Janna Müller und
Frauke Reitemeier (Hg.)
Von Æthelred zum Mann im Mond
Forschungsarbeiten aus der
englischen Mediävistik

2010

DISCREDITING

LEGENDENBILDUNG

URSPRÜNGE

LEGACY

ÆTHELRED

HEIDNISCHE

PAST

ERHALTEN TRADIERTEN

TRADITIONEN CHRISTIANISIERUNG

STONE

MOND

Universitätsdrucke Göttingen

Janna Müller / Frauke Reitemeier (Hg.)
Von Æthelred zum Mann im Mond

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Zur Einführung:
Von Æthelred zum Mann im Mond

Studienanfänger in Göttingen sehen sich bald nach Beginn ihres Studiums mit der Frage konfrontiert, welchen Bereich der Sprachwissenschaft – Mediävistik oder Linguistik – sie innerhalb ihres Studiums der Englischen Philologie wählen sollen. Die Reihe „Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie" hat sich zum Ziel gesetzt, besonders gelungene Abschlussarbeiten Göttinger Studierender zu veröffentlichen, damit diese als „Muster und Ansporn"[1] für zukünftige Studienarbeiten dienen, ganz im Sinne Bedas, der seine *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* „[...] ad instructionem posteritatis" verfasste.[2] Die im vorliegenden Band veröffentlichten Arbeiten sollen zum einen dazu beitragen, Studierenden die englische Mediävistik und ihre vielfältigen Themenbereiche näher zu bringen und gleichzeitig exemplarisch aufzuzeigen, mit welchen Untersuchungsgegenständen sich Abschlussarbeiten im mediävistischen Teilfach beschäftigen können; zum

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[1] Frauke Reitemeier, Hg. (2009), *Von Puritanern, Relativsätzen und wandelbaren Frauengestalten*, Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie 1, S. 8.

[2] Beda, *Storia Degli Inglesi (Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum): Vol. I (Libri I-II)*, ed. M. Lapidge and transl. Paolo Chiesa, Scrittori Greci e Latini (Milano, 2008), S. 12. Übersetzung: „[...] for the instruction of posterity", siehe *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and transl. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Myors (Oxford, 1969), S. 7.

anderen soll ihre Veröffentlichung Studierenden dabei helfen, die oben erwähnte Frage für sich zu beantworten.[3]

Die Abteilung für Englische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters (Mediävistik) der Georg-August Universität Göttingen hat zwei große Forschungs- und Lehrgebiete: Zum einen beschäftigt sie sich mit der Entwicklung der englischen Sprache von den Anfängen der Überlieferung (ca. 700) bis in die Gegenwart. Zum anderen befasst sie sich mit dem historischen, religiösen, politischen und soziologischen Kontext der alt- und mittelenglischen Literatur (ca. 700 bis ca. 1500). Die Abteilung zählt in Göttingen zum sprachwissenschaftlichen Flügel des Seminars für Englische Philologie, steht aber gleichzeitig auch den literatur- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Bereichen des Hauses nahe. Die in dieser knappen Beschreibung des Gegenstands der Mediävistik hervortretende Interdisziplinarität des Fachgebietes wird in schöner Weise von den beiden hier veröffentlichten Arbeiten aufgezeigt: Andreas Lemkes Arbeit zeigt die Schnittstellen der zahlreichen mediävistischen Fachkompetenzen mit den Geschichtswissenschaften, die Arbeit von Andre Mertens diejenigen mit der Kulturwissenschaft im weitesten Sinne.

ANDREAS LEMKES Staatsexamensarbeit „'Ealle þas ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh unrædas': Voices from the Reign of Æthelred II" beschäftigt sich mit der turbulenten Regierungszeit des angelsächsischen Königs Æthelred II (978-1013, 1014-1016), während derer dänische Heere England heimsuchten und sich weder durch gewaltige Tributzahlungen noch durch militärische Unternehmungen im Zaum halten ließen.[4] 1016 schließlich übernahmen dänischstämmige Könige den angelsächsischen Thron.

Die Geschehnisse dieser Zeit wurden von der Nachwelt dem mangelnden politischen und militärischen Geschick des Königs angelastet und brachten ihm den Beinamen *Unræd*, ,der schlecht Beratene', ein. In jüngster Zeit beginnt sich dieses Bild von der Regierungszeit Æthelreds II in der Forschung zu wandeln, und sowohl seine Person als auch seine Regierungszeit erfreuen sich großen Interesses, nicht zuletzt erkennbar an zahlreichen neueren Publikationen.

Mit seiner Analyse unterschiedlichster Quellen geht Andreas Lemke der zeitgenössischen Wahrnehmung des Königs in angelsächsischer Zeit und damit einer möglichen Basis des schlechten Rufes Æthelreds nach sowie der Frage nach einem möglicherweise angesichts der Situation vorhandenen kollektiven Gefühl der Panik unter den Angelsachsen. Einem Überblick über die Quellenlage und die

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[3]   Hingewiesen sei hier darauf, dass es sich bei den abgedruckten Arbeiten um eine Staatsexamensarbeit (Andreas Lemke) und eine Magisterarbeit (Andre Mertens) handelt, deren Umfang denjenigen einer BA-Arbeit bei weitem überschreitet; Themengebiete und Aufbau dürfen aber auch BA-Studierenden als Muster gelten.

[4]   *Ealle þas ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh unrædas* [...]: „All those afflictions befell us because of ill counsel [...]", Lemke, S. 13.

bisher zu diesem Thema geleistete Forschung folgt zunächst die Analyse der Angelsächsischen Chronik und der Darstellung König Æthelreds II, der Rolle der *ealdormen* und anderer angelsächsischer Adliger ebenso wie der Darstellung der Wikinger. Daran schließt sich eine Untersuchung von Königsurkunden, Gesetzestexten und der Münzprägung aus Æthelreds Zeit an. Lemke kommt in diesem ersten Teil seiner Arbeit zu dem Schluss, dass keine der untersuchten Quellen das in der älteren Forschung vorherrschende Negativbild des Königs und seiner Regierungszeit rechtfertigt: Obwohl nach Meinung des Verfassers in der Angelsächsischen Chronik wichtige Fakten, die zu einer positiven Bewertung Æthelreds und seiner Regierungszeit hätten beitragen können, ausgelassen werden, kritisiert der Chronist den Herrscher nicht offen und steht loyal zum Hause Wessex. Die Adligen des Landes werden dagegen eher in ein schlechtes Licht gerückt und tragen so nach Quellenlage eine Mitschuld an den Krisen des spätangelsächsischen Staates. Die Wikinger schließlich werden in der Chronik oft stereotyp dargestellt; ihre Darstellung scheint für die Angelsachsen als Spiegel ihrer eigenen Vergehen angelegt worden zu sein. Königsurkunden, Gesetzestexte und Münzprägungen schließlich zeugen von einem funktionierenden Staat, der es sich leisten konnte, anstelle militärischen Vorgehens gegen die Wikinger auf hohe Geldzahlungen auszuweichen und damit letztlich eine gut beratene Politik zu betreiben.

In einem zweiten Teil seiner Arbeit widmet Lemke sich dem Werk Ælfrics und Wulfstans und untersucht daneben auch das Gedicht *Battle of Maldon* und die altenglische *Promissio Regis*[5]. Während Ælfric, vor allem nach 1005, vor dem Verfall von Idealen und Ordnungen warnt, bestärkt Wulfstans apokalyptische Predigt *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* die Angelsachsen als von Gott auserwähltes Volk, das noch in der Lage sei, sein Schicksal abzuwenden. Gleichzeitig schafft Wulfstan nach Meinung des Verfassers mit diesem Text im Falle eines dänischen Sieges die ideologischen Voraussetzungen für einen angelsächsisch-dänischen Staat. Die *Battle of Maldon* stellt mit Byrhtnoth einen königstreuen Gefolgsmann dar, der in einem aussichtslosen Kampf mit den Wikingern beispielhaft mutig und fromm für sein Vaterland kämpft. Die *Promissio Regis* ermahnt den König, seinen christlichen Pflichten nachzukommen. Lemke konstatiert für alle untersuchten Quellen eine instruktive Tendenz, die zu richtigem Handeln aufrufen sollte. Ein Krisenbewusstsein in jener Zeit lässt sich nach Meinung des Verfassers zwar ausmachen, die Angelsachsen waren jedoch weit von einer kollektiven Panik angesichts der Umstände entfernt. Mit Æthelred II stand ihnen ein würdiger König des Hauses Wessex vor, der – soweit es in seiner Macht stand – England in einer Extremsituation als funktionierenden Staat zusammenhielt. Verstärkt durch die Angriffe der Wikinger wurden interne Streitigkeiten und unglücklich

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[5]   Hierbei handelt es sich um ein Versprechen, das der König unmittelbar im Anschluss an seinen Krönungseid zu leisten hatte.

ausgewählte Berater jedoch überbewertet und prägten das negative Bild der Nachwelt – zu Unrecht, wie der Verfasser darstellen kann.

ANDRE MERTENS legt mit seiner Arbeit „Das mittelenglische Gedicht *Mon in þe mone stond and strit*: Edition und Kommentar", eine Ausgabe vor, die sich – im Gegensatz zur vorherigen Forschung – in ihrem sprachlichen Kommentar ausschließlich diesem Gedicht widmet und zudem eine deutsche Übersetzung liefert. Aus der mittelenglischen Epoche sind zumeist die großen Autoren der Zeit – Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower oder auch William Langland – und ihre Texte weithin bekannt. Weniger zur Kenntnis genommen werden die vielen anonym verfassten mittelenglischen Prosa- und Verstexte, zu denen auch das von Mertens edierte Gedicht zählt. Da besonders die weltlichen Gedichte, die in der Handschrift London, British Library, Harley 2253 überliefert sind, bisher größtenteils nicht in kommentierten Editionen vorliegen, füllt Mertens' Arbeit eine Lücke.

Zunächst äußert Mertens sich in der Einleitung zur bisher zu diesem Gedicht entstandenen Forschungsliteratur. Anschließend bespricht er orthographische und dialektale Eigenheiten des Textes. Das Gedicht *Mon in þe mone stond and strit* ist, wie eingangs bereits erwähnt, bisher nicht in einer kommentierten Edition erschienen, eine Edition des Textes ist aber in der Vergangenheit häufig Teil von Gesamtausgaben der Handschrift Harley 2253 gewesen. Die Lesarten dieser Editionen werden im kritischen Apparat von Mertens' Ausgabe angeführt. Mertens selbst hat für seine Edition eine möglichst handschriftengetreue Wiedergabe des Textes vorgenommen. Auf Edition und Übersetzung folgt ein Zeilenkommentar, in dem Mertens auf erklärungsbedürftige mittelenglische Formen, Wortbedeutungen und die Übersetzungsvorschläge vorhergehender Herausgeber eingeht. Gleichzeitig dient dieser Zeilenkommentar dem Leser neben der Übersetzung als weitere Hilfe zum Textverständnis. Das Gedicht über den Mann im Mond wird in der Forschung inhaltlich häufig als Nonsens eingestuft und hat von literaturkritischer Seite bisher wenig Anerkennung erhalten. Mertens analysiert das Gedicht in seinem Kapitel 5 in dessen kulturhistorischen und politischen Dimensionen, um dieses für ihn von einer „einzigartige[n] Atmosphäre und eine[m] liebenswerten Ton"[6] gekennzeichnete Gedicht in ein neues Licht zu rücken. Die Geschichte vom Mann im Mond, einer Frau im Mond und sogar Kindern im Mond war in regional unterschiedlichen Versionen weit verbreitet, und auch heutzutage kennt sie noch jedes Kind. Im Mittelalter dürfte das Gedicht bzw. die Legende um den Mann im Mond in aller Munde gewesen sein und richtete sich wohl aufgrund seiner derben Ausdrucksweise in erster Linie an das Volk, wie Mertens ausführt. Zur Platzierung des Gedichtes innerhalb der Handschrift und zu den unterschiedlichsten inhaltlichen Ausdeutungen, die von

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6   Siehe Mertens, S. 175.

christlicher Allegorie zu einer sozialpolitischen Deutung reichen, äußert Mertens sich in diesem Abschnitt ebenfalls. Seiner eigenen Ausdeutung zufolge standen der Sprecher und der Mann im Mond, den der Sprecher direkt anredet, auf einer sozialen Stufe; anders als der Titel des Gedichts vermuten lässt, sei nicht der Mann im Mond, sondern der Sprecher als zentraler Charakter anzusehen. Der Dichter selbst habe, laut Mertens, Einblick in das bäuerliche Leben der Zeit (um etwa 1300) gehabt und eigene leidvolle Erfahrungen mit den Lebensumständen der sozial niedrigen Schicht gemacht; hierin sieht Mertens einen möglichen Auslöser für die Entstehung des Gedichts, in dem der Mondmann mit den Erfahrungen des Sprechers konfrontiert wird. Letztlich biete das Gedicht viele unterschiedliche Interpretationsansätze, so dass die Einstufung als inhaltlich unsinnig kaum haltbar erscheint. In seinem Fazit betont Mertens, dass die mittelenglische Dichtung auch bereits vor Chaucer einigen Unterhaltungswert zu bieten hat und dass eine eingehende Analyse solcher Texte wichtige Einblicke in die kulturhistorische und sozialpolitische Situation im mittelalterlichen England gewährt.[7]

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Reitemeier, Frauke, Hg. (2009), *Von Puritanern, Relativsätzen und wandelbaren Frauengestalten*, Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie 1.

Beda, *Storia Degli Inglesi (Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum): Vol. I (Libri I-II)*, ed. M. Lapidge and transl. Paolo Chiesa, Scrittori Greci e Latini (Milano, 2008).

—— , *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and transl. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Myors (Oxford, 1969).

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[7] Erwähnenswert ist auch die sich an die Arbeit anschließende Bibliographie, die dem interessierten Leser umfangreiche Literatur zum *Mon in þe mone stond and strit* liefert.

Andreas Lemke

'Ealle þas ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh unrædas': Voices from the Reign of Æthelred II

I. Introduction

1. King *Æthelred II* and the Problem of *unræd*

"All those afflictions befell us because of ill counsel."[1] When translating the title of this thesis we get a fair notion of what is to be regarded exemplary for the so-called 'lamentations', which are to be found in those annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* covering the reign of King Æthelred II (978-1016). Although he achieved to be the longest-reigning monarch in Anglo-Saxon history, the reputation of his legacy up to the present day has been tainted to a high degree by the work of a single chronicler who composed the 'main' account for Æthelred's reign[2] and its subsequent embellishment with discrediting remarks by later historians such as Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury. Æthelred became notorious

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[1]   This is my tranlation of a passage from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* s.a. 1011: "Ealla þas ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh unrædas […]", see *MS C*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes 5 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 95.

[2]   See pp. 17-19 *infra* in my chapter on the 'Æthelredian Annals'.

for ill-advised policy in the face of the impending Danish conquest of Anglo-Saxon England, almost evoking the impression that he was the one who through his tarrying, incompetence and apparent acts of violence lost the inheritance of the House of Wessex single-handedly. Æthelred *unræd* 'ill counsel' became 'the Unready' in the course of time: never prepared and up to the task he had to face: the defence of the kingdom.[3] The Scandinavian invasions and the eventual conquest seem to have generated a trauma, a stain on the national consciousness with the king and his councillors as scapegoats. Even so, this story of Anglo-Saxon failure, of the alleged collapse of English society, might not be as authentic and conclusive as it seems. There appears to have been an alternative tradition, which emphasized Æthelred's positive qualities as argued by Simon Keynes.[4]

Fortunately, during the last three decades intensive research on this period has rendered the events of Æthelred's reign in a much more differentiated way, shedding some light on the dismal picture so prominent hitherto. Nevertheless, there is still further need for a careful and precise survey of the source material transmitted. The Viking conquest denoted a national catastrophe for the Anglo-Saxons, thus an inquiry into their effect on contemporary sources is essential for our understanding of that period.

This thesis aims at analysing various sources from the reign of Æthelred II in order to determine in what way the Danish invasions affected the thinking and perception of the Anglo-Saxons as reflected in source material of various kinds. Moreover, it will examine sources to unearth whether both an explicit awareness of crisis and a common denominator in blaming the king for the national misfortune existed, or whether there is source material that can refute the traditional perception of Æthelred as a weak, violent and incompetent ruler. Important to this discussion will be the question of how the different sources complement or contradict one another.

"Records only speak when they are spoken to and they will not talk to strangers."[5] This remark by C. R. Cheney pinpoints the problem. Even in the case of the chronicler's account we might gain a different picture if the historian would ask the appropriate questions. Indeed, anyone who ignores this simple principle might be prone to *unræd*.

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[3]   See S. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready', in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings* (New York, 2000), ed. D. Pelteret, pp. 168-75 for an excellent survey on the development of Æthelred's sobriquet from the 12th century onwards.

[4]   See ibid., pp. 168-69 and n. 39 (with reference to Byrhtferth's *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*); cf. also M. Lapidge, 'The *Life of St Oswald*' in *The Battle of Maldon A.D. 991*, ed. D. Scragg (Oxford, 1991), p. 54 for a positive, almost laudatory depiction of Æthelred.

[5]   C. R. Cheney, *Medieval Texts and Studies* (Oxford, 1973), p. 8.

2. Current State of Source Material and Research

According to Sir Frank Stenton, we are fortunate that the reign of Æthelred was "one of the few periods which can be studied in a full and contemporary narrative."[6] Even so, the account of the anonymous chronicler should not be taken for granted. In contrast to the reign of the great Anglo-Saxon king Alfred we lack a contemporary biography of Æthelred. A Latin chronicle composed by *ealdorman* (denoting 'chief retainer', 'earl') Æthelweard could have provided us with a clear picture of Æthelred's reign - given his attachment to the royal court - but a chapter in his work headed *Actibus Eius* was never finished.[7] We are fortunate, however, that the years between 978 and 1016 provide us with a rich supply of source material ranging from law-codes, coins and charters, to ecclesiastical sources, namely the works of Ælfric, abbot of Eynsham, archbishop Wulfstan of York and Byrhtferth of Ramsey.

The bulk of written material surviving from that period is impressive. It was a time of much activity in manuscript production.[8] Reflection of contemporary thought and the Viking invasions are to be found in a heroic poem on the battle at Maldon in 991. Later accounts by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers Williams of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and the author of the *Worcester Latin Chronicle* (*WLC*) reveal their view on the Anglo-Saxon kingdom by drawing heavily on the tradition established by the writer of the 'main' account of Æthelred's reign.

Outside England, various works, such as the chronicles compiled by Adam of Bremen, Thietmar of Merseburg, the *Annales Cambriae*, and Scandinavian sources such as the *Heimskringla* or *Knutsdrapa*, and finally the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, written by a Flemish monk in praise of Æthelred's and Cnut's wife Emma, feature among the rich source material bearing witness to Æthelred's reign.

When reviewing historical research on the subject, Sharon Turner set the tone among modern historians in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (publ. 1799-1805).[9] By making little assessment of the quality of the evidence or the dimension of the subject he mainly based his account on the catastrophe presented in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and held Æthelred personally responsible for the outcome of events. E. A. Freeman, writing in the 1860s, struck the same chord in *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* (publ. 1867-79), and finally in the early 1940s Stenton complained of "national degeneracy", regarding Æthelred "as a king of singular incompetence"[10] in his *Anglo-Saxon England* (first publ. 1943).

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[6]   F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p. 394.

[7]   Cf. R. Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English 978-1016* (Stroud, 2002; repr. 2004), p. 10 and *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 34.

[8]   Cf. S. Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready', in *Writing Medieval Biography 750-1250: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow*, ed. D. Bates *et al.* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 95 and n. 89.

[9]   For an overview of the current state of research and source material see S. Keynes, 'Æthelred II', *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004), I, 409-19.

[10] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 394-95.

Ever since there has been a broad-scaled attempt by modern scholars such as Dorothy Whitelock, Simon Keynes and Malcolm Godden, to name only a few, at rehabilitatiting Æthelred, based on a more balanced understanding of the problems that confronted the king. Critical assessment of the literary sources on which the traditional account of his reign depended and integration of evidence from the wide range of source material have contributed to the formation of a more differentiated view. Nevertheless, it remains difficult for modern scholars to come to a conclusive evaluation of Æthelred's reign and build a persuasive case to overcome the deep-rooted tradition of prejudice. However, interest in the king and his times has remained unwaning in recent years as the large bulk of publications shows.[11] Nowadays the current study of Æthelred's reign is much more multifaceted and well-balanced than it had been for a long time. Still, many questions concerning his reign in the light of the source material available will remain inconclusive, leaving it impossible to reduce his thirty-eight-year rule to a simple matter of good or bad kingship, but rather demand further intensive investigation.

3. Thematic Structure of the Thesis

My survey of the source material will be divided into three sections: firstly, I am taking a close look at the evidence provided by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, royal charters, coins and laws. Secondly, ecclesiastical sources by Ælfric will be subject to my investigation. Finally, three other sources of interest, namely, Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, the poem *The Battle of Maldon* and an Old English *Promissio Regis* are focused upon. Owing to the scope of this thesis and the abundance of source material, it is impossible to treat every source with the attention it deserves. Thus, various aspects will not be taken into consideration. Furthermore, only sources being datable to the actual reign of Æthelred, i.e. the years from 978 to 1016, will be considered for a close survey. The *Chronicle* as the main source of interest provides the exception from the rule.[12] Later material such as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* or the Anglo-Norman Chroniclers will be left out of the discussion. Finally, my analysis does not encompass the works of Byrhtferth of Ramsey,[13] one of the most prominent scholars of that period, for reasons of limited space.

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[11]   For recent studies of Æthelred's reign see N. J. Higham, *The Death of Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 1-71; Lavelle, *Aethelred II*; I. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England, 991-1017* (Woodbridge, 2003); A. Williams, *Æthelred the Unready: the Ill-Counselled King* (London, 2003).

[12]   It was probably written at some time between 1016 and 1023, see S. Keynes, *Anglo Saxon England: a Bibliographical Handbook for Students of Anglo-Saxon England*, ASNC Guides, Texts and Studies 1, 9th ed. (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[13]   For Byrhtferth see M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey', *ODNB*, IX, 332-33.

II. Voices from the Past: Sources for the Reign of Æthelred

1. Records of Royal Government

1.1. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

When speaking about the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC*), we have to keep in mind that this is a mere term of convenience applied by modern scholars to describe a composite set of annals which has contributed to a large extent to our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history.[14] The original compilation, the so-called 'common-stock', probably compiled at the West-Saxon court of King Alfred and copied for wider circulation, was continued at different centres throughout the country, thus representing particular biases, local features, etc. It is therefore important to note that the *ASC* is far from being a homogeneous or uniform work.

Even though its reliability as a historical source cannot be taken for granted, much of the information can be tested against other independent sources. Despite all its probable imperfection, it provides the historian with invaluable information concerning the history of Anglo-Saxon England.

The Æthelredian Annals

One of the continuations of the *ASC* covers a set of vernacular annals for the reigns of Æthelred II and Cnut between 983 and 1016 (with extensions from 1017-22). It is generally referred to as the 'main' account for the reign of Æthelred.[15] This account is to be found in MSS CDE[16] of the *ASC*, with minor variations owed to the process of transmission, thus suggesting that those three manuscripts (with reservations also MS F) were modelled on a common archetype. Furthermore, this set of annals also formed the basis of the *WLC*.

The account was probably written in retrospective, possibly at one time between 1016 and 1023,[17] drawing to an uncertain extent on earlier material, but given its prominence by the distinctive voice of an unknown chronicler. He is traditionally regarded as the 'Abingdon Chronicler', given the 'Abingdon background' and distinctive additions relating to abbatical succession at Abingdon

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[14]   Cf. S. Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge *et al.*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2001), pp. 35-6. For editions and general surveys cf. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel: a Revised Text*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1892-99; repr. 1952); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and transl. M. Swanton (London, 1996); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Revised Translation*, ed. D. Whitelock *et al.* (London, 1961); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition*, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes (Cambridge, 1983-); A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol I: *c. 550 – c. 1307* (London, 1974).

[15]   Cf. S. Keynes, *Anglo Saxon England*.

[16]   For an overview of the different manuscripts see Swanton, *Chronicle*, pp. xxi-xxviii.

[17]   See n. 12 *supra*.

in MSS. CE, 984-5, 990, 1016 associated with this see. Those additions, however, are not integral to the account and might be explained by marginal annotations in the process of transmission from a common ancestor.[18] The provenance still is a matter of debate. Alternatively Abingdon, London,[19] Canterbury[20] and Ramsey[21] have been proposed as places of origin of the *Chronicle*.[22] It is hard to discern from the way the narration is presented and the items of local interest seem to be absorbed into the composer's account. Simon Keynes points out that his "consciousness is rather national than provincial."[23]

What is so remarkable about the account is that the anonymous chronicler - writing with the advantage of hindsight - digresses from the laconic nature of annals and presents (at least from *c.* 991 on) a compelling story of the wars with the Danes.[24] He provides the reader with explanations for the events he records and comments upon them in an often defeatist manner. The episodes are recorded with the consciousness that the kingdom had already fallen. Thus the entries are incorporated into a narrative apparently focused to a large extent on defeat and inevitable conquest:

> He had no need to offer comfort or encouragement to his audience, since the cause was already lost; he was like a dead man conducting his own post-mortem.[25]

was the verdict of Prof. Keynes, who claims that the chronicler might not have had restraints in being outspoken for the nature of his work suggested a detachment from the royal court.[26] Another striking feature is the chronicler's interest in portraying personalities, their morals as well as their actions, and passing judgement on them.[27] Thus, the downfall of Anglo-Saxon England gets a

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[18]   Cf. Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', p. 162.

[19]   Cf. ibid., p. 163.

[20]   Cf. Plummer, *Chronicles*, II, cxvi.

[21]   Cf. Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', pp. 162-63; cf. also *Chronicles of the Reign of Æthelred the Unready*, ed. C. Hart, The Early Chronicles of England 1 (Lewiston, NY, 2006), pp. xxiii-lvii. He claims that the annals for Æthelred's reign were compiled by Byrthferth of Ramsey.

[22]   I am not going to include a lengthy discussion on provenance and compilation of the 'main' account and consequently on the relationship of the various manuscripts, as this would be beyond the focus of this thesis.

[23]   Keynes, 'Decling Reputation', p. 162.

[24]   Cf. C. Clark, 'The Narrative Mode of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before the Conquest', in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 215-37, esp. 224-30.

[25]   S. Keynes, 'A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred the Great and Æthelred the Unready', *TRHS*, 5th ser. 36 (1986), p. 201.

[26]   See ibid.; cf. also P. Stafford, 'The Reign of Æthelred II: a Study in the Limitations on Royal Policy and Action', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. D. Hill, BAR British Series 59 (Oxford, 1978), p. 17, who suggests that the *Chronicle* appeared to have had no official or semi-official purpose.

[27]   Cf. Clark, 'Narrative Mode', p. 225.

very personalized focus. From 991 onwards, the annals strikingly adopt a more literary style, reminiscent of prose narrative. Vocabulary, syntactical constructions and style provide us with a rich diction, occasionally even coming close to poetry.[28] The occurrence of certain turns of phrase, which appear time and again in the annals, is another crucial aspect in binding the annals together as a continuous narrative.[29]

In my survey of the *Chronicle*, MS. C (British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.i, fols.115v -164r) will be the main source as it provides us with the most detailed account and was compiled chronologically closest to the events recorded. The greater part of the manuscript was written in all probability c. 1045. The compiler probably drew on an exemplar which also lies behind MS. B (British Library, Cotton Tiberius A.vi, fols. 1-35), inserted a set of 'Abingdon Annals' (976, 977, 978-9, 980-2), before he continued to copy and amend an exemplar of the 'main' account, which he had probably received from London or Canterbury. He concluded with writing down annals for the period c. 1023-1066, including some 'Abingdon' entries in the late 1040s.[30] The commonly used term 'Abingdon Chronicle' with reference to its place of origin is disputable.[31]

In two instances, however, I will additionally draw on another work, as we are fortunate to have an independent contemporary source: MS. A, the so-called 'Winchester Chronicle' (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 173, fols. 1-32r). This alternate evidence reminds us that the 'main' account should not be taken at face value in any regard and therefore is far from being authorative.

The Depiction of Kingship in the Æthelredian Annals

The Danish Conquest of Anglo-Saxon England has always been closely associated with King Æthelred II and his failed policy of buying off the Scandinavian invaders instead of taking the field and resisting resolutely. The fall of the House of Wessex was more often than not attributed to questionable character traits on the king's part.

The focus of this chapter will be on the depiction of King Æthelred in the *Æthelredian Annals*. The presentation of his actions (or lack thereof) will be analysed against the background of independent source material before contrasting him with the other royal protagonists Edmund 'Ironside', Sweyn

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28 Cf. Clark, 'Narrative Mode', pp. 226-9; see *infra*, pp. 49-51 in the context of the martyrdom of Archbishop Ælfheah.
29 Cf. Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', pp. 161-62.
30 Cf. idem, *Anglo-Saxon England*.
31 Cf. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, pp. lxxviii-lxxx, lxxxv-vi, lxxxix-xcii and *The Abingdon Chronicle, AD 956-1066 (MS C, with reference to BDE)*, ed. P. W. Conner, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes 10 (Cambridge, 1996), pp. xxi, xxiii-xxiv, xxxvi-xlix.

Forkbeard and Cnut in order to attempt figuring out the attitude of the chronicler towards King Æthelred and his counterparts.

Even though the narrative gains its unique character and momentum from 991 onwards, the initial entries on the king's reign disclose interesting features. The king succeeded to the throne under dubious circumstances, as his role in the conspiracy to murder his half-brother King Edward was far from clear.[32] Whereas MS C records in the annal for 978 that King Edward was martyred, DE (as A) claim that he was killed. The latter entries are more detailed and include a panegyric reminiscent of Archbishop Wulfstan, concluding with the statement that wisdom and contrivance of men were worthless against God's purpose. This probably refers to the perfidious murder but could also be read as a defeatist standpoint expressing that the defence against the Viking incursions was pointless. The coronation described in the next year portrays the king in a positive light, as he was consecrated in the presence of two archbishops and ten diocesan bishops, thus being depicted as the Lord's Anointed and rightful king, "mid mycclum gefean Angelcynnes witon" as DE record.[33] What follows, however, can be seen as a bad omen, when the C-chronicler remarks that a bloody cloud in the likeliness of fire had often been seen. Plummer correctly remarks that an Anglo-Saxon audience would have recognized this as sign of the impending Doomsday.[34] The description recalls the events of the year 793, when the E-chronicler described bad omens, e.g. fiery dragons in the air, followed by a Viking raid on Lindisfarne.[35] In Æthelred's days, this celestial phenomenon was followed by Viking raids during the next three years (980 Southampton, 981 Devon and Cornwall, 982 Dorset and London). These renewed Viking incursions must have come as shock for the English, who had enjoyed the peaceful and prosperous reign of King Edgar (959-75).[36] The chronicler probably wrote these entries with hindsight, trying to suggest a connection between the portent and the Viking raids (even to invoke past disasters?) and thus presented Æthelred's reign as doomed from the start, creating the impression that the king was punished for being entangled in his brother's murder one way or the other.

In the C-annal for 982 the chronicler includes an episode about the German Emperor Otto II, which appears unimportant at first sight, but a closer look reveals important implications. Otto is portrayed as vanquisher of the heathen

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[32]   He probably had not been involved in whole affair, which might have been concerted by his mother Ælfthryth, but the whole matter is highly controversial . See Williams, *Æthelred*, pp. 1-19 for an outline and survey of the circumstances of Edward's death.

[33]   *MS E*, ed. S. Irvine, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes 7 (Cambridge, 2004), p. 60; *With great rejoicing of the councillors of the English people* (translations in this paper are mine and are given in italics in the footnotes).

[34]   See Plummer, *Chronicles*, II, 167; cf. also Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', p. 178, who discusses the metereological background of the phenomenon.

[35]   See Irvine, *MS E*, p. 42.

[36]   For Edgar see A. Williams, 'Edgar', *ODNB*, XVII, 698-703.

Saracens who attacked southern Italy. Moreover, the chronicler recalls Otto's dynastic links to Edward the Elder.[37] This entry might be a means of implicitly discrediting Æthelred when seen against the background that in reality Otto suffered a disastrous defeat.[38] The emperor is portrayed as a Christian king who protects the people against an invading (heathen) army – a task, as we have noted above, to which the king of the Anglo-Saxons did not seem to have been up to. Otto's dynastic links with the House of Wessex, Æthelred's royal bloodline, make it all the worse. The spirit and valour of Æthelred's lineage was still alive, but apparently lacking in the present monarch. This episode shows dissatisfaction with Æthelred's inaction and appears to have provided him with a role model the chronicler wants the king to follow.[39] It seems as if part of the criticism is directed at Æthelred's absence from the battlefield. This is not to be underestimated as personal lordship bonds were an important element in the Anglo-Saxon state.[40] The king in battle encouraging his troops seems to reflect an ideal of the chronicler, which is so prominently presented in *The Battle of Maldon* (see *infra*). Richard Abels stressed the personal connection between the monarch and his subjects when exploring tenth-century Anglo-Saxon rulership, claiming that royal lordship had been an essential part of kingship.[41]

When we take a closer look at the account of Æthelred's reign, we sparsely encounter the king leading his troops into battle in person. There were actually only three occasions where his presence is recorded by the chronicler (s.a. 1000, 1009, 1014).

In the year 1000 the king is said to have gone to Cumberland "⁊ hit swiðe neah eall forheregode."[42] Furthermore, the annal reports a failed rendezvous with Anglo-Saxon fleet, which instead ravaged the Isle of Man. There is more to this story than meets the eye. What could be dismissed as one of the king's alleged acts of violence, carries great significance for the careful observer. Æthelred in fact displayed his strength as English monarch and his ambitions to an imperial claim over Britain in the tradition of his ancestors Edgar and Æthelstan. The latter was the first to assert an imperial claim and was styled in some of his charters *Rex totius Britanniae*.[43] Cumberland (i.e. Strathclyde) had a long history of aiding Viking bands from the Isle of Man as well as the Viking Kingdom of Dublin and served

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[37]   Edith, daughter of Edward the Elder, had married Emperor Otto I, Otto's father.
[38]   Cf. Plummer, *Chronicles*, II, 169.
[39]   Cf. A. Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel: Advising Ethelred the Unready', in *Via Crucis. Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. T. N. Hall, Medieval European Studies 1 (Morgantown, WV, 2002), p. 403.
[40]   Cf. Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred', p. 85.
[41]   See R. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), pp. 79-96.
[42]   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 88; *And ravaged nearly all of it*.
[43]   Cf. M. Wood, 'Stand Strong against the Monsters', in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. P. Wormald and J. Nelson (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 199-203.

as an area of retreat for them.[44] Even in the late 10th century royal authority did not cover the whole of England, as Wessex, Kent and parts of Mercia formed the areas where the king could effectively exercise his authority. The expedition to punish that region and align it to his realm seems to have been a clear expression of resolve, strength and imperial ambition.[45] Seen against this background, the fleet's strike against the Isle of Man was in no way a failure or an arbitrary action, but rather a concerted attack directed against the Viking threat endangering the west-coast of Æthelred's kingdom: a strong political message of a government that was safe-guarding its boarders.[46] The subsequent remark "ꟳ se unfriðflota wæs ðæs sumeres gewend to Ricardes rice."[47] might indicate that the aggressive politics of the king had intimidated the Scandinavian invaders. Moreover, as henceforth we cannot detect any hints that the Viking raiders afflicting England were of Hiberno-Norse origin, the punitive expedition in 1000 seems to have accomplished its aim. Finally, the reasons for the attack could have had their origin in Æthelredian *realpolitik*, as the dominance of the Irish Sea trading routes and the Northwest coast of Britain up to and including Strathclyde would have been a realistic political ambition, as Simon Keynes has argued.[48] Indeed, the chronicler is quite reticent about implications that were more than obvious.

King Æthelred makes his next appearance in 1009. In the wake of his naval construction programme the Anglo-Saxon fleet was assembled at Sandwich. Apparently the king was with the fleet, because as a large bulk of the ships was lost due to alleged treason committed by a certain Wulfnoth and the ensuing disastrous punitive expedition led by Brithric, brother of *ealdorman* Eadric (of Mercia),[49] the king and his *ealdormen* returned to London "ꟳ forleton þa scipo ðus leohtlice."[50] Consequently, the naval commanders followed the king with their ships. The chronicler's defeatist comment "ꟳ leton ealles þeodscypes geswinc ðus leohtlice forwurðan, ꟳ næs se sige na betere þe eal Angelcyn to hopode."[51]sets the tone. We can deduce a lot from this passage. First, it seems as if the king's

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44   Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', p. 30.

45   Æthelred's claim to authority over Britain is also evident in the *intitulationes* of some of his charters. A charter dated 1001 (S 898) styles him *rex totius insule* 'king of the whole island', see *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, ed. J. Kemble, 6 vols. (London, 1839-48; repr. Vaduz, 1964), III, p. 316; cf. Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, p. 97. In this thesis Anglo-Saxon charters are cited by their number in P. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968), abbreviated a S.

46   Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', p. 31 and Howard, Swein Forkbeard's Invasions, p. 53.

47   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 88; *And the enemy fleet went to Richard's kingdom* [i.e. Normandy] *that summer*.

48   See S. Keynes, 'The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon', in *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg, p. 14.

