's father, King Æthelred the Unready, and of his half-brother, King Edmund Ironside, in 1016. That is to say, he was one of Cnut's 'new nobles', who for whatever reason or in whatever circumstances rose from these origins to enjoy a dominant position in the Anglo-Danish kingdom of England from the early 1020s to the death of Cnut on 12 November 1035.[24] Already in the early 1030s, the kingdom seems to have been divided against itself by regional and political faction, which found expression, in the immediate aftermath of the king's death, at an assembly of all the councillors at Oxford, when the succession was disputed between supporters of Harold Harefoot (led by Earl Leofric and 'almost all the thegns north of the Thames and the shipmen in London') and supporters of Harthacnut (led by Earl Godwine and 'all the chief men in Wessex').[25] The faction is also reflected by subtle and rather less than subtle differences between different versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in the annals from the mid-1030s onwards;[26] and it found reflection at the same time in the coinage of the later 1030s,[27] and in the charters of the same period.[28]

Given the nature of his position during Cnut's reign, Earl Godwine was

---

[24] For Godwine, see S. Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. A. R. Rumble (London, 1994), pp. 43–88, at 70–4; F. Barlow, *The Godwins: the Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty* (London, 2002); and E. Mason, *The House of Godwine: the History of a Dynasty* (London, 2004).

[25] *ASC*, MS E, s.a. 1036. For Leofric, see Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', pp. 77–8, and S. Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 32–43, with further references.

[26] S. Keynes, 'The Manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', *The History of the Book in Britain*, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge, forthcoming); S. Baxter, 'MS C of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Politics of Mid-Eleventh-Century England', *EHR* 122 (2007), 1189–1227; and N. Brooks, 'Why is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about Kings?', *ASE* 39 (2010).

[27] T. Talvio, 'Harold I and Harthacnut's *Jewel Cross* Type Reconsidered', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History: Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley*, ed. M. A. S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), pp. 273–90; see also D. M. Metcalf, 'A Kingdom Divided', *Numismatic Circular* 1991, pp. 292–3.

[28] For the dominance of Earl Godwine and Earl Leofric at royal assemblies during the period 1030–42, see Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', p. 87 (1030–5), and S. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters c. 670–1066*, I: *Tables*, ASNC Guides, Texts, and Studies 5 (Cambridge, 2002), Table LXVIII; the attestations of thegns during the same period (*ibid.* Table LXX) require closer analysis.

naturally at the centre of subsequent political developments. In 1035–6, the kingdom was shared between the absent Harthacnut, supported by Queen Emma and Earl Godwine in Wessex, and Harold Harefoot, supported not only by Earl Leofric but also, and no less effectively, by Ælfgifu of Northampton. In 1036, Ælfgifu orchestrated an extraordinary campaign which led not only to the abandonment of Harthacnut's cause, but also to the discomfiture of the athelings Edward and Alfred (exiles in Normandy), and so ultimately, in 1037, to the elevation of Harold Harefoot as full king.[29] Crucially, Earl Godwine seems in this process to have shifted his allegiance from Harthacnut to Harold; for Godwine would have had little to gain from the return and re-establishment of Æthelred's sons, and seems to have been closely involved in the capture of Alfred (Edward's younger brother) at Guildford in 1036, and his blinding at Ely soon after, leading to his death probably in 1037. Already in the later 1030s, assignment of complicity in Alfred's capture and death is likely to have been a burning political issue; and a glance at the annals in the various manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for 1036, suggests that the controversy lay precisely in the question of Earl Godwine's complicity. There is no indication in the extant versions of the *Chronicle* that Earl Godwine made any formal submission to Harold, in 1036 or 1037; but he must have done so, presumably by taking an oath and perhaps also by making a symbolic or public display of his position.

King Harold Harefoot died in Oxford on 17 March 1040, and was buried lower down the Thames at Westminster; whereupon those left in control of the kingdom's affairs 'sent to Bruges for Harthacnut, thinking they were acting wisely'.[30] Some time before midsummer (24 June) Harthacnut returned to England, with his fleet of sixty ships. There is no indication in the *Chronicle* that Earl Godwine submitted formally to Harthacnut in 1040;[31] but again, it is likely that he did so, not least because his earlier defection from Harthacnut to Harold would have marked him as one upon whom the incoming king could not necessarily rely. Harthacnut's return was followed no less significantly by the return of the atheling Edward from Normandy in 1041: 'And in the same

---

[29] For this campaign in 1036–7, see S. Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae reginae*', *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. A. Campbell, Camden 3rd ser. 72 (London, 1949) / Camden Classic Reprints 4 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. xiii–lxxxvii, esp. xxxii–xxxiii. For Edward and Alfred in 1036, see S. Keynes, 'The Æthelings in Normandy', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1991), 173–205, at 194–6.

[30] *ASC*, MSS CD, s.a. 1041 (O'Keeffe, p. 107; ed. Cubbin, p. 66); see also MS E, s.a. 1039 for 1040 (ed. Irvine, p. 77). *ASC*, MS E, might be regarded as this stage as an 'official' record, as if of the 'court' party; the annals shared by MSS CD represent a rather different point of view, as if of a 'country' party. In this case, both chroniclers convey a sense of Harthacnut's unpopularity.

[31] For discussion of the evidence from JW/WM, see below, pp. 202–3.

year Edward, son of King Æthelred, came to this land from France. He was the brother of King Harthacnut. They were both sons of Ælfgifu, who was count Richard's daughter.'[32] The dedication-picture at the front of the *Encomium Emmae reginae*, with its prologue and closing chapter, reflect this brief period in 1041–2, between Edward's return to England in 1041 and Harthacnut's death in 1042, when Emma could be portrayed in power alongside her sons Harthacnut and Edward (by different fathers);[33] but the appearance of harmony was not to last. King Harthacnut died at Lambeth, 'standing at his drink', on 8 June 1042, and was buried near his father in the Old Minster at Winchester.[34] The 'Godwinist' (or court-party) chronicler remarks that 'before he was buried, all the people chose Edward as king, in London', adding, seemingly resigned to the new state of affairs, 'May he hold it as long as God will grant him'; another chronicler reported, with perhaps a greater degree of confidence, 'and all the people then received Edward as king, as was his natural right'.[35] The turn of events represented nothing less than the end of the Anglo-Danish line, and the formal restoration of the native 'English' dynasty; yet rather than extending the harmony, one can imagine that the effect was to render the political climate even more highly charged.

It might be expected that the thrust of the *Encomium Emmae*, and particularly of its closing chapter, would have required some modification had a copy of the work been commissioned or required for any purpose in the aftermath of Harthacnut's death (whether for Emma herself, or for some other person). It has in fact long been apparent that a new recension of the *Encomium* was produced during Edward's reign, perhaps soon after his accession in 1042. Our understanding of this 'Edwardian recension' of the *Encomium* has been based hitherto on extended excerpts made in the sixteenth century from an earlier

---

[32] *ASC*, MS E, s.a. 1040 for 1041 (ed. Irvine, p. 77). The account in MSS CD, s.a. 1041 (O'Keeffe, p. 107; ed. Cubbin, p. 66), describes Edward as the son of King Æthelred, explains that he had been driven into exile many years before, and adds that he was sworn in as king.

[33] London, British Library, Add. 33241, 1v, reproduced (with the facing page of text) in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. Campbell [1998], p. [xlii], and (more legibly, with extended discussion) in C. E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, AS Stud. 3 (Woodbridge, 2004), fig. 21, or (in colour) in M. P. Brown, *Manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon Age* (London, 2007), pp. 133 and 165 (though one must dissent from the view that the work was 'composed in Normandy around 1040'). The image echoes the references in the text to the joint rule of Harthacnut and Edward (*EER*, [Argumentum], lines 30–2, ed. Campbell, pp. 6–8, and iii. 14, lines 1–3, *ibid*. p. 52).

[34] The formal details of Harthacnut's death and burial are from the 'official' record, in *ASC*, MS E, s.a. 1041 for 1042 (ed. Irvine, p. 77); the descriptive or more circumstantial account is from *ASC*, MSS CD, s.a. 1042 (ed. O'Keeffe, pp. 107–8; ed. Cubbin, p. 66).

[35] *ASC*, MS E, s.a. 1041 for 1042 (ed. Irvine, p. 77), and MSS CD, s.a. 1042 (ed. O'Keeffe, pp. 107–8; ed. Cubbin, p. 66).

manuscript itself considered lost;[36] but in December 2008 a fourteenth-century manuscript known as the 'Courtenay Compendium', containing (among many other items) a text of the Edwardian recension of the *Encomium Emmae* in what is evidently a state close to its original form, appeared at auction.[37] It can be seen on the basis of this remarkable discovery that the Edwardian recension of the *Encomium* represents the Encomiast's own revision of the text as first 'published' in 1041–2, with adjustments here and there, and, perhaps most importantly, with the provision of a new ending.[38] All will become clearer, in matters general and particular, when images of the manuscript become more readily accessible, and when one can ascertain by comparison with the text of 1041–2 what (if anything) was omitted, what was abbreviated, what was modi-fied, and what (even if not much more than the ending) would appear to have been added. There may not be much to learn about the rather loaded passage dealing with Emma of Normandy at the time of her marriage to King Cnut, on a leaf now missing from the eleventh-century manuscript, since the text provided by a sixteenth-century transcript of that manuscript has the support of the sixteenth-century excerpts from the Edwardian recension;[39] but it would be interesting to know what might emerge in connection with Cnut's burial at Winchester, where some adjacent text in the extant eleventh-century manu-script has been erased.[40]

[36] *Encomium Emmae*, ed. Campbell, pp. xv–xvii and 52, n. b, from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds lat. 6235, fols. 7–14; for further discussion, with translation, see Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', pp. xlix–li.

[37] The manuscript had been on deposit in the Exeter Record Office for several years, largely unknown to modern scholarship, and was sold at Sotheby's, London, Western Manuscripts and Miniatures, 3 December 2008, lot 31. For further details, see T. Bolton, 'A Newly Emergent Mediaeval Manuscript Containing *Encomium Emmae Reginae* with the Only Known Complete Text of the Recension Prepared for King Edward the Confessor', *MS* 19 (2009), 205–21, esp. 211–14; also published in *Anglo-Saxon* 2 (2008). We are most grateful to Dr Bolton for providing us with further information about the text of the *Encomium* in the 'Courtenay Compendium', pp. 189–209. The manuscript itself has passed overseas, into private hands. Under the provi-sions of the export licence, a set of digital images is held by the British Library (RP 9618); it should be noted, however, that export copies are reserved from public use for seven years, unless the new owner allows this restriction to be waived. There is a colour facsimile of the opening page of the text ('Courtenay Compendium', p. 189; cf. *EER Prologus*, ed. Campbell, p. 4, lines 1–14) in the sale catalogue; for the last two pages, see below, n. 41.

[38] It had been supposed that the accounts of the treatment of the ætheling Alfred in 1036 (*EER* iii. 7), and of Harthacnut's reunion with Emma in 1040 (*EER* iii. 10), might have been abbre-viated (see Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', p. xlix, citing Campbell). We understand from Dr Bolton that both passages are present in full in the Courtenay Compendium, and that the sixteenth-century transcript is essentially a truncated version of that text.

[39] Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', p. xlvi, with n. 4 (*EER* ii. 6, ed. Campbell, p. 32, lines 6–16).

[40] *Ibid*. p. xliv, with n. 1 (*EER* iii. 1, ed. Campbell, p. 38).

194

We may turn for the time being to the published facsimiles of the last two leaves of the 'Courtenay Compendium', for a full text of the revised ending, which is directly relevant for our present purposes:[41]

Qui <*erasure*> iussioni fratris obaudiens anglicas partes aduehitur, et mater amboque filii regni paratis commodis nulla lite intercedente utuntur.

Obeying his brother's command, he [Edward] was conveyed to England, and the mother and both sons, having no disagreement between them, enjoy the ready amenities of the kingdom.

• Hic fides habetur regni sotiis, hic inuiolabile uiget fedus materni fraternique amoris.

• Here there is loyalty among sharers of rule, here the bond of motherly and brotherly love is of strength indestructible.

At this point, the final sentence of the original work is replaced by a new ending:
• His itaque fratribus ut dixi concorditer in domino unanimiter seculo simul quoque regnantibus mors media intercidit amicamque fratrum confederacionem nichili pendens regem Hardichnutonem uitalibus auris abstulit. O quantus dolor quantus gemitus quantus etiam fratrem superstitem omnesque terre principes tristicie inuasit tumultus, postquam tanti regis solacium sibi mortis ademit interuentus. Verum quoniam hunc ictum <*erasure*> euadendi nulla datur copia,[1] rex mortuus a fratre et matre sepelitur honorifice uti legalis <*for* regalis?> exposcebat gloria. Dolet interim prae <*for* prius?> terra amissum regem, animos tum se exhillarabat quia successor futurus erat cui hereditario iure debebatur regimen.[2]

• While these brothers were, as I have said, at one and the same time reigning harmoniously in the Lord and unanimously in the world, death came in between to divide them and, caring nothing for the brothers' amicable agreement, deprived Harthacnut of life's breath. O what great sorrow, what great groaning, and also what great tumult of grief overtook the surviving brother and all the nobles of the land, after death's intervention deprived them of the solace of such a great king. But since no opportunity is afforded for avoiding this blow, the dead king is buried with due honour by his brother and mother such as his royal glory demanded. In the meantime the land first <*reading* prius> grieves over a lost king, then lifts its spirits because there was a successor in waiting to whom rule was due by hereditary right.

• Nunc, o lector uigil, tua appareat sollicitudo atque reduc ad memoriam in

• Now, o watchful reader, let your careful attention show itself and bring

---

prohemio quidnam dixerim de circulo. Memini quidem dixisse me in faciendo circulo ad unum idem punctum fieri reductionem quatinus <quatinius *in error*> circulus rotunditatis accipiat orbem.[3] Sic quoque factum est in anglici regni administrando regimine.[4]

• Alradus autem primus rex – primus autem quia omnium sui temporis prestantissimus – ei praefuit monarchie. [5] Huic itaque nature persoluenti ultima, dum tenera etas successorem non pateretur filium, ineffabilis prouidencia dei eius prouidit posteritati et licet post aliquot lustra ei tum cui debebatur restituit.

• Mortuo siquidem Hardechnutone in regnum successit Edwardus heres scilicet legitimus uir uirium eminentia conspicuus uirtute animi consiliique atque etiam ingenii uiuacitate preditus et, ut omnia breuiter concludam, omnium expetendorum summa insignitus. Huius in aduentu omnis terra siluit, eiusque dominio collum calcabile supposuit.

• Dominacionis enim eius milies mille uotis ante desiderauerat diem,[6] cum <est *perhaps here by error*> eo paterne bonitatis uideret ac sapiencie elucere specimine <*for* specimen?>. Ad laudem dei nominis cui est honor et gloria per infinita secula. Amen.[7]

back to recollection what I said in my preface about the circle. I indeed recollect that I said that in making a circle there must be a returning to one and the same point so that the circle may attain the orbit of its round form. So likewise it was brought to pass in the arranging of the rule of the English kingdom.

• Æthelred, the foremost king – foremost because of all those of his time the most outstanding – commanded that monarchy. When he paid his last debt to nature, since tender age did not permit his son to be successor, God's ineffable providence made provision for his posterity, and albeit after some years restored (that monarchy) to the one to whom it was then due.

• Indeed with Harthacnut dead Edward succeeded to the kingdom, namely the legitimate heir, a man notable for the eminence of his power, endowed with virtue of mind and counsel and also with quickness of intellect, and – to conclude in brief – marked out by the sum of all desirable things. At his coming, the whole land was hushed and bent its neck ready to be pressed down under his dominion's heel.

• For it had longed with a thousand times a thousand prayers for the day of his lordship, since it saw shining out in him the mark of his father's goodness and wisdom. To the praise of God's name, to whom is all honour and glory forever and ever, Amen.

Notes
In this edition, the bullet points correspond to the rubricated section markers in the 'Courtenay Compendium'. Angle brackets enclose editorial commentary, reflected in the translation, and the numbers in square brackets refer to the notes which follow.

1   The phrase 'euadendi nulla datur copia' reflects the Encomiast's apparent fondness for this idiom, as in 'sauciandi occidendique copiam persequentibus praestant' (*EER* i. 4, lines

196

25–6, ed. Campbell, pp. 12, 14), and 'ubi eis copia data est mutuo loquendi' and 'qui si inter eundum sibi copia pugnandi . . . accideret' (*EER* iii. 8, line 3, and iii. 9, line 3, ed. Campbell, p. 48). Campbell, p. xxxi, noted that this idiom may echo Vergil's use of 'data copia fandi' at *Aeneid* I. 520 and XI. 248 (Campbell, p. xxxi).

2   The phrases 'cui . . . debebatur regimen' (here) and particularly 'cui debebatur restituit' (below), applied to Edward, recall 'regnum cui debebatur restituit' (*EER* [Argumentum], line 29, ed. Campbell, p. 6), and 'regnum hereditario iure sibi debitum' (*EER* iii. 10, line 15, ed. Campbell, p. 50), applied to Harthacnut.

3   The address to the reader harks back explicitly to the image of the circle in the author's preface (*EER* [Argumentum], lines 13–18, ed. Campbell, p. 6); similarly, the way in which the reader is addressed – 'o lector uigil' – mirrors 'o lector uigilique . . . oculo mentis perscrutato textu' (*EER* [Argumentum], line 33, ed. Campbell, p. 8); and the phrase 'reduc ad memoriam' is reminiscent of 'paucis libet ad memoriam reducere' (*EER* i. 1, line 15, ed. Campbell, p. 8).

4   The terminology of kingship and monarchy in this text is (in combination) clearly that of the Encomiast. The notion of an 'English kingdom' recalls 'Anglicum regnum' (*EER* [Argumentum], line 19, ed. Campbell, p. 6). The term 'regimen', used here and above, had been used for Cnut in 'Danorum . . . regimen' (*EER* ii. 19, line 4, ed. Campbell, p. 34), and compare also, 'quod administrabat regimen' (*EER* i. 1, lines 5–6, ed. Campbell, p. 8) and 'Hardecnutoni filio . . . qui tunc temporis regimen Danorum obtinebat' (*EER* iii. 8, lines 7–8, ed. Campbell, p. 48). The term 'monarchiam' (below) is found in 'monarchiam regni Cnuto uir strenuus suscepit' (*EER* ii. 15, line 1, ed. Campbell, p. 30), and 'ad optinendam monarchiam regni Danorum' (*EER* ii. 19, line 3, ed. Campbell, p. 34).

5   'Praestantissimus', the epithet applied here to Æthelred (*Alradus*), parallels the Encomiast's use of the same superlative to describe Emma herself, in 'omnium ejus temporum mulierum praestantissima' (*EER* ii. 16, line 7, ed. Campbell, p. 32), and then shortly afterwards, her husband's (Cnut's) virtue, in 'haec autem hinc prestantissima uirtute coniugis . . . accendebatur' (*EER* ii. 17, lines 4–5, ed. Campbell, p. 34).

6   'milies mille uotis' recalls the phrase 'o res millenis milies petita uobis', referring to the marriage of Cnut and Emma (*EER* ii. 16, lines 20–1, ed. Campbell, p. 32).

7   The verbal parallels which exist between this 'new' text and the *Encomium* of 1041–2, as well as the shared rhetorical adornments, such as rhyming clauses and hyperbaton, are striking. The reference back to the author's prologue cleverly brings the image of the circle full circle, as it were, and need not be taken as skilful fiction on the part of a different author. The version of the ending of the 'Edwardian recension' hitherto familiar from the sixteenth-century excerpts (above, n. 36) appears to be no more than a heavily truncated version of this revised ending.

This is, in effect, a much expanded version of the closing section of the *Encomium Emmae reginae* as printed in Campbell's edition (*EER* iii. 14). The reference back to the author's prologue suggests strongly that the person responsible for composing the revised ending, and (one must assume) the text of the 'Edwardian recension' as a whole, was none other than the Encomiast himself. He lays stress, as before, on the harmony between the two (half-) brothers, but now remarks at length on the widespread grief occasioned by Harthacnut's death. Harthacnut was buried with honour by his mother and brother; and while there was sorrow in the land for the late king, spirits were raised because his successor would reign as king by hereditary right. In this connection the

197

author invokes a metaphor in his own prologue, to the effect that the *Encomium* began in praise of the queen, and came round, as if in a circle, back to praise of the queen at the end. It was the same, we are now told, with provision for the succession to the throne in the English kingdom. King Æthelred (*Alradus*) had not been succeeded by his son, who at the time of his father's death [in 1016] was still quite young; yet by the working of divine providence it came to pass after the passage of some years that the monarchy was restored to the legitimate heir, in the person of Edward. The Encomiast enlarges on Edward's particular qualities, and avers how everyone saw in him the mark of his father's goodness and wisdom. Amen.

Given that the Encomiast had contrived not to mention King Æthelred in the *Encomium* as first written in 1041–2, it is remarkable, even if under the changed circumstances entirely appropriate, that Edward's accession in 1042 should now be represented as a long-awaited reversion to Æthelred's line, and that the new king's father should be cast in such a light.[42] One should never underestimate the strength which Edward gained, not least in the perception of others, from the royal blood which flowed through his veins, as shown in 1041–2 and again when he faced Earl Godwine in 1051; but the realities of the prevailing political circumstances were more complicated. Although Edward had with him some close associates from Normandy, he was required at first to make his way in what remained none the less, and fundamentally, an Anglo-Danish court.[43] And while there might well have been a 'popular' feeling that the kingship of the English had been restored to the rightful line, the position of Earl Godwine, as one who had come to power with the Anglo-Danish regime, was itself well entrenched. It is possible that as the principal earl in the kingdom Godwine would have been expected, yet again, to make a public display or demonstration of his loyalty to the new king. There is nothing to this effect in the extant versions of the *Chronicle*; but in the conditions which obtained in 1042, after Edward's long period of exile in Normandy (1016–41), an act of some such kind might have been required to mark the submission of the nobility to one widely acknowledged as the rightful king. Godwine, in particular, was suspected in certain quarters of complicity in the capture and death of Edward's brother Alfred; and Edward

---

[42] For the Encomiast's 'suppression' of Æthelred, so that he could present Cnut's marriage to Emma in a more positive way (in the early 1040s), see Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', p. lxix. For Edward's position in the closing years of his father's reign, see S. Keynes, 'Edward the Ætheling (*c*. 1005–16)', *Edward the Confessor: the Man and the Legend*, ed. R. Mortimer (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 41–62, at 51–6; and *ibid*. pp. 61–2, for the sense of his place in the royal line.