49   For this important protagonist see S. Keynes, 'Eadric Streona', *ODNB*, XVII, 535-38.

50   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 93; *And abandoned the ships thus lightly*.

51   Ibid.; *And let the toil of the nation thus lightly come to nothing. And no better than this was the victory which all the English people had expected*.

presence was an important factor, for after his departure the ships retreat together with their commander-in-chief. Secondly, the chronicler criticizes the king and his actions too easily. Deeming the abandoning of the ships 'thus lightly', which echoes the subsequent remark that the naval commanders betrayed the nation's toil 'thus lightly', misses the point. After the loss of some 100 vessels the English fleet would have been decisively weakened – making it an easy prey for an impending Viking attack. Thus, Æthelred's move was not pointless or even cowardly but rather reasonable. He saved what was left of his fleet and took precautions to avoid complete annihilation, which might have been the outcome of an encounter with an enemy fleet, considering the disarray of the Anglo-Saxon forces reported in this entry. Moreover, in view of the fact that Thorkell's fleet landed at Sandwich the same year, one might conclude that Æthelred was aware of the Danish plans and wanted to encourage his troops by engaging the Vikings in person: a clear expression of resolve and preparedness.[52] The lamentation at the end of the passage shows that the English had trust in the king and hoped that the fleet would be the key to success. The chronicler's critique might reflect the anger of a disappointed people that had borne heavy burdens through paying tribute and contributing to the militarization of the kingdom.

In 1013 the presence of Æthelred played an important part in the siege of London. When Sweyn approached the borough "þa nolde seo burhwaru bugan ac heoldan mid fullan wige ongean *forðan þær wæs inge se cyng Æþelred* [my italics] ⁊ Þurcyl mid him."[53] The sheer presence of the monarch seems to have inspired the people of London to hold out. Did the chronicler want to highlight what was possible if the king fulfilled his duty and thus indirectly admonish Æthelred that he could have averted the eventual fate of the nation, if he had behaved in like manner more often? This passage makes an even greater impression on the reader when contrasted with the fall of London only a few lines later. Apparently, Æthelred had left the town in preparation for his departure to Normandy after Christmas. At first glance, his departure appears as an act of cowardice, but considering that the Danes virtually had conquered most of the realm, it rather represented a tactical retreat in my eyes. Æthelred wanted to avoid captivity and uphold the hope of his people that their king was not yet defeated, thus still capable of mounting powerful retaliation to regain the kingdom and his people and finally drive the Scandinavian invaders from English soil. This account presents us with a strong correlation between the king's presence and the resolve and morale of his subjects to fight.

After Sweyn's death the following year (1014) and Æthelred's return from exile, he successfully leads his troops into battle against the people of Lindsey, who had just shown allegiance to Sweyn's son Cnut, displaying a strong determination to

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[52]   Cf. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions*, pp. 77-86.
[53]   O'Brien O' Keeffe, *MS C,* p. 98; *There did the citizens not want to surrender but resisted with fierce battle, because the king was inside and Earl Thorkell with him.*

exact his royal authority and show courage. It is remarkable to note that the term *cyning Æthelred* appears three times in this entry within a few lines, just as if the chronicler wants to emphasize that Æthelred was the rightful king. In contrast, Sweyn is not designated with a royal title as long as he had control of England, but looses the adjunct *cyng*, which he had had hitherto as king in his own right (of Denmark and Norway). Moreover, Sweyn is not crowned or elected king, but his accession to the throne is depicted as mere subjugation of the English: ”⁊ eal þeodscype hine hæfde þa for fulne cyng.”[54] compared to Æthelred, who was the consecrated monarch of the Anglo-Saxons. In summary: the chronicler takes a clear stand, as he seems not to have recognized Sweyn as rightful king but rather still regards Æthelred ruler of England, which the king impressively underpins in taking the field and driving his contender for the throne, Cnut, from the country.

This positive image does not last very long, as the chronicler comments upon Æthelred's payment to Thorkell's army after Cnut's mutilation of hostages given to him "buton eallum þissum yfelum,"[55] thus regarding the policy an additional burden for the nation. After heroically reclaiming the kingdom by driving out Cnut, Æthelred seems to have lost respect by relapsing into his old policy of paying tribute. In this case, the lamentation might be pointless, as the tribute was not intended to buy off the Danes, but rather pay the wages for his powerful ally Thorkell and his mercenaries.

Finally, in 1016, at a time when Æthelred lay sick at Cosham, his son Edmund 'Ironside' was put in charge of the defence of the realm. Here again, the absence of King Æthelred plays an important part in the narrative. When Edmund had gathered the *fyrd*,[56] the men refused to fight as they wanted to be led into battle by the king in person and eventually dispersed. The next lines present us with a dramatic narrative being suggestive of a 'last stand' of the English:

> Þa æfter ðære tide þa bead man eft fyrde be fullan wite, þæt ælc man ðe fere wære forð gewende, ⁊ man sende to ðam cynge to Lundene ⁊ bæd hine þæt he come ongean þa fyrde mid þam fultume ðe he gegaderian mihte. Þa hi ealle tosomne comon, þa ne beheold hit nan ðinc þe ma ðe hit oftor ær dyde. Þa cydde man þam cynge þæt hine man beswican wolde, þa þe him on fultume beon sceoldon, forlet ða þa fyrde ⁊ cyrde him eft to Lundene.[57]

This compelling passage suggests that this time not a regional contingent was gathered, but rather the *micel fyrd*, i.e. everyone who was capable of bearing arms,

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54   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 98; *And all the nation received him there as full king.*
55   Ibid., p. 99; *Besides all those evils.*
56   Cf. R. Abels, 'Army', *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 47-48.
57   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 100; *Then after the festival, the army was ordered out again on pain of the full penalty, every man to go forth who was capable of service. And word was sent to the king in London, begging him to come to join the army with the forces he could gather. When they all came together, it availed nothing, no more than it had often done before. The king was then informed that those who should support him wished to betray him. He then abandoned the army and betook himself to London.*

to encounter the Danes in a decisive battle. Once more, the presence of the king seems to be crucial in order to elevate the morale of the Anglo-Saxons and apparently he answered the call and joined the main army mustered by his son. What follows is another fitting piece for the narrative of the chronicler. He bemoans that as usual the effort of the nation had been brought to nothing by another episode of ill counsel. It cannot be proven if there was any truth to the alleged conspiracy, but it seems rather unlikely, even though Æthelred's court seems to have been a place of competing factions.[58] Nevertheless, these lines fit the pattern of a narrative of national degeneration, breaking bonds and conspiracy presented by the C-chronicler. In effect, he blames *unræd*, but refrained from identifying the informants. It is hard to detect personal criticism directed at the king as he answered the call of his subjects to lead his troops into battle. Given the tense political situation (with his hitherto senior *ealdorman* Eadric switching sides regular as clockwork) and his fragile state of health, the king's return to London should be seen in a more favourable light.

Concluding from the examples discussed, the chronicler does not seem to have a purely negative attitude towards the king, but rather reveals an intention to portray what effect royal presence on the battlefield can have. The resolve and the morale of the Anglo-Saxons in battle was depicted as depending on the king, whose official duty – at least in the eyes of the chronicler – it was to lead the defence against the Danes himself at that stage.

In fact, Anglo-Saxon kingship had always been manifested by military resolve and personal prowess in battle as epitomized by the prominent members of Æthelred's lineage, Alfred, Edward the Elder and Æthelstan.[59] The careful observer might detect a veiled invocation of the grandeur assigned to Anglo-Saxon kings of the House of Wessex. This gives rise to the question of purpose. With the account of the *Chronicle* being written after the Scandinavian conquest, such an appeal and commemoration of the past might appear pointless.

Perhaps this question can be answered in connection with reference to the use of the term *Angelcynn*. According to Alice Sheppard, the *Angelcynn* denoted those people, who in the face of impending conquest were created by personal bonds of lordship to the king "and who in Æthelred's case are lost because of the failure of lordship ties."[60]

It is probable that the chronicler intended to remind his readers of the fact that there were still kings of the bloodline of the House of Wessex, who would hopefully return to England and lead the *Angelcynn* against the Scandinavian usurpers: namely the *æthelings* 'princes of royal blood elective to the throne', who were exiled in Normandy. Sheppard claims that the *Chronicle* seemed to regard

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58   Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', esp. pp. 23-30.
59   Cf. P. Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 2003), p. 204.
60   Cf. A. Sheppard, *Families of the King: Writing Identity in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Toronto Old English Series 12 (Toronto, 2004), p. 16.

kingship as an office and a "reconsideration of the authorizing power of genealogical discourse."[61] Genealogical discourse operates as authorizing a king's claim to the throne.[62] It is quite significant, therefore, that the *Chronicle* does not refer to Æthelred's sons simply as 'his sons', but uses the specific term *æthelings* with all its implications concerning royal succession.

The question of lordship seems to be crucial in this regard. The introductory quote from the *ASC* s.a. 1011 is of special interest: "Ealle þas ungesælða us gelumpon þurh unrædas þæt man nolde him a timan gafol beodon oþþe wið gefeohtan."[63] Sheppard goes on to claim that the interpretation of this passage depended on the translation of the word *þæt*.[64] She states that the meaning of this passage as far as *unrædas* was concerned would be clear, but could have had an ambiguous meaning, when read in full. If we translated the *þæt* with 'namely', it would simply state that the king and his councillors pursued a twofold strategy of military resistance and tribute without modifying the statement to an extent that any of the strategies was intrinsically wrong. Doing so, Sheppard in effect argued that the king's weakness was one of 'policy'. If, however, we were to interpret the *þæt* as 'with the consequence of', as suggested by her, the methods of defence would be seperated from the *unrædas*. In that reading, the criticism points rather to the fact that the councillors were unwilling to carry out the aforementioned strategies in the appropriate circumstances.[65] This would not only signify a shift of perspective from criticism of the king to criticizing his councillors, but even more importantly, a division between Æthelred and his *witan* 'wise councillors', displaying a flaw in the king's relationship to his advisors:[66] this is yet another example of failed lordship ties.

When Æthelred returned to England in 1014 lordship ties seemed to have played a significant role. After Sweyn's death the councillor's invited him back to England pleading "þæt him nan hlaford leofra nære þonne hiora gecynda hlaford"[67]on the condition that he would govern *rihtlicor* 'more justly' than before. Two things are of importance here: first, the term *hlaford* might have denoted a pledge of allegiance to some higher authority, involving the relationship of lord and man.[68] Second, it implies misdemeanour on the part of the king hitherto as

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61   Cf. Sheppard, *Families of the King*, p. 19.
62   Ibid., p. 20.
63   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 95; *All those afflictions befell us because of ill counsel, that they never were offered tribute in time nor fought against.*
64   Cf. Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel', pp. 397-402.
65   Although I concur with Sheppard's second translation 'with the consequence of' – a possible translation of *þæt* being 'so that' – I have not found it denoting 'namely' in the dictionaries consulted, cf. *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. J. C. Hall, 4th ed. (Cambridge 1970), s.v. *ðæt* and *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, ed. and enlarged T. N. Toller (Oxford, 1882), s.v. *þæt*.
66   Cf. Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel' pp. 401-2.
67   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 98; *That no lord would be dearer to them than their natural lord.*
68   Cf. Hunter Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 198.

far as he had not governed his people wisely and justly. Subsequently, Æthelred sent his son Edward (the future Anglo-Saxon king Edward 'The Confessor') to England to negotiate terms on which the Anglo-Saxons would accept him as rightful ruler. He promised to be a gracious ruler and to reform the things which the people hated. Æthelred's law code of 1014 (*VIII Æthelred*) might have been such an attempt.[69] Furthermore, he wanted to forgive all the things that had been said and done against him in return for allegiance without treachery. Consequently, the people "æfre ælcne deniscne cyng utlah of Engla lande gecwædon."[70] This passage conveys the impression of a covenant between the king and his subjects, describing lordship ties, rather than innate authority of the king. It looks like a contract, which Stenton regards as "of great constitutional interest as the first recorded pact between an English king and his subjects."[71] He might have had a case here, but these terms are still far from being an 'Anglo-Saxon *Magna Charta*'. The account communicates the notion that the weakness of the king and former differences between the monarch and his subjects were the result of Æthelred's lack in establishing (and keeping) proper relations in terms of lordship bonds with his nobles.

Another striking feature clearly is, that during the whole account of his reign in the *Chronicle* Æthelred is always assigned the title *cyng/cyning*. The phrase *se cyning* without adding the personal name is exclusively reserved for Æthelred (with one exception in 1016 when Cnut is referred to as *se cyng*). One gets the impression that it implied 'king of the English,'[72] denoting a genuine Anglo-Saxon king. After Æthelred's death the phrase is applied to his son Edmund, giving further credit to this assumption. These seem to have been the words of someone "whose devotion to the king was unswerving."[73]

Assuming that the depiction given by the chronicler could not have been intended to be directly directed at Æthelred, it might well serve as a reminder and encouragement for the princes of royal blood to return to England, to govern more justly than their father had done and re-establish the bond of royal lordship with the *Angelcynn*, as they were rightful kings-to-be of their people. The significance of lacerated lordship bonds played an important role and is not to be

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[69] See pp. 72-73 *infra* in my chapter on Æthelred's later codes; cf. Plummer, *Chronicles*, II, 193.

[70] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 99; *For ever denounced every Danish king an outlaw from England.*

[71] See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 386.

[72] For a discussion on the development of the titles 'king of the Anglo-Saxons' and 'king of the English' see S. Keynes, 'England, 700-900', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. D. Abulatia, 7 vols. (Cambridge, 1995-2005), II: *c.700-c.900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 18-42 and idem, 'England, c.900-1016', in *Cambridge Medieval History*, III: *c.900-c.1042*, ed. T. Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 456-84.

[73] S. Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then: England A. D. 1000', in *Europe Around the Year 1000*, ed. P. Urbańczyk, (Warsaw, 2001), p. 250.

underestimated,[74] but nevertheless has to be treated with care. Without doubt Anglo-Saxon society around that time was still dominated by personal bonds of lordship, kinship and family ties, and the apprehension that the *Angelcynn* were primarily those people forged as a unity through the example of their ruler in opposition to Scandinavian invaders in the tradition of King Alfred's struggle with the Danes prevailed. Nonetheless, *Ænglaland* by then had become a political unity of its own, defined by recognised boundaries and specific institutions. The king was not only the leader of the people but also lord of the territory.[75] Moreover, as Sarah Foot has shown, the term *Angelcynn* in the meaning that had been used since the times of King Alfred did not only have the connotation described by Sheppard.[76] It is difficult, therefore, to come to a conclusive statement concerning the role of lordship bonds, but it does not seem unlikely that the chronicler at least wanted to remind the audience of this immanent notion of his account.

The question of whether a king should fight seems to be presented in the affirmative, but we will see later on that it was also subject of the hagiographic and homiletic discourse of Ælfric.[77] In any circumstances, one is not to forget, that especially in the initial years his reign, the Viking incursions might not have been regarded as a significant threat. It would have been imprudent of the king to risk his life in order to tackle a problem which was merely the duty of the *ealdormen*, whose office included organizing the local (shire) defence.[78]

From 991 onwards the wind might have changed. According to Eric John, Byrhtnoth's inconceivable defeat at Maldon might have come as a shock, when the English realized that their defences were not adequate: "It is after this defeat that the mood of the English slides into defeatism and division."[79] This corresponds with the shift in tone prevalent in the chronicler's narrative. It might have been deemed too foolhardy for the king to jeopardize his life in those circumstances, for without adult male progeny his death would have meant a severe succession

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[74] That bond was established by an oath of loyalty sworn publicly by the king's subjects since the time of King Edmund – corresponding with a threefold promise made by the king at his coronation, cf. S. Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then', pp. 256-57 and pp. 106-108 *infra* in my chapter on the Old English *Promissio Regis*.

[75] Cf. Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then', p. 251.

[76] See S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* 6th ser. 6 (1996), 33-49. She claims that it was an abstract construct generating a common identity of the West-Saxons, Mercians and Kentish men, defined by the West-Saxon court in stressing the otherness of those Germanic subjects from those under Danish rule. Moreover, she emphasizes the significance of a common cause, i.e. fighting off the Danes, under one leader and on a more general basis the sense of a common heritage, one faith and a shared history to this concept of 'common identity'. In her view cultural qualities such as customs, language, law and linguistic bonds were paramount in forging a collective identity in medieval societies.

[77] See my chapter on Ælfric of Eynsham *infra*.

[78] Cf. Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, pp. 81 and 97; cf. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation*, pp. 58ff.

[79] E. John, 'War and Society in the Tenth Century: the Maldon Campaign', *TRHS* 5th ser. 27 (1977), p. 174.

crisis as Higham claims.[80] This could have been one of the reasons why the king does not appear to have led his troops into battle in person till the year 1000, by which date his first wife Ælfgifu had already born him male heirs, who, however, might not have reached adulthood by then. The marriage with Emma of Normandy, in spite of their strategic significance of forging an alliance with Normandy to contain the Scandinavian threat, in 1002 provided the king with problems of a related kind. Henceforth, male heirs by two different wives could assert their respective claims to the English throne, thus providing a potential source of upheaval of rival contenders in case the king would experience an untimely death. Provided that knowledge of the cessation of the Carolingian line in 987 – without a doubt one of the most distinguished dynasties in Europe – had spread to England, this probably had made a lasting impression on Æthelred and his contemporaries, who witnessed this caesura first-handedly.[81]

Evidently much was at stake for Æthelred (and the kingdom) if he showed military courage and campaigned against the Vikings in order to elevate the morale of his troops. Either the chronicler did not bear that in mind or he just voiced popular dissatisfaction with the absence of the king. In either case his depiction of the ruler not fighting comes short of Æthelred's contemporary concerns, which would have entailed severe repercussions for his people.

When considering the chronicler's habit of de-contextualizing events and withholding important information, the accounts of Æthelred's apparent acts of violence deserve further discussion. Despite the attack on Strathclyde and the Isle of Man mentioned above, the *Chronicle* records apparent violent outbursts more than once. Historians should be aware that those acts of violence might have seemed different to contemporaries who knew their circumstances and true nature. Accordingly, interpretation and evaluation of the text of the *ASC* and the effect on the audience is difficult from today's perspective.

In 986 the *Chronicle* sparsely records "Her se cyning fordyde þæt bisceoprice æt Hrofeceastre"[82] without giving detailed information about circumstances or background. Taken at face value this annal depicts an outrageous crime of the king, whose duty, according to the idea of Christian (pastoral) kingship, it was to protect the churches in his realm – a promise made during coronation by Anglo-Saxon kings.[83] Additionally, the ensuing entry records the renewal of Viking incursions after a cessation of five years, as Watchet is said to have been ravaged and many losses were to be mourned. This annalistic sequence conveys the impression that Æthelred had committed a crime against God by ravaging

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[80]   See Higham, *Death of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 26. According to him, it might have been possible that Æthelred's first wife had not yet born him sons up to that point and his brothers, also potential successors to the throne, had already been deceased.

[81]   Cf. Lavelle, *Æthelred II*, pp. 81-82; Higham, *Death of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 26-27.

[82]   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS. C*, p. 85. *Here the king laid waste the bishopric at Rochester.*

[83]   See my chapter on the *Promissio Regis infra* (p. 106 f.).

Rochester with the result of incurring His wrath manifested by the Scandinavian raiders. However, put in the right context this event appears in a quite different light. There seems to have been a dispute between bishop Ælfstan and King Æthelred, concerning a temporary royal grant of land of ecclesiastical property (OE *læn*) to his *thegn* 'retainer' Æthelsige, which the bishop resented, subsequently evicting Æthelred's man and provoking an over-reaction on the king's part.[84] Seen against this background the whole affair can no longer be ascribed to a specific character trait of arbitrary violence, but rather expresses Æthelred's exercising of authority when one of his royal prerogatives was disputed. This perfectly corresponds with this particular period of his life, when after the death of Bishop Æthelwold in 984, hitherto one of the king's most influential teachers and advisors, the young king attempts to break free of factional influence and assert his innate royal authority.[85] Besides, a king resorting to ravaging as a punishment was not uncommon in the tenth and eleventh century and not exclusively reserved for Æthelred, but in line with the kings Eadred, Edgar, Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor.[86]

1002 marked another dismal event which contributed to Æthelred's reputation of being violent to the point of tyranny: the so-called 'St. Brice's Day massacre'. The *Chronicle* records that the king

> het ofslean ealle þa deniscan men þe on Angelcynne wæron; […] forðam þam cyninge wæs gecyd þæt hi woldan hine besyrwan æt his life ⁊ siððan ealle his witan ⁊ habban siþþan þis rice.[87]

This passage does not, however, have an explicitly negative tone. Æthelred reacted to what sounds like "an eleventh-century Gunpowder plot"[88] that endangered his life and the future of his kingdom. Nevertheless, it suggests an unprecedented level of violence by implementing a nationwide slaughter of the Danes. We should be careful not to take those lines at face value. As mentioned before, the full scale of royal authority was confined to certain territories.[89] It seems rather unlikely that in the area of the former *Danelaw* (Northumbria, Eastern Mercia and East Anglia) the king's order could have been carried out with the same efficacy as

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[84] Cf. Williams, *Æthelred*, pp. 26-9; see also Keynes, 'A Tale of Two Kings', p. 211; S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready'. 978-1016: a Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 178-80 and idem, 'Æthelred II', p. 411.

[85] Keynes headed a chapter on the period c. 984-993 'The Period of Youthful Indiscretions', see *Diplomas*, pp. 176-86.

[86] Cf. Keynes, 'Tale of Two Kings', p. 211 and n. 60.

[87] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 89; *Ordered all Danish men to be killed who were among the English people* […] *because the king had been told that they would deprive him of his life and afterwards all his councillors, and then posses this kingdom.*

[88] J. Wilcox, 'The St. Brice's Day Massacre and Archbishop Wulfstan', in *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. D. Wolfthal, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 4 (Turnhout, 2000), p. 83.

[89] See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 380.

in the royal heartland Wessex. Moreover, the Anglo-Saxons had a long tradition of amalgamation and intermarriage with the Scandinavians, who had settled in England for almost 150 years.[90]

I agree with Simon Keynes and other scholars suggesting that the king's order was directed at a certain group of 'Danes', who were most likely to be mercenaries and traders, "whose trustworthiness the king and his councillors had good reason to suspect."[91] The aspect of trustworthiness can be underscored by a contemporaneous account, apparently independent of the 'main' chronicle.

For the year 1001 the 'Winchester Manuscript' (MS A) records a Viking raid on Devon, in which a certain Pallig is accused of having deserted king Æthelred in spite of pledges and gifts received. Pallig seems to have been a Danish mercenary in the service of the English monarch, who had broken his promise and treacherously turned against his former employer. This was all the more severe as in the light of the fact that from 997 on the Viking forces (or at least parts of it), pacified and hired as mercenaries after Æthelred's truce with Olaf Tryggvason in 994, appear to have ignored the provisions of the agreement and renewed their raids. If this were indeed the case, one can assume that the 'massacre' in 1002 – on whatever scale it had been carried out – was an outburst not only of ethnic hatred, but also of frustration about the Scandinavians, who had pillaged the country for a decade, betrayed the English and nevertheless were profiting from Anglo-Scandinavian trade. Simon Keynes remarked that "deep-rooted anger materialized in the massacre on St. Brice's Day."[92] From this perspective the order of the king might even have been a popular decision. Æthelred appears to be an active ruler who was well aware of the national mood. Rather than being skulking and fearful, he responds to the issues of the day with a high degree of energy.[93]

In the context of the *Chronicle*, however, it emerges to have been an unwise action as in the following year the Danish raids recommenced under the leadership of Sweyn Forkbeard. What makes this situation even more intriguing is that according to William of Malmesbury, Pallig and his wife were killed in the massacre.[94] Pallig's wife Gunhild was the sister of Sweyn. Although we should be careful in our treatment of William's account, as his work is interspersed with exaggerations and inadequacies, we cannot dismiss the idea of a retaliatory attack

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[90] The process of Scandinavian settlement and Anglo-Scandinavian amalgamation commenced with the creation of the *Danelaw* 'area under Danish law and custom' resulting from the division of England after King Alfred's victory over the Viking leader Guthrum at Edington 878 and the subsequent 'Treaty between Alfred and Guthrum' (c. 886/890).

[91] Keynes, 'Tale of Two Kings', p. 212.

[92] S. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006-7 and 1009-1012', *ASE* 36 (2007), p. 154. According to him, there had been basically one Viking force active in the period from 991-1005.

[93] Cf. Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, p. 102.

[94] See *William of Malmesbury.Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and transl. R.A.B. Mynors *et al.*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998), I, 300.

led by Sweyn, which had been provoked by an act of violence against his countrymen and subjects, his family even. The chronicler's account conveys the notion that the Anglo-Saxons seemed to have borne the brunt for their king's character traits, resulting from apparent rumours of an attempted overthrow of government, which contributed to Æthelred's reputation of having relied on *unræd*. Whatever the case, there is another document related to the massacre: a royal charter, dated 1004 (S 909), concerning the renewal of land privileges of the monastery of St. Frideswide, Oxford. In its discursive section the charter refers in retrospective to the massacre. The tone of the charter shows no signs of remorse, and the murder of the Danes ("qui in hac insula uelut lolium inter trictictum pullulando emerserant")[95] in Oxford is called "iustissima examinatione"[96] agreed upon by the king "cum consilio optimatum satrapumque meorum,"[97] thus making it not only a decision of Æthelred alone, but one in accordance with his *witan* 'wise men'.

The St. Brice's Day massacre leaves us with an evident discrepancy in judging events. It might have been a popular measure regarded appropriate at the time of implementation, but seen in the context of the chronicler's narrative, it is yet another example of violence and *unræd* with severe repercussions for the people.

Another element which seems to be connected with Æthelred's violent streak, were the recorded blindings of prominent retainers of the king. In 993 Ælfgar, son of *ealdorman* Ælfric (of Hampshire), was blinded. At first sight this might appear as a kind of collective family punishment for the alleged treason committed by Ælfric in the preceding year (see next chapter), but this is hard to believe. Simon Keynes pointed out that Ælfgar's blinding had not been a barbaric and arbitrary act of revenge but the result of personal crimes of the *thegn* representing another stage "in the king's escape from the influence of those who had misled him in his youth."[98] Furthermore, blinding was an act of legal enforcement as it was implemented as mercy punishment under King Edgar.[99] That is why we should regard it as a display of royal strength rather than an act of violence. The late tenth and early eleventh centuries saw an increase of mutilation as a punishment for crimes in general.[100] Consequently, the king's order was far from unusual. Thirteen years later, Wulfheah and Ufegeat were blinded, and *ealdorman* Ælfhelm (of Northumbria) killed. The *Chronicle* does not mention those punishments to have been carried out on behalf of the king although this would

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[95]   Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, III, 328; *Who on this island sprung up, sprouting like cockles amongst the wheat*.

[96]   Ibid.; *By most just extermination*.

[97]   Ibid.; *With the counsel of my leading magnates and leading men*.

[98]   Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 183-84 for a discussion on Ælfgar.

[99]   Cf. idem, 'Tale of Two Kings', pp. 212-13.

[100] Cf. A. Cowen, '*Byrstas* and *bysmeras*: The Wounds of Sin in the *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*', in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: the Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. M. Townend, Studies in The Early Middle Ages 10 (Turnhout, 2004), p. 404.

be the first idea most likely to come to the mind of the reader. The *WLC* adds details concerning the involvement of *ealdorman* Eadric (of Mercia) in the murder of Ælfhelm and the blindings being carried out on royal order.[101] In spite of all the dubious circumstances those actions make no impression of arbitrariness, but seem to have been part of a greater scheme, which Simon Keynes identified as a 'palace revolution' in 1006, probably engineered by Eadric, whose family rose to prominence at court in those years.[102]

Taking it one step further, Higham assumed this 'palace revolution' to have been planned by Æthelred, who had used Eadric as an instrument to get rid of his opponents, in this case an East Mercian/Northern faction at court entertaining good relations with the malcontent *ætheling* Athelstan, who was afraid of being disinherited after his father's second marriage. Higham sees the actions taken against the *thegns* Sigeferth and Morcar in 1015 in the same context.[103] Although he seems to have an interesting case here, based among other things on the apparent generosity of Athelstan towards members of this East Mercian/Northern faction in his will of 1015,[104] it is far from conclusive.

No matter what verdict the chronicler wanted his audience to cast, he finally strikes a more conciliatory note when recording Æthelred's death admitting that "he geheold his rice mid myclum geswince ŋ earfoðnessum þa hwile ðe his lif wæs"[105] thus acknowledging the king's efforts in consideration of the circumstances he had to reign in.

After Æthelred's death "ealle ða witan þa on Lundene wæron ŋ seo burhwaru gecuron Eadmund to cyninge ŋ he his rice heardlice werode þa hwile þe his tima wæs."[106] This account is quite interesting as it suggests a smooth transition from Æthelred to his undisputed heir. Edmund is portrayed as being unanimously elected. Although this sets him apart from Sweyn (to whom the people only bowed), it also indicates a different perception of kingship in contrast to Æthelred's coronation. Whereas he was consecrated with the blessing of the church, reflecting his 'divine right of kings', Edmund was chosen king. This seems to be no less than a shift from hereditary succession – which in Anglo-Saxon England was not clearly regulated, for it could also include fraternal succession – to some kind of elective kingship, in which the monarch and his subjects were bound to each other in a relationship of lord and men (not unlike the situation

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[101] See *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, vol. II: *The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. and transl. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995), pp. 456-59.

[102] See Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 209-13 and idem, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 155.

[103] See Higham, *Death of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 41-47.

[104] Cf. *English Historical Documents*, vol. I: *c. 500-1042*, ed. D. Whitelock, 2nd ed. (London, 1979), pp. 593-96.

[105] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 101; *He held his kingdom with great toil and difficulties as long as his life lasted.*

[106] Ibid.; *All that councillors who were at London and the citizens chose Edmund as king. And he defended his kingdom zealously as long as his life lasted.*

when Æthelred returned from exile). This action might denote the claim of the English not to accept an unjust or even despotic king, whose elavation to the throne depended on birthright, but instead to choose their ruler on certain requirements, including a pledge of allegiance in return for just and benign rule on the king's part. Again the chronicler seems to give us a glimpse of his ideal of kingship, which could be read as an appeal to future kings to keep in mind that members of the House of Wessex were still seen as rightful heirs to the throne, but only under certain conditions.

Still, Edmund's election is portrayed in a more positive light than it really was. First, only the *witan* at London and its inhabitants (supposedly by acclamation) are shown to be the electorate and secondly, the *WLC*, biased as it might be, recorded that at Southampton the s*anor pars* (the majority, including the most influential councillors) of the *witan* unanimously elected Cnut and renounced the *æthelings*.[107] Once more the wording of the passage is suggestive of a contract-like agreement. Keeping that in mind, the chronicler's intention was to make a strong case for Edmund right from the start. In contrast to his father he is portrayed as a resolute, almost heroic leader mounting a forceful campaign against the invaders. Edmund leads his troops into battle himself and is victorious, whereas English efforts in the reign of his father displayed a notion of futility and helplessness. But even Edmund could not avert the eventual fate of the kingdom as he lost the decisive battle at Ashingdon, where he, like his father, was betrayed by *ealdorman* Eadric, whom he had recently received into his service despite his constant change of allegiance. The chronicler mourned "næs nan mara unræd geræd þonne se wæs,"[108] voicing what looks like a pun on an uninterrupted royal policy in the reigns of Æthelred and Edmund. The chronicler elevated Edmund, making him a torch of hope for the Anglo-Saxons – in contrast to his father's (in-)actions and caution – whose light was eventually extinguished by the same wind which had been the cause of Æthelred's troubles. Nonetheless Edmund averted utter conquest by coming to terms with Cnut on a division of the kingdom. The similarity to the agreement of King Alfred and the Viking leader Guthrum in 878 is striking. The death of Edmund 'Ironside' brought to naught what might have been the starting-point of a renewed history of re-conquest[109] and finally Cnut succeeded to the kingdom.

The conclusion to be drawn from this chapter emerges to be that the chronicler has a strong tendency to de-contextualize his depiction of Æthelred and show reticence with regard to important implications of the king's actions. We

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[107] See Darlington and McGurk, *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, pp. 484-5.

[108] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 102; *No greater ill-counsel was ever agreed to than that was.*

[109] Renewed insofar as beginning with the reign of Edward the Elder (899-924), the kings of the House of Wessex had extended their influence northwards, embarking on a conquest of the *Danelaw*, whose end came with the dissolution of the Viking kingdom of York and the expulsion of its last Norwegian ruler, Eirik 'Bloodaxe', in 954.

have to keep in mind that his account was written in retrospective, which gave him the opportunity to present events in a way fitting into his narrative of national defeat. Æthelred's actions have to be conceived in a wider context resulting in eventual conquest. Even so, he does not criticize the king directly and much of the alleged implicit criticism is a matter of debate and interpretation. The picture of Æthelred given in the *ASC* is not permanently negative but appears basically sympathetic towards the king despite all his apparent faults. Unfortunately, the question of whether the chronicler deliberately held back information which would have enriched his narrative and presented Æthelred in a more positive light, or whether he expected his intended audience to be informed about the circumstance and aware of all the implications, cannot be answered with certainty.

The depiction of Æthelred's son Edmund, despite his 'rebellion' against his father in 1015,[110] is predominantly positive. He is presented in an almost heroic way: an active king of resolve and strength, being victorious where his father appeared to have failed. Eventually, however, the sins of the father seem to have descended upon the son, as the chronicler mourns the decision to receive *ealdorman* Eadric into his service and condems this measure even more than the alleged ill counsel his father had taken and thus had brought *ungesælða* upon the English nation.

Alice Sheppard's explanation for the failure of both Anglo-Saxon kings is grounded in her reading of the *Chronicle* as salvation history:

> by assenting to the Christian theory of historical causality – political change is caused by sin [...]. As salvation history, the Æthelred-Cnut Chronicle understands conquest and invasion as a necessary part of the divine plan. Æthelred fails because he, like all the other kings in the tradition of salvation historiography, is supposed to. What at first seems to be the story of personal incompetence is instead merely the necessary preface for the coming of the next kingdom. In the accession of Cnut, that kingdom comes.[111]

Her treatment of the issues is intriguing, especially when we assume that the chronicler probably had a monastic background and would have been well-accustomed with the concept of salvation history. Taking into consideration millenary expectations, this reading of the account would stand to reason. If we accept this idea, the tone of the *Chronicle* appears to be rather conciliatory. It

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110 Edmund acted against the king's will when he married the widow of Sigeferth, a Northumbrian *thegn*, whom Æthelred had intended to be brought to Malmesbury after her husband's murder. The *atheling* also gained submssion from the people of the 'Seven Boroughs' (Lincoln, Leicester, Stamford, Derby, Nottingham, York and Torksey), cf. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* s.a 1015. I am not quite sure what to conclude from those actions but a bid for the throne on Edmund's part cannot be ruled out, although we have to be careful with such insinuations.

111 Sheppard, *Families of the King*, p. 93.

functions as both an explanation for the afflictions and appeal to the audience that they should not be afraid or malcontent with the outcome of the Danish conquest, which would by the time of the account's composition have permeated every layer of society. My opinion is that we should be cautious not to read it as ecclesiastic propaganda for the Scandinavian rule, come upon the Anglo-Saxon with divine approval, even though it cannot be ruled out. Notwithstanding, the evidence of passages suggesting underlying glimpses of hope, or an appeal to remember what could be possible, seems to be the more convincing interpretation.

The positive image of a resolute king leading the *Angelcynn* and boosting the morale of his troops might be seen as a veiled rallying cry of resistance. It was directed at an audience which should not despair as still one day the Danish rule might be ended by a king from the House of Wessex, having learned from the positive actions as well as from the faults of Æthelred. The chronicler is not overtly critical of the king but at the same time does not portray him in the most favourable light. This could be an indication that the chronicler might not have been able to voice his message openly in the contemporary political circumstances (i.e. the reign of Cnut), but needed an audience capable of understanding the implications of his narrative.

Defending the Kingdom: English Resistance and the Role of the Ealdormen

The narrative of the *Chronicle* is focused on the English dealing with the Viking invasions. Domestic affairs are only hinted at or completely neglected, thus making the struggle with the Scandinavians the preponderant element in a story of national failure towards inevitable defeat. In order to understand the effect of these incursions on the chronicler's way of writing and interpreting things, a closer survey of his depiction of the English defensive strategies, efforts and the people who implemented them is needed.

The most prominent of the policies pursued in the face of the Viking onslaught was peace-making by providing tribute and provisions for the raiding parties in order to come to terms or employ them as mercenaries.

The *Chronicle* records several instances where the Vikings were bought off (991, 994, 1002, 1007, 1012, 1018) for a truce. Apart from those national payments devised by the king and his *witan* there seem to have been local payments (e.g. the people of East Kent in 1009 and the Londoners in 1013 and 1018), accumulating to an impressive amount, which appears to have been an enormous burden for the English people. Although it was a common strategy implemented throughout Europe in the Viking Age and had been part of King

Alfred's policy towards the Scandinavian raiders a century earlier,[112] the fact that the chronicler gives exact figures, which at first glance appear to be quite intimidating, makes one wonder about his intention in doing so, even if we cannot verify the amount of the recorded payments.[113] In combination with his depiction of English military efforts, the image created is one of cowardice, where money did the job swords should have done. The chronicler does comment frequently on the payments himself. As mentioned above, the payment of 21,000 pounds to Thorkell's army at Greenwich in 1014 was described to be 'on top of all woes'. In 1006 the king and his councillors agreed on paying tribute "eallum þeodscype to þearfe, þeah hit him eallum lað wære."[114] The message of this passage is inconclusive. We cannot discern what the chronicler's attitude was when he records that it was for the benefit of the nation, especially if we keep in mind that the chronicler remarked in the preceding lines that in a situation of sheer terror, the king and his councillors eagerly contemplated what seemed to them most advisable in order to save the country from complete devastation.