[43] For a recent review of the evidence, see S. Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question', *Edward the Confessor*, ed. Mortimer, pp. 77–118.

might well have appreciated a public affirmation of the earl's loyalty to the new political order.[44]

The context in the 'Vita Ædwardi regis'

The account of Earl Godwine's display of loyalty to King Edward, symbolized by his gift of the ship, cannot be separated from its literary context in the *Vita Ædwardi regis*. The *Vita Ædwardi* was addressed by its anonymous author to Queen Edith herself. It has been suggested that the work was written in two stages (Book I in 1065–6, and Book II in 1067), but it seems more likely that the whole work was written at one time (perhaps *c.* 1068), and that it was intended from the outset to rationalize for Edith's benefit the turn of events following Edward's death in January 1066 and Harold's death in October.[45] One can so easily picture Queen Edith in the later 1060s, coming to some kind of accommodation with the new regime, yet perhaps wanting at the same time to draw comfort from her own construction of the past; one might even picture her doing so on the upper floor of her stone church at Wilton, where she was last seen conducting her affairs in 1072.[46]

   Queen Edith would have known that it was important to get one's own story into circulation, and on the record for the instruction of posterity. One of the most striking aspects of the *Encomium Emmae reginae*, written for Queen Emma in 1041–2, and re-issued in the aftermath of King Edward's accession in 1042, was the highly tendentious nature of its narrative, represented most obviously by the airbrushing of Queen Emma's first marriage (to King Æthelred), and by the way in which Emma is carefully exonerated from any involvement in the turn of events which brought the athelings Edward and Alfred back to

---

[44] For the suggestion that the gift of the ship was an assertion by Godwine 'of his own Scandinavian roots', turned later by the author of the *Vita Ædwardi* into 'a gesture which acknowledged an English empire', see E. M. Tyler, '"When Wings Incarnadine with Gold are Spread": the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure at the Court of Edward the Confessor', *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. E. M. Tyler (York, 2000), pp. 83–107, at 93.

[45] On the date of the *Vita Ædwardi*, see *Life of Edward*, ed. Barlow, pp. xxix–xxxiii (adducing reasons for an 'early' date for Book I which seem far from conclusive); P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 40–8 (arguing for a 'later' date); R. Mortimer, 'Edward the Confessor: the Man and the Legend', *Edward the Confessor*, ed. Mortimer, pp. 1–40, at 14–22 (leaving the options open); and Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor', p. 83 (following Barlow).

[46] The picture is suggested by a vernacular record preserved in the Wells archive, printed with translation in S. Keynes, 'Giso, Bishop of Wells (1061–88)', *ANS* 19 (1997), 203–71, at 243–7 and 262–3, and registered in D. A. E. Pelteret, *Catalogue of English Post-Conquest Vernacular Documents* (Woodbridge, 1990), no. 56. For Queen Edith after the Conquest, see also Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, pp. 274–9.

England in 1036, leading in Alfred's case to his capture and death.[47] So what, one might ask, was the Encomiast's line on Earl Godwine? It seems likely that Emma herself, after the events of 1037, would not have been as well disposed towards Godwine as she might have been before; yet the Encomiast, for his part, might not have been ready to implicate a man who was still the most powerful earl in the land, indeed at the height of his success as a king-maker. So perhaps one can sense in the Encomiast's carefully worded account not just the portrayal of Harold Harefoot as a villain but also the suggestion that Godwine was not quite as blameless as one might have supposed.[48] Queen Edith, on the other hand, would have come to this highly charged subject, almost thirty years later, wanting to ensure that her father's record was untainted. As royal biography, the *Vita Ædwardi regis* might seem on first reading to be somewhat more dignified, and more restrained, than the *Encomium Emmae*; yet in fact it is suffused with precisely the same kind of artful dissimulation, and is scarcely less tendentious than the earlier work. In the view of the late Professor Barlow, there was no clear evidence that the *Encomium* was known to the author of the *Vita Ædwardi*.[49] However, comparison of the Encomiast's descriptions of King Swein's invasion fleet and of Cnut's invasion fleet with the newly recovered part of the description of the ship given by Earl Godwine to King Edward strengthens the suspicion that the author of the *Vita Ædwardi* was indeed familiar with the earlier work.[50] In other words, it is arguable that the *Vita Ædwardi regis* was conceived by Queen Edith as her own response to the view of events put about in the early 1040s by Queen Emma, her late mother-in-law. Remarkably, nothing is said in the *Vita Ædwardi* about the period 1035–42, when Earl Godwine's loyalty was given first to Harthacnut, then to Harold Harefoot, then again to Harthacnut, and finally, although belatedly, to Edward himself; which is all the more striking since anyone writing in the 1060s would have been acutely aware of the accusations made in various quarters about Earl Godwine's complicity in the blinding and capture of Alfred. There is an obvious analogy here with the deafening silence of the 'Godwinist' version of

---

[47] Above, n. 42, and Keynes, 'Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', pp. lxvi–lxxi, with references. The historical 'truth' which lurks within the *Encomium* does not lie hidden *under* the author's artifice, but is precisely what can be revealed *in* (as part of) the artifice (*ibid*. p. lxxi; cf. E. M. Tyler, '"The Eyes of the Beholders were Dazzled": Treasure and Artifice in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *EME* 8 (1999), 247–70, p. 247, n. 2).

[48] *EER* iii. 4–5 (ed. Campbell, pp. 42–5).

[49] *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, p. xxii; see also Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, pp. 47–8.

[50] The matter was re-opened (in 2000) by Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', pp. 93–5, and has now been taken further in E. M. Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry at Wilton Abbey', *ANS* 31 (2009), 135–156, at 143 and 151–2. For the passages in question, see *EER* i. 4 (ed. Campbell, pp. 12–13) and ii. 4 (*ibid*. pp. 18–21), with Dr Love's discussion, below, pp. 211–13.

200

the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MS E), on the events on 1036, as if the less said about these events the better. The author seems to have been determined above all to represent Earl Godwine as loyal to King Edward from the outset of his reign, as if to suggest, quite pointedly, that it was through no fault of Godwine himself that things went wrong, and perhaps in this way to transfer some of the responsibility to his sons. The context might lie also in the Norman justification for their invasion of England in 1066: that the invasion represented the punishment of Harold, son of Godwine, for breaking his promise to Duke William when he visited Normandy in 1064, and beyond that for his father's complicity in the capture and blinding of Edward's brother, Alfred the atheling, in 1036.[51]

The poems interspersed throughout the *Vita Ædwardi regis* clearly demand closer study as a group, and in relation to the prose, if their inwardness is to be fully appreciated.[52] At one level, the poem now restored to its full extent celebrates Earl Godwine's stature, wealth, and generosity, symbolized by the magnificence of the ship which he presented to King Edward, and by the splendour of all that came with it. More to the point, however, is the emphasis placed on Godwine's overt display of loyalty to the king, represented by the poet as a model for others to follow, as if to suggest (with the advantage of hindsight) that things might have turned out differently had anyone paid attention. Amidst all the accusations laid against Godwine in the prevailing 'Norman' view of events, Queen Edith might have been pleased to see her father represented in this way as the late King Edward's most noble and loyal subject, and pleased too by the poet's remark that the 'English world' (*Anglicus orbis*) had then rejoiced 'in Edward the splendid king (*rege decoro*)', and that peace had been restored. The fact that the representation of Earl Godwine was

---

[51] For these matters, as a part of Norman propaganda in the late 1060s, see *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. E. M. C. Van Houts, 2 vols, OMT (Oxford,1992–5) I, 104–7 and 158–61, and *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and M. Chibnall, OMT (Oxford, 1998), pp. 2–7. Alfred's murder is not mentioned in *The 'Carmen de Hastingae Proelio' of Guy Bishop of Amiens*, ed. F. Barlow, OMT (Oxford, 1999).

[52] For the poems in question, see *VÆdR* i. *Prol.* (*ibid.* pp. 2–9, on Edith, her father, and her brothers), i. 1 (*ibid.* pp. 20–1, on Godwine's loyalty), i. 2 (*ibid.* pp. 26–9, on Godwine's children, with extended discussion, n. 57), i. 3 (*ibid.* pp. 38–9, on accusations against Godwine), i. 4 (*ibid.* pp. 44–7, on Godwine), i. 5 (*ibid.* pp. 58–61, on Harold and Tostig), i. 6 (*ibid.* pp. 72–5, on Edith and Edward), and ii. *Prol.* (*ibid.* pp. 84–91, on Godwine's sons). Barlow comments (p. xxviii): 'It may be that they concern the misfortunes rather than the triumphs of the house of Godwine, but they appear to contain no secret messages or concealed views.' On the poems, see V. B. Jordan, 'Monastic Hagiography in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England: the Cases of Edward the Confessor and St. Edmund, King and Martyr', unpubl. PhD diss. (Boston College, MA, 1995), with discussion of 'Poem 2', pp. 102–3, and *idem*, 'Chronology and Discourse in the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 8 (1998), 122–55, at 136–53 [omitting discussion of 'Poem 2'], and Dr Love's comments, below, pp. 204–5.

spectacularly disingenuous, given what is known of his behaviour in 1035–42, is beside the point; for if the author was already aware of the outcome, the *intended* point is clear.

John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury

A story told in the Latin chronicle attributed to John of Worcester, and also by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, is clearly related in some way to the story of Earl Godwine's ship embedded in the poem in the *Vita Ædwardi regis*. It is said in these twelfth-century sources that soon after Harthacnut's accession, in 1040, Earl Godwine gave the king a ship, in order to secure the king's friendship after allegations had been leveled against him of complicity in the capture and death of Harthacnut's half-brother, the atheling Alfred; at the same time, Godwine was required to clear himself by an oath. The ship is said by John of Worcester to have had 'a gilded prow or beak' and to have been 'furnished with the best tackle, well equipped with suitable arms and eighty picked soldiers';[53] in much the same vein, William of Malmesbury says it was a ship 'with a beak of gold, containing eighty soldiers'.[54] Agreement of this kind between John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury suggests that the account of Earl Godwine's gift of a ship to Harthacnut originated in an earlier Latin chronicle compiled apparently in the late eleventh or early twelfth century, perhaps at Worcester.[55] The question is how to account for the similarity between this story and the description in the *Vita Ædwardi regis* of the ship given by Earl Godwine to King Edward in 1042. It is conceivable, if not very likely, that Earl Godwine made the same gesture on two or three separate occasions, for Harold Harefoot in 1036–7, for Harthacnut in 1040, and for Edward in 1042; or that he made it only the once, for Harthacnut in 1040, transferred by the author of the *Vita Ædwardi regis* to 1042, for Edward; or indeed that he made it only the once, for Edward in 1042, transferred by whatever source lies behind John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury to the earlier occasion in 1040.[56] The answer must lie in a closer understanding of

---

[53] JW, s.a. 1040 (*The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, II: *The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, with J. Bray, OMT (Oxford, 1995), pp. 530–3).

[54] WM, *Gesta regum Anglorum* [hereafter *GR*] ii.188.6 (*William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum / The History of the English Kings*, I, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, OMT (Oxford, 1998), 338).