Whatever his attitude, the statement that the nation hated this policy hints at an English dissatisfaction with the measure and denotes that there might have been a discrepancy between popular expectations and governmental measures, although Keynes has found evidence that the king enjoyed the support of his subjects in raising the money to buy peace from the Danes.[115] Coming back to our introductory quote of 1011, we cannot detect genuine criticism of the payment as such, just that the appropriate strategy (tribute or military resistance) was implemented on the wrong occasion. Even if we were to assume an underlying critique of the strategy pursued, it could have well been the outcome of a retrospective verdict on a measure that had been regarded appropriate at the time of its implementation. One has to keep in mind that buying off the Vikings did not only buy time but in my opinion also emerges to be a prudent decision, as after the annihilation of Byrhtnoth's forces at Maldon in 991, the Anglo-Saxons were aware that the alternative would be paying with English blood. Whereas the Scandinavians were a trained military force, the Anglo-Saxons had enjoyed almost twenty years of peace during the reign of Edgar (959-975). When the Vikings returned in the 980s England was ripe for pillaging, as the defences had eroded, the garrisons were not permanently manned and the standing armies established

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[112] Cf. R. Abels, 'Paying the Danegeld: Anglo-Saxon Peacemaking with the Vikings', in *War and Peace in Ancient and Medieval History*, ed. P. de Souza and J. France (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 173–92, for a general survey of Anglo-Saxon strategies.

[113] Cf. Keynes, 'Historical Context' pp. 100-1 and n. 60. He argued that the statements about the tribute sums seemed credible, as they would not be incompatible with the volume of coinage during Æthelred's reign.

[114] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 92; *For the benefit of the whole nation, although it was hateful to them all.*

[115] See Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 202, n. 182.

in the reigns of Alfred and Edward the Elder had become unnecessary.[116] Coming to terms with the Scandinavian invaders thus seems to have been a reasonable strategy. Ryan Lavelle argued that peace had been a continuation of politics by other means.[117] Large armies (or *fyrds*) were difficult to keep together, making the cessation of hostilities and the setting up of a truce a practical necessity.[118]

Damon has cogently argued that those payments need to be seen as part of a peace plan related to a concern in the society about the morality of warfare. According to him, the idea that peace could have been best achieved through conversion to the Christian faith played an important role.[119] It is significant therefore, that, according to the *Chronicle*, archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury seems to have advised that course and figures prominently among others in the text of Æthelred's treaty with the Viking forces (*II Æthelred*).[120] When we take into consideration the account of the events of the *Chronicle* concerning the raids lead by Olaf Tryggvason, the scheme of payments and conversion comes into our focus.

The various manuscripts give a different reading as far as Olaf's campaigns are concerned. MS A seems to conflate the annals for 991 and 994, as it connects Olaf's presence at Maldon with the statement that the king stood sponsor at his confirmation, which the 'main' account records for 994 in the wake of the attack on London.[121] Therefore, my analysis is based on the 'main' account. Æthelred continues a policy which had been successful during Alfred's times and which had had several continental precedents, such as Louis the Pious who received the Dane Harald Klak at baptism at Ingelheim in 826. However, the Norwegian king-to-be became Æthelred's confirmant, i.e., a member of the king's family, not a godson by baptism.[122] According to the annal, Olaf promised that he would never come back to England in hostility, and states that he had fared thus. Although Olaf may have been baptized before he came to England,[123] the event at Andover and the subsequent treaty with the Norwegian and his forces were a clever tactical move, whose significance the chronicler did not present in full.

Not only does Olaf seem to have come into Æthelred's service, but he also became a great promoter of Christianity throughout Norway, Greenland and the

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[116] Cf. R. Abels, 'English Tactics, Strategy and Military Organization in the Late Tenth Century', in *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg, p. 144.

[117] See R. Lavelle, 'Towards a Political Contextualization of Peacemaking and Peace Agreements in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Peace and Negotiation*, ed. Wolfthal, p. 39.

[118] See ibid., p. 44.

[119] See J. E. Damon, 'Advisors for Peace in the Reign of Æthelred the Unræd', in *Peace and Negotiation*, ed. Wolfthal, p. 58.

[120] See p. 66 *infra* in my chapter on the early legislation of Æthelred.

[121] Cf. J. Bately, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', in *Battle of Maldon,* ed. Scragg, pp. 37-50.

[122] See Darlington and McGurk, *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, pp. 444: "sibi in filium adoptavit"; *Adopted him as a son*.

[123] Cf. E.V. Gordon, 'The Date of Æthelred's treaty with the Vikings: Olaf Tryggvason and the Battle of Maldon', *Modern Language Review* 32 (1937), pp. 29-30.

Orkneys after he had succeeded to the crown of Norway.[124] It is also possible that England provided parts of the clergy for conversion. Æthelred thus pursued an intricate foreign policy in order to drive a wedge between the Danish and Norwegian factions. When we keep in mind that the Anglo-Saxon king had agreed to a peace treaty with Normandy in 991, secured by the marriage to Emma of Normandy in 1002, he had ingeniously guarded his flanks. The peace treaty of 991 is not mentioned by the chronicler. We can but only speculate about his intention. Maybe it was a matter of deliberation to conceal this achievement of Æthelred's foreign policy or he regarded it as too insignificant, as the treaty's intention had come to nothing with regard to the renewed Viking raids, especially the fleet which (according to the *ASC*) retreated to the duchy in 1000, thus apparently proving the provisions of the treaty meaningless.

The full impact of Æthelred's foreign policy might become clear when we consider the dates of events. It is striking that the first recorded event in 994 takes place in September (Nativity of St. Mary). Bearing in mind that the dating of the annals in the *Chronicle* was not consistent, as Swanton has shown,[125] it cannot be ruled out that the attack on London took place in September 993, with the annal following the indiction year commencement (a tax cycle with the beginning of the (fiscal) year in September).[126] Consequently, the following events and the hiring of Olaf as mercenary can be brought into line with renewed Viking attacks on Saxony in 994 as recorded by Thietmar of Merseburg.[127] Those raids might have been the consequence of Æthelred securing his coasts by means of an alliance with the Norwegian, thus forcing Viking adventurers to look for another area to loot and pillage. From this perspective, the arrangement between the English king and Olaf exhibits a well-planned foreign policy.

Even though the chronicler does not record all the important implications of the strategy implemented in Olaf's case, he does not deem it imprudent or false. In like manner receiving Thorkell's forces into his service initially appears to have been a story of success. Only when those forces demanded payments in order to take up weapons against Sweyn does the description of Æthelred's policy take a negative connotation. Nevertheless, the 'main' account does not voice overt criticism towards this policy. MS A, however, as I have mentioned previously, portrays Pallig's broken pledge of allegiance without criticizing his employment as mercenary in the first place. It rather sounds as if the A-chronicler was disappointed with the Dane's disregard of lordship ties than an utterance of critique. The fact that the entry concerning Pallig is not recorded by the main

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[124] Cf. T. M. Andersson, 'The Viking Policy of Ethelred the Unready', *Scandinavian Studies* 59 (1987), p. 285.

[125] See Swanton, *Chronicle*, pp. xv-xvi.

[126] Cf. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions*, pp. 42-43.

[127] See *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, IV, chs. 23-25, ed. and transl. W. Trillmich, Ausge-wählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 9 (Darmstadt, 1957), pp. 139-43.

chronicler is puzzling. Even if it is hard to draw a proper conclusion from this, it at least reminds us that the information given by the 'main' account should by no means be taken for granted, as the independent account of MS. A provides us with additional and different information for Olaf's campaign and the year 1001.

Paying tribute and setting up truces was but only one aspect of the Anglo-Saxon resistance. In the 990s Æthelred began an ambitious programme of military construction: new boroughs were raised on the sites of Iron-Age hill forts (south Cadbury, Old Sarum, Cissbury) in connection with the refurbishment of defences of existing boroughs.[128] Moreover, after the renewed Viking raids of the 980s seem to have passed by unopposed, English military resistance was mounted to engage the Scandinavian threat.

The entry on the encounter at Maldon in 991 provides us with the first account of a pitched battle between Anglo-Saxons led by their *ealdorman* Byrhtnoth and a Viking force. Unfortunately, both the accounts of CDE and A are very sparse in their description of the event. This is significant in two ways: first the defeat of the Essex *fyrd* lead by such an important *ealdorman* like Byrhtnoth must have come as a shock for the Anglo-Saxons and secondly, the chronicler shows a tendency to personalize his accounts of military encounters with the Vikings by describing and commenting upon the behaviour of the leading men.

In that way the alleged deficiency of Anglo-Saxon defences is embodied by *ealdorman* Ælfric (of Hampshire), who features prominently in the English defeats of 992 and 1003.

In 992, when the English had assembled a fleet on a national level to entrap the Danish army, the *Chronicle* records that the *ealdorman* warned the Danish fleet and abandoned his own forces at night "him sylfum to myclum bysmore."[129] What seems to be despicable treachery must be treated carefully. Following Damon's argumentation, Ælfric might have been a proponent of a peace policy of tribute and conversion. What the chronicler portrayed as an act of betrayal might have been an "attempt to pre-empt the fighting by a peace parley that went awry."[130] He further suggests that Æthelred himself had favoured secret negotiations, despite pursuing a military solution on the outset, in order to overcome a division among his *witan* on the question of military resistance or coming to terms in a peaceful way. Damon has a point when he claims that "a policy of appeasement can easily be termed treason if it results in defeat."[131] Whatever the case, such an obvious act of betrayal would have entailed severe consequences. Oddly enough, Ælfric is not deprived of his office, as he reappears in the narrative of the *Chronicle* in 1003 and 1016 and features among the senior *ealdormen* in attesting the king's diplomas,

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[128] Cf. Abels, 'English Tactics', p. 145.
[129] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 86; *Himself to great disgrace.*
[130] Damon, 'Advisors for Peace', p. 66.
[131] Ibid., p. 69.

being in top position from 999 to 1009.[132] The objection that Æthelred might have been too powerless to discharge and punish Ælfric for his actions is hardly credible.

When making his reappearance in 1003, the picture we get from Ælfric is far from positive. In order to encounter the Danes, a great *fyrd* was gathered from Wiltshire and Hampshire, which is said to have gone "swiðe anrædlice"[133] against the Viking army, giving the impression that the force was determined to defend the kingdom. In this context (given the background of 992) it appears symptomatic that, when Ælfric enters the scene as the leader of the *fyrd*, the whole effort turned into disaster. The chronicler remarks that he had been up to his old tricks, feigned himself sick and said that he was ill "⁊ swa þæt folc becyrde þæt he læden sceolde, swa hit gecweden ys, þonne se heretoga wacað þonne bið eall se here swiðe gehindrad."[134] The first remarkable thing about this passage is that Ælfric is said to have continued his 'old tricks'. Either the chronicler's remark about the *ealdorman*'s character was common knowledge, or he rather tries to stir up the emotions of his audience in being suggestive of Ælfric's character traits and intended to influence its judgement of him. The overriding issue in these lines is that of lordship bonds. Instead of inspiring his men and leading them into battle, Ælfric betrays them and thus the mutual bonds of lordship which were so important in late Anglo-Saxon England.

The subsequent proverb looks like the chronicler's attempt to remind his audience what was necessary to fight off the invaders and probably to implicitly criticize the practice of those in command, who apparently had failed to act according to the code of conduct drawn up by the chronicler. Lordship ties and personal leadership were paramount to him. T. D. Hill has shown that the proverb had several predecessors: similar sayings are to be found in a letter by Alcuin, in the *Durham Proverbs* and the Alfredian translation of the *Regula Pastoralis* of Gregory the Great.[135] He concluded from those lines in the *ASC* that it

> reflects one of the central themes of the Anglo-Saxon literary response
> [...], the tension between the old heroic ideals and the harsh necessities
> demanded by the reality of war. From a purely pragmatic perspective
> avoiding combat might on occasion be wise, but from the perspective of
> traditionalists such as the Maldon-Poet or the chronicler [...], prudence
> seemed too similar to cowardice.[136]

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[132] Cf. S. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters c. 670-1066*, vol. I: *Tables*, ASNC Guides, Texts and Studies 5 (Cambridge, 2002), Table LXII.

[133] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 90; *Very resolutely*.

[134] Ibid.; *And thus betrayed the people he should have led, as it is said, when the leader gives way, the whole army will be much hindered.*

[135] See T. D. Hill, "'When the Leader is Brave…': an Old English Proverb and its Vernacular Context', *Anglia* 119 (2001), pp. 233-34; see also Plummer, *Chronicles*, II, 183.

[136] T. D. Hill, "'When the Leader is Brave…'", p. 236.

The chronicler further embarks on the question of leadership when he describes the Danes to have exploited the army's confusion when they saw that they "anræde næron."[137] This seems to have been a pun on the introductory remark to this passage, when the *fyrd* approached the Vikings *anrædlice*. Alice Sheppard is of the opinion that this further denoted the English defeat being the result of a lack of commitment to their leader rather than a lack in bravery, referring to the meaning of the word *anræd*, which in a political context meant 'loyal', 'faithful', 'committed to a lord or king'.[138] The defeat of the Anglo-Saxons in spite of a promising beginning was thus personalized and attributed to an *ealdorman* incapable of fulfilling his duties and provoking the break of lordship ties resulting in inevitable defeat. Once more, one is inclined to suspect Ælfric's 'tricks', as his position as prominent general and councillor of the king in royal diplomas does not suggest wrongdoing on his part. Ælfric's sickness might have been perceived by bystanders as feigned and embellished as fitting piece for his narrative by the chronicler. In contrast thereto, it could also have been the natural reaction of someone who, in the face of an overwhelming Viking force with the prospect of slaughter and the terror of war, had lost his nerves. This reaction would have been human if we consider the brutality and ruthlessness of shield-wall encounters in those days. Probably Ælfric was not up to his job anymore, although I would dismiss Higham's remark that by 1003 he was a "frightened old man."[139]

Comparing the events of 1003 with the annal for the following year makes the latter a sort of counterpiece. The prominent English leader in this case is a certain Ulfcytel (styled *dux Eastanglorum* by the *WLC*,[140] though there is no contemporary evidence that would validate his office as *ealdorman* of East Anglia). When he is confronted with the task of dealing with a Danish force lead by Sweyn Forkbeard – the same force which had vanquished the *fyrd* lead by Ælfric – he and his councillors deem a strategy of buying off the invaders most reasonable, as he was not able to collect large enough an army in due time. The Danes consequently break the truce and Ulfcytel orders their ships to be destroyed. Unfortunately, he is betrayed by those "þa ðe he to þohte"[141] – displaying yet another episode in the

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[137] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 90; *Were not resolute*.
[138] See Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel', pp. 408-9 and n. 46. This meaning is not to be found in the dictionaries I have consulted: see Hall, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *anrædice* and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *an-rædlice*. I am highly indebted to Janna Müller, who made me aware of the fact, that according to the *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)* *ānræd* could indeed have had the meaning of 'resolute in support of (the king)'. Nevertheless, it assumes that denotation only in combination with the preposition *mid*, which consequently seems to be a set expression or idiom. Therefore, as this is not the case in the passage under investigation, Sheppard's reading provides us with an intriguing point, which, however, does probably not apply to our context; cf. A. Di Paolo Healy *et al.*, *Dictionary of Old English*, s.v. *ān-ræde, ānræd*.
[139] Higham, *Death of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 28.
[140] See Darlington and McGurk, *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, p. 454.
[141] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 90; *Those who he beseeched for this*.

chronicler's tale of disloyalty and constant failure. Following this alleged act of treachery, Ulfcytel assembles an army and engages the Danish force "fæstlice" 'stoutly'.[142] The chronicler bemourns the bereavement: "ðær wearð Eastengla folces seo yld ofslagen"[143] and boasts that if the full strength of the East Anglians had been there, the Danes would have been annihilated and closes this entry by claiming the Danes to have said "þæt hi næfre wyrsan handplegan on Angelcynne ne gemitton."[144] By effectively juxtaposing the accounts of Ælfric and Ulfcytel, the chronicler depicts good and bad leadership. The East Anglian *thegn* at first pursues a policy similar to that of Æthelred and his councillors. But unlike him, Ulfcytel does not accept the apparent treachery but collects his forces and leads the troops into battle himself. There might be even more to it than meets the eye. Ulfcytel in contrast to Ælfric is no *ealdorman*. Nevertheless, he seems to have been able to collect a strong force because of his personality. The chronicler perhaps intended his audience to perceive him as a brave leader who had earned his people's allegiance through exemplary lordship – intensifying the contrast to Ælfric. Moreover, the fact that he was no *ealdorman* might have been a criticism of Æthelred's practice of leaving those important offices vacant.[145] In the case of East Anglia this entailed severe consequences as two major Danish incursions (1004 and 1010) are recorded in the *ASC*. The remark that the East Anglians would have had a more commensurate victory if their full strength had been there could have been a side blow for Æthelred to the effect that if Ulfcytel – who would have been more capable of that office than the other leaders the king had appointed – had been an *ealdorman*, he would have had the authority to muster a larger force to fight off the Danish invaders. Although this is of course a matter of speculation it seems quite plausible. Finally, the choice of words in the 'Ulfcytel episode' seems to invoke Old English poetry, using this annal to promote a heroic lordship as Alice Sheppard has so cogently argued.[146] We find *handplegan* in the *Battle of Brunanburh* (l. 25a)[147] and *yld* usually denotes warriors or noble leaders in heroic poetry. In the same vein the dramatic account of the East Anglian chief men perishing makes Ulfcytel's victory even more heroic and simultaneously conveys the idea that it was honourable to face the enemy on the battlefield and perish while defending one's people and country against all odds.

At the same time, it adds to the impression that buying off the Danes was regarded as a suitable and advisable strategy for coping with the Scandinavian raiders when the occasion arose. It was only deemed negative in retrospective

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[142] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 90.

[143] Ibid.; *There were the leading men of the East Anglian people slain.*

[144] Ibid., pp. 90-1; *That they never met worse an encounter among the English nation.*

[145] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 197-98 and n. 163. There had not been an East Anglian *ealdorman* since the death of Æthelwine in c. 990.

[146] See Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel', pp. 410-11.

[147] See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 78.

when additional financial burdens like the *Danegeld*[148] had afflicted the Anglo-Saxons without procuring the intended result of averting national defeat.

Ulfcytel's importance is stressed once more in 1010 when the Danish army landed at Ipswich and went straight away to the place where they had heard the East Anglian *thegn* to be with his army. It seems as if the Danes either wanted to show their boldness and take revenge for the humiliation in 1004 or simply that the chronicler wants us to believe that they regarded Ulfcytel the most menacing threat to their plans. Thus, the hero of the East Anglians becomes a symbol for Anglo-Saxon resistance, casting a shadow on the king and his *ealdormen*. This entry, however, does not provide us with another account of fierce courage of Ulfcytell's forces, but instead reports the flight of the East Angles without mentioning their leader at all. Instead, the men of Cambridgeshire resisted resolutely, but more often than not in the chronicler's narrative, the effort was betrayed by the flight of a named leader, in this case Thurcetel 'Mare's Head', who "fleam ærest astealde" 'first started the flight'.[149]

Eventual flight and defeat of the English forces after being deserted by their leader feature as recurring images in the sympathetic story of English resistance.

In 993 the supposed leaders of the Anglo-Saxon forces (Fræna, Godwine and Fryðegyst) are said to be the ones who first gave flight, but like Ælfric they continued to witness diplomas long after their actions, from which we can conclude that their behaviour was not regarded as an act of treachery.[150] Likewise, even if the image of fleeing Anglo-Saxon forces is quite frequent in the *Chronicle*, we should neither come to the conclusion that fear and cowardice prevailed among the descendants of those bold and warlike warriors who had come to Britain in the 5th century, nor that all the chief men were traitors or hampered by fear. What is portrayed as flight could, from a more objective perspective, be regarded as tactical retreat in the face of an enemy which outnumbered the often hastily gathered English *fyrd*. Simon Keynes has argued that the Viking forces in the latter part of Æthelred's reign appeared to have been considerably larger than e.g. the *micel here*, which troubled England in King Alfred's days. The armies of Æthelred's time had numbered "between five and ten thousand men,"[151] including "professional soldiers recruited from throughout Scandinavia […], products of a land effectively organized for war."[152] A tactical retreat when facing a superior opponent in order to avoid total defeat was without a doubt the most reasonable decision Anglo-Saxon leaders could make.

We can in no possible way appropriately assess the situation 1000 years ago, but what definitely influences our verdict on the account is the portrayal of the

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[148] Cf. S. Keynes, 'Heregeld', *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 235.
[149] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 94.
[150] Cf. Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LXIII.
[151] Idem, 'Tale of Two Kings', p. 206; cf. also idem, *Diplomas*, pp. 224-25.
[152] Idem, 'Tale of Two Kings', p. 206 and n. 36.

notorious *ealdorman* of Mercia, Eadric 'Streona' ('the Aquisitor'), who in the *Chronicle* appears to be the very personification of betrayal, breaking lordship bonds and personal gain, leading to the breakdown of society and eventual defeat.

His appointment to the post of *ealdorman* of Mercia can be seen as a brilliant tactical move by Æthelred. After a vacancy of some 20 years, the Mercian ealdormanry was revived in order to provide an organized and effective resistance and put the forces of central England under a single command. It seems to be an appropriate response to what the chronicler criticized in 1010:

> Þonne bead man eallan witan to cynge, ⁊ man sceolde þonne rædan hu man þisne eard werian sceolde, ac þeah mon þonne hwæt rædde þæt ne stod furðon ænne monað; æt nextan næs nan heafodman þæt fyrde gaderian wolde, ac ælc fleah swa he mæst mihte, ne furðon nan scir nolde oþre gelæstan æt nextan.[153]

This lamentation shows us quite frankly that the perception of measures implemented by the royal government and the nobles was one of chaos. Like an almost similar passage in 1006, it suggests discord among the leading men and consultations, which in the end showed no expedient results, while at the same time the country was harried and destroyed – as the saying goes: "War means old men talking and young men dying."

Even so, this annal is recorded for 1010, when Thorkell's fleet had already landed in England, causing indescribable harm and devastation, and therefore might have influenced the perception of the chronicler, who provides us with a dramatic narration of a nation breaking apart. The account probably pinpoints a problem which had been there from the start. Seen against this background, assigning Eadric the office of Mercian *ealdorman* was an attempt to overcome dissension in order to organize an effective defence against the Vikings. Eadric was an upstart from a not very prominent West Mercian family. His appointment meant a break with the established aristocracy, which had hitherto shown a disappointing performance in defending the kingdom. Æthelred put his trust in *homines novi* (the appointment of Uhtred to the ealdormanry of Northumbria in 1006 being another example), not at least to secure his own position in uncertain times by enlarging a faction among his *witan* of men loyal to him. On the other hand, Æthelred took a considerable risk by investing him with a level of unprecedented power. The account in the *ASC* suggests that the king's expectations and trust were undeserved.

The chronicler records Eadric's appointment in 1007 with plain words without passing any judgement on him. But as the narrative gains momentum Eadric turns

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[153] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 95; *Then all councillors were summoned to the king and it was then to be decided how this country should be defended. But even if anything was then decided, this did not even stand for more than a month. Therafter, there was no leader who wanted to gather an army, but each fled as best as he could and in the end no shire would even help the next.*

into the figure-head of Anglo-Saxon failure and treachery. In 1009, when the king had issued a nationwide order of resistance and apparently entrapped the Viking army lead by Thorkell, the long-desired triumph was thwarted by the *ealdorman*: "Ac hit wæs þa ðuruh Eadric ealdorman gelet swa hit gyt æfre wæs."[154] This statement, however, is anachronistic and passes judgement on Eadric with the advantage of hindsight, as up to that point he does not appear to be accountable for any kind of transgression as far as defending the kingdom was concerned. The chronicler deliberately sets the tone for our subsequent understanding of the Eadric's character, quite similar to his approach towards Ælfric. What we have here is an absolutization. In this case, Streona's action is all the more severe, as Thorkell's army which would have been on the brink of defeat, henceforth wrought unprecedented harm, overrunning the larger part of Eastern and Southern England. Nevertheless, Eadric rose to top-rank among the *ealdormen* from 1010 on, thus disturbing the system of seniority.[155] We get a notion of the dimension of his influence in 1012 when it is said "Eadric ealdorman ʒ ealle þa yldestan witan, gehadode ʒ læwede, Angelcynnes"[156] came to London. This wording is quite reminiscent of the usually applied phrase 'the king and all his councillors'. It is tempting to assume a pun inserted by the chronicler to show how much influence Eadric had gained despite his questionable character.[157]

The most prominent qualities of this *ealdorman*, if we follow the account in the *Chronicle*, are betrayal and intrigue. In 1015, when Edmund collected an army to fight Cnut with the combined forces of him and Eadric, the latter thwarts the mutual effort by deserting Edmund and swapping sides, taking 40 ships with him to support Cnut. The passage explicitly states "ða wolde se ealdorman beswican þone æþeling."[158]

He would have been worthy of the nickname 'turncoat' as after Edmund's initial victories against Cnut one year later, Eadric rejoins his ranks the following year. The Battle of Ashingdon provided the scene for his final act of treachery: "Þa dyde Eadric ealdorman swa swa he ær oftor dyde; astealde þæne fleam ærest mid Magesæton ʒ aswac swa his cynehlaforde ʒ ealre Angelcynnes þeode."[159] This decisive encounter resulted in total defeat of the English forces, wherein all the nobility perished (e.g. Ælfric and Ulfcytell). Thereafter, Eadric played a prominent part in the negotiations between Edmund and Cnut. The choice of words seems

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[154] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 94; *But it was then hindered by ealdorman Eadric such as it always was.*

[155] Cf. Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LXII. Usually the senior, i.e. the one who had held his office the longest, was in top-position to attest royal charters.

[156] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 96; *Ealdorman Eadric and all the chief councillors, clerical and lay, of the English people.*

[157] A later Worcester monk assigned him the title *sub-regulus*. Cf. *Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, ed. T. Hearne, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1723), I, 281.

[158] O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 100; *Then the ealdorman wanted to betray the prince.*

[159] Ibid., p. 102; *Then did ealdorman Eadric as he had often done before; he first started the flight together with the Magonsætae and so betrayed his lord and all the people of the English.*

important. The term *cynehlaford* (with reference to Edmund) instead of *cyning* evokes the impression that the chronicler wants to stress the bonds of lordship which were torn apart. Eadric betrayed his natural lord, underscoring the argument that Æthelred's reign was permeated by the dissolution of personal bonds within society. The chronicler seems to have been determined to have a named villain to personalize the issue of loyalty.[160] Æthelred's kingdom seems to have collapsed from within when confronted with an exterior threat.

The apparent palace revolution in 1006, the events of 1015, when the king's *thegns* Sigeferth and Morcar were betrayed and killed by Eadric, and the subsequent 'rebellion' of Edmund *ætheling* against his father (a bid for the throne on his part?) are evidence of a late Anglo-Saxon state that began to crumble. Internal divisions and factionalism seem to have weakened the nation from within, making it ripe for conquest. In this situation, the influential protagonists seemed to have striven for power and tried to gain what was possible, thus undermining a united Anglo-Saxon effort to overcome the invaders. This was exemplarily displayed by the actions of the *ealdormen,* whose apparent acts of cowardice and treason were all the more tragic, as they were the king's confidants and generals, in whom the monarch and the Anglo-Saxon people had put their trust and hope: "Treachery, like loyalty, is in starker relief when it comes attached to an identifiable character"[161] as Jonathan Wilcox has argued. The submissions of Æthelmær in 1013 and Uhtred in 1016 to the Danish invaders are contributing to this picture. Seen against the depiction of Ulfcytel as heroic leader, Æthelred's choice of generals appears to be particularly unfortunate, thus blaming the eventual conquest – at least indirectly – on the king.

Despite the personalized focus on English defeat, the whole narrative conveys the impression of desperation as no measures seem to be effective. In 1006 the Anglo-Saxon defensive efforts are not only presented to have been ineffective ("ac hit naht ne beheold þe ma ðe hit oftor ær dide"),[162] but the English forces seem to have caused afflictions for the population: "seo fyrding dyde þære landleode ælcne hearm, þæt him naðer ne dohte ne inghere ne uthere."[163] As Wilcox remarked, the equation of the Danish army and the Anglo-Saxon *fyrd* was quite cynical. The compound *inghere* blends contradictory elements as on the one hand *ing-* suggests a domestic element as opposed to foreign invaders, but on the other it is combined with the term *here*, which in the narrative of the *Chronicle* always denotes a Viking force. The boundaries are blurred. The afflictions for the people must have been so severe that the contemporary perceptions appear to be one of

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[160] Cf. J. Wilcox, '*The Battle of Maldon* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 979–1016: a Winning Combination', *Proceedings of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 3 (1995), p. 39.

[161] Ibid.

[162] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 91; *But it availed no more than it had often done before.*

[163] Ibid.; *The English army caused the people of the country every sort of harm, so that they profited neither from the native army nor the foreign army.*

general woe. Trust in Anglo-Saxon institutions (i.e. the *fyrd*) must have been shaken in its very foundation. The people were no longer able to identify friends and foes. A similar passage is recorded for 999 when the English efforts resulted not in fighting the Danes but in the oppression of the people, the waste of money and even the encouragement of the raiders.

This notion of chaotic circumstances, where the terror caused by the Danes goes hand in hand with the oppression caused by the English forces, is reminiscent of Archbishop Wulfstan, who in his *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos* admonishes the English for imitating Danish practices and causing woe.[164]

Even Æthelred's nationwide naval building programme in 1009 comes to nothing because of the treacherous action of individuals. The perception of this catastrophe is even aggravated by the fact that the chronicler records that there had never been a larger fleet in Anglo-Saxon England and stresses what high hopes the people had concerning the fleet, but in the end desperately concludes: "ꝺ næs se sige na betere þe eal Angelcyn to hopode"[165] after remarking near the beginning of the entry: "Ac we ða gyt næfdon þa gesælða ne þone wyrðscype þæt se scypfyrd nyt wære þissum earde þe ma ðe heo oftor ær wæs."[166] The nation had made a tremendous effort and endured the burdens imposed upon them, but once again it had availed nothing. The defeatist tone immanent in statements like this is striking and provides something of a red thread meandering through the chronicler's narrative.

Nonetheless, this is not the end of the story. Although the chronicler "presents the reign as a remorseless progression towards ultimate disaster,"[167] as Simon Keynes put it, an uncertainty remains concerning the question whether the Anglo-Saxons in the 990s and the first decade of the eleventh century had this "threat of defeat"[168] looming on their consciousness.

The answer cannot be given with certainty, but, surprisingly, evidence from the *Chronicle* seems to give credibility to the argument that in fact the English did not display defeatism, but resolutely tried to withstand the Viking onslaught. On several occasions the Anglo-Saxon forces are portrayed as having courageously resisted their enemies,[169] even though the final outcome of those encounters was defeat or retreat in most cases. The focal point of English resistance seems to have been the borough of London.

The chronicler gives special credit to the *burhwaru* 'citizens' of London, who in 994, 1009, 1013 and 1016 withstood the Scandinavian attacks. In 994 the

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164 See p. 98 *infra*.
165 O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*; p. 93; *And no better than this was the victory which all the English people had hoped for.*
166 Ibid. p. 92; *But yet we had not the good fortune nor the honour that the naval force was of use to this country, any more than it had been on many previous occasions.*
167 Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', p. 166.
168 Ibid.
169 See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, s.a. 999, 1001, 1003, 1004, 1009, 1010.

chronicler records that when the Scandinavians attacked it

> hi þær geferdon maran hearm ⁊ yfel þonne hi æfre wendon þæt him ænig buruhwaru gedon sceolde. Ac seo halige Godes modor on þam dæge hire mildheortnesse þære buruhware gecydde ⁊ hi ahredde wið heora feondum.[170]

suggesting that not only the Londoners surprised the Vikings by their resolve, but also that they had divine assistance. We find similar entries for 1009: "⁊ oft hi on þa buruh Lundene fuhton. Ac si Gode lof þæt heo gyt gesund stent, ⁊ hi þær æfre yfel geferdon."[171] and 1016: "gewende se here sona to Lundene ⁊ ða buruh utan embsæt ⁊ hyre stearclice onfeaht ægðer ge be wætere ge be lande, ac se ælmihtiga God hi ahredde."[172] Only in 1013 the victory of the Londoners seems not to have been due to divine providence but rather to the presence of the king, who thus had lifted the citizens' morale and fighting spirit as I have mentioned in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, even London was not impregnable, as it was burnt in 982 and submitted to the invaders in 1013 and 1016. It is significant that after Cnut's accession, the *burhwaru* of London had to pay an extra tribute in 1018, giving credit not only to the wealth of the prosperous trading centre but also as a sign of special humiliation in order to demoralize the very symbol of Anglo-Saxon resistance.

With regard to the London context, another event is of importance: the martyrdom of Archbishop Ælfheah in 1012. The archbishop of Canterbury was kidnapped by the Viking force in 1011, after he was betrayed by a certain Ælfmær who showed the Scandinavians a secret passage into the city. Again, this contributes to the chronicler's narrative of disloyalty and betrayal, in this case made all the more despicable as, according to the *ASC*, Ælfheah had saved the traitor's life beforehand. The description of the archbishop as "heafod Angelkynnes ⁊ Cristendomes"[173] is telling in this regard. Oddly enough he is assigned the title 'head of the English' instead of King Æthelred. Maybe this denotes the chronicler's perception of all secular institutions having failed and an appeal that from now on the people should place their faith in religion to aid the English defences in times of distress.

After Ælfheah was martyred, his body was translated to London, where it was buried at St. Paul's, where "nu God sutelað þæs halgan martires mihta."[174] These

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[170] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 87; *There they suffered more harm and evil than they ever thought any citizens would do to them. But the holy mother of God on that day showed her mercy to the citizens and delivered them from their enemies.*

[171] Ibid., p. 94; *Often they attacked the borough of London. But, praised be God, it still stands untouched and they always suffered evil there.*

[172] Ibid., p. 102; *The army soon turned to London and besieged the borough, attacking it strongly both by water and by land, but the Almighty God delivered it.*

[173] Ibid., p. 96; *The head of the English and of Christendom.*

[174] Ibid., p. 97; *Now God reveals the powers of the holy martyr.*

passages appear as a hagiographical piece making the dead archbishop something like a patron saint. According to Paul Cavill, this passage on Ælfheah is reminiscent of elements of the rhythmical prose of Ælfric and Wulfstan.[175]

Apart from that, the fact that he was buried in London makes this city the focal point of English resistance as the head of the *Angelcynn* and Christendom lies there. In the eyes of the chronicler the burial of Ælfheah might have been the reason for the deliverance of the borough from the Viking onslaught. The attack on Canterbury as the spiritual centre of the Anglo-Saxons and the barbaric slaughter of the Archbishop – a crime with almost biblical dimensions – must have come as a shock for the people, which they probably conceived as a sign of the impending breakdown of society and a precedent of the last days. At the same time, by shifting the spiritual centre from Canterbury to London, the chronicler tries to invoke the example of Ælfheah's weaponless resistance and attributes divine assistance to London.

The 'faith factor' should not be underestimated as in the course of British and Anglo-Saxon scholarship Gildas, Alcuin and Bede, to name but a few, stressed the importance of the Anglo-Saxons as favoured by God, almost invoking the notion of 'God's chosen people', a concept originally reserved for the Israelites. Especially Bede's notion of the *adventus Saxonum* (the arrival of the Germanic tribes in Britain) and the subsequent progression of Anglo-Saxon (ecclesiastical) history as a story of the confirmation and trial of a Christian nation pleasing to God was of importance. The Angles, Saxons and Jutes were portrayed as the chosen people who took their rightful place in conquering the Britons.[176] Given the circumstances of the chronicler's account, history seemed to have repeated itself, once again replacing a people which had become corrupt due to its sins and therefore lost God's favour, by yet another chosen people – the Danes.

Therefore, it does not seem too far-fetched that the chronicler wanted to provide London as an example for the Anglo-Saxons that God was still on their side, trying to dismiss possible defeatism among the people, who believed that it was part of God's divine plan to punish them for their transgressions. Even if the enemy emerged to have been sent as divine wrath for English sins, they should not give up hope, but believe in the notion of being God's chosen people. This could have well been the case, even if we assume that the 'main' account was written after the Danish conquest. The careful observer can detect a slight notion

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[175] See P. Cavill, *Vikings: Fear and Faith in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2001), pp. 165-66 and Plummer, *Chronicles*, I, 142; cf. T. A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories. Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 106-110 for a possible attribution to Wulfstan. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe argues against the passage of 1011 to be read as verse (cf. *MS C.*, p. 96, n. 7).