[55] For connections between WM and JW, see M. Brett, 'John of Worcester and his Contemporaries', *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), pp. 101–26, at 113–17; see also *John of Worcester*, ed. Darlington and McGurk, pp. lxxi and lxxvi, and R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum / The History of the English Kings*, II: *General Introduction and Commentary*, OMT (Oxford, 1999), p. 13.

[56] For references to some earlier discussion, see *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, p. 20, n. 46.

the relationship between these sources, for which the evidence of the full text of the poem in the *Vita Ædwardi regis* is now available. Since the *Vita Ædwardi regis* is suffused with poetry of this nature, the starting point has to be that the poem in the *Vita Ædwardi* originated in that work, and thus in the late 1060s. If the similarities between the descriptions of the 1040 ship given by John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, and the account of the 1042 ship in the *Vita Ædwardi regis*, are of a kind which might be expected of any fanciful descriptions of ships, it might follow that there had been more than a single gift of a single ship; but if John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, representing a common source, exhibit direct borrowing from the wording of the *Vita Ædwardi regis*, it would appear to follow that the description of the 1040 ship was derived or developed from the description of the 1042 ship, and, in all liklihood, that Earl Godwine made his gesture only to King Edward. The new text is important because it strengthens the impression that the description of the ship in the source behind John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury was derived directly from the description of the ship in the *Vita Ædwardi regis*; and it would seem to follow that in taking his cue from the *Vita Ædwardi*, the anonymous author of the common source transferred the gift from its original context, in 1042, to a different context, in 1040, for reasons of his own.

The explanation may lie in the rather different agendas of an author working for Queen Edith, in the late 1060s, and an author representing a local, conceivably Worcester, view of the Anglo-Saxon past formulated in the later eleventh or early twelfth century. If the purpose in one was a natural desire to project a positive image of Earl Godwine, the purpose in the other was to make a compelling story of Godwine's need to clear himself of accusations about his complicity in the capture and blinding of the atheling Alfred in 1036 (and his death soon after). The question of Godwine's complicity in Alfred's capture, blinding and death had become a burning issue, among the English, the Danes, and the Normans. In the view of the past which came to prevail, Earl Godwine was quintessentially the villain associated with the Anglo-Danish regime, whose treatment of Alfred had given the Normans a pretext for their invasion in 1066; the story of his gift of a ship to a king was too good to leave aside, but it worked better, in the different historiographical context, as a story illustrating Godwine's submission to Harthacnut than as a story symbolizing his protestations of loyalty to King Edward and Edward's readiness to accept them. If the story has any basis in reality, the basis is likely to lie in Queen Edith's memory of her father's gift of a magnificent ship to her late husband the late king, quite possibly on the occasion of his accession in 1042, when there would have been so much for which to play.

LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS

Few things gladden the Latinist's heart more than some new Latin, and it is especially exciting to be presented with a discovery which so neatly fills one of the most frustrating holes in a puzzling but crucial text. The recovery of the second half of this poem enables a fresh literary assessment of the piece as a whole. In the hope of some new insights, we can reopen a number of lines of enquiry: concerning the author's identity, the poem's role within the hagiographer's overall plan of propaganda, and its relationship with other comparable accounts of splendid ships.

In search of an author for the 'Vita Ædwardi regis'

A close reading of the ship-poem will be the principal focus of discussion in what follows here, and so it seems best to begin by clearing out of the way the matter of the text's authorship, not least because it has recently been tackled afresh in a brief article by Rhona Beare.[57] The question was left open by Frank Barlow and has only been revisited inconclusively by others since.[58] The two learned Flemish hagiographers, Goscelin and Folcard of Saint-Bertin, have both been considered as the most likely matches for the set of characteristics which emerge from the text itself, perhaps simply because we know of their literary activities in England at this time, and have reasonably-sized specimens of their work.[59] At the present state of our knowledge, we can do little better than to go with Barlow's application of Ockham's razor in his observation that 'it would be remarkable indeed if there were more than two Flemish monks writing in England at the same time'.[60]

Paving the way for Barlow, Richard Southern had pressed the case of Goscelin, admitting at the same time that the canon of his works was still uncertain.[61] Beare now follows Southern's lead, arguing for Goscelin, by adducing evidence from the poems in the *Vita*, and we may thus reasonably ask whether the newly recovered lines of verse can be pressed into service in a similar way, to lend further support to Beare's argument, which we must

---

[57] R. Beare, 'Did Goscelin Write the Earliest Life of Edward the Confessor?' *N&Q* 253 (2008), 262–5.

[58] For example E. Van Houts, 'The Flemish Contribution to Biographical Writing in England in the Eleventh Century', *The Limits of Medieval Biography: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow*, ed. D. Bates, J. Crick and S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 111–27, at 112 (leaving the matter open) and 122 (considering Folcard's case), and M. Otter, 'Closed Doors: an Epithalamium for Queen Edith, Widow and Virgin', *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. L. Carlson and A. J. Weisl (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 63–92, at 65 n. 5.

[59] *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, pp. xlvi–lix.

[60] *Ibid.* p. lix.

[61] R. Southern, 'The First Life of Edward the Confessor', *EHR* 58 (1943), 385–400, at 398–9.

204

address first. She focuses on a Biblical image – the four rivers of paradise – used in three of the poems in the *Vita* in a manner which is similar to the way Goscelin deployed it in two prose hagiographies certainly ascribed to him and a third which may be at least in part his work.[62] The correspondence is striking, though it is fair to say that the image is handled with more sophistication in the poems than in the prose hagiographies. In the latter it seems like just one more piece of figurative adornment to dress up what is in effect a saintly genealogy, whereas the poet strings out a complex metaphor comparing the offspring of Godwine to the four rivers, which then at one point transform into other shapes, in verses whose cunning intricacy almost defies explanation.[63] Yet that one piece of evidence alone cannot convict.

Beare then points to a puzzling Classical allusion in one of the same three poems, by which Godwine's sons Harold and Tostig are spoken of as having Herculean strength, like Atlas who held up the sky alongside the 'Cyllenian hero' (*Cyllenius heros*).[64] As Beare relates, this reference has caused confusion, since the well-known story of the labours of Hercules includes the hero's sharing of Atlas's weighty task, yet *Cyllenius* is the name for Hermes or Mercury, who was born on Mount Cyllene, and Mercury is not elsewhere said explicitly to have helped Atlas.[65] She suggests that the phrase *Cyllenius heros* occurs uniquely in this poem and one other, to which Barlow had already called attention, addressed to Goscelin by Reginald, a fellow monk at Canterbury.[66] Reginald lavishes praise on the hagiographer claiming that 'Vt recreat miseros cantu Cillenius heros / Lumine quem largus cantantem senserat Argus / Sic tua uox mentes recreat cantando tepentes' (lines 50–2).[67] Beare thus contends that if Reginald had taken the phrase *Cillenius heros* from the poem in the *Vita Edwardi* then it must have been in order to flatter its author, that is, Goscelin.

---

[62] The hagiographies in question are the *Vitae* of St Wærburh, c. 1 (*Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: the Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely*, ed. R. C. Love, OMT (Oxford, 2004), pp. 30–1), and Mildrith, c. 4 (D. W. Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: a Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982)), p. 114. The image also occurs in the *Vita* of St Wihtburh, c. 23 (*Goscelin of Saint-Bertin*, ed. Love, p. 83), which may be a slightly later work incorporating material written by Goscelin.

[63] This is the poem celebrating Edward and Edith's marriage and their offspring, *VÆdR* i. 2 (ed. Barlow, pp. 26–9). For an insightful new perspective on it, see now Jordan, 'Chronology and Discourse', pp. 141–5, as well as Tyler's suggestion that the Ovidian theme of metamorphosis is at play, in 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry', pp. 149–50.

[64] *VÆdR* i. 5 (ed. Barlow, pp. 58–9), at line 5 of the poem.

[65] Beare, 'Did Goscelin Write the Earliest Life of Edward the Confessor?', p. 264.

[66] *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, p. 142; the poem was edited by F. Liebermann, 'Raginald von Canterbury', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 13 (1888), 519–56, at 542–4.

[67] 'Just as the Cyllenian hero revives the wretched with his song, he whom Argus, plentiful in eyes, had heard singing, so too your voice revives lukewarm minds with its singing.'

205

Yet she overlooks another rather earlier occurrence of the same phrase in the same line-end position, namely in the *Ecloga Theoduli*, a dialogue-poem debating the relative merits of classical and biblical narrative, dating from the late ninth or early tenth century and a widely popular classroom text.[68] There, in lines 197–9, Falsehood boasts that 'Herbarum succos tractans Cillenius heros / Exortes lucis uirga reuocauit ab umbris' ('handling the juices of herbs, the Cyllenian hero, with his wand summoned back from the shades those deprived of light'). Although in this case Beare's argument is clever and attractive, it is somewhat weakened by the existence of what may very well have been a common source for both poets, perhaps recollected from distant school-days, and the verbal similarity cannot alone carry the burden of responsibility for assigning the *Vita Ædwardi* to Goscelin.

What, then, of the ship-poem? Barlow had suggested that one might make useful comparisons with Goscelin's various accounts of ships among the miracles of St Augustine.[69] Chapters 5–11 (cols. 399–404) are taken up with tales of storms at sea miraculously allayed and wrecks averted: each of them presents a wonderfully vivid narrative, told with Goscelin's characteristic eye for detail, and yet there are disappointingly no striking resonances at all with the poem in the *Vita*, beyond the merest fleeting similarity of ship/sea vocabulary that is only to be expected. It is not that those ships are necessarily any less grand than Godwine's – chapter 5 describes a voyage made by Cnut, returning from pilgrimage, and chapter 11 the voyage of an *ingens trieris* ('vast trireme') carrying Greeks and Englishmen from Constantinople to Venice, which 'ran with full wind and sail and raised its head like a watchtower over the great ocean' (*pleno uento et uelo currebat, et ut magni maris specula caput tollebat*).[70] But the language used is simply quite different, and even the Classical allusion which the new lines of the poem have brought – to Aeneas's weapons wrought by Vulcan, to which we shall return below – finds no striking parallel in Goscelin's work.

We might take a different tack by looking more generally for comparable diction among the remarkable verses which Goscelin scattered throughout his Life of Edith of Wilton, but the truth is that unlike the relatively straightforward descriptive and narrative content of the present poem, their burden is prevailingly mystical and meditative, sometimes overtly devotional.[71] They

---

[68] The *Ecloga* has most recently been edited, with Italian translation, by F. Mosetti Casaretto, *Teodulo. Ecloga: Il canto della verità et della menzogna* (Florence, 1997).

[69] The miracles of St Augustine still await a modern edition and the full version (Goscelin wrote two versions, the *Historia maior de miraculis* for 'home' consumption, and the *Historia minor* for a wider public) may be found in the Bollandists' Acta Sanctorum, Maii VI, cols 397–411.

[70] Acta Sanctorum, Maii VI, col. 403B.

[71] The Life of Edith was edited by A. Wilmart, 'La légende de Ste Édithe en prose et vers par le moine Goscelin', *AB* 56 (1938), 5–101 and 265–307, and has now been translated in *Writing*

may bear comparison with some of the other poems in the *Vita Ædwardi* – particularly the extraordinary epithalamium which turns the dedication of the new church at Wilton into a celebration of Edith's spiritual fecundity[72] – but not in any noteworthy way with this one, alas.