[176] Cf. Cavill, *Fear and Faith*, pp. 48-57. For Bede's account of the *adventus Saxonum* see Beda, *Storia Degli Inglesi (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)*, ed. M. Lapidge and transl. P. Chiesa, 2 vols.: *Volume I (Libri I-II)* (Milan, 2008), pp. 66-72. For the OE translation: *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, ed. T. Miller, 4 vols., EETS os 95, 96, 110, 111 (London, 1890-98; repr. as two volumes 1959), I.1, 51-55.

of encouragement in the annals at a time when an overt rallying cry for resistance was not possible. He appeals to the Anglo-Saxons that they should not accept the Danish conquest especially if they regarded it as divine providence, but rather remember that the Lord had not forsaken them for good.

The portrayal of English resistance is quite ambiguous in the narrative of the *ASC.* On the one hand, the Anglo-Saxons seem to have mounted a considerable effort to overcome the Viking threat, showing that it was not courage they lacked. On the other the story of resistance is one of constant defeat due to individual failure, (apparent) treachery and dissensions among the nobles which deprived the English measures of its efficiency. Wilcox has cogently argued that the audience "was primed to contemplate issues of loyalty and disloyalty expressed through death in battle or retreat when listening to a story of English engagement with the Vikings."[177]

Occasionally, the tone of the narrative is almost desperate. The cohesion of the chronicler's account is in part represented by his lamentations about the Anglo-Saxons not being able to act as a united force due to individual interests and thus thwarting the defensive efforts, subsequently availing nothing but defeat and oppression of a wretched people. Despite all that the chronicler almost praises the citizens of London, making the borough the focal point of English resistance and a torch of hope in times of distress, reminding the Anglo-Saxons that they still could avert their apparently inevitable defeat and conquest by putting their faith and trust in God, who "chastiseth every son whom he receiveth."[178] The undertone of a nation chosen by the Almighty and tested upon its faith cannot be dismissed in my eyes. Written in the reign of Cnut, the account could not voice its message more overtly. That is why it is necessary to search for subtle evidence of an appeal by the chronicler. He deemed Anglo-Saxon resistance with divine approval to be successful and rightful.

Ravaging Sea-Wolves: the Portrayal of the Vikings

One of the most striking features of the 'main' account is its almost singular preoccupation with the Viking raids of that period. Important events concerning domestic policy, ecclesiastical issues or Anglo-continental relations remain absent from the chronicler's narrative. Accordingly, it remains questionable if his focusing on the battle against the Vikings was deliberate, or whether he just recorded what appeared to be the overriding issue on the minds of the chronicler and his contemporaries.

The 38 years of Æthelred's reign were characterized by incessant Scandinavian

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[177] Wilcox, '*Battle of Maldon*', p. 34.
[178] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 845. This line is from a letter by Alcuin written to the bishop of Lindisfarne after the Viking raid in 793.

onslaughts, changing their nature from hit-and-run raids in the 980s, to settlement and employment as mercenaries in the 990s, to eventual large-scale invasions aiming at the conquest of England during Æthelred's last days. Whereas the early entries seem to portray insignificant raids in which the Vikings were up to their traditional hit-and-run tactics, the nature of narration changes from 991 onwards. The accounts are much more elaborated and detailed in the depiction of the terror and affliction the Vikings caused.

In 994 the Vikings "worhton þæt mæste yfel ðe æfre æni here gedon meahte"[179] and "ridon him swa wide swa hi woldan Ᵹ unasecgendlice yfel wyrcgende wæron."[180] Those lines stand exemplary for certain idioms, which were used by the chronicler to express aspects of mastery of the Danes when they were ravaging the country as Simon Keynes argued.[181]

In this context the devastation caused by the Scandinavians are portrayed as the working of evil (993, 994, 997, 1001, 1002, 1009, 1011). Moreover, the phrase *swa hi woldon* 'as they pleased' or the like to describe the activities of the Vikings occurs ten times (994, 998, 999, 1001, 1006 (twice), 1009, 1010, 1011, 1013), suggesting unopposed campaigning and discrediting any efforts of defence by the king and his subjects.

Finally, another recurring idiom *swa heora gewuna wæs* 'as their custom was' (or similar phrases) permeates the entries from 1001 onwards (1001, 1006 (twice), 1009, 1016). By choosing this phrase the Vikings are portrayed as genuinely barbaric and warlike as their customs exhibited in the *Chronicle* are ravaging, burning and slaying.

The chronicler seems to have raised the activity of the Scandinavians to a level beyond that of the Anglo-Saxon forces by describing it with elements of heroic poetry. In 1003 the raiders return to their *yðhengestas* 'wave-stallions' when the English dispersed in confusion, and in 1004 their encounter with Ulfcytel is termed *handplegan* 'encounter of hands'. Both terms are common to Old English heroic poetry and the latter is to be found e.g. in the *Battle of Brunanburh*.[182]

The chronicler goes as far as to ridicule the whole situation by making his account for 1006 sound like a satire. In that year the Vikings' mastery of the situation is striking. When winter approached, the Danish army retreated to their *friðstol* 'sanctuary' on the Isle of Wight and "eodan him to heora gearwan feorme."[183] This activity is juxtaposed with the king, who went to Shropshire instead of dealing with the Vikings "Ᵹ nam þær his feorme,"[184] as his royal prerogative was. This mirroring of activities ridicules Æthelred, as the *feorm* 'food-

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[179]   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 87; *And wrought the greatest evil that ever any raiding army could do.*
[180]   Ibid.; *Rode as widely as they pleased, working inconceivable harm.*
[181]   See Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', p. 161.
[182]   See n. 147 *supra*.
[183]   O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 91; *They betook themselves to the entertainment waiting for them.*
[184]   Ibid.; *And took there his food-rent.*

rent' was a duty the people were obligated to perform on the king's request. Seen against this background, the chronicler satirizes the royal authority and at the same time elevates the Danes to a level of 'natural' authority, matching or even outclassing the king's.

The entry provides us with another satirical remark by the chronicler as he records that the Danes on their way through England "dydon heora ealdan gewunan, ⁊ atendon hiora herebeacen swa hi ferdon."[185] This not only ridicules the English beacon system as apparently ineffective defence measure, but first and foremost euphemises the dreadful reality as the chronicler uses this metaphor for his description of the burning villages the Scandinavians left in their wake.

Contributing to this picture of fierce defiance is the description of the Vikings carrying their booty to the ships past the gates of Winchester "rancne here ⁊ unearhne"[186] while the citizens could do nothing but look on. The defiance of the Vikings shown in front of England's capital seems outrageous. Possibly the chronicler laments the cowardice and helplessness of the Anglo-Saxons in a way reminiscent of Wulfstan, who in his *Sermo Lupi* decries the inactivity of the people, doing nothing but stand by and look at the evils caused by the heathens out of a sense of false shame instead of acting, thus committing sins and procuring divine anger.[187] The defeatist tone of the chronicler is remarkable as he claims

> Ða wearð hit swa micel ege fram þam here þæt man ne mihte geþencan ⁊ ne asmeagan hu man hi of earde adrifan sceolde oþþe ðisne eard wið hi gehealdan, forðan þe hi hæfdon ælce scire on Wesseaxum stiðe gemearcod mid bryne ⁊ mid heregunge.[188]

The significance of these lines should not be underestimated. Apparently, the perplexity of the English and their indecisiveness is causally linked to the activities of the Vikings. The Anglo-Saxons seem to have faced an enemy which not only outnumbered them, but also showed a level of ruthlessness and cruelty which was beyond imagination. The whole issue turned into one of avoiding complete devastation. It might not have been a downright exculpation, but at least it sheds light on the dramatic situation and the horror creeping into the minds of those in command, thus mitigating their eventual failure.

Apart from their uncompromising savageness, also manifested by the accounts of the mutilation of the Anglo-Saxon hostages by Cnut in 1015 and the recurring theme of incessant devastation and slaughter, the preponderant picture given of

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[185] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 91; *Followed their old habits and lit their beacons as they went.*

[186] Ibid.; *The proud and undaunted army.*

[187] See p. 98 *infra* in my chapter on Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos.*

[188] O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, p. 92; *Then was such great terror wrought by the army, that no one could think or conceive how to drive them from the country, or to defend this country from them, because they had cruelly left their mark on every shire of Wessex with their burning and their harrying.*

the Scandinavians is one of heroic defiance, humiliation and untrustworthiness. Examples are given in 1004 when the Viking army despite a truce with the English sneaked inland to burn and ravage Thetford. Another example is the aforementioned account of Pallig in MS A, who deserted the king after he had received great gifts and apparently had pledged his allegiance to Æthelred.

This manuscript is of great importance in another respect, as the text differs from the main account.[189] For 1001 the A-chronicler gives details of a raid in Hampshire not mentioned in other manuscripts of the *ASC*, and is generally much less dramatic in his account. Moreover, whereas the 'main' account sticks to its narration of a precipitated flight of the Anglo-Saxons MS A records an almost heroic resistance against the odds. Finally, the Winchester manuscript records a truce made with the Vikings, which is not recorded in the 'main' account. The A-chronicler's use of the Old English idiom *niman frið* 'obtain peace' is reminiscent of the annals of King Alfred's reign and suggests that he saw nothing remarkable about this policy. The same phrase is used in 991 where the 'main' account explicitly refers to the payment of *gafol* 'tribute'. The conclusion to be drawn from the comparison of the 'main' account and MS A is that the latter's view of things might be more balanced and free from a single-mindedness to portray contemporary events in a specific way.

In spite of Pallig's apparent betrayal, there are two positive examples of Viking mercenaries. Apart from Olaf Tryggvason, who was received into the king's service, Thorkell 'the Tall', whose army had brought terror over the Anglo-Saxons from 1009 to 1012, culminating in the martyrdom of archbishop Ælfheah, joined the Anglo-Saxon forces with 45 ships. This was indeed a strategic masterpiece, as Æthelred ensured the service of one of the most influential warriors of the Scandinavian world, enlarged his naval defence, drove a wedge between the Danes and counterbalanced the influence of *ealdorman* Eadric. Perchance this action finally drove Sweyn, who feared to be toppled by an alliance of Thorkell and Æthelred and regarded the Dane's move as an outrageous provocation as is sometimes suggested in the literature,[190] to invade England and take revenge. It cannot be said for certain. Thorkell's employment at first seemed to pay off, even though he could not avert Sweyn's conquest of England in 1013 and remained inactive as his paymaster's hands were bound. In the end he pledged his loyalty to Cnut and became earl of East Anglia.

Remarkable about the 'treacherous' nature of the Vikings is that they are never overtly accused of treachery in contrast to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, first and foremost the *ealdormen*. It seems as if the chronicler intended to blame the Anglo-Saxons for being foolish enough to trust the Scandinavians rather than making the Vikings subject to his criticism. One could conclude that in his

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[189] For a comprehensive survey and edition of the manuscript see *MS A*, ed. J. Bately, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes 3 (Cambridge, 1986).

[190] Cf. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions*, p. 84.

opinion the Vikings behaved according to their nature, i.e., burning, ravaging, slaying, breaking truces etc. – you cannot blame the children because they have not been restrained by their parents. To summarize the issue: the chronicler does not blame the Vikings but the Anglo-Saxons. When we are to assume that the account was written in the first years of the Danish rule it appears to be strange that the Vikings on the one hand are portrayed in such an unfavourable way, but on the other, are not specifically blamed for certain actions.

An evaluation of the supposedly most important source for the reign of King Æthelred II is anything but easy and conclusive. Much criticism of the king and his policy is based on this account, compiled by a single chronicler after the Danish conquest, who retrospectively gives his perception of events. His narration is centred on the struggle with the Vikings and the failure of the Anglo-Saxons to overcome this problem. At first sight, it seems to convey a personalized story of continuous cowardice, treachery and domestic dissension making the Anglo-Saxon state collapse from within. The king and his councillors seem to have been inconsequent, devising inappropriate countermeasures at the wrong time. Desperation, even anger, appears to permeate his account – a decent 'post-mortem' of Anglo-Saxon England.

Nevertheless, the careful observer would be too hasty to pass such an unreflected judgement on the *ASC*. As we have seen the chronicler is far from consistent in his narration. This is what should puzzle the onlooker. Despite all his explicit and (probably) implicit criticism, we get glimpses of hope every now and then. Not everything seems to be doomed, for we, as readers, are incited to learn from the examples of the citizens of London, Ulfcytel, and even King Æthelred and his son Edmund. The main intention of the *Chronicle* was surely not to blame the Anglo-Saxon monarch for the Danish conquest. Simon Keynes remarked:

> It is the voice of one who identified with the cause of the English people, and, after over thirty years of almost uninterrupted warfare, it is still the voice of one who knew that his loyalty was owed to the king.[191]

I would like to take the discussion one step further. In the course of analysing the *Chronicle* I came across several hints that the chronicler was not only loyal to King Æthelred, apart from his apparent errors and character traits, but was cautious not to discredit the royal lineage of the House of Wessex. Ostensibly, for him the rightful king of England could be no one but an Anglo-Saxon. That is why he did not criticize the king openly, but instead depicts his exiled sons as *athelings* and heroicizes Edmund's efforts in defending the kingdom. It seems as if he wants to send out a message that Anglo-Saxon England was not to be ruled by Scandinavian rulers for good, but that instead a rightful Anglo-Saxon king should

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[191]   Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then', p. 251.

learn from Æthelred's fate, claim his heritage and lead his subjects against the foreign usurpers. An important feature of his narration is that he gives an explanation for the conquest. The cause of events was not due to divine punishment, but to human failure – an instruction how *not* to act in such circumstances. The chronicler was loyal to the king and the English people, whom he wanted to encourage by his depiction of the heroic struggle of the Londoners.

The 'main' account of the *Chronicle*, despite its critical and defeatist undertone, was a means of encouragement and exhortation at the same time. The chronicler mainly provided his audience with an instruction how not to handle the problem, but at the same time offers insight in his notion of how the things could have been handled in order to avert the Danish conquest. He could not voice this in an open rallying cry for resistance, given the circumstances he wrote in, but had to do this under the cover of an apparent harsh verdict of the Anglo-Saxon leadership. Whoever the chronicler was, under which supervision (if any) he had written his account of Æthelred's reign, his expectations lay with the descendants of the House of Wessex, who were exiled in Normandy back then and who he hoped would learn from the reign of their father, inspire their people by just and courageous kingship and one day return victorious to England, shaking off the Danish rule and take their rightful place as kings of the *Angelcynn*.

1.2. Charters from the Reign of Æthelred

The *Chronicle* remains the most influential source in determining our understanding of Æthelred's reign, but as we have seen it is ambiguous, deficient and biased in some regards and therefore far from conclusive. I am inclined to agree with Prof Keynes when he points out

> It is to Æthelred's laws and charters that we should turn in the hope of gaining a more balanced view of the state of affairs during the course of his reign as a whole.[192]

Indeed, as far as charters are concerned, we are blessed with a considerable abundance of documents which are of great use for a better understanding of events. Some 120 royal charters survive from the period 979 to 1016, representing a remarkable continuity of diplomatic activity.

Keynes' work *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready'* still sets the tone for any detailed analysis of those documents. He has argued that the production of diplomas had probably been undertaken by a central writing office or at least by a government agency.[193] There seems to be evidence that not only a royal secretariat

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[192] S. Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment in the Reign of King Æthelred the Unready', in *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. I. Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 73.

[193] See Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 134-53.

responsible for administrative documents had existed, but also a royal seal and government archives. Even the possibility of an official equal to the status of chancellor (though lacking that title) could not be ruled out.[194] Keynes suggested that this agency, though it may not have had a monopoly for the production of diplomas, had operated on the occasions of the *witenagemot* 'meeting of the wise', which seems to be feasible as certain groups of charters show striking similarities as far as formulas and witness-lists are concerned, thus are suggestive of being produced on a single occasion.[195] Such meetings of the *witan* were held regularly and thus are not only evidence for a working government, but provide us with a large amount of diplomas.[196] Keynes, however, admitted that he had developed the idea of a secretariat or central writing office for the sake of convenience, as the evidence was not conclusive.[197] If such an office existed, it would have been a clear indication for a centralized authority of royal government during Æthelred's reign.

The bulk of charters belongs to the first decade of Æthelred's reign, accounting for about one-third of the overall amount, but there is a steady output of diplomas throughout his reign. Only on four occasions (991, 992, 1010, 1015) do we lack any charters, which might be either due to the fact that the drawing up und issue was interrupted by political circumstances or that no charters survive from those particular years.

Those four years without charters could reflect the events portrayed in the *ASC*. In 991 and 992 the Anglo-Saxons had to fight off the Vikings at Maldon and London, respectively. The English effort might have been directed at active defence against the Vikings, for no meetings are recorded for those years.[198] The absence of royal diplomas might suggest that the royal government was acting, instead of hesitating and discussing – a sign for a resolute and determined policy of tackling the problem without futher ado. The lack of diplomas in 1010 can possibly be explained by the fact that Thorkell's army was ravaging large parts of England. In those circumstances the pressing needs of reality would have been regarded more important than consultations, as no time could be wasted but a country had to be defended. This could also have been the case in 1015 when Edmund, Æthelred and Cnut were competing for England, although the *ASC* records a great assembly at Oxford – an occasion prone to draft royal diplomas. The political upheaval with the murder of Sigeferth and Morcar apparently hindered such activities.

The fact that despite all political trouble, confusion and defeatism suggested

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[194]   See Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 151.
[195]   See ibid., pp. 126-34, esp. 132-34.
[196]   Williams, *Æthelred*, p. 21, Table 2, records 25 possible meetings; cf. also Keynes, *Diplomas*, Appendix 2, pp. 269-73.
[197]   See Keynes, *Diplomas.*, p. 153, n. 242.
[198]   See Williams, *Æthelred*, p. 21, Table 2.

by the 'main' account of the *Chronicle*, we have a continuous (but declining) production of royal diplomas during the period of 1011-1016 is of paramount significance. The process of government and decision-making seems to have been uninterrupted, which is remarkable under the given circumstances. Nine diplomas (including the recently discovered *Barking Charters*)[199] survive from 1012-3, giving the impression that the King and his government wanted to show strength and resolve after the terror caused by the Viking armies of Tostig (1006-7) and Thorkell (1009-1012).

We can detect a general tendency towards a decline in the issuing of royal diplomas during the course of his reign, but Simon Keynes has persuasively argued against interpreting that as a sign of a weakened government.[200] Other tendencies are similarly striking. Firstly, whereas the diplomas of the first decades of his reign grant land and privileges in areas which one would attribute to the king's 'heartland' (Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent and parts of Mercia), from c. 1000 onwards a shift towards Eastern and even Northern England becomes evident.[201] Significant in that regard are three grants made to the important Northern *thegn* Morcar in 1009 (S 922), 1011 (S 924) and 1012 (S 928). If those grants are of a specific political intention – and there seems to be no doubt about that in my opinion – it appears as if Æthelred wanted to gain influence in Northumbria, trying to bind this remote area to his authority. This would have bundled the defensive powers of all England and protected himself against any shift of Northumbrian loyalty due to veiled sympathies for a Danish invasion. Moreover, Æthelred did in no way turn a blind eye to the growing power of Eadric 'Streona' and might have intended his grants to create a counterweight in the person of Morcar, corresponding with his rise among the *ministri* 'retainers' in the diplomas.[202] Eadric, however, thwarted the king's plans as he killed Morcar and Sigeferth when the king lay sick at Cosham in 1015. We can probably determine the king's areas of influence and interest by analyzing the location of the lands and privileges granted in his charters. For example, the fact that the king only once at an early stage of his reign granted land on the Isle of Wight (S 842, dated 982) might be seen as an indicator that in the course of the years it became an important base for the Vikings, which the chronicler of the 'main' account called their *friðstol* 'sanctuary' in 1006.

Unfortunately, I cannot embark here on a detailed analysis of land grants with regard to the question where the king's influence and power lay, and to which extent the grants reflect a tendency to make good the losses of certain religious

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[199] Cf. Hart, *Chronicles*, p. xciv.

[200] See Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 141-42.

[201] Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', p. 33. The shift to the East might be owed to the fact that London became the centre of resistance during the last year of Æthelred's reign. Thus we might detect a tendency to highlight the importance of those regions.

[202] Cf. Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LXIII.

houses or laymen as a consequence of Viking devastation.

Secondly, the diplomas provide us with evidence that Æthelred wanted to create his own sphere of influence by promoting and rewarding certain *thegns* (e.g. Ælfgar, Æthelsige and Wulfric 'Spot') who were dear to him and being less generous as far as *ealdormen* were concerned. This probably needs to be seen in connection with his policy of creating a personal element of power within particular shires: the appointment of reeves invested with far-reaching authorization. While leaving the kingdom without high-ranking officials, Æthelred encouraged the emergence of the reeve as his representative at shire-level. What appears to be a tactical masterpiece to tighten control of his kingdom in order to promote law and order at the same time created friction between those in high offices, leaving especially the *ealdormen* (the first line in defending the kingdom) taken aback and discontented.[203] Prime examples for this home-made conflict are the charter S 883 (c. 995), in which the competences of ealdorman Leofsige (Essex) and two of the king's reeves clash,[204] and the murder of the king's high reeve Æfic in 1002.

Thirdly, we have a noteworthy alteration with regard to the beneficiaries of royal diplomas. From 979 to 989 the majority of the charters record grants to laymen. This was changing during the following two decades – reaching a peak between 1000 and 1010 – when Æthelred seems to have given more attention to ecclesiastics and religious houses. Remarkably enough the last years of his reign again witness a clear swerve towards lay grants.

The emphasis on laymen as beneficiaries during the early years of his reign might indicate resolve to secure his position as king (which was far from undisputed given the circumstances of his brother's death) by building up a loyal faction at court, rewarding faithful followers and at the same time saturating those who had reservations against the king.[205] In this 'period of youthful indiscretion' the king wanted to break free from the influence of his mother and other influential councillors and assert his authority and independence.[206] He seems to have come to regret that later on, when his diplomas show specific features and a shift towards ecclesiastical beneficiaries, but I will focus upon that issue in due time as we first have to analyse the phenomenon in a wider context. The fact that lay grants are preponderant during the last years of his reign might indicate that the king was at pains to secure personal loyalties of important *thegns* and their warriors in order to bundle the Anglo-Saxon efforts of defence. Seen in this light, his grants seem to be a clever and pragmatic move to keep his kingdom from

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[203] Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', pp. 29, 31 and Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 80.

[204] See Whitelock, *English Historical Documents,* pp. 571-73.

[205] Cf. Stafford, 'Reign of Æthelred', p. 26; see also Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 181, who argues that it might have reflected the king's sympathies at that time.

[206] This is also underscored by the fact that his mother Ælfthryth stopped attesting charters after 984 to return only in 993, see Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LIX.

disintegrating.

The most striking feature of Æthelred's diplomas is without a doubt an apparent change of mind, reflected in the nature of his charters from 993 to 1005. In this period the king was eager to confirm or renew earlier grants of land or privileges to particular churches, granting them land and privileges which they had not enjoyed before.[207] Simon Keynes remarked that his charter for Abingdon Abbey (S 876, dated 993) had been a key document, as far as it represented the recognition in high circles of the Viking raids as divine punishment for transgressions – not least on the part of the king himself.[208] Those charters in favour of religious houses must be seen in the context of a pledge for averting further punishment and earn divine assistance. It seems as if the king had come to regret some decisions of his youth and wanted to make good and atone for the wrongdoings, i.e. the maltreatment of certain churches and their property. Therefore, it is not surprising that the king restores land to Rochester after having ravaged that see in 984.[209] In another grant to St. Albans (S 916), he explicitly states "ut Deo quae Dei erant restituerem."[210] This is further stressed by his tendency to change the order of witnesses in favour of abbots.[211] Keynes explains this change of mind by the people surrounding the king in those years, who seemed to have been of considerable reputation and closely associated with the advancement of monastic reform.[212] The theme of divine assistance also finds expression in the appearance of distinctive chrismons in charters. Simon Keynes has shown that we come across two charters issued in 1011-12 (S 923 and S 926), where distinctive forms of pictorial invocation, namely of Christ and peace, were employed.[213] Those 'PAX' chrismons must have perfectly fitted the contemporary mood, representing an appeal to divine assistance in order to bring about peace in times of turmoil. According to Keynes, this invocation of Christ reflected Frankish tradition and also had (numismatic) precedents in Anglo-Saxon England, which the draftsman of the 'PAX' chrismons had apparently been aware of.[214]

The king bemoaning the wrongdoings of his youth, and especially the greed of certain men who had led him astray with their counsel, was another feature, according to Keynes. Æthelred in his diplomas often refers to the period when after the death of Bishop Æthelwold in 984 he was manipulated by a group of men acting in their own interest by taking advantage of his youth and

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[207] Cf. Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then', p. 263.
[208] See idem, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 154.
[209] Cf. S 885, 893.
[210] *Charters of St Albans*, Anglo-Saxon Charters XII, ed. J. Crick (Oxford, 2007), p. 190; *That I should restore to God the things which were God's*.
[211] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 118.
[212] See ibid., p. 189.
[213] See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 202-3.
[214] See idem, 'An Interpretation of the *Pacx, Pax* and *Paxs* Pennies', *ASE 7* (1978), pp. 169-70.

inexperience at the expanse of various religious houses.[215] The charters S 876, 885, 891 and 893 form a distinct group in which the king explicitly regrets the indiscretions of his youth.[216]

Pauline Stafford, drawing on Frank Stenton's work, has pointed out that the charters of the period 993 to 1000 had become much more detailed and discursive with a "tendency to enlarge upon the history of the property."[217] They often in their discursive sections embark on the justification and explanation of the grant and the authority to possess it in the estate in question. In most cases it was a freestanding section, separated from the Latin text and recorded in the vernacular (as opposed to the Latin corpus of the diplomas). Connected with that is the reference to crimes in those sections in order to explain the forfeiture of land, which had brought the estates into the hands of the king. Keynes remarked that only in Æthelred's reign such a profusion of references to former crimes was to be found.[218] The question is whether those passages are an indicator for an extraordinary level of criminal activity, which would deem his reign as a period of lawlessness. Whitelock has argued that the elaboration on crimes "give away his sense of insecurity and his need for self-justification,"[219] but, even if she might have a case here, I would like to agree with Prof. Keynes, who argues that it might have been a fashion, expressing a desire to strengthen the new owner's title to the estate.[220] He continues to claim that, on the contrary, the vivid accounts of how the malefactors had been brought to justice rather showed consequent law enforcement and thus the power of the crown. Nevertheless, we should not overestimate the king's capacity to exercise his supremacy. A charter dated 996 (S 877) might serve as an indicator for the "weakness of Ethelred's regime" as Dorothy Whitelock remarked.[221] Although I do not agree with her terminology, the charter at least provides us with a notion of apparent limits of royal authority, as it records the crimes of a certain Wulfbald, who ignored the king's order to undergo trial four times. In the end, all his property is assigned to the king and he himself is placed at Æthelred's mercy. But this instance shows that it was possible to disobey the king's will.

Undisputedly, the charters show a claim to authority as they often refer to the loss of documents and their replacement and the relationship of present charters to former ones, always asserting the singular and ultimate authority of the new grant, as to be seen in S 883: "Hoc autem precipiens precipio ut nulla aliorum

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[215] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 177, 186.
[216] Cf. ibid, p. 180, n. 101.
[217] P. Stafford, 'Political Ideas in Late Tenth-Century England: Charters as Evidence', in *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, ed. P. Stafford *et al.* (Manchester, 2001), p. 68; see also F. Stenton, *Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford, 1955), p. 74.
[218] See Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 76.
[219] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 47.
[220] See Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 77.
[221] Cf. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 575.

librorum scedula nostro libello precelli uideatur, sed inperpetuum delitescat et aboleatur."[222] Similar sanctions are to be found with great regularity in the charters of this period.

Another feature mentioned by Stafford common to this distinctive group of charters are lengthy proems/*arangae*. The king's actions are portrayed in the context of salvation history, a tendency common in the last decades of the 10th century. Furthermore, in the early years of the new millennium we come across references to the affliction of his enemies and the Last Judgement.[223] The context of the Last Judgement is of special interest, for the king in religious discourse was regarded as shepherd of his people to be held accountable at the Last Judgement as we will see in the *Promissio Regis*.[224]

Pauline Stafford has brilliantly summarized the character of Æthelred's charters of the 990s:

> In sum, there is a stress on kingship, family and inheritance – including that of the king himself; on consultation and advice often with reference to some notion of the public good; and on documentary proofs of owner-ship: all in the context of a view of history, both dynastic and salvational, and of the king's own bodily history. Much of this is framed by the concern to justify and explain the king's action.[225]

Following her argumentation, the circumstances called for a definition of good kingship or at least for an explanation of royal action, thus representing evidence for contemporary political thought.[226] Of central importance seems to have been the idea that a king was bound to the advice and counsel of his *witan* as we find numerous references to councillors (*satrapes/optimates)* and even the process of consultation.[227] Another charter dated 1012 (S 926), which refers to the downfall of *ealdorman* Leofsige, describes the result of decision-making as a *foedus*, i.e., a settlement being arranged among the king and his council.[228] Counsel and crimes (e.g. betrayal) emerge to have been seen in a wider context of public interest as we find several references to the public good and *patria*, which conveys a strong notion of unity "if not Englishness."[229]

Stafford argues that the nature of Æthelred's diplomas served as an explanation for reversing his previous grants, which she regarded, quite correctly,

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[222] *Charters of Abingdon Abbey: Part 2,* Anglo-Saxon Charters VIII, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford, 2001), p. 484; *This however, I strongly enjoin, that no document of other title-deed may be superior to our charter, but such to lie hidden for ever and be destroyed.*

[223] See S 984, 985, 899, 911.

[224] See p. 107 *infra* in my chapter on the *Promissio Regis*.

[225] Stafford, 'Political Ideas', p. 71.

[226] See ibid., pp. 72-73.

[227] S 876 and 891 give details about that process.

[228] Cf. Stenton, *Charters*, pp. 79-80.

[229] Stafford, 'Political Ideas', p. 80.

as difficult to promote. This change of mind on the king's part was presented as a shift from youth to maturity of a good king who acted justly and rightfully according to the advice of his councillors.[230] We should not underestimate another significant feature here which Stafford mentioned in one of her previous works, namely that during the 990s the royal grants show a wider geographical spread: "The build-up of followers in the Wessex heartland is replaced by a wider royal largesse."[231]

Finally, the royal charters of Æthelred give us an insight into his self-awareness. The diverse *intitulationes* of his diplomas suggest an almost imperial understanding of his office, reminiscent of his ancestor Æthelstan. *Rex Anglorum totiusque Britannie orbis gubernator* 'King of the English and governour of the whole orbit of Britain' (S 877), *Anglorum rector caeterumque gentium per circutium adiacentium gubernator* 'Leader of the English and governor of the other neighbouring nations round about' (S 882) or *Anglorum basileus caeterumque gentium triviatim persistentium gubernator et rector* 'Ruler of the English and governour of the other adjoining nations round about' (S 882) are only a few titles reflecting his self-perception as potent ruler who sometimes is even styled *totius Albionis imperator* 'emperor of all Albion' (S 886). Those titles appear as a vigorous claim to authority in combination with the almost obligate invocation of divine favour and genealogical descent. Important in this regard as a means of legitimizing the claim to authority of the West-Saxon bloodline and safeguard the royal succession is the fact that from 993 onwards the *æthelings* attest Æthelred's diplomas, coinciding with the reappearance of his mother Ælfthryth.[232] Maybe the king wanted to display the unity of the royal house, to disavow any accusations regarding solo-attempts in decision-making and at the same time stress the claim of his sons to the throne in order to prevent a possible succession crisis following his death, as this image loomed dreadfully on his mind after he had experienced that difficult situation after the death of Edgar.

Without a doubt, Æthelred's charters provide us with invaluable information about his politics, character and process of development as monarch. The output and the form give evidence of a highly productive administration showing its capacity in decision-making even in times of turmoil. Following the 'red thread' of his diplomas we can detect a change of mind on the king's part from the young 'hotshot' who wanted to assert his authority and relied on councillors who took advantage of his inexperience and youth to the mature and determined monarch, who had realized the error of his ways and tried to atone for the wrongdoings of his youth. In this respect he did not only rely on the advice of his leading men but

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[230]   Cf. Stafford, 'Political Ideas', p. 82; it is also striking that in the second half of Æthelred's reign the witness lists appear to be longer as if to stress the approval of a considerable number of councillors.

[231]   Idem, 'Reign of Æthelred', p. 29.

[232]   Cf. Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LIX.

also tried his utmost to earn divine favour and mount a collective resistance against the Vikings while struggling to mend the flaws running through society and aristocracy. While emerging as documents of a time of lawlessness at first sight, the charters rather provide us with records of effective law enforcement and unequivocal legal security for the grants and privileges executed.

Æthelred's diplomas bear witness to a king whose self-image was that of a rightful ruler, being the descendant of the royal House of Wessex, member of the lineage of Alfred, Æthelstan and Edgar, hatching an imperial ambition to rule the whole of Britain by right of ancestry and divine acquiescence.

1.3. Æthelred's Law-Codes

The state of affairs within a society finds reflection in its legislation. Anglo-Saxon England was no exception in this respect, although we have to keep in mind – to quote Patrick Wormald – that

> we have no good reason to doubt that Anglo-Saxon law-codes tell the truth, within reasonable limitations, about Anglo-Saxon law. But we have every reason to wonder whether they tell us the whole truth.[233]

Even so, the law-codes of Æthelred provide us with another valuable source of contemporary thinking and the state of Anglo-Saxon England during his reign.

Eight surviving law-codes (and their variations) and two fragments help us gain insight into contemporary society and the position of king and government, although we have no conclusive evidence that the surviving versions of the legislative pieces represent the original form (if any) of the decrees as late Anglo-Saxon law was not comparable to modern Statute Law. The word of the king commanded authority, but its legal implementation depended rather on local agencies of enforcement rather than the letter by letter wording of the documents.[234]

The legislation of Æthelred can be roughly divided into two periods. His early law-codes were mainly secular, dealing with traditional issue of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon legislation, whereas his later codes represent a strong ecclesiastical and homiletic element as they were influenced by Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who in the latter half of his reign gains reputation as important advisor, composer of legislation and, according to the *Liber Eliensis*, close friend and confidant of Æthelred.[235]

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[233] P. Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', in *Ethelred*, ed. D. Hill, p. 49.

[234] Cf. ibid., pp. 48 and 56-57; cf. also P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol I*: Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), p. 338. Wormald argues that the Q version of VII Æthelred and perhaps IX and X Æthelred represented the official form of the decrees.

[235] See *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. D. Bethurum (Oxford, 1957), p. 62 and *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*, ed. D. Whitelock, 3rd rev. ed. (Exeter, 1976), pp. 16-17.

The Early Legislation

It is probable that Æthelred promoted new legislation as early as the 980s as two of his law-codes (*I* and *III Æthelred*) refer to an assembly at *Bromdun*. Whatever the case, the first important law-codes were issued in the 990s. The dates of *I* and *III Æthelred* are uncertain for their prefaces mention only the place of the legislative assembly (Woodstock and Wantage, respectively). Concluding from the fact that there was a great *witenagemot* at Wantage in 997[236] and the striking parallels of both codes (clauses of *I* are repeated in *III*), one might argue that they originate from that particular meeting. Wormald suggested that both codes might have originated from the decrees agreed at the Pentecost assembly at Winchester in 993.[237] Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered with certainty and remains a matter of debate.

Despite the fact that a solution of the problem of origin is out of reach, the striking parallels and the almost similar wording of both codes suggest that they were pieces of the same legislative process. The Wantage code deals mainly with the affairs of the Danelaw (as opposed to Woodstock, which was decreed "æfter Engla lage"),[238] partly giving *I* and *IV Æthelred* harsher applications on particular issues. The Wantage code is full of Scandinavian vocabulary and it appears that Æthelred scheduled a vigorous enforcement of his will in the Danelaw, the implementation of which was probably entrusted to the king's representatives.

Both codes deal extensively with legal procedures concerning theft, purchase of land and goods and the surety system. The overriding issue emerges to have been the improvement of public security as this aim is addressed in both prefaces. The Wantage code stresses in its first chapter the keeping of the peace. With reference to the King's peace the code invokes the long tradition of Anglo-Saxon lawgivers and decrees that a breech of that peace could not be compensated for (ch.1). This does not only stress the monarch's universal assertion of power, but also conveys the impression that Æthelred wanted to extend his influence to the North of his realm and pacify the unruly regions in Mercia and Northumbria.

Those law-codes stress the concept that every crime committed was a crime against the king himself (and thus the whole *Angelcynn*) as he was entitled to all the fines (eg. I Ætr. 1.9a; 1.11; 1.13; 4.3). Moreover, the reeve, as representative of the king in the shires, gains prominence in those codes, thus stressing the monarch's influence and authority.[239]

Important provisions of *III Æthelred* deal with theft – which was severely punished - and exactly determined fines, which suggest that by means of legal enforcement Æthelred's government ensured a steady flow of money in order to

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[236] Cf. Williams, *Æthelred*, p. 21, Table 2.

[237] See Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 328.

[238] *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, ed. and transl. A. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1925), p. 52.

[239] Cf. III Ætr.11, which sets down that no one except the king was entitled to judge a *thegn*.

finance the kingdom's expenses. Notwithstanding, I strongly doubt this to be an indicator of financial problems or despotic tendencies. On the contrary, it was an ingenious legal guaranty of the governmental finances.