It is worth emphasizing that on the whole, Barlow was more inclined towards Folcard than Goscelin as author of the *Vita Ædwardi*, but the lack of clinching evidence held him back at the last.[73] He alludes to the only poetry attributed to Folcard, a twenty-seven-line hymn on St Vigor of Bayeux, transmitted exclusively in Hariulf's eleventh-century *Chronicon Centulensis* (iv. 20).[74] Hariulf's narrative gave no specific background for the composition of the hymn, and simply headed it FVLCARDVS, so that the attribution is by no means a secure one. As Barlow observed, the hymn has an internal rhyme-scheme, just as does the ship-poem, but so did many other poems from this period – hexameters with monosyllabic or disyllabic rhyme enjoyed a position of pre-eminence certainly assured by the eleventh century. Moreover, the poem's subject matter, the life of Vigor, from his entry into the monastery at Arras as a boy, to his death as bishop of Bayeux, is too different from our description of a ship to offer any basis for comparison. On the face of it, the hymn is as much like the verses in the *Vita Ædwardi* as any of Goscelin's known poems is, no more or less, but that is all. Here, then, we seem to have drawn a blank, at least for the time being.

The poem made whole

It is disappointing, admittedly, but no great surprise that the restoration of this poem is not the magic key to unlock the author's identity, yet that temporary drawback should not be allowed to prevent the poem's very great interest from shining through. Elizabeth Tyler has written at length about the first half of the poem as Barlow had published it, advancing various theories which can now be tested across the full sweep of the poet's original composition.[75] Before proceeding to these matters, it will be useful to establish exactly what Henry Summerson's remarkable discovery provides by way of new information, picking over some textual difficulties along the way.[76]

---

the *Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber Confortatorius*, ed. S. Hollis (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 23–93.

[72] *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, pp. 72–5.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] The hymn was printed among the works of Folcard in PL 147.1179–80 and again at PL 174.1333–4 in the context of Hariulf's *Chronicon*, which was also edited by F. Lot, *Hariulf: Chronique de l'Abbaye de Saint-Riquier (Ve siècle–1104)* (Paris, 1894), with the hymn at p. 227.

[75] Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', and 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry'.

[76] The ship-poem is cited below from the edition and translation in Summerson, 'Tudor Antiquaries and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*', Appendix, pp. 171–3.

It was already clear that the poet envisaged Godwine's gift as a substantial long-ship – supposedly big enough to hold 120 men – with high prow and stern, gilded dragon at the prow, golden lion at the stern. The sail is purple-coloured, but also depicts ancient kings and their deeds. Then the loss of a folio in Harley 526 cut in half the poet's further elaboration upon the mast, yard, and sail. As with all the verses in the *Vita Ædwardi*, there are some aspects of the poet's description which the constraints of metre and rhetorical affectation have rendered allusive and obscure. Lines 21–3, forming a bridge to the newly discovered section, present particular difficulty, and the clear error in Add. 39184, of *interne* for *antemne* in line 21, suggests the possibility that other such slips may contribute to our difficulty in establishing what the poet meant to say. Barlow, left with only the first half of the sentence, was not to know how it had concluded, and therefore did his best to make something of what remained. He offered the translation 'the yard-arm strong and heavy holds the sails / when wings incarnadine with gold are spread', which cannot now be sustained in the context of the completed sentence. Line 21 refers to the yard or spar, from which the sail was hung. Such a spar would have been relatively slender in comparison with the mast, not least for ease of raising and lowering the sail, presumably. In her remarkable exploration of Viking ships, Judith Jesch cites an account in skaldic verse of the shuddering of a ship's yard.[77] The Latin poet here refers to the yard's *grauidus stipes*, where the adjective's literal meaning is 'pregnant, laden, full' – one might force it to mean 'stout', yet that seems only barely appropriate for the ship's horizontal yard, and 'burdened' may seem nearer the mark. It is just possible that something slightly more vivid was intended, perhaps the yard bulging with the reefed sail, or the yard and sail bellying outwards. Slightly more problematic is the second half of the line, *roburque uolatus*. Barlow's fairly free translation treated 'uolatus' as a plural noun meaning 'sails'. In fact, the word's standard meaning is 'flight, flying' or by extension 'swiftness', and it is not attested being used to refer to a ship's sails. The structure of this poetic line has the appearance of aiming at symmetry, with two nouns in the genitive singular wrapped around two in the nominative, in a chiastic pattern. *Robur* means 'oak, wood', something made of wood, or 'vigour, power' – this phrase would then render the literal translation 'the vigour of its swiftness', perhaps referring afresh to the yard's weighty beam, bulging with its sail: and it is with this thought that the translation is offered in Summerson's appendix: 'The mast, that yard-bearing trunk, speeding the ship with its burden of sails, supports. . .'.

So far so good, but what is this assemblage of mast, yard, and sail said to be supporting, now that we have the second half of the sentence and the object

[77] Jesch, *Ships and Men*, p. 162.

208

of the verb? Line 23, 'armigerum uolucrem pedibus rostroque ferentem', again does not surrender its import easily. The most obvious interpretation of something held up by the yard is whatever comes at the top of this ship's mast, the natural solution being a weathervane, pennant or burgee. There is good and varied evidence for the existence of vanes: we shall have cause to consider a reference to a vane in another Latin text in a moment, a look at the Bayeux Tapestry provides various images of relatively simple specimens, and across a number of articles, Martin Blindheim explored the surviving 'golden' weathervanes thought to have come from Viking ships.[78] He observed two types emerging from a combination of this evidence: vanes fixed to the tops of masts, and those attached to the ship's stem, with distinct names in Old Norse (*veðrviti* and *flaug* respectively).[79] The group of probably eleventh-century vanes which Blindheim discussed have the distinct form of a flat near-quadrant-shaped gilt copper plate, usually highly decorated with engraving or open-work, surmounted by a three-dimensional figure, a lion or a dragon.[80] Although it might not seem to matter much for our purposes whether such vanes were functional or not, scholarly disagreement about their use as navigational aids does raise a point of some interest here.[81] If they were *not* of practical use, then these eye-catching vanes may have been status-symbols or distinguishers of rank.[82] It would most fitting, then, to place such a thing atop the mast of a ship made for a king.

In line 23, then, the poet would appear to be providing further detail about the shape or decoration of the ship's vane, in terms that seem open to more than one interpretation according to the preferred permutation of the nouns on offer. Line 22 establishes the notion of something with red-gold wings – but what? – to translate literally, a warrior-bird (or winged warrior) carrying with feet and beak (carrying what?), or a bird holding a warrior with its claws and beak (as in the translation offered on p. 172 above), but also just possibly – the grammar supports this too – a warrior holding a bird that has claws and a beak,

---

[78] M. Blindheim, 'The Gilded Vikingship Vanes: their Use and Technique', *The Vikings*, ed. R. T. Farrell (Chichester, 1982), pp. 116–27, a translation of 'De gylne skipsfløyer fra sen vikingetid: Bruk og teknikk', *Viking* 46 (1982), 85–111, which includes a larger selection of plates of surviving weathervanes than the English version has. Cf. also Campbell's excursus on descriptions of Viking ships in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, appendix V.

[79] Jesch, *Ships and Men*, pp. 161–2, provides an example of what seems to be a reference to a weathervane in the verses of Arnórr Þórðarson jarlaskáld.

[80] Blindheim, 'De gylne skipsfløyer', plates 1 (Söderala), 2 and 3 (Källunge), 4 and 5 (Heggen, Buskerud) and 6, 18, 19 and 21 (Tingelstad). Cf. Jesch, *Ships and Men*, fig. 4.8 (Söderala).

[81] On this see J. Engström and P. Nykänen, 'New Interpretations of Viking Age Weathervanes', *Fornvännen* 91 (1996), 137–42, contradicted by A. E. Christensen, 'The Viking Weathervanes were not Navigation Instruments!', *Fornvännen* 93 (1998), 202–3.

[82] As suggested by Jesch, *Ships and Men*, p. 162.

or holding it by its claws and beak. One of the surviving vanes, from Tingelstad in Norway, of probably slightly later date than the others (though there seems to be disagreement on this point), was decorated in the Romanesque style, closely comparable with illustrations in English manuscripts, whereas most of the others are examples of the so-called Ringerike style.[83] Instead of lions or dragons, this specimen depicts what has been interpreted as David rescuing a lamb from a lion (as in I Sam. XVII:34–5): the warrior-shepherd, with detailed folds and creases in the skirt of his garment, is shown forcing open the beast's mouth. Blindheim observes that the style of the image is rather more consonant with production by an English or Norman craftsman than by a Scandinavian artist.[84] This is not to suggest that an image of David is exactly what the poet had in mind, merely that a weathervane depicting a human figure is not entirely out of the question. To add to the weathervane's high status as a symbol, the poet completes his depiction by noting that the life-like bird – whatever it is doing or however depicted – has gems for eyes.

The rest of the poem is on the whole less troublesome to interpret, saving a group of lines, which will be shown below to be of some importance for an appreciation of the poem as a whole, namely 36–8. They appear to refer to weaponry other than that already described as being the equipment of each of the ship's 120-strong crew, which we shall examine more closely in a moment. As transmitted, line 37 is particularly obscure, though the emendation of *nunc* to *non*, so as to negate *inferiorum*, helps somewhat, as will be seen from the translation that has been offered. It seems otiose to go back to mentioning weaponry all over again when the equipment has already been itemized in lines 27–30. Possibly what the poet intended here was other war-gear not made of metal, such as bows, perhaps, yet nevertheless in its quality not inferior to Aeneas's armour forged by the god Vulcan himself (see below for more on this). At any rate, in terms of extra detail the newly-discovered lines add to Godwine's gift a decorated weathervane, heaps of gold and silver, and men equipped with every kind of weapon. Moreover, the ship seems to have a place for the king to sit (unless lines 31–8 should be read as abruptly panning away from the ship, to a royal throne elsewhere), decked out with treasure and silks. The whole scene dazzles. We are told that Godwine promised further gifts, and swore oaths

---

[83] Blindheim, 'Gilded Vikingship Vanes', p. 117 ('it is debatable on what side of the year 1100 the Tingelstad vane should be placed'). H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art* (London, 1967), pp. 54–5 (and plate 216), dated the vane and its decoration to the second half of the eleventh century, following the dating suggested by A. Bugge, 'The Golden Vanes of Viking Ships. A Discussion on a Recent Find at Källunge Church, Gothland', *Acta Archaeologica* 2 (1931), 159–84, at 168 ('made under the influence of English art, but in all probability in Norway some time in the middle or second half of the eleventh century').

[84] Blindheim, 'Gilded Vikingship Vanes', p. 123.

of loyalty; crucially, of course, the recipient of all this lavish display is named unmistakeably in line 50 as Edward.

Echoes of the 'Encomium Emmae'

Now we are equipped to ask what difference the new section of this description makes to an interpretation of the poem as a whole, particularly in the light of the close readings of the first half offered by Elizabeth Tyler, who drew up this ship alongside those so vividly depicted in the *Encomium Emmae reginae*.[85] Our starting-point should be a direct comparison with those earlier ships, in order to highlight what the newly-recovered lines of the poem bring to the question. In book 1 the Encomiast describes Swein's magnificent fleet, *turritas . . . puppes* with bronze prows.[86] The scene unfolds with a sequence of details which match the poem very closely, not only in the section already known, but perhaps more strikingly in the second half. So Swein's ships have gold lions on the stern, and dragons breathing out fire, just like Edward's, and to confirm our conjecture about the gilded vane apparently described in lines 22–3, these ships have atop their masts, bird-shaped weather-vanes (*uolucres . . . uenientes austros suis signantes uersibus*), as well as shining men made of gold and silver, *uiuis quodammodo non inpares* ('in some measure not unlike live ones'), the same observation as the poet's in line 24. There are also golden bulls in this case, as well as dolphins and centaurs, and other creatures whose names the Encomiast claims not to know. He does not specify where on the ships the golden men were or how many on each ship: possibly this simply means human heads on the prow, as on some of the ships depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry, including William's, as Campbell pointed out in his appendix on the Encomiast's ships.[87] A further descriptive detail in the *Encomium* is of the sides (*latera*, used in the poem too, at line 10) of the ships, painted and also, more obscurely, *aureis argenteisque aspera signis*. Campbell rendered this as 'covered with gold and silver figures'; in fact *aspera*, that is 'harsh, savage, fierce', implies that the figures were intended to instil fear. One feature for which there is no match at all in the prose accounts is the poem's sophisticatedly decorated purple sail, with its *patrum series* and *bella . . . nobilium . . . regum*, though one wonders whether any of that could be at some level the equivalent of the gold and silver figures on the sides of the ships in the *Encomium*. In any case it is difficult to imagine precisely what

---

[85] Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi regis* and the Display of Treasure', and 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry'.

[86] *EER* i. 4 (ed. Campbell, pp. 12–13).

[87] *Encomium Emmae*, ed. Campbell, p. 95. William's ship, a gift from his wife Matilda, apparently had a golden child, his right forefinger pointing forwards (i.e. towards England), an ivory horn held to his lips by his left hand; see E. Van Houts, 'The Ship List of William the Conqueror', *ANS* 10 (1987), 159–83, at 176.

kind of decoration the poet could have had in mind here. Coloured sails are certainly attested, whether it be the vivid striped sails on the Bayeux Tapestry, or the 'blue' sails on Cnut's ships in *Knútsdrápa*.[88] Sophisticated devices, presumably painted or maybe embroidered on the sails, are another matter, and there seems to be scant evidence for any kind of decoration beyond the natural patchwork created by the stitching-together of woven sections.[89] Such speculation, though, is perhaps less relevant than the recognition that the poet is very likely to have had a purely literary model for this 'genealogical' sail, as Tyler has pointed out (see further discussion below).

Book 2 recounts Cnut's mustering of a new fleet, picking out many of the same features, and emphasizing repeatedly the amount of gold on display: first the gold prows, and silver *in uariis nauium figuris* ('silver . . . on the variously shaped ships', is how Campbell translated this, but one suspects that it is the equivalent of *aureis argenteisque . . . signis* on the sides of the ships in i. 4, so perhaps better as 'silver on the ships' various figures').[90] Then golden lions, 'men of metal, menacing with golden face' (*metallinos homines aureo fronte minaces*), dragons 'burning with pure gold' (*obrizo ardentes*), and bulls with horns shining with gold (*radiantibus auro*). The whole scene glints in the sun, so that 'the eyes of the beholders were dazzled, and to those looking from afar they seemed of flame rather than of wood' (*ut intuentium hebetatis luminibus flammeae magis quam ligneae uiderentur a longe aspicientibus*). The brilliance of the sun glinting on the gold, here strikingly captured, is directly paralleled in the poem in the *Vita*, where at lines 40–1 the very sea itself is awestruck by the sunlight reflected off the ship and all its weaponry ('Quae stupeat pontus nimium mirantibus undis / respiciens solem tota de classe lucentem'). Altogether the Encomiast paints a wonderfully vivid picture of a fleet undoubtedly intended to strike terror into the hearts of those who beheld it, described in such hyperbolic terms as to impress those who read about it. Campbell gathered up some of the parallels with the details of these ships that can be found in vernacular narratives such as the sagas in *Heimskringla*, while also emphasizing the strong influence of Latin Classical literature, and especially of Vergil, observable throughout the *Encomium* and

---

[88] See the discussion of sail-colours in Jesch, *Ships and Men*, p. 162. William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii. 135.1 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, pp. 216–17), provides the story of the ship with 'uelum purpureum' given to Æthelstan by Harold Harfagri.

[89] Jesch, *Ships and Men*, p. 163. For speculation about painted symbols on sails, see C. Westerdahl, 'Society and Sail: On Symbols as Specific Social Values and Ships as Catalysts of Social Units', *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia. Papers from an International Research Seminar at the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, 5th–7th May, 1994*, ed. O. Crumlin-Pedersen and B. Munch Thye (Copenhagen, 1995), pp. 41–50, esp. 47–8.

[90] *EER* ii. 4 (ed. Campbell, pp. 18–21).

certainly in these maritime scenes.[91] The latter is important also for interpreting the poem in the *Vita Edwardi*, to which we can now return.

A reading of the ship-poem in the 'Vita Ædwardi regis'

In her discussion of the first half of this poem, published in 2000, Tyler made a number of points. Her first was that the poet's ship should be interpreted figuratively and that it is thus not our concern to be troubled about whether it existed or not.[92] The second element of this observation is exactly the right one, in so far as our understanding of the poem as part of the author's intended message does not depend on certainty that such a ship existed: that he wanted there to be one as part of his narrative is sufficient. Yet we should not push too far with the idea of a 'figurative' reading of the ship: with its Titanic dimensions and flashy decoration its significance for the author is just that and very precisely that, a BIG ship given by a man who could afford such things, the size commensurate with the momentous nature of Edward's accession, no metaphor, no complex imagery, no double signification. With the recovery of the second half of the poem, the full scale of Godwine's generosity, and the concomitant wealth and status on display, can be appreciated.

Of course, to stop at a surface reading would be to demean the anonymous author's sophisticated artistic intention: all of the poems in the *Vita Edwardi* are allusive and to some extent figurative, and Tyler is right to subject this one to that kind of analysis. She noted that an initial response to the poem is to conclude that the ship betokens Godwine's pivotal status in the kingdom not least as someone upon whom Edward's own position depends. It can also be read as making a statement about Edward's aspirations, with its purple sail and depictions of earlier kings and their deeds. Yet all this, Tyler suggested, is 'only a superficial reading', and so she moved on to discuss the role of Scandinavian associations in the depiction of an awe-inspiring golden ship. Without the benefit of the second half of the poem, with its unambiguous reference to Danish axes, Tyler felt that there lacked in this ship any sense of Scandinavian context, observing instead what she sees as 'the very English nature of the gift as portrayed by the Anonymous'.[93] She read this as a deliberate rewriting of Godwine's gift – 'transposing the idiom of Godwine's very Scandinavian ship', as she puts it – aimed at shifting focus away from the actual gesture as an intended assertion of the earl's Anglo-Danish background towards the fictionalized gesture as acknowledgement of Edward's position

---

[91] *Encomium Emmae*, ed. Campbell, pp. 94–6, on Scandinavian fleets, and pp. xxx–xxxii, on the use of Vergil.
[92] Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', p. 91.
[93] *Ibid.* p. 92.

213

at the centre of an 'English Empire'.[94] Now that we can follow the poet's full intention through the detailing of the ship's equipment, to Godwine's oath of loyalty, and the climactic vision of Edward's reign as a peaceful Golden Age, it is important to reopen the question of focus. The Scandinavian connections of this ship and its crew are now in full view. This, and the thorough-going emphasis upon the earl's great generosity and his lavish oath, shift the spotlight back on to Godwine as the poem's primary focus, rather than Edward. There is, after all, no escaping his presence in most of the other poems in the *Vita*: he features in the opening dialogue between muse and poet ('Ipsius inde patrem, fidei pietate cluentem, / scribes Godwinum'); is the starting-point ('dux stirpe beatus') for the poem to mark Edward's marriage to Edith, celebrating his four offspring; he is the focus of the next ('ille dei uir . . . clarus corde fideli'), decrying the accusations unfairly made against him; and also of the one which follows that, on his key position in the kingdom, a second David to Edward's Saul.[95]

Tyler used verbal parallels to suggest that the anonymous author of the ship-poem may have been familiar with the *Encomium Emmae*, and that he was thus influenced by the two hyperbolic accounts of Viking long-ships which we have already considered.[96] In an earlier article she had followed Campbell's lead in noting the Vergilian echoes in the Encomiast's account of ships.[97] She highlighted the same 'Vergilian framework' in the ship-poem, deployed under the influence of the *Encomium*, and, as she saw the relationship, stiltedly striving to follow its lead with a less skilled touch.[98] The particular verbal parallels adduced by Tyler to suggest a link between this poem and the ship-scenes in the *Encomium* do not seem strongly convincing, at least not on their own; ideally, one would want a sense of the author's familiarity with the *Encomium* to emerge rather from the two works read as whole projects. Yet, as noted above, the idea of literary debt is reinforced now that the ship-poem has been restored to its full extent, by the comparable accumulation of details in both the ship-poem and the two passages in the *Encomium*, and especially by the similarities between the detailed observation of the ships' bird-weathervanes in both cases, as well as the life-like metal men, and the brilliance of the sun reflecting off the ships' metalwork.

The content of the second half of the poem would also seem to confirm the

---

[94] *Ibid.* p. 93, restated on p. 97.
[95] *VÆdR* i. *Prol.*, i. 2, i. 3 and i. 4 (ed. Barlow, pp. 2–9, 26–9, 38–9 and 44–7).
[96] Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', pp. 94–5.
[97] Tyler, 'Treasure and Artifice'; cf. *Encomium Emmae*, ed. Campbell, p. xxxii.
[98] Tyler, 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', p. 97 ('the Anonymous sees, somewhat dimly it must be said, how the Encomiast deploys his Vergil, and follows in his footsteps').

main thrust of Tyler's thesis about the re-use of intertextual resonances, since there are at least two places where Vergilian echoes can now be heard, indeed are deliberately highlighted.[99] The first is in the description of the armour worn by the ship's crew, lines 25–7, 'Singula bis denis argenti transtra talentis, / bis binis rutili, cumulas dux inclytus, auri, / cuique uiro galeam loricam pone trilicem'. Vergil referred three times in the *Aeneid* to such a triple-mail corselet (always with *trilicem* at a line-end), and the first occasion has the most striking resonances for this context. Book III of the *Aeneid* describes Aeneas's journeyings and includes his encounter with the seer Helenus, King Priam's son, ruling as king in Chaonia. After Helenus has prophesied Aeneas's victorious arrival in Italy and given sage advice, he lavishes gifts upon him:[100]

> dona dehinc auro gravia sectoque elephanto
> imperat ad navis ferri, stipatque carinis
> ingens argentum Dodonaeosque lebetas,
> loricam consertam hamis auroque trilicem
> et conum insignis galeae cristasque comantis,
> arma Neoptolemi. sunt et sua dona parenti.
> addit equos, additque duces,
> remigium supplet, socius simul instruit armis.

The resonances thus awakened by our poet, if taken to be intentional, cast Edward as the hero and founding-figure Aeneas, and Godwine as a prophetic figure of some influence who lends very tangible support to his fellow-countryman.