Another sign of royal authority in the Wantage code are the chapters on coinage (III Ætr. 8-8.2; 16), being directed at those minting counterfeit money. The production of coins at authorized mints seems to have been subject to royal prerogative, as only the king was entitled to appoint moneyers (ch. 8.1). Those coinage laws are found in a more elaborated form in *IV Æthelred*, a codex in Latin of unknown date. Here they comprise the greater part of that code (chs. 5-9.3), the other chapters of which deal with trade regulations already in force in London. Those regulations hint at a prosperous Anglo-continental trade.[240]

We can conclude from the coinage laws a highly centralized and efficient system of coinage being firmly under royal control, whose pillars were weight standards, authorized moneyers and mints. Furthermore, those laws represented a claim to ubiquitous validity as they applied to Anglo-Saxons, Danes and foreigners.[241] The fact that penalties for moneyers who produced false coins outside the boundaries of royal authorization were very harsh[242] shows that the highly organized system of coinage was essential to Æthelred's government. The king asserted his authority by keeping the whole monetary system under his royal dominion.[243]

Those provisions with regard to counterfeit money should by no means be regarded as indicating lawlessness and a weak government. It is rather a sign of royal authority and the success of the coinage system as well as the trust Æthelred's subjects had in that system and its control by royal government, as no one would counterfeit coins which were not respected and trusted.

Prominence among the early legislation of Æthelred has gained a text now termed *II Æthelred*, which principally records a treaty between the king and the Viking army led by Olaf Tryggvason, Jostein and Guthmund. The date of this piece (991 or 994) has long been debated, but I agree with E. V. Gordon who dates it – contrary to Liebermann – to 994.[244] *II Æthelred* represents one of the

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[240] P. Sawyer, 'The Wealth of England in the 11th Century', *TRHS* 5th ser. 15 (1965), pp. 156-61 had argued that ch. 2.8, which is concerned with the subjects of the Holy Roman Emperor, might indicate particularly strong trading connections between England and the Empire. He assumes that the bulk of silver for the production of the English silver penny might have originated from there.

[241] See IV Ætr. 5.2., 8

[242] See III Ætr. 8; 16; IV Ætr. 5.3; 5.4

[243] The importance of royally organized coinage is also evident from clauses in Æthelred's later codes, which deal with its improvement (V Ætr. 26.1; VI Ætr. 32.1).

[244] The terms in ch. 1 seem to represent previous local arrangement now incorporated into a general peace treaty agreed upon after the events mentioned in the *Chronicle* for 994, although the text does not incorporate any provisions that are in line with Olaf's confirmation at Andover. But the fact that the text refers to tribute payment in the past (see chs. 1 and 7.2), makes it ap-

few instances of a recorded peace treaty. It functions as a prime example for Æthelred's policy of buying off Viking invaders and employing them as mercenaries in order to prevent further Viking onslaught and secure English trade. Chs. 8 and 9 seem to have been an independent piece of legislation and deal with vouching for warranty. Intriguing in that regard is that in that process the accused was bound to declare how the land or goods in question came into his possession. This parallels the lengthy discursive sections of Æthelred's charters where he does the same to justify his claim to the lands he granted. Probably the provisions in *II Æthelred* can be seen in the same vein of creating indisputable legal security.

Finally, another significant feature of Æthelred's early legislation is the nature of decision-making. As to be seen in his charters from 993 to 1005, the legal documents stress that they were *laga* 'laws' or *gerædnysse* 'ordinances' which were agreed upon by the king and his councillors.[245] Moreover, if we have personal reference, we come across *we* more often than *I* (i.e. the king).[246] The process of decision-making seems to have been promoted as one of collective action by the king in agreement with his advisors. This indeed stands in line with the impression we gain from royal diplomas.

In sum, Æthelred's early legislation dealt with strictly secular themes. The codes display a high level of contingency and according to Wormald, "English legislation had seldom before been so thoroughly planned."[247] The law-codes *I* and *III* set down definite regulations for legal procedure and stand in line with the laws of Æthelred's ancestors Æthelstan and Edgar.[248] The general impression is one of a well-pondered legislative process aiming at bringing about order and legal security and provided the Anglo-Saxons with specific and definite guidelines. The law-codes display a universal claim of royal supremacy and strengthen the position of the monarch and his representatives while simultaneously trying to extend Æthelred's sphere of influence.

I agree with Simon Keynes' remark that there was nothing to be found in his legislation being suggestive of a collapse of social order in the face of the renewed Viking attacks in the 980s and 990s.[249] The law-codes rather bear witness to "a king who is perfectly capable to take appropriate action to traditional tenth-century concerns."[250]

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pear rather likely to have been drafted after the events of 994; cf. Gordon, 'The Date of Æthelred's Treaty with the Vikings', pp. 24-32.

[245] See the prefaces of I Ætr. and III Ætr. in Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 52 and 64.

[246] The only instances where the documents apply the first person are to be found in IV Ætr. 6; 9.2 and 9.3, but even then they are always contextualized with reference to decisions made by more people than just the king.

[247] Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 325.

[248] Cf. Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 48.

[249] See Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment', p. 74.

[250] Ibid.

Æthelred's Later Codes

The later legislation of Æthelred brought about a remarkable change. The law-codes become more ecclesiastical in tone with a distinctive homiletic element. This shift of focus and nature is owed to the influence of Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who became one of the chief advisers to king Æthelred and whose style and language permeates the legislation of the latter half of Æthelred's reign. The earliest code apparently drafted by Wulfstan some time between 1002 and 1008, dealt with the relationship between English and Danes and reflects his conception of both the ordering of society as a whole and acknowledgment that there had always been a differentiation in legal terms and regulations between Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians,[251] which, however, will not be the object of my discussion here.

In the context of the Viking raids of 1006-7 and 1009-12 there are remarkable examples of legislation as a religious response to the pressing realities bearing the mark of Wulfstan.[252] Emanating directly or indirectly from a *witenagemot* at (King's) Enham at Pentecost 1008, three texts were drafted by the archbishop: *V Æthelred*,[253] the version apparently envisaged for common circulation, a Latin version designated *VI Æthelred (Lat.)*,[254] probably intended for higher ecclesiastics and giving valuable procedural information (e.g. the involvement of the archbishops Wulfstan and Ælfheah) and finally *VI Æthelred*,[255] a vernacular version with some additional material. I am not going to embark on a lengthy discussion on the relationship of those codes and the different manuscripts they are preserved in as this debate would have taken the survey of those codes too far with regard to the focus of my thesis.[256]

The Enham decrees provide us with a kind of hybrid legislation. Religious

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[251] The so-called *Laws of Edward and Guthrum*; see *Councils & Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. I: *A D. 871-1204*, ed. D. Whitelock *et al.*, 2 pts. (Oxford, 1981), I, 302-12; cf. also Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 330-40 and 389-91.

[252] Several clauses and themes are derived from or reflected in other works of Wulfstan, like the *Institutes of Polity* or the *Sermo Lupi*. For a detailed analysis see e.g. Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England,* pp. 326-36.

[253] See Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 344-62.

[254] See ibid., pp. 362-73.

[255] See Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 91-107.

[256] For a detailed discussion see K. Sisam, 'The Relationship of Æthelred's Codes V and VI', in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 278-87; Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', pp. 50-8; Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 338-43; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 191-92, 199 and 332-35. Wormald (ibid., pp. 336-7) suggested that the fragment X Ætr. might have been part of the Enham legislation and represented an 'official version', as the pre-amble was reminiscent of the beginning of contemporary diplomas. The act of law-giving is explained and conveys the notion of an official approach. Besides echoing the law-traditions of Edgar and Edmund, the prologue clearly was Wulfstan's work and throughout the preserved chapters we find clauses reminiscent of the Enham decrees and other Wulfstanian works, see Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 130-33 and notes.

themes (e.g. as the duties of good Christians and clerics) go hand in hand with secular concerns. Following Lawson's argumentation, they show a general interest in protecting the weak, suppressing disorder and improving the state of the church, which all were characteristic of Carolingian thought and the contemporary peace movement on the continent.[257] This would have been extraordinarily remarkable, as it would have meant official royal promotion of that movement.[258]

The essential message seems to be a reordering of society, i.e. the shunning of all *unlaga* 'injustices', and observation of God's laws and the practices as laid down in the code. Wulfstan seems to have detected abuses within society and tries to remind the people of their wrongdoings[259] in order to earn God's favour and bring about improvement throughout the country in religious and secular concerns.

Apart from the religious element there are also more practical concerns. For the first time we encounter a legislative statement on the *trinoda necessitas* (maintenance of fortifications and bridges and military service).[260] To be regarded as complementary is the clause of supplying ships, to be ready after Easter each year.[261] This is an unmistakable sign that the government was aware of the dangers posed by the Vikings and responded to it with a long-term focus. Striking in this respect is that one decree includes a clause concerning the damage of warships and the subsequent severe punishment.[262] It appears that it might have been inserted in retrospective with regard to Wulfnoth's treachery the following year (see *ASC* s.a. 1009). The pressing concern for military response and strict discipline as the only way of overcoming the immediate threat of the Scandinavians can also be seen in the fact that for the first time since the days of King Ine of Wessex (c. 688-726), desertion from the *fyrd* was severely punished.[263]

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[257] See M. K. Lawson, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut', *EHR* 107 (1992), p. 575. According to him, Wulfstan's access to earlier sources from England and the continent might have stimulated his desire for a more ordered and Christian society. For the Carolingian tradition see Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', pp. 71-74.

[258] Cf. Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', pp. 70-71; cf. also H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century', *Past and Present* 46 (1970), 42-67 and J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany in the Reign of Ethelred II: Some Comparisons and Connections', in *Ethelred*, ed. D. Hill, p. 194, who wonders whether there had been similarities between Æthelred's later legislation and that produced on the continent in connection with the Peace of God.

[259] See V Ætr. 24-26, 32-33.1; VI Ætr. 53.

[260] See V Ætr. 26.1; VI Ætr. (Lat.) 32.3; see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 344; cf. R. Abels, 'Trinoda Necessitas', *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 456-57.

[261] See VI Ætr. 32.3.

[262] See VI Ætr. 34.

[263] Cf. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 344; Æthelred's active strife to suppress abuses and maintain public order and security, even in the North, can be derived from one manuscript of V (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 201), where in chapters. 32 and 32.5 the king is praised to

Loyalty to the king and a united stand against the Danes seems to have been paramount, as can also be derived from the final chapter:

> ⁊ utan ænne cynehlaford holdlice healdan ⁊ lif ⁊ land samod ealle werian, swa wel swa we betst magan, ⁊ God ealmihtigne inwerdre heortan fultumes biddan.[264]

This is also echoed at the beginning, where the loyalty to one lord, one Christian faith and the casting off of heathen practices are stressed (cf. V Ætr. 1; VI Ætr. 1).

Of special interest is one clause included in *V Æthelred* – but not to be found in the other Enham decrees - concerning the nation-wide observation of St. Edward's festival. Although it has been regarded as a later interpolation,[265] it yet provides us with evidence that the cult of St. Edward was well-established by the early eleventh century. The appearance of this clause in a document of Wulfstan's making is particularly interesting, for in the concluding annals of the 'Northern Recension' of the *ASC*, in whose production Wulfstan was apparently involved,[266] regard Edward's murder as a horrible crime for which the English were punished by renewed Viking attacks. Therefore, I tend to concur with Simon Keynes, who saw the 'official' enforcement of the cult of St. Edward in *V Æthelred* as a means of Wulfstan's concern to help the English repent of their sins and thus avert further punishment.[267]

The Enham legislation intended to strengthen the position of the king, restructure society with the aim to abjure all wrong-doings and eagerly to follow the laws of God to earn his favour to overcome the contemporary afflictions. The borderline between law-code and homily are blurred in the context of Wulfstan's influence. This tendency is further elaborated in what can be seen as a direct response to the arrival of the Viking fleet led by Thorkell in 1009: the law-code *VII Æthelred*. It is extant in two versions, one in Latin (*VIIa Æthelred*),[268] probably translated from a now lost Old English version and another version in the vernacular.[269] Even though the Latin version probably did not come from Wulfstan, its Latin shows marks of his composition.[270] The two versions differ in matters of content and organization with the Latin being the more detailed

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have tackled the problems connected with the appeal "þæt he ma mote" ('may he do more'), see Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 361.

[264] Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 362; *And let us loyally support one royal lord, and all together defend our lives and our land, as well as ever we can, and pray to Almighty God from our inmost heart for his help.*

[265] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 178, n. 132.

[266] Cf. ibid., pp. 158-59; for the Wulfstanian poems in the *ASC* see Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 106-110 and K. Jost, 'Wulfstan und die angelsächsische Chronik', *Anglia* 47 (1923), 105-23.

[267] See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 179.

[268] See Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 375-78.

[269] Cf. ibid., pp. 379-82.

[270] Cf. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 330 and n. 308. Putting a halt to the selling of Christians overseas (VII Ætr. 5) was one of Wulfstan's constant anxieties (see V Ætr. 2, VI Ætr. 9).

providing us with useful information.[271]

Central issue of this law-code was a programme of prayer, including a three-days-fast and barefoot processions to church accompanied by a priest in order to make confession. After having addressed the general congregation the code lays down special arrangements for the members of religious houses: the masspriest had to say mass for the king and his people (VII Ætr. 6.1), a special mass (*contra paganos*) had to be sung at Morrow mass (VII Ætr. 6.2; VIIa Ætr. 3) and on top of that the whole community had to lie prostrate before the altar at each of the Hours and sing Psalm 3 (*Domine, quid multiplicati sunt*) together with the collect *contra paganos* (VII Ætr. 6.3; VIIa Ætr. 3.1) until things would become better.[272] Psalm 3 is of special interest in that regard as it reflects on God's protection of his chosen people against persecution by non-believers.[273] Accordingly, this law-code would stand in line with other religious works which associated the Anglo-Saxons with God's chosen people.[274] The Viking attacks seem to have sharpened Wulfstan's sense of the havoc and mayhem which pagans could impose on a Christian nation[275] – a notion which was reflected in his awareness of abuses and society's need for improvement underlying the Enham legislation.

VII Æthelred does not provide us with any practical measures against the Viking incursions as the Enham codes had done, but it was symbolic "of the desperation and despair which the English felt when faced yet again by a hostile force, and their perfectly natural appeal for divine help."[276]

Although all elements of *VII Æthelred* appear to have had earlier Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian antecedents and might have been commonplace among the English,[277] yet their *combination* is what gives this penitential edict its striking significance. Indeed this nationwide programme of prayer, with processions through England, carrying relics of saints and chanting in unison must have been an overwhelming sight. In effect, it was a concerted religious effort to do penance for the nation's sins and try to achieve divine assistance for the struggle against the Danes.

This code also provides us with evidence that there seems to have been a change of mind. Whereas in the 990s the renewal of the Viking incursions seems

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[271] Whereas the OE version states that it was decreed "ða se micele here com to lande" ('when the great army came to the country'), the Latin one claims "Hoc instituerunt Æþelredes rex et sapientes eius apud Badam" ('This decreed King Æthelred and his councillors at Bath'). Other differences pertain to the duties of the clergy and prohibitions added. Cf. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 447.

[272] Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 171, argued that there had been a programme of prayer and fasting in response to Scandinavian incursions, instituted collectively by the bishops of England at some point between c. 995 and 1008.

[273] Cf. Wilcox, 'St. Brice's Day Massacre', p. 88.

[274] It is evident in the works of Alcuin, Bede and Ælfric.

[275] Cf. Wilcox, 'St. Brice's Day Massacre', p. 88.

[276] Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 181.

[277] Cf. ibid., pp. 181-89.

to have been connected with the misdemeanours of the king himself, the edict of 1009 sees a shift of focus towards the notion that the Vikings were an instrument of God's wrath incurred by the sinful Anglo-Saxons as a whole, which now required a united nationwide act of penance.[278]

The last law-code to be taken into consideration is another ecclesiastic code of 1014 (*VIII Æthelred*).[279] It is chiefly ecclesiastical in subject matter and deals with the protection of the churches from breaches of their peace, the rendering of tithes and dues and accusations against the clergy. Judging from the prologue, it is not unlikely that there had been a secular companion volume as Wormald has suggested, but, even so, nothing of that legislation has survived.[280]

This code is also of special interest because it tells us about the development of the concept of kingship. After having stated that someone who committed homicide has to pay compensation "þam cyninge ๅ Christe"[281] Wulfstan explains this clause: "Forðam Cristen cyning is Cristes gespelia on Cristenre þeode; and he sceal Cristes abilgðe wrecan swiðe georne."[282]

Here we have an invocation of the pastoral kingship, i.e. the king being the shepherd of his flock (his people), a theme which had gained prominence in England since the time of King Edgar.[283] The king was reminded of his office – an indication that he had not fulfilled his duties before? I do not want to speculate on that issue but it fits rather well with the events after Æthelred's return from exile, when the account of the 'main' chronicler gives the impression that there had been a certain disaffection and discontent with regard to the king's former ruling practices. This law-code thus might reflect the Anglo-Saxon apprehension that the king had to be reminded of his office and role as Christian monarch.

In the same vein, particular clauses of *VIII Æthelred* reflect a consciousness of Anglo-Saxon law-making tradition. After having stated that once there had been wise councillors who designed secular laws with religious concern (ch. 36), Wulfstan laments that ever since the days of Edgar, the laws of Christ and the king had dwindled and deteriorated, and that things had grown worse (chs. 37-39) – all elements which feature prominently in Wulfstan's works, especially the *Sermo Lupi*. But at the same time he kindles hope by holding out the prospect of

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[278] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 181; see also idem, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred', pp. 91-92.

[279] See Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 386-402.

[280] See Wormald, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', p. 59 and Lawson, 'Homiletic Element', p. 578 and n. 4.

[281] Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 388; *To the king and Christ*.

[282] Ibid.; *Because a Christian king is Christ's deputy among a Christian people, and he must avenge very zealously offences against Christ*. This idea is also to be found in Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, probably drawing on Sedulius Scottus' *Liber de Rectoribus Christianis* as ultimate source (see Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 388, n. 2). J. C. Pope (*Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols., EETS os 259, 260 (London, 1967–68), I, 374-77) suggests that Wulfstan used Ælfric as a source.

[283] Cf. also Lawson, 'Homiletic Element', p. 568, who points out that in the tradition of Ottonian practice from the times of Edgar onwards the kings had looked upon themselves as Christ-like.

improvement in case it was God's will and the people would pursue it zealously. He mentions the example of former kings of the House of Wessex and praises their legislation and their piety (ch. 43), placing Æthelred into that glorious bloodline, hence portraying him as an able descendent of the those rulers but at the same time reminds him of his duty derived from the king's ancestry and obligation to God without addressing him in person.

Similar to the Enham legislation, the law-code closes with an appeal to honour God and His laws and to display unity in supporting one royal lord "ꝺ freonda gehwilc mid rihtan getriwðan oðerne lufige ꝺ healde mid rihte."[284] Those closing chapters are suggestive of a shepherd who is trying to bring his flock into line when facing the wolves.

The code brings about the notion of yet another concerted action: an appeal to king and people to bundle their strength and effort and bethink themselves of Anglo-Saxon tradition and their own wrongdoings, which have resulted in the deteriorating circumstances of the day. At the same time there is no sign of desperation but rather the notion of a fresh start, beginning with a change of attitude, as the opportunity to avert the impending doom was still there. Wulfstan expected every man to do his or her duty (including Æthelred) in order to achieve the common aim of fighting back the Vikings. Concluding from this law-code in correspondence with the *Chronicle*, there seems to have been a general sense of elation in England upon Æthelred's return from exile.

From 1008 to 1014 we can detect a development in Wulfstan's drafting of law-codes. He is moving from a purely homiletic perspective to a more balanced blend on the conventions of preaching and law-making.[285] Nevertheless, the 'later Wulfstan' tried with full confidence to put governmental power behind the needs of church and people. With a steady increase the laws designed to repress sin and crime were fused "with a pastoral tradition striving for moral and spiritual rearmament."[286]

There is a discernible shift of character in Æthelred's law-codes from the moment Wulfstan becomes influential in the process of drafting them. Whereas Æthelred's early codes deal with traditional issues and display an able, sagacious monarch who tries to uphold law and order in England and assert his royal authority on a national scale even in the areas of limited royal influence, the later codes show a clear preoccupation with the dangers posed by the Vikings. The Scandinavian threat is seen in a religious context, as expression of divine wrath triggered by the people's sins. Wulfstan strives to unite the Anglo-Saxons under the Christian banner, evoke a 'holy war' against the heathens (who by this time were Christians for the most part) and draws on homiletic tradition, as he had

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[284] Whitelock, *Councils & Synods*, I, 402; *And each of the friends shall love with true fidelity the other and support him rightly.*

[285] Cf. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 341.

[286] Ibid., p. 345.

come to think that homiletic legislation was the appropriate way "to achieve the purposes for which Anglo-Saxon legislation had always been intended."[287] After all secular measures to overcome the invaders had failed, Wulfstan's law-codes take the lead in mounting spiritual resistance and it is essential for their understanding that, though a common denominator is discernible, each piece of legislation has to be viewed in its specific historical context.

Æthelred's legislation has been viewed as deficient, loquacious and vague, arguments which I neither can agree with nor definitely dispense with. Nonetheless, in appreciation of his reign and seen against the circumstances of his in one way or the other troubled reign, I want to conclude my discussion with a statement by Patrick Wormald:

> Æthelred was no Justinian, no Charlemagne, no Æthelstan even. But his ge-ræd-nessa supply no justification for the immortal and malicious pun, Æþel-ræd Un-ræd.[288]

1.4. Coins

Æthelred's Coins

Any comprehensive survey of source material would be deficient without numismatic evidence. For a period which saw incessant Viking incursions and tribute payments the factor of coinage should not be underestimated.

England enjoyed high-standard coins and probably the "most sophisticated monetary system in Western Europe."[289] Æthelred had inherited an effective and productive system of coinage and recoinage from his father Edgar, whose reform in 973 was a not only a landmark in the medieval monetary system, but set the scene for the next 150 years. The central features of Edgar's reform were uniformity of types, centralized die-production being under firm royal control and synchronized changes or *renovationes monetae* on a six-year basis, with the coins bearing the inscription of both moneyer and mint.[290]

During Æthelred's reign the nationwide system of 47 productive mints under Edgar was extended to 75,[291] although we have to keep in mind that not all of them were productive on the same level at the same time. Therefore, Dolley's claim that no man had to travel more than fifteen miles to get to a mint has to be

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[287] Wormald, *Making of English Law,* p. 345.
[288] dem, 'Æthelred the Lawmaker', p. 77.
[289] M. Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage and the Payment of Tribute', in *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg, p. 156.
[290] For details of Edgar's reform see S. Lyon, 'Some Problems in Interpreting Anglo-Saxon Coinage', *ASE* 5 (1976), pp. 192-95.
[291] Cf. Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage', p. 158.

treated with caution.[292]

Nevertheless, Æthelred's reign saw the production of six substantive types, reminted on a six-year basis. This system fails only once "precisely when the whole fabric of the English state comes closest to collapse"[293] as a regular *renovatio monetae* would have been due 1015, but instead its abandonment displays a concession to military disaster and political turmoil in that year.

Detailed analysis of the different types and a lengthy discussion on metrology despite its importance would have exceeded the scope of this thesis and will not be undertaken. Consequently, I will restrain myself to depicting general tendencies.[294]

The different types bear witness to Christian motives as we find Cross types (*Crux* (991-997)*, Small Crux* (996/997 ?), *Intermediate Small Cross* (997 ?)*, Long Cross* (997-1003) and *Last Small Cross* (1009-1015) among Æthelred's coins, just like *Manus Dei* ('Hand of God') types (*First Hand* (979-985)*, Second Hand* (985-991)*, Benediction Hand* (c. 991). Especially the *Small Cross* coins reverted to the design of Edgar's reform thus invoking his peaceful regime. It is therefore not surprising that the *Last Small Cross* was produced in times of outstanding turmoil, when the desire for peace was most pressing.

The *Benediction Hand* type is remarkable as Æthelred is portrayed bare-headed but with a cross-sceptre on the obverse and the *Manus Dei* in a benediction blessing with a cross in the cuff[295] on the reverse. Apparently the king was determined to stress his piety (after the period of youthful indiscretion discussed above?) and earn divine favour after the renewal of the Viking incursions. Like the *Agnus Dei* coins (see below) the *Benediction Hand* was only a temporary issue, the minting of which might have been triggered by a certain event. It is tempting to associate it with the Viking attack on Maldon but this assumption should be handled with care as we lack conclusive evidence.

If earning divine favour was the original intention, we see quite a different picture from 1003 onwards. The *Helmet* type depicts Æthelred not bare-headed or with his crown as sign of royalty but instead with a helmet. There can be no doubt that this type denotes the willingness for military response. Æthelred wanted his subjects to know that their king was not only their ruler by heritage who pursued a policy of paying tribute and hiring mercenaries, but that he was also determined to respond militarily with all necessary resolve – a 'monetary call to arms'.

Æthelred, just like his royal predecessors, exercised firm control of the monetary system as the coin laws evident in Æthelred's early legislation suggest (see *supra*). The fact that moneyers were appointed by the king and dies were cut

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[292]   See M. Dolley, 'An Introduction to the Coinage of Æthelraed II', in *Ethelred*, ed. D. Hill, p. 118.

[293]   Ibid., p. 120.

[294]   For an overview, chronology and discussion of the different types see e.g. Dolley, 'Coinage of Æthelread II', pp. 118-29 and Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage', pp. 160-62.

[295]   Cf. Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage', p. 161, pl. 8.6.

and distributed from authorized centres such as London, Winchester or York (probably for a fee payable to the Crown) bear witness to an ingenious system run by the royal government.[296] The establishment of mints should be seen in the same light, as smaller mints were established to fill gaps in the network in order to implement a policy of firm royal control of the coinage.[297] Moreover, it seems that Æthelred set up 'emergency mints', of which only Salisbury achieved lasting prominence and translated exposed mints to former Iron Age forts at Cadbury, Cissbury and *Eanbyrh* – which were refortified – to keep the coin production running and avoid loosing royal authority as a response to Viking attacks disrupting the flow of coins minted from certain boroughs.[298]

Peter Sawyer has shown that the England of Æthelred's days was a wealthy country and that it might have been this wealth which enticed Scandinavian raiders to loot in the first place.[299] His assumptions regarding the volume of coin production seem to be feasible and concur with Simon Keynes' statement that the sums of tribute mentioned in the *Chronicle* might be adequate.[300] Apart from that, there seems to be no indication of a steady level of devaluation due to the payments of tribute to the Vikings, but a series of rise and fall in the weight standard.[301] England did not 'bleed to death'. Conclusively, the large number of coins produced in combination with the amounts found in Scandinavian hoards suggests that Anglo-Saxon England enjoyed indeed a highly efficient, productive and sophisticated monetary system, even though we would be mistaken to regard it a money economy.

The fact that under Æthelred the coinage prospered and the system inherited from King Edgar through Æthelred was handed down to their successors, shows that it was an expression of royal authority, of organized structures at governmental level even in times of political turmoil and impending anarchy. Æthelred's coins in no way convey the impression that they were products of a weak king with his realm falling apart. To cite Michael Dolley: "Forged under Æthelred perhaps was a kingdom greater than its king."[302]

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[296] Cf. Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage', p. 164.

[297] Cf. M. Dolley and D. Metcalf, 'The Reform of the English Coinage under Eadgar', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins. Studies Presented to F. M. Stenton on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, ed. M. Dolley (London, 1961). pp. 148-49.

[298] Cf. Dolley, 'Coinage of Æthelraed II', p. 125 and Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, pp. 115-16. Apparently sacks of important boroughs seems to coincide with the introduction of new types issued from secure mints, cf. Lyon, 'Some Problems', p. 202 and n. 4

[299] See Sawyer, 'Wealth of England', p. 145.

[300] Cf. ibid., pp. 151-4; for Keynes' statement see n. 109 above.

[301] Cf. V. J. Butler, 'The Metrology of the Late Anglo-Saxon Penny: The Reigns of Æthelred II and Cnut', in *Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, ed. Dolley, p. 211; for the metrology see also Dolley and Metcalf, 'Reform of English Coinage', p. 214 and Lyon, 'Some Problems', pp. 195-203.

[302] Cf. Dolley, 'Coinage of Æthelraed II', p. 130.

The Agnus Dei Coinage of 1009

Standing out against the numerous issues is a remarkable new type produced at about the time of the the arrival of Thorkell's army, being an example of Christian symbolism: on the obverse we do not find the king's portrait but a symbol of Christ, i.e., the Lamb of God, and on the reverse the figure of a dove, representing the Holy Spirit. But the significance of this issue is not only owed to its remarkable design but also to its great rarity.[303] This gives rise to the question of whether the *Agnus Dei* issue was a substantive type or only a temporary production serving a particular purpose. It is undoubtedly remarkable that symbols with such a strong Christian connotation were used and the royal portrait dispensed with.

    Simon Keynes gave a brilliant analysis of the coins' symbolism. According to him, it would have been obvious to any contemporary familiar with Scripture or church liturgy as a threefold invocation of the Lamb of God had been an integral part of attending mass.[304] As evident from the Bible, the figure of the Lamb had a twofold connotation. Firstly, the sacrificial lamb of the liturgy, taking upon himself the sins of the world, thus delivering the people and bringing peace, and secondly, the Lamb of the Apocalypse, which holds the book at the Last Judgement after having led his followers to victory over their enemies.[305] The image of the Dove (as derived from John I, 32) was an invocation of peace and referring to the peaceful nature of Christ.[306]

    When we keep in mind the contemporary situation, this Christian symbolism seems to fit the pattern. The Enham legislation of 1008 and first and foremost VII Æthelred issued at Bath the following year reveal an apparent need for the Anglo-Saxons of repentance and confession of sins in order to avert further punishment and earn God's favour by doing penance.

    Accordingly, it is not that important whether the *Agnus Dei* issue reflects a concern with the impending end of the world or the peace-bringing Lamb of God of the liturgy. It might be a combination of both, an expression of the deep affliction of the Anglo-Saxons who were harried by the apparent agents of divine anger.

    In what way can we connect the desperate measures promulgated in VII Æthelred with the *Agnus Dei* coinage? Dr. Lawson suggested that the meeting-place of the council at King's Enham would provide us with both a semantic and a chronological connection. The place-name (*ean-ham*) signified as 'place where lambs are bred' and as the meeting took place at Pentecost (in the middle of May) there would have been plenty of lambs on the neighbouring hills.[307] The dove as

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[303] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 190-91.
[304] See ibid., pp. 191-92.
[305] Cf. ibid., p. 192.
[306] Cf. ibid.
[307] See Lawson, 'Homiletic Element', p. 576.

symbol of the Holy Spirit would have been appropriate as the meeting took place at Pentecost. Although the idea seems intriguing it might have been no more than wishful thinking. Keynes pointed out that particular aspects of the coinage could be better explained by the context of the late summer of 1009.[308]

The arrival of the Viking fleet prompted an emergency meeting of the king's council at Bath. The drafted law-code gives a notion of urgency for a concerted appeal to Christ. The *Agnus Dei* coinage (struck at a remarkably high weight standard) would have been in the spirit of the programme of prayer and the other measures evident in the Law-Code of 1009. I agree with Simon Keynes in that regard, as he claims that the new type had been yet another expression of absolute determination on the part of the royal government to overcome the immediate threat of another Viking army.[309] The coinage in combination with a programme of prayer and the endorsement of the sanctity of St Edward should be seen as a concerted action, reflecting both hope and desperation, in order to win divine assistance to vanquish the Scandinavian invaders, as all measures of military response seemed to have availed nothing.

This issue appears to have been an emergency issue, struck at a limited number of mints and discontinued after a relatively short period. Those points would give force to the argument that there was no time to implement the scheme on a larger scale and that the *Agnus Dei* type was intended to be temporary. Moreover, again Prof. Keynes has made an interesting point in suggesting that the authorities had seen this issue as temporary from the start, as they had in mind the next regular issue, the *Last Small Cross*, for those types had a strong association with King Edgar and the inseparable notion of his peaceful reign.[310]

Consequently, although the idea of a connection of the meeting at King's Enham and the *Agnus Dei* type might have carried a certain attraction, it seems more reasonable to regard it as product of an emergency situation triggered by the arrival of Thorkell's fleet. It bears witness to a king and his government determined to do whatever necessary in response to the renewed Viking threat. Maybe a national dissatisfaction with the defensive measure implemented so far prompted them to make a bid for divine assistance and unite the Anglo-Saxons, appealing to their Christian belief and encourage them in times of utmost despair not to abandon their faith as God was still on their side. When we assume the fabric of society to be flawed and fragile, the *Agnus Dei* coinage can be seen as another administrative attempt to mend the cracks in what was the body of the *Angelcynn*.

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[308]   See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 198; cf. also D. Metcalf, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coin Finds 973-1086* (London, 1998), p. 217.

[309]   See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 199.

[310]   See ibid.

2. Ecclesiastical Sources: Ælfric of Eynsham

After having considered the secular sources of Æthelred's reign, I want to proceed with one of the most prominent ecclesiastical figures of his time: Ælfric of Eynsham. In the second section of my paper the effect of the Viking invasions on his works will be discussed, focusing – among other aspects – on his perception and concept of kingship.

Ælfric probably was one of the most distinguished scholars of his age if not of the whole Anglo-Saxon period.[311] After having been trained as a monk under the tutelage of the great Benedictine Reformer Æthelwold at the Old Minster, Winchester, he was sent to Cerne Abbey/Dorset to serve as a masspriest and schoolmaster.

From those days originate his close connection to two important lay magnates, namely Æthelweard, ealdorman of the Western provinces (d. c. 998) and his son Æthelmær, who also had a close connection to the royal court, being the leading thegn from 994 to 1005, according to charter evidence.[312] In 1005, however, Æthelmær retired from his duties at court and chose to live temporarily with the community of the newly founded abbey at Eynsham. Important in this regard is that Ælfric became the first abbot of the aforementioned abbey, presumably appointed at Æthelmær's instigation.[313] As Keynes has cogently argued, the question of whether these new circumstances made Ælfric change his mind and gave him the opportunity to be more outspoken in his views on the affairs of his time arises.[314]

Ælfric's works are to be considered significant as source material for the reign of Æthelred, given the patronage and contacts he enjoyed. Prof. Gretsch pointed out correctly: "Mit anderen Worten: ungeachtet seiner klösterlichen Abgeschiedenheit, stand Ælfric in engem Kontakt mit führenden politischen und geistlichen Kreisen. Was er schrieb, hatte Gewicht."[315]

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[311] For further information on Ælfric see Malcolm Godden's entry in the *ODNB*, I, 387-88.

[312] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 192, 209-10 and idem*, Atlas of Attestations*, Table LXIII.

[313] Cf. idem, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 160.

[314] See ibid. Keynes remarks that Ælfric might not have been directly affected by Viking incursions during his time at Cerne, but that after his move to Eynsham/Oxfordshire he might have been exposed to greater danger on a regular basis.

[315] M. Gretsch, '*Laus et Corona Militum, / Iesu Tibi Certantium*: Heilige Kämpfer in England um die Jahrtausendwende' (forthcoming). Ælfric was also acquainted with bishop Wulfsige of Sher-borne, for whom he wrote a pastoral letter and other lay magnates, who cannot be identified with certainty; see p. 89 *infra*. We have to be careful, however, when we speak of 'Ælfric's views' as a lot of his writings have literary predecessors, thus possibly transmitting preconditioned mentalities.

2.1 Catholic Homilies and Early Works

During his time at Cerne Abbas he was extraordinarily productive, composing the first and second series of his *Catholic Homilies* (both dedicated to Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury), the *Lives of Saints*, a paraphrase of four of the seven books of the Old Testament and various other works.

It is remarkable that within this large bulk of his writings, Ælfric seems to be quite reticent as far as the Viking invasions of his days are concerned as well as about the quality of royal government. Traces of the impact of the Scandinavian raids are elusive in the first series of his *Catholic Homilies* (c. 990).[316] Its preface conveys the notion that Ælfric believed his era to be one of great affliction and turmoil in the face of the impending end of the world, thus leaving the Christians in a need to save themselves, aptly guided by clergymen like him. He reveals his motivation for writing the *Homilies* in the Old English preface: "for ðam ðe menn behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan þe is geendung þyssere worulde."[317]

Throughout his working period at Cerne, he seems to be concerned with the spiritual well-being of the nation, stressing

> the need to follow biblical example and to live one's life in accordance with
> good Christian principles, in order to escape the punishment and deserve
> the protection of God.[318]

Nevertheless, the Viking incursions seem to have made an impact on his writing as shown in the Latin preface to the second series of his *Homilies*[319] and more explicitly in the *Lives of Saints*, to which I will turn in a moment.

Against this background, the *Letter to Brother Edward* (written in the late 990s, allegedly by Ælfric), in which the author disapproved of Edward adopting the customs of heathen men – an insult that reverberates in Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* – his appeal to the councillors of the king to speak their minds[320] in his *Homily for the Sunday after Ascension* (c. 1000) and the concern expressed in his *Letter to Archbishop Wulfstan* (c. 1002-1005) about bishops becoming too involved in secular affairs (such as judging thieves and robbers and neglecting their episcopal

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[316]   For the dates of Ælfric's work see P. Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', in *The Anglo-Saxons: Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes (London, 1959), pp. 212-47.

[317]   *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, ed. P. Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997), p. 174, ll. 57-9; *Because men need good teaching more than anything else at this time, which is the end of the world.*

[318]   Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 162

[319]   See *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series: Text*, ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 5 (Oxford, 1979), p. 1, ll. 13-14. The Vikings are called 'pirates', a term used by continental chronicles to refer to the Vikings ever since.

[320]   For this recurring image see also the *First Series* preface (Clemoes, *Catholic Homilies*, p. 176, ll. 114-19) and the works of Wulfstan, esp. *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*.

duties and being susceptible to bribery),[321] might reflect contemporary thinking. Apparently Ælfric's major concern were the Viking raids of the late 990s and the first years of the new millennium, which might have shaken the very fabric of the Anglo-Saxon state, leading to dissensions in every order of society and the breakdown of standards of behaviour.[322]

What can we deduce from the writings composed by Ælfric at Cerne about his opinion on the defence against the Vikings and his view on royal government and in particular the king? Even though I agree with Prof. Keynes that he did not voice overt criticism about Æthelred's regime – at this stage including his noble patrons[323] – it is possible to get a glance at his concept of kingship and how the predicaments of his days had to be dealt with.

There is not much to be found in his *Catholic Homilies* concerning his idea of kingship. Ælfric's parable on kingship in the *Homily for Palm Sunday* has given occasion for much debate, but seen in its particular context, I, however, tend to side with Prof. Godden, who suggests it to be an "explanation for the subtle relationship of free will and divine grace in matters of spirit"[324] and not so much a discussion of whether an anointed (*gehalgod*) king has the god-given right to rule as he pleases once he has been chosen as monarch, or whether a sacred king can be deposed of due to committed crimes[325] ("ꞃ hi ne magon his geoc. of heora swyran asceacan.")[326] Although this passage might appear to voice underlying criticism on tyrannical or absolutist kingship it tells us very little about Ælfric's attitude towards kingship.

His *Homily for Monday in Rogationtide* provides us with a clearer picture of kingship: "Cyninge gerist. rihtwisnyss and wisdom."[327] Furthermore, the king has to direct himself and his people well. Ælfric states that under such a wise king his people will prosper and be happy and victorious. He then juxtaposes this wise ruler with a "unwisne cyning,"[328] whose people will suffer because of his *misræde* ('misguidance'). This last remark in particular might allude to Ælfric's view on royal government, yet a pun on Æthelred's later epithet *unræd* would be anachronistic. In general I agree with Malcom Godden, who characterizes the homily as "remarkably hard-hitting on those in authority."[329]

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[321] See also D. Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman', in her *History, Law and Literature in 10th -11th Century England* (London, 1981), no. XI, p. 59.

[322] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 163.

[323] See ibid., p. 162.

[324] M. Godden, 'Ælfric and Anglo-Saxon Kingship', *EHR* 102 (1987), p. 913.

[325] Cf. ibid.; see also M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. J. Roberts and J. Nelson, King's College London Medieval Studies 17(London, 2000) pp. 70-71.

[326] Clemoes, *Catholic Homilies*, p. 294, ll. 114-15; *And they cannot shake his yoke from their shoulders*.

[327] Godden, *Catholic Homilies*, p. 183, ll. 93-94; *The King becomes justice and wisdom*.

[328] Ibid., l. 98; *Unwise king*.

[329] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 13 (Oxford, 2000), p. 519.

The concept of the 'just king' might draw on the Irish-Latin tract *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* in which the ninth abuse is a wicked king (*rex iniquus*). This tract seems to have provided a key text about kingship for Ælfric as he produced an Old English version at about the same time as his *Lives of Saints*.[330]

Ælfric depicts a king whose duties cover all aspects of the care for a Christian kingdom, including the protection of monasteries as well as just and wise governance of his people. It is remarkable that several provisions of the just king can be found in Æthelred's later law-codes.[331] Of particular interest are the remarks that he should be advised by councillors "Wytan hym sceolan rædan […] ⁊ fæstlice winnan wið onsigendne here. ⁊ healdan his eðel"[332] – a remark clearly directed at the Viking onslaught. The end of the account reads almost like a warning, as injustice seems to stem from ill counsel: "Wite eac se cyning […] gif he rihtwisnyssse ne hylt […] swa he bið eft genyþerad […] under þam unrihtwisum. þe he unrædlice geheold."[333]

A still later text, which apparently drew on *De duodecim abusivis*, is edited by Pope, who dates it to Ælfric's Cerne period and claims that a particular passage "seems to be aimed at those in high station, including the king."[334] Ælfric again deals with the question of *ræd*, prompting that counsellors "sceolon cyðan heora word openlice, / […] for ðan þe manega magon maran ræd findan / þonne ænlypige magon mid agenum gewille."[335] He goes on to claim that it befits a king to listen to his councillors (*witum*), and act "be heora ræde, na be runinge."[336] Those remarks seem to voice Ælfric's concern with a king who rules without the advice of his nobles. Even though he does not criticize Æthelred directly, his claim that a king should not rule 'according to whisperings' strongly reminds one of the king's alleged character trait of acting according to unspecified rumours presented in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[337]

Later on he exhorts the king to be prepared to sacrifice himself for his people as Christ did (ll. 58-61). James Earl argued that Ælfric was not talking about a king dying in battle, but rather a king like St Edmund,[338] whose martyrdom is presented in the *Lives of Saints*. The preceding passage (ll. 48-54) identifies the king as

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[330] Cf. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', p. 69.

[331] Cf. esp. the provisions of the Enham legislation. See pp. 68-72 *supra*.

[332] *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, ed. R. Morris, EETS os 29, 34 (London, 1867-68, printed as one volume), p. 303, ll. 1-4; *Counsellors must advise him* [...] *and fight resolutely against an assailing army and guard his homeland*.

[333] Ibid., p. 303, ll. 15-19; *Let the king know,* […] *that if he does not uphold justice* […]*, he will be brought down again* […] *under the injustice which he with ill counsel upheld*.

[334] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, I, 372.

[335] Ibid., I, 380, ll. 31-35; *Should make their word known openly* […]*, because many people are able to find greater advice than individuals can by means of their own will*.

[336] Ibid., l. 47; *According to their advice, not according to rumours*.

[337] See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, s.a. 1002 1005.

[338] See J. W. Earl, 'Violence and Non-Violence in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric's "Passio of St. Edmund"', *PQ* 78 (1999), p. 135.

"Cristes sylfes speligend" 'Christ's own vicar', who as a pastor may protect his flock (i.e. his people) from the "onfeohtend[n]e here, / and him sige biddan æt þam soðan Hælende, / […] swa swa ealle cyningas dydon þe gecwemdon Gode."[339] This passage sounds like a spiritual call to arms, where the king is to identify himself with the suffering Christ rather than fight with weapons against his enemies.[340]

Finally, his epilogue to *Judges* (c. 1000), testifies to Ælfric's interest in the discussion of rulership, which he presents with the examples of the Israelites, the pagan Romans and Christian emperors. Once more he takes up the question of counsel when he alludes to the Roman emperors, who had a *witenagemot* each day.[341]

The epilogue ends with a passage about Anglo-Saxon kings from the House of Wessex (thus Æthelred's lineage) who had been victorious against their enemies by divine assistance. Alfred and Æthelstan are presented as courageous warrior-kings, who fought the Vikings and thus ensured peace for their people. When turning to Edgar Ælfric embarks on a royal panegyric, elevating him above all other kings. In contrast to the former kings he does not fight, but earns divine assistance to tame his enemies and have their peaceful subjugation because "arærde Godes lof on his leode gehwær, ealra / cininga swiðost ofer Engla ðeode."[342] This passage might allude to Æthelred, as his most prominent predecessors on the English throne are presented in a victorious light. But whereas two of them fight against the Danes, Edgar overcomes his enemies without arms and the help of God alone – a clear indication of his role as secular figurehead of the Benedictine reform.[343] Ælfric's account of kingship in *Judges* is equivocal, as he praises English kings who fight but superelevates the non-violent approach of Edgar. However, what is most important and significant for all of them is the intervention of God on their side, thus portraying the victories of Anglo-Saxon kings as the manifestation of the rule of God in the world.

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[339] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, I, 381, ll. 51-54; *An attacking army and pray for victory for them from the true Saviour* […]*, like all the kings did who pleased God.*

[340] Cf. E. John, 'The World of Abbot Ælfric', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald *et al.* (Oxford, 1983), p. 312.

[341] See *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch: Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS os 160 (Oxford, 1922; repr. London, 1969), p. 415, ll. 25-26.

[342] Crawford, *Heptateuch,* p. 417, ll. 83-4; *(He) raised up praise of God everywhere among his people, more than all other kings over the English people.*

[343] The Benedictine reform was a monastic reform movement, sprung from continental centres like Ghent, Fleury and Cluny in order to renew and enforce the often neglected Rule of St Benedict as a consequence of a decline in monastic discipline and secularization of the clergy. In England the Benedictine movement was championed by Æthelwold (Bishop of Winchester), Dunstan (Archbishop of Canterbury) and Oswald (Archbishop of York); cf. *inter alia* M. Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 25 (Cambridge, 1999).

2.2 Ælfric's Lives of Saints

When turning to his *Lives of Saints*, a collection of hagiographical pieces and homilies, we get further glances at the concept of kingship presented by Ælfric. The dedicatees of this work were *ealdorman* Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær, members of the West-Saxon military aristocracy and thus responsible for the country's defence against foreign invasion (i.e. the Viking raids). Therefore, the *Lives of Saints*, being composed "at a time of developing military and social crisis in England,"[344] might have been of special interest to them and through their transmission to other leading nobles of the country, if not Æthelred himself. Two pieces from this collection seem to deserve closer attention as they depict two former Anglo-Saxon Kings (Oswald and Edmund), who suffer martyrdom whilst defending their people against heathen armies – a topic of pressing contemporary concern, especially for the two aristocratic patrons of Ælfric.

In his account of St Oswald, modelled partly on Bede's account of the Northumbrian king in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Ælfric does not focus on the king's military skills, but rather on his pious life and promotion of Christianity, the divine reward for which is Oswald's rule over Northumbria. Unswerving faith in God, not military strength, seems to be the overriding issue as Oswald's victory over the heathen king Cædwalla is achieved because "crist hym gefylste to his feonda slege"[345] although his forces were outnumbered. In his final battle against the Mercian king Penda Oswald is martyred whilst praying for the souls of his people as he realizes that the battle is lost. What are we to make of his example? Oswald is presented as a king who leads a pious and celibate life, whose military skills in defending his kingdom are secondary and who zealously promotes Christianity with the assistance of the holy bishop Aidan. What is striking in this regard is the absence of secular councillors (*witan*). This could be seen as a slight hint that a king in Ælfric's view has to direct his rule according to the rule of God and the advice of God's servants, i.e. the clergy, as man was fallible.

In contrast to the *vita* ('life') of St Oswald, the story of the East Anglian king Edmund is presented as a *passio*, which means that the martyrdom of the king is in the focus of the narrative.

Again Ælfric draws a clear picture of Edmund's royal qualities: wise, just, held in high esteem by his people and leading a life agreeable to God: "Es ist der *rex iustus* und *rex christianissimus*, der hier gezeichnet wird. Kämpferische Expertise wird nicht erwähnt."[346] as Prof. Gretsch remarked.

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[344] E. G. Whatley, 'Hagiography and Violence: Military Men in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, in *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright *et al.*, Toronto Old English Series 16 (Toronto, 2007), p. 217.

[345] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 4 vols., EETS os 76, 82, 94, 114 (Oxford, 1881-1900; repr. in two volumes 1966), II, 127, l. 16; *Christ helped him to the slaughter of his enemies.*

[346] Gretsch, 'Heilige Kämpfer'.

Edmund is confronted with a Viking army (the *micel here* of Alfred's days) that ravages the country "swa swa heora gewuna is"[347] – a very prominent phrase used by the Chronicler of the *Æthelredian Annals* as we have seen above.[348] The Viking leader Hinguar (the historical figure Ivar 'the Boneless') dispatches a messenger who demands to share the kingdom's wealth and the submission to Hinguar as *under-kyning*. Like Oswald, Edmund does not seek the advice of secular councillors but turns to a bishop for advice, who wants him to yield to the messenger's proposal. The king, however, is prepared to fight for his people and perish in battle rather than surrender or flight. He stresses his faith in God and makes his submission dependent on Hinguar's conversion to Christianity. Finally, Edmund is seized by the Vikings, shot with arrows (an allusion to the archmartyr of Christendom, St Sebastian whose *Life* Ælfric had likewise included in his collection) and finally put to death by Hinguar beheading him. When the Vikings come to drag him away, Edmund puts down his weapons, mindful of Christ's example, when he commanded St Peter to fight against the Jews who were coming for him.[349] After his death, Edmund's body is buried and henceforth works miracles and peace is restored to the oppressed people. It is striking that a wolf "wearð asend / þurh Godes wissunge"[350] to protect Edmund's severed head and even carried it to the next village "swylce he tam wære."[351] Earl has drawn attention to the fact that it was important to realize the symbolism here.[352] The wolf could be seen as a symbol for the Vikings (Hinguar is styled *wulf*) who were tamed by the Christ-like behaviour of the martyred king, whose people enjoyed peace and prosperity later on. Furthermore Earl argued that the restoration of the head to the body recalled the image of the king restored as head of his people, working miracles and thus manifesting God's presence in the world. Edmund presents an example for Ælfric's theme of virtuous suffering (cf. also preface of the first series of the *Catholic Homilies*). The taming of the wolf might echo Æthelred's dealing with and subsequent conversion of Olaf Tryggvason. It cannot definitely be ruled out that, at least at this stage, Ælfric voices a positive comment on the king's non-military policy towards the Vikings.

Ælfric depicts Edmund as a pious Christian, a Christ-like king, achieving eternal glory by dying a martyr's death for his people in order to overcome his enemies. What seems to be an example of passive resistance cannot have been seen as appropriate for an Anglo-Saxon king given the Viking incursions of Ælfric's days. Magennis' comment that Ælfric presented his saints larger than life, living in a world not to be associated with the people's reality, might put the

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[347] Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, II, 316, l. 28; *As their custom is.*
[348] See p. 52 *supra.*
[349] See Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, II, 321-23, ll. 101-5.
[350] Ibid., II, 324, ll. 145-46; *Was sent by God's direction.*
[351] Ibid., II, 326, l. 162; *As if he were tame.*
[352] See Earl, 'Violence and Non-Violence', p. 140.

problem in a nutshell.[353] Therefore, it is not so much Ælfric's intent to present Edmund as literal model for contemporary kingship but rather as a 'warrior saint', who lives a God-fearing life and thus provides for the aristocracy a "Leitbild […], dem sie sich durch ein gottgefälliges und göttesfürchtiges Leben zumindest anzunähern trachteten."[354] Edmund's *passio* is instrumental for Ælfric's final message, claiming that there is still hope for the Anglo-Saxons as long as many saints like Edmund are buried and venerated in that country to strengthen the people's faith and manifest the presence of God by working miracles.[355] What seems to have been an account of Ælfric's ideal of kingship can eventually be seen as an institutional promotion of the cults of saints in order to build up spiritual resistance and strengthen the national belief in God in the face of the Viking invasions.[356]

Apart from the two accounts of Anglo-Saxon kings there are further pieces, which present us with evidence of Ælfric's ideas of kingship and his view on the contemporary political situation.

A homily from the *Lives of Saints* called *De oratione Moysi* ('On the Prayer of Moses'), according to Malcolm Godden "one of the most politically charged of all Ælfric's writings,"[357] provides us with valuable information. The military success of the Hebrews led by Joshua depended on Moses praying. The story offers a paradigm for the relations between military power and the Church. In lines 30-7 Ælfric stresses that the Christians should pray to God in every distress and at the same time exhorts his audience that if divine help is denied, it would be due to God being angered "mid yfelum dædum."[358] Apparently, the Danish raids of the 990s were not the only problem for Ælfric, rather the consequence of other misfortunes which preceded them. Later on he invokes the peaceful reign of Edgar when monasteries were honoured and the clergy fulfilled their duties. He embarks on a series of events that happened after Edgar's reign, naming the overthrow of the monasteries and the contemptuous treatment of God's servants. As a consequence "us com to cwealm and hunger. / and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmre."[359] He links this exhortation to contemporary events as he draws on the Old Testament (Levithicus XXVI, 3ff.), where God warns Moses to follow his laws unless the people want to incur his wrath with the phrase "hit is swa ðeah swa gedon swyðe neah mid us. / nu on niwum dagum and

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[353] See H. Magennis, 'Warrior Saints, Warfare, and the Hagiography of Ælfric of Eynsham', *Traditio* 56 (2001), pp. 48-51.

[354] Gretsch, 'Heilige Kämpfer'.

[355] Ibid.

[356] Cf. Magennis, 'Warrior Saints', p. 50.

[357] M. Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England' in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. Godden *et al.* (Oxford, 1994), p. 133.

[358] Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, I, 286, l. 35; *With evil deeds.*

[359] Ibid., I, 294, ll. 154-55; *Pestilence and hunger came to us and then the heathen army had us to disgrace.*

undigollice."[360] These passages suggest that for Ælfric the impious behaviour of the Anglo-Saxons – which he likens to the Israelites, God's chosen people – has incurred divine wrath. Blaming them for the misfortunes of the realm, rather than the king and government, is a recurring topic of his work.[361] In lines 240-72, however, he is critical of King David, whose people are destroyed because of his sins. This could probably allude to sins of Æthelred, the consequence of which were the Viking incursions.[362] Coming back to Alice Sheppard's idea of salvation history and projecting it on Æthelred, this passage should not be read as a critique, but the reader should bear in mind that the course of events leads to the Kingdom of God, thus exculpating the king who has to fail in order to reveal God's will. Neverthess, I am aware that although her concept is intriguing, we need to tread Sheppard's idea with the necessary care it deserves.

The overriding issue concerning the defence of the kingdom and Ælfric's concept of rulership seems to be religious piety. In his summary of the *Book of Kings* the fates of good and bad kings always depend on their piety: those who turned to God were glorified and victorious in battle, those who turned away from God were put to shame and suffered defeat.[363]

The admonition not to forsake God is also shown in Ælfric's account of the two kings Abdon and Sennes, who chose death instead of submitting to the heathen emperor Decius. The last bit sounds like an appeal to Ælfric's audience: "Nimað eow bysne be ðam . þæt ge ne bugon fram criste / for ænigre earfoð-nysse . þæt ge þæt ece lif habbon."[364] This account reminds us of Edmund's and Oswald's fate – two kings who epitomized unswerving belief and virtuous suffering.

Taking into consideration the accounts presented in the *Lives of Saints*, the impression we get of Ælfric's attitude towards the pressing realities of his time and the role of kings is ambiguous. He does not completely rule out military response but a pacifist attitude based on Christian teaching and deep faith in God seems to predominate.

In his story of the Maccabees,[365] a Hebrew people fighting an invading heathen force, Ælfric tries to reconcile both military action and Christian non-violence by dividing the population into three classes (ll. 812-17): *laboratores* ('those who work'), *bellatores* ('those who fight') and *oratores* ('those who pray'). The story of the Maccabees, seen in its historical context, clearly pays tribute to the

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[360] Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, I, 294, ll. 176-77. *But it has now very nearly happened to us, in recent times quite openly.*

[361] See ibid., I, 292-96, ll. 133-77.

[362] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 136.

[363] See Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, I, 386, ll. 39-44.

[364] Ibid., II, 58, ll. 79-80; *Take example from this, that you do not turn away from Christ due to any difficulty, that you have the eternal life.*

[365] See ibid., II, 66-125; ll. 812-62 give a detailed account of the division of the classes and Ælfric's treatment of the duties of the *oratores*.

contribution of the particular classes to the defence against the invasions.[366] Ælfric at first takes a pacifist stand once more and claims that the events should not be seen in a literal way. His contemporary audience should use spiritual weapons against their enemies (ll. 690-93).[367] Eventually, in the epilogue, he does not rule out a military solution and embarks on a discussion of wars, including the *bellum iustum* 'just war': "*Iustum bellum . is rihtlic gefeoht wið ða reðan flot-menn . / oþþe wið oðre þeoda þa eard willað fordon.*"[368] In that way he specifies the duties of the 'warriors' of the realm, just as he assigns this role to the Maccabees being the *bellatores* of the Hebrews.[369] This argument voiced by Magennis makes perfect sense when we keep in mind that the addressees of Ælfric's work belonged to the Anglo-Saxon *bellatores*. Moreover, by defining the *oratores*, his predomination with the non-intervention of the clergy in secular affairs – an indicator for the breakdown of contemporary society in the face of the Viking onslaught as seen *inter alia* in his *Letter to Brother Edward* becomes clear.

The doctrine of 'just war' in order to defend the country was deemed acceptable by Ælfric and his contemporaries, although there was "some lingering sense of guilt incurred by those who participated in such a war,"[370] which again points to a pacifist attitude. Several other pieces in the *Lives of Saints* dealing with non-resistance and the question of faith instead of military warfare are mingled with notions of active resistance. What is to be gained from this conclusion? In my opinion Lees has made two interesting comments on the problem. First, she claims that this collection is

> a medium within which Ælfric increasingly contests and debates the politi-
> cal issues of his own time, though always from the perspective of his desire
> for the rule of God.[371]

followed by her statement that

> The objects of the past worthy of veneration furnish ways of understand-
> ing and intervening in the historic present through emphasizing chastity, the
> moral virtues of the ruling classes, and the importance of the priestly
> caste.[372]

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[366] Cf. Magennis, 'Warrior Saints', p. 41.

[367] Cf. Ibid.

[368] Skeat, *Lives of Saints*, II, 114, ll. 708-9; *Iustum bellum is just war against the cruel sea-men or against other people who wish to destroy our land.*

[369] Cf. Magennis, 'Warrior Saints', p. 42.

[370] M. Godden, 'Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles', *Leeds Studies in English* ns 16 (1985), p. 96; see also, J. E. Cross, 'The Ethic of War in Old English', in *England before the Conquest*, ed. Clemoes and Hughes, pp. 269-82.

[371] C. A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Medieval Cultures 19 (Minneapolis, MN, 1999), p. 95.

[372] Ibid., p. 96.

Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* thus present an approach to deal with contemporary affairs, but it predominately emerges to be a concept suggestive of spiritual warfare. Ælfric wants to provide the *godre lare* he had postulated in the preface to his *Catholic Homilies* to overcome the pressing predicaments. At the end of the day we are left with the conclusion that from early on in his career Ælfric is closely engaged with contemporary social and political issues and is critical of what happened around him. He sensed a deteriorative tendency permeating every layer of society, including those in high positions – namely the king and his *witan/ealdormen* – with the consequence of divine punishment in the form of the Scandinavian invaders. The *Lives of Saints* might not have been intended as *speculum principis* ('mirror for princes'), but its treatment of rulership, and that of kings in particular, conveys the impression of implicit criticism of the royal government. Ælfric makes a stand that a solution for the current troubles has to be sought in spiritual guidance (advice) derived from the examples of faithful Christians who overcame their difficulties by strong belief in God.

2.3 Ælfric's Later Works

With reference to our initial question of whether we can detect a difference in Ælfric's works after being appointed abbot at Eynsham, it is necessary to turn to his later works, dating from c. 1005 until his death, thus covering a period of approximately five to ten years.[373] Simon Keynes remarked that Ælfric's voice "is harder to hear from Eynsham because the texts are fewer, and less familiar, and, frankly, because of all the noise generated by Archbishop Wulfstan."[374] Even so his oeuvre still provides us with useful information. Besides his *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (c. 1005), providing a guide to the monastic life and drawing on the *Regularis Concordia*,[375] Ælfric directed three tracts on Christian teaching in the vernacular to laymen. One of these tracts, the so-called *Treatise on the Old and New Testament* (*c.* 1005-6), addressed to a certain Sigeweard,[376] deserves special attention. In this piece he undertakes a reinterpretation of the Old Testament story of Judith, of which he had written a prose rendering while still at Cerne. In the latter version military and political implications become apparent, when Ælfric tells his addressee that he had translated the *Book of Judith* into English "eow mannum to bysne, þæt ge eowerne / eard mid wæpnum bewerian wið /

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[373] Cf. Clemoes, 'Chronology', p. 245.

[374] Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 163.

[375] This was supposed to be the single-most important document of the Benedictine Reform in England; see L. Kornexl, '*Regularis Concordia*', *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 389.

[376] For discussion of his identity see Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 164, n. 65.

onwinnendne here."[377]

One can detect a clear shift in tone and readership. In his tract he is addressing a wider audience ('eow') and especially Sigeweard – presumably a *bellator* by Ælfric's definition.[378] It seems as if Ælfric takes a more belligerent stand than hitherto. This is underscored by his account of the Maccabees, who "wunnon mid wæpnum þa swiðe / wið þone hæðene here"[379] with divine assistance. Apart from that Ælfric stresses that their leader Macchabeus did not want to incur God's anger and pleaded with the Lord for help and then fulfilled those words with mighty deeds. This is quite significant as Ælfric redefines the concept of divine wrath: it is no longer a consequence of the peoples' sins, mistreatment of the clergy and monasteries, but instead of failing to honour a promise to defend the country.[380] This is remarkably different from the pieces in his early works. He takes those responsible for defending England up on their promise and reminds them of their duties. Later on, Ælfric impresses on Sigeweard the need for *witan* to consider which of the three pillars of the throne is broken (*bellatores*, *oratores*, *laboratores*) and mend it immediately.[381] In my opinion it is an unmistakable appeal for every man to consider and fulfil his duty to support the king and royal government in the face of the Viking raids.

Another item of interest is Ælfric's tract known as *Wyrdwriteras* of uncertain date,[382] in which he tries to address "some nobleman of influence, hoping to reach the king himself and his chief ministers" as Pope has remarked[383] and engages the theme of military delegation. He provides the reader with a list of kings and emperors who had lightened the burden of command by choosing "him sylfum to fultume, / ealdormen under him"[384] as he states that "an man ne mæg æghwar beon, and ætsomne / ealle þing aberan, þeah ðe he anweald hæbbe."[385] Ælfric stresses that the king should stay away from the battlefield in order not to weaken his country and being able to take care of other business.[386] Consequently, Theodosius stays at home to pray for his generals' success (ll. 73-77) as does

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[377] Crawford, *Heptateuch*, p. 48, ll. 777-80; *As an example for you people, that you should defend your country with weapons against the invading army.*

[378] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 140.

[379] Crawford, *Heptateuch,* p. 49, ll. 786-87; *Won with weapons fiercely against the heathen army.*

[380] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 142; he remarks that this theme reminds one of Offa's statement in *The Battle of Maldon*, lamenting that those who spoke bravely in the meadhall would not fight when the battle was be at hand, see D. Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon', in *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg, p. 27, ll. 198-201.

[381] See Crawford, *Heptateuch*, pp. 71, ll. 1204-7.

[382] Cf. Clemoes, 'Chronology', p. 244, who dates it c. 1002-5, while Pope (*Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 726) dates it to the period of Ælfric's abbacy. As both provide the possibility of assigning it to 1005, I am discussing it among his later works.

[383] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 726.

[384] Ibid., II, p. 728, ll. 6-7; *Himself to assistance, ealdormen under him.*

[385] Ibid*.,* ll. 4-5; *One man cannot be everywhere and bear all things together, although he has the rule.*

[386] Cf. Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel, p. 406.

Moses, who prays for Joshua when he was sent against the Amalekites (ll. 87-94). But the best example is provided by King David. When he is almost killed in battle his leading *thegns* turn to him: "Ne scealt ðu næfre heonon forð / mid us to gefeohte, þinum feore to plyhte, / þelæste þu adwæsce Israhe[l]a leohtfæt."[387] Given all his alleged negative character traits, Æthelred was still the rightful and consecrated king of the Anglo-Saxons. His death in battle might have been disastrous in the contemporary circumstances as his second marriage to Emma might have subsequently been followed by a succession crisis similar to the situation after Edgar's death. With the Scandinavian armies at the door of the English kingdom, political turmoil would have turned out to be disastrous for the nation. Bearing that in mind, a reading of *Wyrdwriteras* as a plea for the king to refrain from engaging the Vikings in battle himself cannot be ruled out.

Nevertheless, the question arises of whether the delegation of councillors and the absence of the king from the battlefield had been on Ælfric's mind to be the primary theme of this piece. If indeed it was a plea to implement a policy of delegation, it would have been an inappropriate one, as Mary Clayton remarks,[388] for the *Chronicle* provides us only with three instances where the king actually takes the field himself.[389] Pauline Stafford argues that Ælfric had been pleading for a king who knows how to choose good deputies instead of leading his armies in person, thus advocating or even defending Æthelred's policy of delegation.[390] Simon Keynes argued in a similar way in 1980,[391] but has treated the topic again more recently, not being sure what *Wyrdwriteras* really does signify.[392] Defending Æthelred's policy of delegation would have stood to reason as it was primarily the duty of the *ealdormen* to raise *fyrds* and defend their territory.

If there is veiled criticism of Æthelred's policy it is not so much directed at the need to appoint generals, but rather at their quality.[393] M. K. Lawson strikes the same chord when claiming that *Wyrdwriteras* had not been a response to criticizing the king for not leading his armies into battle but rather an "implied criticism of his choice of generals, who are not after all, known to have been particularly successful."[394]

Perhaps Ælfric was indeed choosing a negative attitude towards the king's policy, consequently exhorting him to share political responsibility by appointing carefully- chosen *ealdormen*. This would have been a fitting response to Æthelred's

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[387] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 729-30, ll. 47-49; *Never henceforth shall you go with us to battle, your life to endanger, lest you extinguish the light of Israel.*

[388] Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', p. 84.

[389] See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, s.a. 1000, 1009, 1014.

[390] See P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: a Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), p. 14.

[391] See Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 207.

[392] See idem, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 165.

[393] Cf. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', pp. 84-85.

[394] Lawson, 'Homiletic Element', p. 572, n. 3.

practice of appointing very few *ealdormen*, even when their predecessors had died, and choosing high reeves as direct agents of his dominion instead.[395] One of these 'natural' successors to an ealdormanry would have been Æthelmær, Ælfric's patron, when his father died in c. 998. He finally was appointed to that post later in Æthelred's reign (c.1012) and had remained one of his closest advisers hitherto.[396] Yet, this post had been vacant for about 14 years. Could it have been possible that Ælfric had the promotion of an apt and pious *ealdorman*, namely his benefactor Æthelmær, on his mind when he wrote this tract? It is hard to tell, but one is inclined to doubt that, as Pope points out that the primary message of the abbot's work had been that the realm's well-being depends on God and that ultimately all guidance and defence must come from him,[397] referring to the final lines:

> Ure wissung and ure waru sceal beon of Gode, / and we scelon secan æt Gode sylfum urne ræd / mit anrædum mode, and on eornost sprecan, / þæt ure behat beon þe we behatað Gode / fæste and getreowe, trumran þonne stanweall.[398]

I agree with Simon Keynes, who has argued that one could sense a notion that this wall, symbolizing the bond between God and the English people, "had been crumbling."[399]

We can detect a growing sense of unease in other works of Ælfric's Eynsham period. In his *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* it seems as if he fears the danger of the king abusing his dominion over religious houses, and in the *Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor*, which might be seen as a condemnation on Ælfric's side of the notorious 'palace revolution' in 1006,[400] the abbot provides his audience with scriptural examples for people who have transgressed the laws of God and thus incurred His vengeance.

Referring to Peter Clemoes, one of Ælfric's major achievements at Eynsham was his set of *Temporale Homilies*, which he reissued with further revisions and some additional material,[401] while at the same time he once again turned to some of his *Catholic Homilies* in order to revise and extent them.[402]

An addition to the *Homily for the Second Sunday after Easter* is striking as Ælfric remarks that "Gesælig bið folc þ fela witan hæfð gif hi riht wyllað and rædfæste

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[395] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 197-98, n. 163 and Stafford, 'Reign of Æethelred', p. 29.

[396] Cf. Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 197-98, n. 163.

[397] See Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 726.

[398] Ibid., II, 731-32, ll. 95-99; *Our guidance and our defence shall come from God and we shall seek our counsel from God himself with zealous determination, and speak in earnest, so that our vow, which we gave to God, might be strong and true, truer than a stone-wall.*

[399] See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 165.

[400] Cf. ibid., p. 166 and Clemoes, *Catholic Homilies*, p. 36.

[401] See Clemoes, 'Chronology', pp. 227-33.

[402] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 164.

beoð."[403] It is not hard to detect Ælfric's opinion of the English councillors and thus the king who appoints them. Notwithstanding this, his *Homily for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost* has two significant passages. In the first he lashes out at the English for having failed to keep God's laws and the way they made "eall-niwe gesetnyssa,"[404] which were running contrary to God's laws and those of the *witan* who were before them.[405] The second passage likens the people who abandon their faith in Christ to those Anglo-Saxons who submit to the Danes, do the devil's work and thus betray their own people to death.[406] It is quite possible that contemporary events prompted Ælfric to compose this passage: the betrayal concerning the English fleet in 1009 and the subsequent arrival of the intimidating fleet (or fleets) lead by Thorkell.

Ælfric seems to be more outspoken on political issues from his vantage point at Eynsham. His duty (and of the clergy in general) not to remain silent becomes quite clear in his 'outburst' in the *Sermo de die Iudicii*:

> Nu is hit gyt wyrse on urum timan, / þæt we ealle suwiað, and unriht gæð
> forð / openlice and digollice, and we embe ne hogiað / […] we ne durran
> nu to þam gedyrstlæcan, / þæt we Cristenum cyninge oððe Cristenum folce
> / Godes beboda and Godes willan secgan.[407]

What are we then to conclude from this survey of Ælfric's works? A clear interest in contemporary political events is quite evident from the very beginning. Ælfric was interested in providing good teaching and pastoral guidance for the English when confronted with the Viking invasions. But even if those works leave a notion of criticism of those responsible for defending the country and the people for their lack in faith, his primary intention was not a literal call to arms, no *realpolitik*, but spiritual guidance. His work is permeated with a pacifist undertone and an appeal to follow Christian teaching and call on the laws of God in times of distress and predicament. Concerning kingship, Ælfric seems to contradict himself, struggling with his understanding of Christian teaching and the presence of God in the world on the one hand and the pressing realities, which confronted the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons on the other. Maybe his amalgamation of

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[403] For the original text, from Ælfric's homilies, First Series, no. XVII, see Clemoes, *Catholic Homilies*, pp. 313-16; for the additional passage in various manuscripts see ibid. pp. 133 and 535-42, esp. 540, ll. 167-78; *Happy is the people that has many councillors, if they desire what is right and will be resolute.* (ll. 174-75).

[404] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 520, l. 101; *All new laws.*

[405] See ibid., II, 519-20, ll. 98-107; Wulfstan echoes this theme in his *Sermo Lupi*.

[406] See Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 521, ll. 132-39; Godden ('Apocalypse', p. 138) dates the homily to around 1009.

[407] Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, II, 598, ll. 180-88; *Now it is still worse in our times that we are all silent and injustice goes on, openly and secretly and we do not care about it* […]*we do not dare now to presume that we reveal God's commands and God's will to a Christian king or Christian people.* Pope (p. 585) admits difficulties in dating this homily but regards it later than 1000.

individual Christian non-violence and collective violence of Christian states and their leaders can be attributed to the legacy of one of the late antique church fathers, St Augustine of Hippo, as Whatley has argued.[408] Ælfric's voice might have been heard through his influential patrons, but I would discard the idea, referring to Earl,[409] that Ælfric's non-violent attitude, evident throughout his writings, was responsible for the king's policy towards the Vikings in the 990s.

It is hard to tell whether Ælfric's standpoint changed dramatically after he became abbot of Eynsham. He does not seem to have been among the most prominent members in the king's council,[410] but to assign to him a sense of dissatisfaction or detachment from those factions being influential after Æthelmær's absence from the court and the 'palace revolution' in 1006 as Keynes suggests,[411] appears to be too far-fetched, even though it cannot be ignored. What is paramount, however, is the nature of his later works. Ælfric seems to be more outspoken on political issues, no longer treating them with topical reference on the level apparent in his early works. One can feel the pressing need to call out he must have felt when the crisis surmounted and the Viking raids of 1006-7 and 1009-1012 were dreadful reality.[412] His intention was to maintain the spiritual well-being of the country, urging the people and those in authority to act – even in a more belligerent manner. Despite all that he never looses his focus that the only solution for contemporary afflictions could be true faith and the grace of God, which even the designated *bellatores* needed to fulfil their duty. Ælfric's concept of rulership can be defined in such terms. He never voices overt criticism directed at the king, but rather wants to remind him of his duties as *Cristes speligend*, being responsible for his subjects and the welfare of his kingdom. Eventually even the consecrated monarch was accountable to God, his success dependent on his faith and piety: a role model for the concept of pastoral (or theocratic) kingship featuring so prominently in the thoughts of the Benedictine reformers.

On thing appears to be certain: the Viking raids made a deep impact in the last decade of the tenth century, reflected in Ælfric's early writings, especially his *Lives of Saints*. After being appointed to Eynsham and against the background of the deteriorating situation, he voiced his opinion more openly. Whether his detachment from the royal court was the main reason is debatable, but it could have facilitated this change in attitude. Ælfric was aware of the seriousness of the situation, thus urging, if not blaming, the English rather than the Danes.[413] The Vikings raids were seen as a consequence of human failure and sins. Divine

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[408]   See Whatley, 'Hagiography and Violence', pp. 224-26 and 229-30.
[409]   See Earl, 'Violence and Non-Violence', p. 136.
[410]   See Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table LXI. He never attested a charter.
[411]   See idem, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 169.
[412]   Ælfric might not have experienced the most severe atrocities wrought by Thorkell's fleet as he might have been dead by 1010.
[413]   Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 170.

deliverance was only to be obtained through true faith and pious behaviour, both provided by the *godre lare* in Ælfric's works.