The epic theme is continued by the next allusion, or rather a direct reference to the section of *Aeneid* Book VIII (line 439 onwards), which recounts the forging by Vulcan and his sons of special armour for Aeneas, including the shield prophetically decorated with scenes from Rome's history (at lines 626–728). This theme was precisely the one which Tyler suggested that the poet had derived from his reading of the *Encomium*.[101] Our lines 37–8 provide the

---

[99] In her most recent article, 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry', Tyler returns to an analysis of the poet's Vergilian borrowings aimed at likening Edward to Aeneas and Caesar Augustus; she describes his allusions as 'very overt and theoretically sophisticated' (p. 142), a more generous view than her earlier critical assessment of his literary capabilities, quoted above.

[100] *Aeneid* III.465–1 ('then he orders gifts heavy with gold and carved ivory to be carried to the ships, and packed the holds with vast amounts of silverware and Dodonian bowls, and a breastplate woven with hooks and in triple-mail with gold, and an excellent conical helmet with a plumed crest, the weapons of Neoptolemus. Also there are gifts for my father. He adds horses, and adds captains, increases the rowing [i.e. the rowers], and at the same time fits out my companions with weapons.' My translation.) The other references to 'loricam . . . trilicem' occur at *Aeneid* V.259–60 and VII.638–40. The identification of these and other poetic resonances is indebted to Brepols' now indispensible tool, CETEDOC Library of Latin Texts (2009 version).

[101] 'The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* and the Display of Treasure', p. 97.

215

explicit reference to the god's smith-work and to the 'Trojan king', and inject a spirit of competition with Aeneas's divinely-provided weaponry. Particularly worthy of attention for comparison are Vergil's lines 626–9: 'illic [on the shield] res Italas Romanorumque triumphos / haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aeui / fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae / stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella'.[102] The shield has the affairs (cf. *uarias res*) of Italy, Roman triumphs (cf. *bellaque nobilium . . . regum*), and the lineage from Ascanius onwards, and the wars to be fought, all of which is very similar to what is supposedly depicted on the ship's sail, except, of course, that in Aeneas's case, it all lay in the future.[103] The poet presents Godwine's expensive ship and its equipment as the direct equivalent – but on a larger scale, in fact – of the gift to Aeneas. Thus most assuredly, as Tyler notes, Edward is flatteringly likened to the man whom Rome claimed as the founder of her vast empire; yet who is it that gave Aeneas his invincible weapons? – the gods of the Romans, specifically, his mother, Venus, who had her spouse Vulcan betake himself to his forge for the purpose. Edward too receives his gift from a parent-figure, his future father-in-law. Perhaps this might be thought to over-work the literary allusion, reading too much into the poem, yet the anonymous author was by no means fearful of crafting bold comparisons for his hero, likening Godwine to the young David in a later poem.[104] In the now-missing chapter which follows the ship-poem, whose content can be recovered from two later accounts of Edward's life, by Osbert of Clare and Richard of Cirencester, the hagiographer describes Godwine's daughter, Edith, Edward's bride-to-be, as *et opere et pictura . . . altera Minerva*, a second Minerva, virginal goddess of crafts, poetry, war, and of wisdom.[105] In a later poem, lamenting the discord between Godwine's sons, Harold and Tostig, the two brothers are nevertheless referred to as *hi duo nubigene . . . roboris Herculei* ('these two cloud-born ones . . . of Herculean strength').[106] We are thus unmistakably in the clutches of Classicizing hyperbole. The poet's purpose with the allusion to Aeneas's weapons is to emphasize Godwine's extraordinarily powerful position, as second only to the king himself, setting the pace for the other English nobles, at their head, yet also somehow so

---

[102] 'There the powerful fire-god, not unaware of seers' words and knowing full well the age to come, had fashioned the affairs of Italy and the triumphs of the Romans, there the whole race that would spring from the stock of Ascanius, and the battles fought out, all in order.' My translation.

[103] In her more recent analysis of this allusion ('The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry', pp. 142–3), Tyler points up the irony of the fact that Aeneas's shield depicted prophetic scenes of future greatness, whereas the ship's sail can only look backwards to past achievements, highlighting the fact that Edward's reign and barren marriage marked an ending.

[104] *VÆdR* i. 4 (ed. Barlow, pp. 44–7).

[105] *Life of Edward*, ed. Barlow, pp. 22–3.

[106] *VÆdR* i. 5, lines 1–2 (ed. Barlow, pp. 58–9).

216

wealthy and influential as to be the very patron of the king himself, as later he is shown as David-like saviour to both Edward and the realm: *Sic fortis Dauid, sic regi parcere nouit* ('Likewise was David strong, and spared a king').[107]

The ship-poem concludes with a vision of the peaceful era inaugurated by Edward's accession, when wars and quarrels cease. Yet here the poet strikes a tone which may shade off into ambiguity, if the resonances of his literary allusions can be argued to carry any weight. From lines 52–3 ('aufugiunt rixae, discedunt bella, furorque / omnis frigescit, tellus pontusque quiescit'), the words *tellus pontusque* can otherwise be found in that particular combination (with a reference to *furor* nearby) in two prominent poetic passages meditating on man's warlike inclinations. The first is at the beginning of Lucan's *Bellum ciuile*, i. 96. Recounting the causes of the war between Pompey and Caesar, Lucan noted that even great states come to an end, not least because attempts at power-sharing are always doomed, as witness to which he points to the bloodshed at Rome's very beginnings, in the supposed conflict between Romulus and his brother Remus, killed for leaping over the young city's walls:[108]

> nulla fides regni sociis, omnisque potestas
> impatiens consortis erit. nec gentibus ullis
> credite nec longe fatorum exempla petantur:
> fraterno primi maduerunt sanguine muri.
> nec pretium tanti tellus pontusque furoris
> tunc erat: exiguum dominos commisit asylum.

Such destructively internecine warring does not win control over the whole world – *tellus pontusque* – only over a tiny plot. This same phrase Statius also used twice in his *Thebaid*, most strikingly within a passage in book 11 in which the deity Pietas, personification of the love and duty owed to family, seeks to intervene in a war between brothers, lamenting that she is no longer revered since humankind spread across the world:[109]

---

[107] *VÆdR* i. 4, line 3 (ed. Barlow, pp. 44–5).

[108] Lucan, *Bellum ciuile* i. 91–7 ('There is no faith between companions in rule, and all power will be impatient of a sharer. Do not trust in any race, nor let examples of the fates be looked for from far off: the first walls [of Rome] were soaked in a brother's [i.e. Remus's] blood. Nor were the earth and the sea a reward for such great madness: a lowly retreat [Rome] brought its lords head to head.') It is striking that Lucan's words also find an echo in the closing section of *EER* iii. 14 ('hic fides habetur regni sotiis', ed. Campbell, pp. 52–3, where the allusion is noted).

[109] *Thebais* xi. 466–8 ('Now I am nothing among the peoples, never any reverence for me. O madness, o men and the terrible skills of Prometheus! [fire and man-made things] How well earth and sea lay quiet and empty after Pyrrha! [after mankind had been wiped out by the flood, by which Zeus brought an end to the Age of Bronze, Pyrrha and Deucalion where the only humans left].')

nil iam ego per populos, nusquam reuerentia nostri.
o furor, o homines diraeque Prometheos artes!
quam bene post Pyrrham tellus pontusque vacabant!

Here the intertextual resonances can cut both ways – the quietness of earth and sea which the poet suggests was ushered in by Edward's reign mirrors a post-diluvian fresh start, yet the context in which Statius and Lucan referred to the sublunar world, *tellus pontusque*, is in both cases a lament at the way bitterness and envy, particularly brother wrestling with brother, brings destruction and death. Such connections were unlikely to have been lost on the kind of well-read audience we are beginning to envisage for the *Vita Ædwardi*. It is precisely this combination of allusions, to the works of Lucan and Statius, which Elizabeth Tyler has recently identified in the first half of the ship-poem;[110] indeed, she suggests that darker tones were a consistent contrastive strand in the intricate tapestry which the anonymous author sought to weave for an audience – Edith and her entourage at Wilton – which knew enough to be able to pick out that strand, and also, in uncertain times, understood only too well the intended irony.

Other analogies for Godwine's gift: one ship or two?

Finally, armed with new evidence we can also now turn to the puzzling question of the ship mentioned by John of Worcester as Godwine's gift to Harthacnut in 1040. Southern tentatively suggested that the poet's ship was a confusion with that one, though he did so whilst also expressing the view that the author's – indeed hagiographer's – account is 'deep in legend' and 'clouded with romance', so that its historical accuracy is of little concern.[111] Later on Barlow dismissed the notion of such a confusion, asking why Godwine could not indeed have given two ships (presumably, though, this is of importance for an assessment of the resources the earl could draw on, seemingly quite substantial: if he was indeed wealthier even than the king himself, as has been suggested, then why should he not have a fleet at his disposal?).[112] Barlow concluded by observing 'there is little similarity in the descriptions, and the earlier ship was manned by eighty knights'.[113] The recovery of the second half of the poem demands a revision of that assessment, as will become evident from an examination of John's words:

---

[110] 'The *Vita Ædwardi*: the Politics of Poetry', pp. 144–9, on possible allusions to Lucan and Statius, and pp. 151–5, on the sophistication of the text itself as also its learned and perhaps largely female audience.
[111] Southern, 'The First Life of Edward the Confessor', pp. 391–2.
[112] On Godwine's wealth, see R. Fleming, 'Domesday Estates of the King and the Godwines: a Study in Late Saxon Politics', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 987–1007.
[113] *Life of King Edward*, ed. Barlow, p. 20, n. 46.

Goduuinus autem regi pro sua amicitia dedit trierem fabrefactam, caput uel rostrum deauratum habentem, armamentis optimis instructam, decoris armis electisque octoginta militibus decoratam, quorum unusquisque habebat duas in suis brachiis aureas armillas, sedecim uncias pendentes, loricam trilicem indutam, in capite cassidem ex parte deauratam, gladium deauratis capulis renibus accinctum, Danicam securim auro argentoque redimitam in sinistro humero pendentem, in manu sinistra clipeum cuius umbo clauique erant deaurati, in dextra lanceam que lingua Anglorum ategar appellatur. Insuper etiam non sui consilii nec sue uoluntatis fuisse quod frater eius cecatus fuisset, sed dominum suum regem Haroldum illum facere quod fecit iussisse, cum totius fere Anglie principibus et ministris dignioribus regi iurauit.[114]

Harthacnut's ship is, strictly-speaking, a trireme, with three banks of oars – *nauis magna*, as Isidore defines it in his *Etymologies* (XIX.i.10). McGurk and Bray translate as 'galley', and one suspects that *trierem* is simply one of many possible ship-words in Latin used here without special nuance beyond the wish to convey (perhaps slightly exotic?) grandeur and size. In much the same way, though actually rather more inaccurately, the poet calls Edward's vessel a *scapha*, defined, for example, by Lewis and Short, as a skiff or light boat, hardly apt for something with over one hundred men on board. The next detail John gave is that the ship's prow was gilded, fitted out with the best weapons, and adorned by eighty hand-picked and handsomely equipped men. There is no mention of an animal-form at either prow or stern. However, we are told that the warriors in the ship had two golden arm-rings each, weighing sixteen ounces. Such personal adornment may well lie behind the poet's oblique reference to the ten talents of silver and four of gold which he says that Godwine heaps on each cross-beam (lines 25–6), that is, not so much beams with piles of gold and silver on them, which seems absurd, even allowing for poetic fantasy, nor even gilded/silvered beams, but rather, by metonymy, gold and silver on the arms of the rowers sitting on the cross-beams. There are forty more rowers in Edward's ship than in Harthacnut's. A crew of up to eighty has been estimated for the largest surviving viking-age warship, Skuldelev 2, raised from Roskilde Fjord in 1962, but built in Ireland

---

[114] JW, s.a. 1040 (ed. and trans. Darlington *et al.*, pp. 530–3). 'However, Godwine, to regain his friendship, gave the king a skilfully made galley, with a gilded prow or beak, furnished with the best tackle, well equipped with suitable arms and eighty picked soldiers. Each one of them had two golden armlets on his arms, weighing sixteen ounces, was clad in a triple mail corslet, with a part-gilded helmet on his head, was girt about the loins with a sword with gilded hilts; a Danish axe bound with gold and silver hung from his left shoulder; in his left hand was a shield with gilded boss and studs, in his right a spear called an *ætgar* in English. In addition, he also swore to the king, with the ealdormen of almost all England and the greater thegns, that it had not been by his advice or at his wish that his brother was blinded, but that his lord King Harold had ordered him to do what he did.'

in about the year 1042.[115] Even allowing for the probability that not all of its 'menacing warriors' were oarsmen, the poem's figure of one hundred and twenty thus stands out as surely somewhat of an artistic exaggeration, to enhance the sense of Godwine's gift as wildly lavish, as well as darkening the menace of the vessel.