3. From Wulfstan to *Maldon*: Witnesses Not to Be Neglected

The sources dealt with in this chapter are but a small selection of the material which the reign of Æthelred provides for the interested readership. I have chosen those pieces as they are probably the most prominent literary works of the period which seemed appropriate to illustrate characteristic features evident in the sources of Æthelred's reign.

3.1 Wulfstan's Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos

The first source I want to turn to is written by one of the most prominent and influential protagonists of the last fifteen years of Æthelred's reign, who continued to remain in high office after the Danish Conquest: Archbishop Wulfstan of York. The former bishop of London came to special prominence when he was elevated to the archbishopric of York in 1002, a see which he held in plurality with Worcester till 1016. He features as a prominent figure, important counsellor and composer of law-codes as we have seen above. Working as "Homilist and Statesman"[414] as Dorothy Whitelock put it, Wulfstan's influence is reflected in his works, which reach from some forty homilies to works on political theory (*Institutes of Polity*) to several legislative pieces, produced for both Æthelred and Cnut, and the fact that the 'Northern Recension' of the *ASC* bears the mark of his supervision.[415]

The work with which he achieved lasting prominence, however, is his *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos,* comprising a compelling mixture of apocalyptic themes, the sins of the English and the atrocities of the Vikings with the threat of Danish Conquest looming dreadfully on his mind. My decision not to include this text in the chapter dealing with ecclesiastical sources is based on my assessment of the *Sermo* not primarily as an ecclesiastical piece of general pastoral guidance, being influenced by the Benedictine reform and monastic revival, but rather as 'sermon-like' work of political significance, which was written in a particular context to serve certain intentions which were not comprehensively religious in nature.

The *Sermo Lupi* is to be found in three different versions (short, medium and long), which are preserved in five different manuscripts, dating from the first

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[414] Whitelock, 'Homilist and Statesman', p. 42.
[415] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 172-77, for a discussion of the Latin tract 'De Tribulationibus' being an alleged source of inspirations for his works.

quarter of the eleventh century to the closing 25 years of the twelfth century.[416]

Although the date of its composition had been a matter of debate, the scholarly consensus, including Dorothy Whitelock and Dorothy Bethurum, has settled for 1014.[417] There might have been an earlier version of the *Sermo* as dates such as 1009 and 1012 could be suggested as the result of interpreting manuscript evidence and subject matter as argued by Prof. Keynes[418] but those assumptions must remain hypothetical as "there is not the slightest evidence for such a version."[419]

With regard to the different versions, the question of their order must remain unsolved for now. The three versions differ in length and content. Whereas the short version runs about 131 lines, making no mention of Viking incursions whatsoever and includes a unique passage on Æthelred being driven into exile, the medium version (178 lines) drops this passage and adds a lengthy passage on the activities of the Vikings, while the long version similarly remains silent about Æthelred's exile, but elaborates on the sins and wrongdoings of the English people. This version concludes with a reference to the work of the 6th-century British monk Gildas – *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* – comparing the conquest of England by the Anglo-Saxons as a consequence of the sins of the Britons with the contemporary situation, thus giving the long version a particular urgency and rhetorical force. Under the given circumstances in-depth discussion of the order cannot be undertaken. The debate centres around the argument that either the short version was the first, as Wulfstan had the habit of reusing his works and expanding upon them or the long version being the original with the other versions being abridgements.[420]

For my part, I have not come to a conclusion. Both interpretations have the same degree of probability and follow a cogent argumentation. Nevertheless, I tend to regard the longest version as the original one – or at least being closest to it – as I think Wilcox's theory on the sermon being preached at York in February 1014 is more than intriguing, although Simon Keynes has deemed it to depend on a chain of assumptions.[421] The sermon appears to have been composed in the

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[416] For the different versions and manuscripts see Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, pp. 1-5 and Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, pp. 1-6 and 22-24.

[417] See Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 6 and Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, pp. 101-4 and 356; see also the discourse on the sermon in S. Hollis, 'The Thematic Structure of the *Sermo Lupi*', *ASE* 6 (1977), 175-95; Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 151-52; J. Wilcox, 'The Wolf on Shepherds: Wulfstan, Bishops, and the Context of the *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*', in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. P. Szarmach (New York, 2000), pp. 408-12, with idem, 'Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos* as a Political Performance: 16 February 1014 and Beyond', in *Wulfstan*, ed. Townend, pp. 375-96, all based on the underlying dating of 1014.

[418] See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 208-13.

[419] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 6.

[420] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 144.

[421] See Wilcox, 'Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*', pp. 375-96; Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 205, for the objection.

heat of the moment on a special occasion, which does not necessarily contradict the outcome of a closer survey that several literary sources and models can be identified for a sermon of this nature.[422] The short version clearly stands in the tradition of Wufstan's apocalyptic homilies and does not reflect the political circumstances of the last years of Æthelred's reign in the way the long version does. Moreover, the fact that it appears with the heading *Larspell* ('sermon') in a manuscript datable to the last quarter of the 12th century, seemingly decontextualized, shows that the message of this apocalyptic sermon was regarded to be useful and worth transmitting even 150 years later.[423] My discussion of the *Sermo Lupi* will be based on the longest version, as contained in British Library, Cotton Nero A.i (I), a manuscript of the early eleventh century, which was apparently annotated in Wulfstan's own hand, thus suggesting his supervision and approval of that version.[424] This version provides us with the most detailed account and best reflects the circumstances under which it was written, showing powerful rhetoric. The initial rubric runs as follows:

> SERMO LUPI AD ANGLOS QUANDO DANI MAXIME PERSECUTI SUNT EOS, QUOD FUIT ANNO MILLESIMO XIIII AB INCARNA-TIONE DOMINI NOSTRI IESU CHRISTI[425]

It could be argued – as Keynes has done – that a reference to a year where the English were persecuted most by the Vikings does not comply with 1014, but rather with 1009 and the afflictions caused by the arrival of Thorkell's fleet.[426] Keynes surely has a point here, but his remark assumes a factual statement on Wulfstan's part. In my opinion Wulfstan might have just wanted to convey the notion of 1014 being a year of severe persecution which it surely could have been in the perception of his contemporaries. By exaggerating the year's significance the archbishop intended to put the seriousness of the situation before the eyes of his audience/congregation and call for determination to withstand the invaders as one, always bearing in mind that the threat of Danish rule had not been averted for good. The term *ANGLOS* is conspicuous, just as if the archbishop used it to stress the unity of the *Angelcynn* as opposed to the *DANI*. Wulfstan chose his words carefully in order to make clear that this sermon was preached to the Anglo-Saxons at a particular moment, explaining its historical positioning.[427]

Wulfstan deals with various issues in the *Sermo*. The first section (ll. 1-25) builds an apocalyptic environment by exhorting the people:

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[422] Cf. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 205-7.

[423] Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 343; cf. Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 5 and White-lock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 3.

[424] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 144.

[425] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 47; *The Sermon of the Wolf to the English, when the Danes persecuted them most, which was the year 1014 of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

[426] See Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 212-13.

[427] Cf. Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 158.

ðeos woruld is on ofste, ꝼ hit nealæcð þam ende, ꝼ þy hit is on worulde aa swa leng swa wyrse, ꝼ swa hit sceal nyde for folces synnan ær Antecristes tocyme yfelian swyþe.[428]

The image of sin is important to Wulfstan's work. He remarks that there had been manifold sins and misdeeds among the English which have brought about divine wrath. For this he embarks upon a lengthy enumeration of the wrongdoings (ll.136-45), after he had already given an account of various afflictions, which in his perception were the result of *Godes yrre* 'God's anger' (ll. 102-32). He also links the political events of the period to this topic as he explains the long period of English defeats to be grounded in divine anger about the sinful Anglo-Saxons whereas the Vikings are victorious through God's consent (ll. 113-15). According to this concept, English defeat was not due to the failure of royal government or the king, but instead the outcome of neglecting Christian duties and committing misdeeds on the part of the English. Sin has corrupted the Anglo-Saxons, making the boundaries of this Christian people and the Scandinavian invaders blur as Wulfstan admonishes the people for adopting 'heathen' practices.[429] Important in this regard is also the factor of *scamu* 'shame'. For Wulfstan, the Anglo-Saxons had to perform *dædbot* 'repentance' in order to overcome their problems. According to Alice Cowen, Wulfstan's focus was on the public sphere (he repeatedly uses the first person plural). Sin could be tackled only at the level of the community through united repentance and sharing of (God's) laws. This might reflect his desire to build a 'holy society', also evident in his law-codes and the *Institutes of Polity*.[430] Cowen further argues that Wulfstan had expressed the relationship of sin and society through the concept of shame. In the eyes of the archbishop, one essential feature of the Viking invasions seems to have been their quality of shaming the English.[431] Additionally, shame is not only the consequence of the peoples' sins, but also part of the problem, as the Anglo-Saxons are ashamed of atoning for their misdemeanour, thus further incurring God's wrath. The most striking passage with regard to shame is the account of the husband who is looking on passively while his wife is gang-raped by the Vikings (ll. 116-20). Cowen pointed out that the impotent body of the *thegn* and the abused body of his wife figured for the wounded body of the nation as a whole – Wulfstan exhorted the Anglo-Saxon for showing passivity before violence.[432] What we have here might be an appeal to the English to act – not only with atonement, but with arms.

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[428] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 47; *This world is in haste end it draws to the end, and therefore in the world things go from bad to worse, and so it should out of necessity greatly deteriorate for the sins of the people before the coming of Antichrist.*

[429] See ibid., ll. 85-93. This motif is also to be found in Ælfric's *Letter to Brother Edward*. See p. 80 *supra*.

[430] See Cowen , '*Byrstas* and *bysmeras*', p. 405.

[431] See ibid. p. 406.

[432] See ibid., pp. 407-8.

Wulfstan feels the bonds of society breaking apart, not only the bonds between father and son, but also of lords and their people. *Ungetrywþa* 'disloyalties' become a recurring image in matters of church and state. He stresses that it was "ealra mæst hlafordswice"[433] that a man betrays his lord's soul. Wulfstan takes this point one step further when he remarks that it had been a great treachery to betray his lord to death or drive him from the land, both of which had happened in England, by giving the example of Edward ('the Martyr'). Compared to the original version, the reference to Æthelred's exile was apparently omitted. Even so, it is necessary to complete the preceeding sentence syntactly, as pointed out by Prof. Whitelock.[434] This clause might have been excluded due to political reasons. I tend to side with Wilcox and Godden, whose argumentation favoured an omission in the context of the year 1014, when Wulfstan apparently strove to achieve a reconciliation between Æthelred and his people on the occasion of the king's return from exile. He left out the passage in question in order not to give the whole enterprise a difficult start as it were those same people whom Wulfstan tried to convince and unite behind Æthelred who had formerly exiled their king from England. This would also fit into the context of *scamu* mentioned above as the *witan* should overcome their feeling of shame and act according to what was right.[435]

The archbishop further bemoans the both treatment and inappropriate behaviour of the clergy and the church. Church dues had not been paid and men generally had not observed church services, thus greatly angering Almighty God. He criticizes that God's laws had not been properly observed – even despised - and that the laws of the people had deteriorated. Furthermore, he complains of *ungylda* 'taxes' (l. 59), probably referring the the introduction of the *Danegeld*, which had been introduced in 1012 to pay Æthelred's Viking mercenaries. Nevertheless, Wulfstan does not seem to have been critical of King Æthelred. When assigning base laws and *scandlice nydgyld* 'shameful tribute' (l. 109), the latter of which by 1014 seems to have been seen with dismay among the population, to divine wrath incurred by the peoples' misdemeanours, Wulfstan exculpates the king for pursuing such a policy.

One passage that gives the sermon its particular urgency and force is Wulfstan's reference to Gildas,[436] in which he recalls the conquest of England by the Anglo-Saxons. He blames it on the manifold sins of the British, with their lawlessness and injustice. He goes even further and advises the English to take this example for a warning as "wyrsan dæda we witan mid Englum þonne we mid

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[433] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 56; *The greatest of all treacheries*; his use of *hlafordswice* for 'treachery' shows also his ambition to stress the dimension of lordship.

[434] See e.g. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 931, n. 4 and idem, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 6;

[435] Cf. Wilcox, 'Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*', pp. 386-88; Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 150.

[436] Much of this passage is literally translated from a letter written by Alcuin after the sack of Lindisfarne in 793. See Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 933, n. 6.

Bryttan ahwar gehyrdan."[437] This passage alone must have raised fear and indignation and shaken up the English. He also criticizes the cowardice of the British clergy for having often neglected their pastoral duty to instruct the people. Wulfstan appeals to the Anglo-Saxon clergy not to follow such an example, but simultaneously acknowledges that the requirement to cry out in order to guide his flock extended to himself.[438] This statement might also be directed at a secular audience, reflecting on possible ill-counsel or *unræd* of Æthelred's *witan* and prompting them to change their course.

Wulfstan's intention, however, was not to condemn his people, but rather to give an explanation of the contemporary afflictions and set down guidelines on how to avert this fate as apart from exhorting the people and bringing their wrongdoings before their eyes he generates hope among his audience. Right from the beginning, he stresses that the Anglo-Saxons needed improvement, i.e., that every man had to work hard to obtain divine favour, whereas hitherto he had merited those miseries through his misdeeds and urges the need to honour God's laws and pay church dues (ll. 15-25). He takes up this topic at the end where he tries to incite the Anglo-Saxons: "Ac utan don swa us þearf is."[439] The archbishop admonishes his audience to atone for their misdeeds and henceforth love God and follow His laws, reminding them that they all would have to await the Last Judgement, and uphold loyalty without treachery among themselves in order to "geearnian us þa mærþa ⁊ þa myrhða þe God hæfð gegearwod þam þe his willan on worolde gewyrcað."[440] This does not necessarily appear to be a vision of the rewards in the next life but could also refer to the contemporary situation: victory over the Danish invaders for recognizing the errors of one's way and lead a life pleasing to God. The urgency of his message cannot be mistaken when he points out earlier: "Ac la, on Godes naman, utan don swa us neod is, beorgan us sylfum swa we geornost magan, þe læs we ætgædere ealle forweorðan."[441] Here Wulfstan appeals with forceful rhetoric to the Anglo-Saxons to react and stand as one to overcome dissensions, as only together they would be able to defend their country against the Viking invaders.

The *Sermo Lupi* appears to be a masterpiece of Wulfstan's, composed at a time

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437   Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 66; *Worse deeds we know of the English than we have heard of anywhere among the Britons.*

438   Wulfstan's concern with the duties of bishops is a recurring feature of his work. In this regard it is of special interest that the various versions of the *Sermo Lupi* in the manuscripts are often accompanied by such reflection on bishops instructing the people. The section "Be þeodwitan" in Cotton, Nero A.i. ends with a personal statement of self-reflection on this issue, being followed immediately by the *Sermo Lupi*. See Wilcox, 'The Wolf on Shepherds', pp. 406-12.

439   Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, p. 66; *And let us do what is necessary for us.*

440   Ibid., p. 67; *Earn for ourselves the glories and the joys which God has prepared for those who do his will in the world.*

441   Ibid., p. 65; *But lo, in God's name. Let us do as is needful for us, save ourselves as best as we can, lest we all perish together.*

when Anglo-Saxon England faced the renewed threat of invasion. When we
assume that he wrote this sermon after Æthelred's return, his intention could only
have been to unite the Anglo-Saxons and mount support for Æthelred, as he was
aware of the fragile situation. He made use of the mood of elation but also
pursued greater ends. Patrick Wormald argued:

> If Wulfstan began as a millennial homilist, he was soon a great deal more.
> From 1014 at least, his oeuvre aimed to reorder society such that it would
> never again merit the punishment meted out by God in that grim year […]
> Wulfstan's books were blueprints for a People of God.[442]

The *Sermo Lupi* has to be treated in the same vein. Wulfstan intricately combined
the inner convictions as a man of God and spiritual leader of the *Angelcynn* after
the death of Ælfheah with his office as statesman who had to react to a pressing
political challenge.

Malcolm Godden has taken the discussion of the sermon to a new level. He
claimed that Wulfstan's use of Old Testament parallels suggested "the cyclic
repetition of divine punishment and repentance," which implied divine anger with
the chosen people, rather than any reference to an apocalyptic setting.[443] Godden
goes on to argue that in the Old Testament the Israelites had enjoyed
exclusiveness as His chosen people and that even if they were conquered by a
heathen people they nevertheless remained chosen.[444] If we take this into
consideration, Wulfstan might have pursued a twofold strategy with the sermon:
on the one hand he tried to mount resistance and generate unity among the
Anglo-Saxons to face the Viking threat, but at the same time constructed a mind-
set in which after an eventual Danish Conquest the English could still regard
themselves as God's chosen people who had to live a pious and God-pleasing life
to assert their claim and one day be rewarded. With his incorporation of the
Gildas passage Wulfstan might have created an atmosphere of acceptance of the
invaders as he – consciously or not – draws a parallel between the Danes and the
Anglo-Saxons who had arrived in England as heathens and finally established
themselves as a Christian people favoured by God, thus paving the way for a
possible amalgamation of the two peoples. This was far from being unlikely, for it
had happened before since Alfred's days: the invaders of old had become part of
the Christian people of the Anglo-Saxons in the course of centuries. The sermon
was intended to provide the ideological basis for a smooth transition towards yet
another almagamation of both Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians.

In my opinion Wulfstan was prepared to both ends: he wrote the *Sermo Lupi* to
encourage the English to fight, gaining victory through adopting his ideal of a

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[442]   P. Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society', in *Anglo-Saxon History*, ed.
Pelteret, p. 208.
[443]   See Godden, 'Apocalypse', p. 155.
[444]   See ibid., p. 156.

'holy society', but at the same time was aware of the fragile situation after Æthelred's return from exile when the Vikings were still present in England. Therefore, he was also prepared for defeat and cleverly laid the ideological foundations for a subsequent living together of both nations with the result of yet another Christian society that would live according to God's law. The fact that he – until his death – became the chief advisor of Cnut fits the pattern and is probably one major reason for the peaceful and prosperous reign of the Anglo-Danish king.

3.2 The Battle of Maldon

When looking at the *Chronicle* account of the battle of Maldon we are provided with sparse information about the event even though this encounter must have been crucial to the state of mind of the Anglo-Saxons. When their then chief *ealdorman* and his force were annihilated they must have realized their vulnerability to renewed Viking onslaughts. The prominence the battle and in particular the brave general Byrhtnoth have gained subsequently was due very much to an anonymous heroic poem of 325 lines: *The Battle of Maldon*.

Although it is impossible to establish the exact date and origin of the poem, it might have been written in the late tenth or early eleventh century in the East Anglian region, Essex or Kent.[445]

Central themes of the poem are the courageous *ealdorman* and his loyal retainers, who even after the death of their leader boldly fight and meet their deaths, thus providing a prime example for bonds of lord- and kinship. This is sharply contrasted with the cowardice shown by those, who on Byrhtnoth's death take the flight – a behaviour completely unacceptable within the heroic code.

The *ealdorman* of Essex is presented as a bold warrior, who fulfils his duty as commander and lord, constantly encouraging and arranging his men and urging them forward. It appears that his behaviour boosts the morale of the troops. Byrhtnoth is portrayed as a worthy lord who maintains his lordship ties through courageous behaviour. This strongly contrasts with the implied criticism posed by the *Chronicle* with regard to the king and his apparently treacherous *ealdormen* and the disintegration of national allegiance in the face of the Viking attacks. The question of loyalty features prominently in the poem. Byrhtnoth resembles the ideal general and his unswerving allegiance to the king is constantly stressed. When the Viking messenger comes to negotiate terms of surrender, Byrhtnoth makes a defiant and heroic speech:

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[445]   See Scragg, 'Battle of Maldon', p. 32 and n. 15.

> Þæt her stynt unforcuð   eorl mid his werode,
> Þe wile gealgean   eþel þysne,
> Æþelredes eard,   ealdres mines
> folc and foldan.[446]

In the course of his speech, he forcefully opposes the messenger's offer to buy peace with tribute (*gafol*) in order to protect the people, regarding it as "to heanlic" 'too shameful' (l. 55b). At first sight, this could be seen as expressing an ideal of honour to defend one's country and people as well as an implied criticism of Æthelred's policy of buying off the invaders. John Damon, however, has argued for a closer look which reveals that

> the poet has Byrhtnoth suggest tribute and peace accord (gafol and gese-man) as proper reactions to defeat, although inappropriate as a means of resolving conflict.[447]

According to that reading, the king's *gafol* policy is seen as a reasonable action after defeat, especially if we keep in mind the outcome of the battle. Considering Byrhtnoth's loyalty to his king, such criticism would be out of place, as he is described as "Æþelredes þegen" 'Æthelred's *thegn*' (l. 151b) and "Æþelredes eorl'"Æthelred's earl' (l. 203a). Alice Sheppard made an intriguing remark in this regard by pointing out that the Maldon poet digressed from traditional conventions of heroic poetry and does not define Byrhtnoth by referring to his lineage or outstanding deeds, but in terms of his relationship to his king.[448]

His heroic death in battle is described in a remarkable way. Whereas his men die gloriously after having displayed their courage and loyalty to their lord, Byrhtnoth's end is partly reminiscent of martyrdom. Wounded and unarmed he looks up to heaven and is slain by "hæðene scealcas" 'heathen warriors' (l. 180b). There has been much debate about the Christian background of the poem and its possible interpretation as a saint's life or allegory[449] and certainly a Christian or hagiographical undertone could not be ruled out completely, although I regard Paul Cavill's comparison to the death of Christ too far-fetched.[450] Byrhtnoth's remark that "God ana wat / hwa þære wælstowe wealdan mote"[451] underlines the

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[446] Scragg, 'Battle of Maldon', p. 20, ll. 51-54a; *that here stands an earl of unstained reputation with his company, who intends to defend this homeland, the kingdom of Æthelred, my lord's people and his country.*

[447] Damon, 'Advisors for Peace', p. 61.

[448] See Sheppard, 'Noble Counsel, No Counsel', p. 415.

[449] Cf. H. Gneuss, 'Die Battle of Maldon als historisches und literarisches Zeugnis' in his *Language and History in Early England*, Collected Studies Series 559 (Aldershot, 1996), no. IX, p. 9 and n. 12.

[450] See Cavill, *Fear and Faith*, p. 122. He remarks that there were twelve named retainers of Byrhtnoth in the poem which resemble the disciples of Christ. Furthermore, like Christ, the *ealdorman* dies between two unimportant people.

[451] Scragg, 'Battle of Maldon', p. 22, ll. 94b-95b; *God alone knows who will be allowed to control the place of slaughter.*

religious element in the poem. With regard to the ideal of men dying with their lord in battle, the so-called *comitatus* ideal referred to by the Roman historian Tacitus in his *Germania*, which was quite frequent in heroic poetry, this Christian element appears to be rather odd and inappropriate. Roberta Frank has cogently argued the *Maldon* poet had rather been inspired by a literary tradition than a contemporary code of conduct[452] and concludes, with reference to contemporary continental sources, that the poem

> peers not backward through the mists to Germania, but just around the corner, to an eleventh century Europe in which the profession of warrior was a way of achieving religious perfection and a martyr's crown.[453]

Following this argumentation *The Battle of Maldon* was no purely heroic poem, which should only display an ideal of bold and courageous defence and loyalty to one's lord, but at the same time combines it with a religious notion, not dissimilar to the idea of the *miles Christi* ('soldier of Christ'), that can be detected in Ælfric's works as well (e.g. his account of St Martin in the *Lives of Saints*).

Nevertheless, the theme of loyalty and fulfilling one's oaths in contrast with cowardice in the face of danger features prominently in the poem. When Byrhtnoth dies the poet records that the sons of Odda were "ærest on fleame" 'first on flight' (l. 186b), a phrase reminiscent of the account of the chronicler. Godric is singled out and criticized for abandoning his lord (ll. 186-90) and later on the poet goes continues:

> | | Us Godric hæfð, |
> |---|---|
> | earh Oddan bearn, | ealle beswicene: |
> | wende þæs formoni man, | þe he on meare rad, |
> | on wlancan þam wicge, | þæt wære hit ure hlaford; |
> | forþan wearð her on felda | folc totwæmed, |
> | scyldburh tobrocen.[454] | |

One cannot avoid thinking of the *ASC*, as like the individual *ealdormen* (e.g. Ælfric and Eadric) in that account betrayal in the poem is personalized, thus making it all the more severe. The image of a military leader abandoning his men followed by crumbling morale and eventual defeat is one of the main topics in the *Chronicle*. In the last few lines of the poem (320-25) another Godric is presented as a virtuous and bold warrior, who dies fighting and is explicitly distinguished from his treacherous counterpart.

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[452] See R. Frank, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in *The Battle of Maldon*: Anachronism or *Nouvelle Vogue*', in *People and Places*, ed. Wood and Lund, pp. 96-97.

[453] Ibid., p. 106.

[454] Scragg, 'Battle of Maldon', p. 28, ll. 237-42a; *Us Godric has all betrayed, the cowardly son of Odda: too many men believed, when he rode away on that horse, on that noble steed, that it was our lord; therefore the army on this field became divided, the shield-wall broken.*

In the face of national turmoil in England during this period, the poem becomes a battle-cry against the Danes, coming close to propaganda in order to unite the people against their enemies. The speech of Byrhtnoth's old retainer Byrhtwold after his lord's death is exemplary:

> Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,
> mode sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað.
> […] A mæg gnornian
> se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð.[455]

This indeed would have been a fitting appeal to contemporaries to show courage, standing as one loyal to their lord (Æthelred) to overcome the Scandinavian invaders, even if their courage and resolve had been shaken by the series of defeats, as presented in the *ASC*. The mentioning of resistance despite diminishing strength sounds like the situation in the closing years of Æthelred's reign and the horrors brought about by the Viking armies of Tostig and Thorkell. Contributing to that notion is the crossregional loyalty displayed in the poem as Wilcox has argued[456]. When the Anglo-Saxons were at the brink of defeat, an appeal to national resistance and loyalty to the king, overcoming regional disparities (reflected in the *ASC* s.a. 1010, where it is recorded that the shires would not help one another), would have been fitting to a national scheme of defence.

The poem appears to be another battle-cry for resistance, stressing the question of loyalty to one's lord in contrast to those cowardly forsaking him. Byrhtnoth is portrayed as willing to fight and die for king and country. I concur with Prof. Gneuss when he claims that the poem had been regarded by contemporaries

> als Lebenszeugnis eines vorbildlichen ealdorman und Christen, der Land und Leute ebenso wie Klöster und Kirchen vor den heidnischen Angriffen zu schützen sucht.[457]

The poet did not only want to create another piece of heroic poetry, of *Gefolgsschaftsdichtung*, but also conceived the struggle in religious terms. *The Battle of Maldon* thus perfectly fits into that period when the Anglo-Saxons were struggling to uphold their ideals of lordship and mount a concerted effort against the Vikings despite their military inferiority, merging traditional heroic values with the question of faith and piety, to win divine assistance in a perceived struggle of Christians against heathens. It reflects the pressing political need to create a united

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[455] Scragg, 'Battle of Maldon', p. 30, ll. 312-16; *The spirit must be the firmer, the heart the bolder, courage must be the greater, as our strength diminishes* […]. *He will have cause to mourn forever who thinks of turning away from this battlegame now.*

[456] See Wilcox, '*Battle of Maldon*', p. 33 and n. 16.

[457] Gneuss, 'Die Battle of Maldon', p. 64.

kingdom by claiming a common Germanic heritage with a great past and ideals of loyalty to king and God.[458]

3.3 The Old English Promissio Regis

Finally, I am going to draw attention to an Old English text, which consisted of a translation of the threefold promise made by Anglo-Saxon kings at their coronation in the tenth and eleventh century and two paragraphs on the duties of kingship, apparently addressed to king and people on a special occasion.[459]

Despite the fact that there has been much scholarly discourse (Liebermann, Stafford, Wormald, Clayton), date and author have not been identified with certainty. According to the text itself, it was copied letter by letter from a document the archbishop of Canterbury, Dunstan (959 – 988), had given to the king on the occasion of his consecration at Kingston. Thus, the possible king in question must have been either Edward or Æthelred.[460]

Regardless of date and authorship, the text does not appear to have been used at a coronation and rather refers to a ceremony in the past, in which the present monarch had been consecrated as king. Mary Clayton seems to have a point when she remarks that it might have been a sermon, which was addressed to a king and the people in order to remind both of the promises which had been made by the ruler at his coronation.[461]

Important in considering this text is of course its apparent lacking of a proper ending and the fact that it is preserved in two manuscripts of the second half of the eleventh century, produced in the scriptorium of Leofric of Exeter.[462] Keeping that in mind we cannot be sure to what degree our preserved text represents the original, if any. The text can be divided into three sections: an introductory sequence, followed by the threefold royal promise, and two sections concerning the duties of kingship.

The coronation oath of the *Promissio* encompasses the preservation of peace, the suppression of crimes and unrightful actions and finally, a promise to command mercy and justice in the king's judgements in order to please God and

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[458] Cf. G. Caie, 'The Shorter Heroic Verse', in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. H. Aertsen and R. H. Bremmer Jr. (Amsterdam, 1994), p. 93.

[459] For an edition of the text see *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury: Edited from Various Manuscripts*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages (Rolls Series) 63 (London, 1874; repr. Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1965), pp. 356-57 and. M. Clayton, 'The Old English *Promissio regis*', *ASE* 37 (2009), pp. 148-49.

[460] Cf. Robertson, *Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 40; Edgar's coronation took place at Bath and it is not certain where Edward was crowned, leaving us with Æthelred's coronation, which was celebrated at Kingston.

[461] See M. Clayton, '*Promissio regis*', p. 131.

[462] Cf. ibid., p. 96.

achieve eternal mercy. With reference to Mary Clayton's analysis, the translation of the promise suggests a conflation of both Anglo-Saxon coronation *ordines*.[463]

The following section deals with consequences for the king if he fulfils his promise and the disastrous outcome for his people if he fails to do so. The text then continues with a direct appeal to the king ("Eala leof hlaford"[464] 'O beloved Lord') to protect himself and a reminder that he as a shepherd has to lead his people and would be accountable for his rule at the Last Judgement.

As I have mentioned previously in my chapter on Ælfric, the dependence of a kingdom's welfare on the behaviour of its king is derived *inter alia* from the Hiberno-Latin tract *De Duodecim Abusivis Saeculi*. Both Ælfric and Wulfstan used the ideas of *rex iniquus* promulgated in that tract[465] in their works. The invocation of the image of the king as shepherd draws on the long tradition of pastoral kingship featuring prominently in Anglo-Saxon England in texts of Gregory the Great, Alcuin and gaining new momentum with the Benedictine reform under Edgar,[466] although the majority of the texts speaking of shepherds do that with regard to the clergy (i.e. priests and bishops). Mary Clayton has pointed out that in vernacular texts only Ælfric and Wulfstan speak of the king as shepherd.[467] The description of the king as leading his people to the Last Judgement shows that the office was seen as a spiritual one. Again, this motif originally invoked by Gregory the Great is adapted by Ælfric and Wulfstan.[468] The *Promissio Regis* is unique in this regard, as the leader of the people is not a bishop or priest, but a king.

The final section shows a distinguished similarity to the description of the king's justice in the ninth abuse of *De Duodecim Abusivis Saeculi*. Among the provisions are the protection of the weak (as seen in his law-codes)[469] and the concluding reference to councillors and representatives:

> and ealde. and wise. and syfre him to geþeahterum hæbbe. and rihtwise mæn him to wicnerum sette. for þan swa hwæt swa hig to unrihte gedoð þurh his aful. he sceal ealles gescead agyldan on domesdæg.[470]

Those lines fit perfectly with the reign of Æthelred when they are read as an

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[463] See Clayton, '*Promissio regis*', pp. 112-13. For the different versions of the coronation oath, see J. Nelson, 'The Second English *Ordo*,' in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Nelson, History Series 42 (London, 1986), pp. 361-74.

[464] Clayton, '*Promissio regis*', p. 148.

[465] See Godden, *Catholic Homilies*, p. 183, ll. 96-99; Morris, *Old English Homilies*, pp. 296-304; *Die „Institutes of Polity: Civil and Ecclesiastical": ein Werk des Erzbischofs Wulfstan von York*, ed. K. Jost (Bern, 1959), I.5 (p. 42), I.11 (p. 47), II.13 (p. 47).

[466] Cf. Clayton, '*Promissio Regis*', pp. 120-1.

[467] See ibid., p. 121.

[468] Cf. ibid., pp. 123-24.

[469] *Supra*.

[470] Clayton, '*Promissio regis*', p. 149; *And old and wise and temperate should he set him as counsellors and appoint righteous men as officers because, whatsoever they do unjustly by means of his might, he must give a reckoning on Judgement Day for all of it.*

exhortation of the monarch to follow this example. The importance of the king drawing on the advice of good counsellors, a recurring image in the sources we have encountered in this paper, possibly alludes to the notorious Eadric Streona and other influential men of rank and file, while the reference to the king's officers can be connected to Æthelred's measure to appoint shire-reeves as his personal representatives of power.

With regard to the author, the *Promissio Regis* had been attributed to Dunstan or Byrhtferth.[471] Pauline Stafford and Mary Clayton considered the authorship of Archbishop Wulfstan, but either dismissed it (Stafford) or could not provide conclusive evidence.[472] Whatever the case, at least the last two sections of the text show similarities in vocabulary, tone and subject matter with the works of Wulfstan, as noted by Patrick Wormald, who remarked that "the idiom, though not the language, is already that of Wulfstan."[473] Even if he was not the author, which is not unlikely as the ideas and concepts incorporated in the *Promissio* originate from other sources, he drew on those ideas in his works. It is also possible that the composer of the text saw Wulfstan as a literary model, but this is a matter of speculation.

Nevertheless, the tone of the *Promissio Regis* suggests that it was composed for an important occasion. The text reads as if written in a time of turmoil. It seems to have been a pressing need to remind the king and his subjects of the duties of kingship and his promises made at the coronation. It is an intriguing idea to connect the text with the events after Æthelred's return from exile in 1014, when the bond between the king and his people was renewed on a seemingly contractual basis.

It generally appears to be written in the same atmosphere of both predicament and hope, which can be detected in the closing decade of Æthelred's reign. Possibly it has to be seen in the same vein as *VIII Æthelred*, bearing witness of an effort to maximise the nation's strength, recollect the ideals of pastoral kingship and appeal to king and people to make a fresh start, learn from former wrongdoings, and act with the conscience of duty and tradition as good Christians, in order to mutually deal with the threat posed by the Viking conquest of Anglo-Saxon England.

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[471] Cf. Clayton, '*Promissio regis*, pp. 94-95 and 131-32.

[472] See ibid., pp. 132-43, who discusses various elements in favour and against Wulfstan's authorship. Liebermann (*Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols (Halle, 1903-16), III, 145), pointed out that the text was in parts very close to *Institutes of Polity* and *Napier L* (a homily), while Robertson (*Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 41) detected similarities with *V* and *VI Æthelred*, two law-codes bearing the mark of the archbishop.

[473] Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 448, n. 119.

III. Æthelred or *Un-ræd*: A Reconsideration of Anglo-Saxon England on the Eve of the Danish Conquest

The French historian Marc Bloch once remarked that causations cannot be taken for granted, but need to be carefully searched for. This is what I have attempted to do in this paper with regard to the reign of Æthelred, which saw the Danish Conquest of Anglo-Saxon England. The eventual fate of the English had in the past been closely connected with the person of the king, who appeared to be weak, inactive, violent and first and foremost ill-counselled. This verdict on Æthelred, based on the account of a chronicler writing after the catastrophe of conquest had already struck the English, should not be considered to be the complete truth, as it seems too harsh and simple in my opinion.

The sources from the reign of King Æthelred do not provide us with a homogenous picture of disaster, seeing Anglo-Saxon England sliding towards eventual defeat. Even the critical account of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not appear to be so deep-rootedly defeatist if analyzed thoroughly. Its criticism, if any, is never voiced overtly and remains a matter of interpretation, as I have argued. The majority of the sources do not show a genuine incompetence of Æthelred's part, but instead are indicators of a well-organized Anglo-Saxon state with working government and administration even during times of great turmoil.

Only after taking all sources into consideration is it possible to come to a well-balanced verdict on the situation in Anglo-Saxon England, for when analyzed individually, the sources might not tell the whole truth.

In my opinion the source material does show a common denominator, but it is not one of criticism and desperation, but one of hope, resolve and united resistance. Explanations are given for the course of events. The actions of the king and his royal government are contemplated on a theoretical and factual basis, not straightforwardly critized, but analyzed. It was not the intention of the chronicler, Wulfstan or Ælfric to condemn Æthelred, but to provide guidance for the Anglo-Saxons, including the king, and mount spiritual and military resistance. If indeed we are to detect underlying exhortations, they ought not to be regarded as criticism for criticism's sake, but as a means of making people aware of certain grievances and digressions from the right path in order to provide an example the addressees should learn from.

Unity and loyalty are themes which become recurring *topoi* in the literary sources. Anglo-Saxon England and its people were not bound to be defeated. Contemporaries were aware of the dangers the Vikings posed and did their utmost to overcome this external threat. Once again the Anglo-Saxons were drawn together by a common adversary and had it not been for the internal factionalism and regional separatism, problems which did not genuinely arise during Æthelred's reign but had troubled Anglo-Saxon monarchs ever since, the

English might have averted their eventual fate.