The most strikingly close similarities are between John's account of the ship's weaponry and the poet's, in the newly-recovered lines: to each of the eighty men John assigns a 'triple mail corselet', a partly gilded helmet (*cassidem* rather than *galeam*), a sword with a gilded hilt, a Dane-axe, again gilded, a shield with gilded boss (*umbo*) and studs, and the kind of spear (*lanceam*) known in Old English as an *ætgar*. In each case there is much more emphasis on this ship's golden quality, hammered home by the repeated use of *deauratus*, than in the poem, where only the animal figure-heads and the weather-vane are described thus, albeit also with *aureus* twice placed a prominent position as first word in a line (15 and 17). The poet allows his ship's prevailingly golden aspect to emerge in a more subtle way, yet vividly, when he notes that the whole thing shines like the sun (line 41). The crew of both ships, then, are very similarly equipped. What should we make of the matching detail? Is it simply the case that this was indeed how such men were kitted out at the period in question, Godwine's provision following one specification twice over? Rather more likely, these details are a sign that John's account was based on the *Vita*.

William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta regum* also provides an account of Godwine's gift, and it is very close indeed to John's. William, ever the critic of venality in all walks of life from the pope downwards, does not hesitate to emphasize that Godwine gave the ship to buy back favour, since Harthacnut had insisted that he purge himself on oath:

Apposuit ille fidei iuratae xenium, ut gratiam plenam redimeret, locupletissimum sane et pulcherrimum, ratem auro rostratam, habentem octoginta milites qui haberent in brachiis singulis armillas duas, unamquamque sedecim unciarum auri, in capitibus cassides deauratas, securim Danicam in humero sinistro, hastile ferreum dextra manu gestantes et, ne singula enumerem, armis omnibus instructos, in quibus fulgor cum terrore certans sub auro ferrum occuleret.[116]

---

[115] Figures in print vary: eighty in Crumlin-Pedersen, *Viking-Age Ships and Shipbuilding*, p. 201; sixty men in O. Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Ship Types and Sizes AD 800–1400', *Aspects of Maritime Scandinavia AD 200–1200. Proceedings of the Nordic Seminar on Maritime Aspects of Archaeology, Roskilde, 13th–15th March, 1989*, ed. O. Crumlin-Pedersen (Roskilde, 1991), pp. 69–82, at 74; and 100 in J. Bill, 'Ships and Seamanship', *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. P. Sawyer (Oxford, 1997), pp. 182–201, at 193.

[116] WM, *GR* ii.188.6 (ed. and trans. Mynors*, et al.*, pp. 338–9). 'Godwine swore the oath, and added a present in order to win back his favour in full, an object very expensive and very beautiful. It was a ship with a beak of gold, containing eighty soldiers, each of whom had two bracelets on each arm, each bracelet containing sixteen ounces of gold; on each man's head

220

Once we allow for William's characteristic literary polishing, all the salient details match those of John's account: the golden prow, eighty men wearing two arm-rings each containing sixteen ounces of gold, a gilded helmet, Danish axe on the left shoulder, spear in the right hand. William's dependence either on John or on John's source at Worcester, seems beyond doubt.[117]

Just as William chose to open the scene with the oath that accompanied Godwine's gift, so John ends it thus. We can now, strikingly enough, match this aspect of the story in the newly recovered section of the poem, at lines 45–7; and in doing so, we may to begin to gain some sense, through the contrast between the two distinct narratives, of the poet's deft handling of an uncomfortable situation, of which the later writers, with their different perspective, were perhaps oblivious. John and William have Godwine swear an oath which exculpates him from responsibility for Alfred's blinding, high-lighting clearly the nature of this gift-ship, at best peace-offering, frankly a bribe to Harthacnut. The poet, however, presents Godwine's gift to Edward more carefully – Godwine out-does all the others in his *larga . . . probitas*, a point made in lines 8–9 and then, in an almost mirroring position seven lines from the end (line 48), repeated, indeed strengthened, with the exhortation 'let him be an example of *probitas* to all the others'. The choice of vocabulary is interesting here: although we might expect Godwine's generosity, his *largitas*, to be the keynote, the poet shifts the emphasis subtly, since the connotations of *probitas* are uprightness, goodness, or honesty. It is a theme which seems to run throughout the verses in the *Vita Ædwardi* – the noun *probitas* occurs a further five times, in four more of the eight poems.[118] Seemingly, this gift wells up out of sheer delight at Edward's accession, and the wish to make a powerful outward sign of strong inner devotion. The opening and closing lines of the poem set the gift very particularly in the context of universal jubilation, of which it is a natural expression on the part of one especially wealthy man. That Godwine should have wished to offer a bribe to gloss over his past career as a political swinger, so to speak, or to make such a conspicuous and lavish show of abject loyalty that his good faith could never come into question

---

was a gilded helmet, on his left shoulder a Danish axe, in his right hand an iron spear; in fact, not to list every detail, they were fully equipped with arms of every kind, in which brilliance competing with terror was meant to hide iron in a blaze of gold.'

[117] For discussion of the relationship between William's *Gesta Regum* and John's Chronicle, see above, n. 55.

[118] Twice in the opening dialogue with the Muse, *VÆdR*, i. *Prol.* (ed. Barlow, p, 6 line 21 'species eadem probitatis', of Edith at Edward's side; p. 8 line 3 'horum . . . dices probitatem' refer-ring to Godwine's offspring), in the poem which celebrates Edward and Edith's marriage, i. 2 (*ibid.* p. 26, line 3, describing Edith as 'probitatis amatrix'), in the poem which likens Godwine and Edward to David and Saul, i. 4 (*ibid.* p. 44, line 13 'ex probitate sui', referring to Godwine), and in ii. *Prol.* (*ibid.* p. 86, line 14, used of Gruffydd).

subsequently, is very far indeed from the poet's mind. Or rather, his artistic effort is being expended in firmly blotting out the very thought. In her analysis of the *Vita*, Monika Otter sees the author's strategy as that of evasion by what she calls 'metonymic substitution', allowing him to displace attention, away from defeat at the Conquest to Edward's sanctity, away from Edith's barren-ness to her spiritual fecundity embodied in a new church building, away from dubious political affiliations to a cracking great ship. To quote Otter again, 'whenever a painful matter needs to be addressed, the narrator shifts to a dif-ferent though related, adjacent subject, through which he can avoid – but also indirectly address – the matter thus supplanted'.[119]

It may perhaps help to reinforce the case for John and William's dependence on the *Vita* by briefly imagining how things would look if their ship, the gift to Harthacnut, represented the reality of Godwine's actions. The unmistakable agenda in the *Vita Ædwardi* might easily suggest the possibility not so much that two ships have been confused, as that the gift to Edward could be a fiction based on memories of an earlier gift-ship for a different recipient. There can be no denying the extent to which all of the poems in the *Vita*, when read as a group, create a carefully controlled fictionalizing artifice that focuses steadfastly upon Godwine and his family. What, then, is to prevent the *idea* of Godwine giving a ship to Edward being an invention, into which the poet breathed realism by basing his vivid account on real ships that he had seen, as well as on the literary model he found in the *Encomium Emmae*? Perhaps he had heard tell of how Godwine gave a ship as a gift and saw the lavish gesture as a perfect vehicle for emphasizing the earl's loyalty to Edward, his wealth, and his status as father-in-law, indeed patron, to the king. The credibility of this proposition perhaps depends as much as anything on an impression of how much artistic license the author of the *Vita* permitted himself. Could he have got away with as large a fiction as a very big ship? Somehow it seems unlikely, as well as out of character: without doubt the whole narrative is highly selective and keen to gloss over difficult truths here, burnish the facts there, but it appears inclined more towards dissimulation than outright falsification.

Once we have accepted that John of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, or their common source, derived the story directly from the *Vita*, then we need only to explain why the gift was reassigned to Harthacnut, and may do so by reference – as suggested in the first half of this article – to the changing agendas of historiography in the period following the composition of the *Vita Ædwardi*. Imagining John's (or William's) reading of this poem in preparation to re-use its narrative content for another purpose, one might wonder also why so little of the poet's vivid depiction of the ship, with its gilded figureheads

---

[119] Otter, 'Closed Doors', p. 67.

and decorated sail and vane, survives the transposition – reduced to 'skillfully made galley, with a gilded prow or beak, furnished with the best tackle' (John) and 'an object very expensive and very beautiful, a ship with a beak of gold' (William) – while all the detail of the crew and its equipment has been seized upon for enumeration. Perhaps, though, the lavish manning and arming of the ship was ultimately, from a practical viewpoint, the more impressive aspect of the gift, since a fine golden ship is all very well but without a crew it would be as much use as the gift of toy motor-boat without the batteries. The two historiographers may have had little use for the poet's carefully-crafted poetic resonances, and certainly no sympathy for the discredited cause he sought to champion.

CONCLUSION

Henry Summerson's recovery of the complete text of the ship-poem in the *Vita Ædwardi regis* is by any reckoning a matter of considerable importance. At one level, it supports the notion that the poet was familiar with the *Encomium Emmae reginae*, and, at another, contributes to the suspicion that later accounts of a ship given by Earl Godwine to a different king, on an earlier occasion, are merely derivative. More particularly, it supplies crucial details about the way Edward's gift-ship was equipped, and affirms a link between the ship and Godwine's oath of loyalty. No less interestingly, it complements and indeed provides further nuance to modern interpretations of the poet's literary agenda; and we now have clear evidence of the poet's use of Classical allusion both to flatter and to sound a more cautious note. As if that is not enough, the recovery of the complete text of the ship-poem, coupled fortuitously with the re-appearance of the 'Edwardian recension' of the *Encomium Emmae*, serves most effectively to remind us that new material awaits discovery in unexpected places, and that, for an Anglo-Saxonist, such treasure might come in the form of a written text as well as in the shape of a sword pommel.

223