Especially in the last decade of Æthelred's reign, Archbishop Wulfstan was a very important figure, being the spiritual leader of the *Angelcynn* – at least after Ælfheah's martyrdom – and at the same time functioning as an important political adviser and statesman. The full scale of his influence in secular and religious affairs may not have been discovered so far and would be a fascinating task for a future research, as according to the source material (at least the literary sources), he seems to have shaped the perception of the contemporary situation to a considerable degree. The Viking attacks have always been also perceived in a religious context: a struggle between Christianity and the heathens (although by that time a great part of the Vikings had been christianized). This sharpened the self-perception of the Anglo-Saxons with regard to their way of life. Evident from the literature is an intention to provide spiritual guidance for the English, making them reconsider their previous behaviour. The overriding notion was one of a flawed fabric of society, which needed to be amended and improved in order to overcome this dangerous situation. Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works should be seen as 'godre lare' to remind the Anglo-Saxons of their nationhood, by stressing history and religious aspects. Pastoral guidance in order to build a better (holy) society, which is pious and pleasing to God, is reflected in their works without setting aside the pressing political challenges of their days. By responding to real dangers with appeals of unity and loyalty as well as simultaneously guiding their flock in order to stress Christian ideals, their works became an effective rallying cry for spiritual and military resistance.

Æthelred might not have been the most apt representative of the royal House of Wessex, but there is sufficient source material to abandon one-sided criticism once and for all. Neither of the sources bluntly blames the king personally, and those showing signs of such criticism do not do so without conveying – at least on an implicit level – a more balanced view. Æthelred was still their rightful and consecrated king and the voices of his reign show an unswerving loyalty to the idea of a rightful Anglo-Saxon king from the House of Wessex. Even so, we can detect a stress on the duties of kingship against which Æthelred's reign had to be measured. In that regard, the literary sources reflect to a certain extent an ideal of how things should be by referring directly or implicitly to contemporary or past events, which more often than not functions as examples of how not to handle things: a theoretical debate on principles in the face of a very real threat, with the aim of providing a blue-print to aid future decision-making.

It would be unjustified to view Anglo-Saxon England in Æthelred's time as a country falling apart under the Viking onslaught. The people were aware of the dangers posed by the Scandinavian attackers, but did their very best to collectively respond to the situation. We can detect something of a national awareness of crisis but without the notion of downright panic. Figures in high and prominent offices tried to mend apparent tendencies of chaos, breakdown and separatism,

realising the error of their ways and trying to evoke a common nationhood based on history and religion, i.e. to prepare the *Angelcynn* for what possibly can be termed their final stand with their rightful ruler leading them to eventual victory. Æthelred might not have been the best for his job, but he tried to fulfil the people's expectations and hopes which they had of him as best as he could and "held his kingdom with great toil as long as his life lasted."[474] First and foremost, the records of royal government show that he aptly responded to the kingdom's day-to-day business, providing us with a picture of a monarch who did his best to secure his kingdom and prevent it from disintegrating and asserting his authority. What we can deduce from the sources is an absolute determination to overcome the threat by a set of military and spiritual measures. When the situation aggravated and the military response had not brought about the intended results we can detect a clear shift towards 'spiritual rearmament' and pastoral guidance to assist the efforts of resistance hitherto.

But when England was on the brink of conquest, all efforts could not have availed anything, as in times of crisis personal interests of those in high office were an obstacle not to be overcome by the Anglo-Saxon king. In many cases Æthelred's choice of generals more often than not might not have been the best, and as his strength diminished and the kingdom was in danger of collapse, his trust in certain men close to him might have been questionable. Nevertheless, we have no justification whatsoever to blame Æthelred for the eventual conquest and reinforce his undeserved epithet *unræd*. To learn from his example, from both its positive and negative aspects, is one of the central messages of the source material. Anglo-Saxon England may have been conquered, but the voices from the past do not attest to desperation and defeatism, but instead emanate resolve and hope that this fate could still be averted or reverted.

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[474]   *ASC* s.a. 1016.

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Andre Mertens

Das mittelenglische Gedicht *Mon in þe mone stond ȝ strit*. Edition und Kommentar

1. Einleitung

Der Mond stellt zweifelsohne mehr als einen stillen Erdsatelliten dar. Als eine Projektionsfläche menschlicher Vorstellungswelt haben insbesondere seine Mondflecken den Menschen fortwährend zu blühender Legendenbildung und Erzählung angeregt. Die tradierten Legenden haben sich im Volksmund unterschiedlichster Kulturen erhalten und wurden bis in eine aufgeklärte, moderne Gesellschaft überliefert. Auch im christlichen Europa sind die tradierten Reste solcher Ausdeutungen der Mondflecken bis heute existent. Man sollte meinen, dass heidnische Elemente in den Erzählungen des Volksmunds mit der Christianisierung Europas erloschen wären. Viele solcher Elemente haben sich jedoch in christliche Rituale eingefügt oder wurden mit biblischen Geschichten verknüpft.

So liegt eine der möglichen Ursprünge der Legende vom Mann im Mond in einer alttestamentarischen Bibelepisode. Ob es sich bei der Episode um den Ursprung der Legende handelt oder ob sich lediglich heidnische Traditionen mit ihr verbanden, kann nicht mehr geklärt werden. Fakt ist, dass sich die Figur vom Mondmann durch das christliche Europa im Volksmund gehalten hat und an

verschiedenen Stellen in der Literatur auftaucht. So findet man in den *Harley Lyrics* (HL) der Handschrift *British Library MS Harley 2253*[1] ein Gedicht, dass die Figur als zentralen Charakter aufgenommen hat und ihm fünf Strophen widmet, die nicht nur aus den religiösen und politischen, sondern auch aus den weltlichen Liedern der Handschrift herausstechen. Dennoch ist dieses Gedicht, das oft als *The Man in the Moon*[2] (MiM) tituliert wird, relativ unbekannt. Nur sehr wenige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten beschäftigen sich dezidiert mit seinem Text. Man erhält den Eindruck, dass es hinter den glänzenden Beispielen mittelenglischer Lyrik, die die Handschrift zu bieten hat, zurücktritt. Dass jedoch eine wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung lohnt, sollte spätestens zum Ende dieser Arbeit feststehen. Das Gedicht bietet neben seinem faszinierenden Thema und seiner unterhaltsamen Geschichte auch noch ungewöhnliche sprachliche Besonderheiten.

Die Einzigartigkeit des Gedichtes zeigt sich allein schon beim Bestimmen seiner Gattung. Wilson bezeichnet es als einzig erhaltenes Beispiel einer „humorous lyric"[3], Susanna Fein redet von „comic lyric"[4]. Die Unklarheit der Gattung deutet darauf hin, wie schwer es sich in die Schubladen der mittelenglischen weltlichen Lyrik einordnen lässt. Es wird im Folgenden auch die Frage aufgeworfen werden, ob es unter die politischen Gedichte der HL gezählt werden könnte. Die literarische Qualität des Gedichts hingegen ist seine größte Schwäche. Böddeker, der eine der ersten Editionen der HL herausgab, die auch die erste Ausgabe mit wissenschaftlichem Anspruch darstellte, brandmarkte es für seinen „kunstlosen Ausdruck", die „naive Anschauung"[5] und verwies es sogleich in die Schranken der Spielmannslieder. Was die - teilweise berechtigte - Kritik am Gedicht betrifft, finden wir jedoch nur wenige Stimmen nach Böddeker. Unzweifelhaft weist die Metrik des Gedichtes größere Schwächen auf. Auch sind einige Satzstrukturen gleich der Metrik als holprig zu bezeichnen. Doch zeigt sich seine Beliebtheit in der Kritik der nachfolgenden Wissenschaftsgenerationen. So bezeichnet es Moore ganz bewusst zweideutig als „consummate nonsense"[6] und würdigt den liebenswerten Charakter seines Dichters. Ähnlich doppeldeutig ist das Lob Renwicks und Ortons. Sie bezeichnen den MiM als „plain nonsense and the most English thing in all medieval literature"[7]. Der Humor scheint für viele Leser

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[1]   Editionen der *Harley Lyrics* sind im Kapitel 1.3 „Texteditionen" aufgeführt und erläutert.

[2]   Die Arbeit bezeichnet das Gedicht fortan als MiM. Um die legendäre Figur des Mannes im Mond und den Charakter des Gedichtes abzugrenzen, wird dieser als Mondmann bezeichnet.

[3]   Wilson, R. M. (Hg.) (1968), *Early Middle English Literature*, 3. Aufl., London: Methuen, S. 263.

[4]   Fein, S. (2005), „The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253", in: Beidler, P. G. *et al.* (Hg.), *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, Bd. 11, New Haven, CT: Connecticut Acad. of Arts and Sciences, S. 4168-4206, S. 4311-4361, s. S. 4202.

[5]   Böddeker, K. (Hg.) (1878), *Altenglische Dichtungen des Ms. Harl. 2253*, Berlin: Weidmann, S. 175.

[6]   Moore, A. K. (Hg.) (1951), *The Secular Lyric in Middle English*, Westport, CT: Grenwood Press, S. 95.

[7]   Renwick, W. L. und Orton, H. (1952), *The Beginnings of English Literature to Skelton, 1509,* 2. überarb. Aufl., Introductions to English Literature 1, London: Cresset Press, S. 92.

von zentraler Bedeutung zu sein. Und in der Tat ist das Gedicht in höchstem Sinne unterhaltsam. Der Sprecher erzählt seinem Publikum eine Geschichte, die ihnen, mit derber Sprache gespickt, einen alten Bekannten vorstellt und diesen als Halunken vorführt. Das Gedicht erweist sich aber bei näherer Betrachtung als tiefsinniger als man erwarten würde.

Diese Arbeit soll jedoch Abstand davon nehmen, dem Gedicht erst seine kulturhistorische Relevanz zu bescheinigen, die eine Beschäftigung mit ihm rechtfertigen würde. Dass man dem MiM eine kulturhistorische Bedeutung beimessen kann, dürfte wohl allein die Unterschiedlichkeit der existierenden wissenschaftlichen Ausdeutungen zeigen. Es finden sich zum vorliegenden Gedicht direkt zwar wenige, aber doch einige sehr tief schürfende Artikel. Dabei hat sich in der Forschung erst allmählich und zaghaft die Überzeugung verbreitet, das Gedicht habe eine verborgene politische Dimension. Spätestens nach dem Aufsatz Frank Bessais, der diesem Interpretationsansatz des Textes mehr Beweiskraft verleihen konnte, ist dieser Ansatz bei ernsthafter Diskussion seiner Aussage nicht mehr zu ignorieren.[8]

Doch sollte noch einmal zur Signifikanz der Figur des Mondmanns zurückgekommen werden. Sie offenbart sich erst richtig, wenn man bedenkt, dass sie als Echo durch die spätere englische Literatur hallt. Es wäre freilich schwer zu untermauern, dass die beiden folgenden Dichter nicht nur die Folklore sondern auch das Gedicht vom MiM kannten, die Vermutung ist aber nicht von der Hand zu weisen. Zumindest was Geoffrey Chaucer angeht, ist stark anzunehmen, dass dieser den Text kannte und einige Anspielungen in seine Texte einfließen ließ. Eine Diskussion dieses Sachverhalts folgt im Weiteren. Es sei hier nur erwähnt, dass es wohl nicht mehr als Zufall gelten kann, dass der diebische Mönch der *Canterbury Tales* den Namen des Mannes trägt, der im Gedicht als Mann im Mond mit Hubert angesprochen wird.[9] Daneben findet man intertextuelle Bezüge bei Shakespeare. In welchem Verhältnis er und Chaucer zum MiM stehen, wird später noch zu klären sein. Man kann der Diskussion aber vorausschicken, dass die Figur und, soweit es die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Handschrift zulässt, auch das Gedicht in den Folgejahrhunderten so populär waren, dass sich vielfältigste Anspielungen in der Literatur finden lassen. Dafür bietet die Sage und vor allem das Gedicht reichlich Stoff. Dem Text zufolge ist der Mondmann zum Beispiel ein Sinnbild für kolossale Trägheit. Daneben gibt es noch seine typischen Merkmale, wie das Reisigbündel oder den Stab, auf dem er dieses Bündel zumeist trägt.

Es ist an dieser Stelle notwendig das Ziel dieser Arbeit zu verdeutlichen. Nach einer Begutachtung des Forschungsstandes wird es nötig sein, den Hintergrund des Gedichts und seiner Handschrift zu beleuchten, um dadurch ein Fundament für die detaillierte Betrachtung zu schaffen. Darauf folgend befinden sich vor der

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[8]   Bessai, F. (1972), „A Reading of the Man in the Moon", *Annuale Mediaevale XII*, S. 120-2.
[9]   Dazu hat Reiss einen detaillierten Aufstaz verfasst, s. Reiss, E. (1963), „Chaucer's Friar and the Man in the Moon", in: *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 62, S. 481-5.

Edition noch Hinweise auf die sprachwissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Text. Dabei sollen zunächst noch in der Einleitung die *Harley Lyrics* soweit Thema sein, wie sie für das Verständnis des Textes auf all seinen Ebenen eine Rolle spielen, bevor dann im Kapitel über die Textcharakteristika auf die Besonderheiten der Sprache des MiM eingegangen werden soll. Der MiM ist Teil der HL, dadurch ist es zwingend notwendig, dem Leser einige Informationen zum Hintergrund dieser Gedichtsammlung zusammen zu tragen. Da es jedoch eine Fülle wichtiger und guter Einleitungen zum Thema HL gibt, sollen diese hier nicht einfach wiederholt zu finden sein. Vielmehr sollen die HL in dezidierter Weise vorgestellt werden, soweit sie für das Gedicht relevant sind. Dies ist im Hinblick auf die Herkunft des Gedichts ohnehin zwingend notwendig. Aber auch an anderer Stelle zeigt sich, inwiefern der MiM in dieser Gedichtsammlung eine bestimmte Position einnimmt.

Nach den Anmerkungen über die Ziele und Methoden der vorliegenden Arbeit folgt der Text mit dem Versuch einer Übersetzung im zweiten, bzw. dritten Kapitel. Der zentrale Teil dieser Arbeit ist der Zeilenkommentar, der den Text im Detail auf sprachlicher und teils auch inhaltlicher Ebene diskutiert. Was aber nicht fehlen darf und den fünften Teil dieser Arbeit darstellt, ist die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gehalt des Textes. Wie ist er vor welchem Hintergrund zu lesen? Was hat die Forschung aus ihm bisher gelesen, welche Erkenntnisse hat sie bereits über den Gehalt des Gedichtes hervorgebracht und welche nicht? Dass der Text Sinn trägt ist und dementsprechend nicht als *nonsense* bezeichnet werden kann, ist das Thema des fünften Kapitels vom „Sinn und Unsinn im *Mann im Mond*". Das Ganze soll erwartungsgemäß in ein Fazit münden, in dem die bis dahin gesammelten Erkenntnisse evaluiert werden.

Zunächst aber zur Lage der Forschungsliteratur, die den Ausgang der Betrachtungen liefern soll. Für die Beschäftigung mit den HL ist seit 2005 eine umfassende Bibliographie verfügbar, die für jedes englischsprachige Gedicht der HL eine eigene Bibliographie bietet. Darin ordnet Susanna Fein die Forschungsliteratur, die sich mit dem jeweiligen Gedicht beschäftigt, in Kategorien und stellt jeden Text zusätzlich kurz vor.[10] Der MiM ist zwar in einer großen Zahl von Editionen (mit-)herausgegeben, diese sind jedoch zum größten Teil Gesamtausgaben der englischen HL. Das bedeutet, der MiM ist in ihnen nur ein Teil einer großen Gedichtsammlung, in denen ihre Herausgeber die Texte kurz vorstellen, kommentieren oder aber eben nur herausgeben. Dagegen taucht der Text vom MiM bisher selten in dezidierten Abhandlungen auf. Es scheint, als ob sich in der bisherigen Forschungsliteratur keine gute Textstudie mit Edition mit einem innovativen Deutungsansatz verbinden konnte, in dieser Hinsicht stellt die vorliegende Arbeit den Versuch dar, diese Lücke adäquat zu füllen. Ein

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10   Fein, *The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253* (2005), zum MiM siehe die Seiten 4202-3 (Kommentar) und 4357-8 (Bibliographie).

entscheidender Moment passiert in der Forschungsgeschichte des Textes, als Menner die erste Abhandlung über den MiM verfasste.[11] Mit seinem Aufsatz machte er bedeutsame Beobachtungen zum historischen und kulturellen Hintergrund des Textes, er gibt jedoch leider keine seiner Deutung entsprechende Edition des Textes dazu heraus. Menner beschäftigte sich in gewisser Weise als erster Forscher ernsthaft mit dem Inhalt des Gedichts und versuchte, in ihm einen Sinn außerhalb des reinen Nonsens zu sehen. Ein späterer Aufsatz von Reiss betrachtet einen Aspekt des Gedichtes, der ihn mit Chaucer in Verbindung bringt. Reiss schließt die Verbindung zu Chaucers *Hubert*[12], die bereits erwähnt wurde. Einen weiteren Durchbruch in der Forschungsgeschichte des MiM erreichte Rogers.[13] In seiner Edition des Textes macht er deutlich, dass sich seine Interpretation von denen früherer Editoren unterscheidet. Er setzt sich zudem detailliert mit einigen entscheidenden Punkten des Textes auseinander. Im gleichen Jahr (1972) erscheint der Artikel von Bessai[14], der im MiM eindeutige Anspielungen auf die schlechte Situation der Bauern zur Zeit des Verfassers erkennen möchte und eine Verbindung zum Bauernaufstand von 1381 herstellen kann. Seine Deutung, die im Kontext der eben vorgestellten Artikel als revolutionär gelten darf, wirkt auf den ersten Blick weit hergeholt, ist letztlich aber überzeugend. Dabei wird die Signifikanz seiner Arbeit erheblich dadurch gedämpft, dass sie kein Echo in der nachfolgenden Literatur findet. Unbeachtet bleibt Bessais Ansatz auch bei Rissanen.[15] Er begutachtet genauer die Stärken des Gedichts; ferner beschäftigt sich seine Studie mit dessen Komik und seinem Unterhaltungswert. Einen weniger bedeutenden Aufsatz zum Thema hat Mantovani kurz darauf verfasst. Sie bezieht sich aber leider kaum auf die vorangegangene Forschungsliteratur, sondern auf die Ursprünge der Sage. Sie setzt sich in ihrem Artikel mit den unterschiedlichen Versionen des folkloristischen Themas auseinander.[16]

Die gerade beschriebene Forschung, die uns im Detail noch später beschäftigen wird, stellt das gesamte Korpus der MiM-Forschung dar, die sich dezidiert mit dem Gedicht beschäftigt hat. Viele der Titel, die in Feins Bibliographie aufgeführt sind, enthalten in größeren Zusammenhängen bloße Erwähnungen des Gedichts, die zwar nicht unbedeutend sind, aber die Tiefe des

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[11] Menner, R. J. (1949), „The Man in the Moon and Hedging", in: *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48, S. 1-14.

[12] Reiss, *Chaucer's Friar* (1963).

[13] Rogers, W. E. (1972), *Image and Abstraction. Six Middle English Religious Lyrics*, Anglistica 18, Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger.

[14] Bessai, *A Reading of the Man in the Moon* (1972).

[15] Rissanen, M. (1980), „Colloquial and Comic Elements in the Man in the Moon", in: *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81, S. 42-6.

[16] Mantovani, M. (1982), „La Lirica Mon in ðe Mone Stond ant Strit e la Leggenda dell' Uomo sulla Luna", *Quaderni di Filologia Germanica della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell' Università di Bologna* 2, S. 25-43.

Textes nicht berücksichtigten. Diejenigen Arbeiten, die sich zwar nicht dezidiert mit dem Gedicht beschäftigen aber weiterführende und elementare Feststellungen zum MiM liefern konnten, sollen an dieser Stelle nicht vorgestellt werden, sondern werden an jeweiliger Stelle diskutiert.

Zu den Editionen des MiM wurde bereits angeführt, dass sie größtenteils Teil von Gesamtausgaben der HL sind. Dieser Tatsache entsprechend sind Beschäftigungen mit der Sprache des MiM rar, denn solcherlei Anmerkungen werden oft im Zusammenhang der gesamten Handschrift erläutert, was dem MiM nicht unbedingt gerecht wird. Wie später auch noch gezeigt werden soll, sticht die Sprache des Gedichts aus der Handschrift heraus (s. Kap. 1.2 ‚Textcharakteristika'). Das bedeutet aber zunächst, dass Feststellungen über die Sprache des Gedichts oft nur im Zusammenhang einer Sprachanalyse der HL zustande kamen. Eine maßgebliche Arbeit zur Sprache der HL schuf Brook, als er mit seiner Abhandlung über die ursprünglichen Dialekte der HL[17] einen Grundstein legte. Er leistete dabei für den MiM die Vorarbeit, es wurde jedoch an keiner anderen Stelle an der Sprache des Gedichts gearbeitet. So müsste man sich damit begnügen, dass der MiM stark vom Dialekt der anderen Gedichte abweicht und es nur „slight evidence"[18] für die Bestimmung seines ursprünglichen Dialekts gäbe. Die Frage nach dem Dialekt wird im Kapitel ‚Textcharakteristika' nochmals aufgegriffen werden.

Zunächst müssten noch die Frage nach der Herkunft des MiM und damit Aussagen über die HL getroffen werden. Wie angekündigt beschränkt sich die gegebene Information auf das Mindestmaß der relevanten Hintergründe. Für eine weitere Auseinandersetzung mit den HL werden im Folgenden hinreichend Angaben zur vorhandenen Literatur gegeben.

Die HL sind eine einzigartige Gruppe von mittelenglischen, anglo-normannischen (französischen) und lateinischen Texten in Prosa und Lyrik. Sie werden gemeinhin als Sammlung bezeichnet und lassen kaum eine Struktur in ihrer Anordnung erkennen, ganz sicher wurden jedoch einige Gedichte in einer bewussten Reihenfolge angelegt, so gilt es z.B. für den MiM, der durch die ihn umgebenden Texte entsprechend ausgedeutet werden könnte.[19] Eine Textanordnung nach unterschiedlicher Sprache gibt es aber nicht, sodass sich die mittelenglischen Texte über die gesamte Handschrift verteilt finden lassen. Es handelt sich um 116 verschiedene Stücke, von denen einige als religiöse Texte eingestuft werden, einige

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[17]   Brook, G. L. (1933), „The Original Dialects of the *Harley Lyrics*", *Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages* 2, S. 38-61.

[18]   Ebd. S. 60.

[19]   Revard, C. (2000), „From French Fabliau Manuscripts and MS Harley 2253 to the Decameron and the Canterbury Tales", *Medium Aevum* 69, S. 261-78. Revard argumentiert, dass der MiM durch besondere Beachtung seiner Umgebung ausgedeutet werden könne, s. dazu vor allem S. 271-2.

aber auch bekannte weltliche und einige politische Stücke darstellen. Der MiM zählt dabei zunächst zur weltlichen Literatur der HL, nachdem ihn Böddeker auf diese Weise kategorisiert hatte (W. L. (= Weltliche Lieder) XIII)[20] und die Forschung erst sehr viel später auf die noch diskutierte politische Dimension des Gedichts stieß. Für Inhaltsangaben und weiterführende Angaben zu Forschungsdiskussionen der einzelnen Stücke bietet sich Feins deskriptive Bibliographie an, aber auch Brooks[21] und Browns[22] Textausgaben geben hinreichend wertvolle Informationen über die einzelnen Texte. Dabei muss auch noch erwähnt werden, dass die unterschiedlichen Stücke auf verschiedene Weise kategorisiert wurden. Neben einer Aufteilung nach Sprache und Gattung kann man die Texte als alliterierend und nicht alliterierend unterteilen. Osberg führt eine Zählung auf, nach der von den 32 englischen Texten 17 bzw. 18 Stücke unter die Kategorie der alliterierenden Stücke fallen.[23] Darunter befindet sich auch der MiM.

Die Zeit der Anfertigung der Handschrift ist Gegenstand vieler Diskussionen und als eigenes Thema gut bearbeitet, z.B. durch Stemmler[24]. So lassen sich unterschiedlichste Daten in der Forschungsliteratur erheben, von denen alle in die erste Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts fallen. Für die Entstehung des MiM hingegen wird eine Zeit bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts angenommen[25], wobei hier ebenso wenig gesicherte Aussagen getroffen werden können, wie über dessen ursprünglichen Dialekt. Für die Geschichte der Handschrift sei auch auf eine gute Zusammenfassung von Hines[26] verwiesen, dazu noch auf den Eintrag Susanna Feins zu den HL in der *Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*[27], die dort wie in ihrer Bibliographie hinreichend weiterführende Literatur angibt.

Über die genaue Herkunft der HL kann in der Forschungsliteratur mehr zusammengetragen werden. Die Diskussionen über die genaue Herkunft sind zwar zahlreich, allerdings gehen diese so sehr ins Detail, dass eine Diskussion für die Zwecke dieser Arbeit zu weit führen würde. Es geht in der Diskussion lange nicht mehr um die Frage nach der Herkunft der HL aus Herefordshire, sondern um teils sehr detaillierte Ortsangaben. Die Ortsbestimmungen drehen sich dabei

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[20]   Böddeker *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878).

[21]   Brook, G. L. (Hg.) (1968), *The Harley Lyrics. The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253*, 4. Aufl., Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.

[22]   Brown, C. (Hg.) (1962), *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, Nachdruck [1932], Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[23]   S. Osberg, R. H. (1984), „Alliterative Technique in the Lyrics of MS Harley 2253", in: *Modern Philology* 82, S. 125-55. Vgl. S. 122-5, Osberg widerspricht sich in seiner Angabe über die Menge der alliterierenden Stücke.

[24]   Stemmler, T. (1962), „Zur Datierung des MS. Harley 2253", *Anglia* 80, S. 111-8.

[25]   S. dazu u.a. Renwick und Orton *Beginnings of English Literature* (1952), sie datieren den MiM auf „before 1300", S. 92.

[26]   Hines, J. (2004), *Voices in the Past. English Literature and Archaeology*, Woodbrige u.a.: Brewer.

[27]   Fein, S. (2006), „The Harley Lyrics", in: Kastan, D. S. (Hg.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, Bd. 2, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, S. 519-22.

im Wesentlichen um die Ortschaften Hereford und Leominster. Zwei frühe Bestimmungen dieses Bereiches stammen von Böddeker[28] und Schlüter[29]. Schlüter kritisiert Böddeker dahingehend, dass dieser nur Verbalflexion und Pronomina herangezogen habe. So erweitert Schlüter die Prüfung auf Phonologie und Wortschatz. Eine detaillierte und überzeugende Auseinandersetzung mit der Herkunft des Schreibers der HL lieferte Samuels in seinem „The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics"[30]. Dass es sich bei der Lokalisierung der HL um das südwestliche Mittelland handelt, verifziert Samuels kurz und bündig, bevor er auf die Details der einzelnen Texte eingeht. Das südwestliche Mittelland macht er an folgenden drei Punkten fest: a) dem „western rounding" von /ue/, /u/ und /eo/ als Reflexe von altenglisch /y/ und /eo/, b) dem *o* vor Nasalen, wie in *mon*, *mony*, *con* und c) der südlichen Endung *-eþ* der dritten Person Indikativ Präsens.[31]

Es soll an dieser Stelle kurz darauf aufmerksam gemacht werden, dass die Namen der Forscher in der gesamten nachfolgenden Arbeit in Form ihrer jeweiligen Kürzel erscheinen. Dies gilt jedoch nicht, wenn es sich an jeweiliger Stelle um einen anderen Titel des sonst abgekürzten Forschers handelt. Zudem sollten nicht bei Genitivformen der verkürzten Namen andere Abkürzungen entstehen, dort wurde der Name also ausgeschrieben (z.B. „Garbátys Edition" statt „Gars Edition"). Zu diesem Zweck folgt unmittelbar ein Abkürzungs-verzeichnis.

1.1 Abkürzungsverzeichnis

Böd	Böddeker, K. (Hg.) (1878), *Altenglische Dichtungen des Ms. Harl. 2253*, Berlin: Weidmann.
Brk	Brook, G. L. (Hg.) (1968), *The Harley Lyrics. The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253*, 4. Aufl., Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.
Brw	Brown, C. (Hg.) (1962), *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, Neuaufl. [1932], Oxford: Clarendon Press.
BS	Bennett, J. A. W. und Smithers, G. V. (Hg.) (1968), *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2 Aufl., Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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[28]   S. Böddeker *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), s. dazu den Kommentar zum MiM auf S. 175.
[29]   Schlüter, A. (1884), „Über die Sprachen und Metrik der Mittelenglischen Weltlichen und Geistlichen Lyrischen Lieder des Ms. Harl. 2253", in: *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 71, S. 153-84.
[30]   Samuels, M. L. (1984), „The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics", *Poetica* 19, S. 39-47.
[31]   Ebd.

BT   Bosworth, J. und Toller, T. N. (Hg.) (1996), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Nachdruck [1898-1921], London: Oxford Univ. Press.

Cas   Casieri, S. (Hg.) (1962), *Canti e Liriche Medioevali Inglesi. Dal Ms. Harley 2253*, S.l.: La Goliardica.

Dav   Davies, R. T. (1963), *Medieval English Lyrics. A Crtitical Anthology*, London: Faber & Faber.

Dun   Duncan, T. G. (Hg.) (1995), *Medieval English Lyrics, 1200 - 1400*, London: Penguin Books.

DW   Dickins, B. und Wilson, R. M. (Hg.) (1969), *Early Middle English Texts*, 7. Nachdruck [1951], London: Bowes & Bowes.

Gar   Garbáty, T. J. (1984), *Medieval English Literature*, Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath.

Gl   Die Glossare der Ausgaben

Gr   Die Grammatikteile der Ausgaben

KaA   Kaiser, R. (1954), *Alt- und Mittelenglische Anthologie*, Berlin: Verfasser.

KaM   Kaiser, R. (1958), *Medieval English. An Old English and Middle English Anthology*, 3. Aufl., Berlin-Wilmersdorf: Kaiser.

Ker   Ker, N. R. (Hg.) (1965), *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, Early English Text Society 255 (O.S.), London u.a.: Oxford Univ. Press.

Klu   Kluge, F. und Seebold, E. (Hg.) (1995), *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, 23. erw. Aufl., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

LH   Luria, M. S. und Hoffman, R. L. (Hg.) (1974), *Middle English Lyrics. Authoritative Texts, Critical and Historical Backgrounds, Perspectives on Six Poems*, New York u.a.: Norton.

MED   Kurath, H. *et al.* (Hg.) (1952-2001), *Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Michigan Press.

ODEE   Onions, C. T. *et al.* (Hg.) (1966), *The Oxford English Dictionary of English Etymology*, Neuaufl. mit Corrigenda, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

OED   Murray, J. A. H. *et al.* (Hg.) (1888-1933), *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Ris   Rissanen, M. (1981), „Colloquial and Comic Elements in the Man in the Moon", in: *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81, S. 42-6.

Rit   Ritson, J. (Hg.) (1829), *Ancient Songs and Ballads, from the Reign of King Henry the Second to the Revolution. In Two Volumes*, Bd. 2, London.

Rog   Rogers, W. E. (1972), *Image and Abstraction. Six Middle English Religious Lyrics*, Anglistica 18, Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger.

Sis   Sisam, C. und K. (1970), *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Spe   Speirs, J. (1957), *Medieval English Poetry. The Non-Chaucerian Tradition*, London: Faber & Faber.

Sto   Stone, B. (1970), *Medieval English Verse*, Nachdruck [1964], Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Tur   Turville-Petre, T. (Hg.) (1989), *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages. An Anthology*, London: Routledge.

Wri   Wright, T. (Hg.) (1842), *Specimens of Lyric Poetry. Composed in England in the Reign of Edward I. Edited from Ms. Harley 2253 in the British Museum*, London.

1.2 Textcharakteristika

Nicht nur aufgrund seines Dialektes, sondern auch aufgrund seiner orthographischen Besonderheiten hebt sich der MiM von den anderen Texten der HL ab. Dabei gilt vor allem das, was Brk für die HL in der Einleitung seiner Edition aufgeführt hat.[32] Brk stellt dort fest, dass <c> und <k> im Anlaut als /k/ einer Regel entsprechend gebraucht werden, nämlich <c> vor Hinterzungenvokalen und <k> vor Vorderzungenvokalen. Im Auslaut hingegen werden die beiden Graphien austauschbar für /k/ gebraucht. Im Gebrauch der Graphie <k> ist der MiM progressiv, d.h. der Text verwendet die erst mit dem Mittelenglischen aufkommende Graphie oft so, wie sie Neuenglisch steht. Anhand von Beispielen wird deutlicher, wie die beiden Graphien gebraucht werden: als /k/ in *botforke* (2), *take* (9), *shake* (11), *stake* (13), *make* (15), *werk* (16) usw. <c> für /k/ enthält der MiM nur dreimal, bei *crokede caynard* (20) und *crye* (33). Ansonsten existiert <c> im

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[32]   S. Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 3.

MiM nur in der Verbindung <ch> und so für die Lautung /tʃ/, z.B. in *muche chele* (5), *pycchynde* (13), *cherl* (34), usw. Ebenso progressiv ist der MiM beim Gebrauch von <w>, das in anderen Texten der Handschrift nach Anlautkonsonanten zumeist <u> einsetzt.

Der Laut /ʃ/ wird in den HL anlautend durch <sh> repräsentiert, einzige Ausnahme ist *schule*, welches man im MiM (32, vgl. *shule* im MiM (27)) findet. Aber noch weitere Eigenheiten der Handschrift lassen sich im MiM ausmachen. So ist gelegentlich ein inorganisches <h> hinzugefügt worden, so im MiM in *heyse* (28), ne. *ease*. Ein Phänomen, das sowohl die HL, als auch den MiM, als auch die mittelenglische Periode betrifft, ist die austauschbare Verwendung von vokalischem und konsonantischem /u/ und /v/ bzw. <u> und <v>, sowohl anlautend als auch im Inlaut. Beispiele zur Verdeutlichung aus dem MiM sind *euer* (12), *vpon* (35) u.a. Ein weiterer interessanter Fall im MiM ist die Form *valle* (4), wo <v> offensichtlich /f/ repräsentiert (vgl. MED s.v. *fallen* (v.) 1a (a)), obwohl mittelenglisch die graphische Unterscheidung zwischen dem stimmhaften und stimmlosen labiodentalen Frikativ umgesetzt wird, also <f> für /f/ und <v> bzw. /u/ für /v/.

In den verschiedenen Editionen werden diese Eigenheiten teils an die Gewohnheiten des modernen Lesers angepasst, teils werden sie aber auch dem interessierten Leser in ihrer ursprünglichen Form geboten (so wie in dieser Edition). So wird das <þ> zumeist durch <th> ersetzt; es ergeben sich bei Begutachtung der Editionen diesbezüglich aber Strömungen in der Forschungsgeschichte. Frühe Editionen, bei uns etwa Rit und Wri, neigen dazu, <th> einzusetzen, wohingegen sehr moderne Editionen den ursprünglichen Zeichenbestand der Handschrift wiedergeben. Ausnahmen dieser Tendenz sind auf der einen Seite Böd (der konsequent <þ> belässt) und auf der anderen Seite leserfreundliche Ausgaben/Übersetzungen wie Dun und Sis. Cas kapselt sich dahingehend komplett ab, indem er konsequent <ð> einsetzt. <ð> kommt in der Handschrift nicht vor, und es ergibt sich auch sonst kein erkennbarer Grund für dessen Einsatz.[33] Frances McSparran bietet eine weiterführende Übersicht zu den *occasional spellings* der HL.[34] Sie listet dort die der Handschrift entstammenden unterschiedlichen Schreibweisen der jeweiligen Wörter auf. Hier folgt als Übersicht, welche Forscher in chronologischer Reihenfolge <th> ersetzt haben: Rit, Wri, Spe, Dav, Sis, Rog, LH, Dun. Es geht dabei um folgende Wörter im MiM: 1 *þe*, 2 *burþen, bereþ*, 3 *þat*, 4 *shoddreþ, shereþ*, 5 *þe, freseþ*, 6 *þornes, beþ, tereþ*, 7

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[33] Diese Tatsache wurde auch schon in einer kommentierten Edition der *Maid of Ribblesdale*, (Brook Nr. 7) von Mechthild Gretsch kritisiert, s. Gretsch, M. (1987), „The Fair Maid of Ribblesdale. Text und Kommentar", *Anglia* 105, S. 285-341, s. S. 287; vgl. dazu Brook *Original Dialects* (1933), S. 3.

[34] S. McSparran, F. (2000), „The Language of the English Poems. The Harley Scribe and his Exemplars", in Fein, S. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 391-426, s. S. 411.

wyþt, 8 *wereþ,* 9 *þis,* 10 *haþ, oþer,* 11 *hiþte, haþ, syþt,* 13 *oþe,* 14 *þornes,* 15 *oþer,* 16 *þer,* 19 *leneþ,* 20 22 *naþ,* 23 *burþen,* 24 *þare,* 25 *þy,* 26 *forþ, þyn,* 32 *þenne,* 33 *hereþ, þah,* 35 *heþ,* 37 *forþ,* 38 *þart,* 39 *wiþ.*

Die Entscheidung für <þ> oder <th> sollte keine editionsphilologische Grundsatzdiskussion darstellen, da sie auf der Bedeutungsebene keinen Unterschied machen würde. Ganz anders verhält es sich aber mit einer Besonderheit, die den HL geradezu Einzigartigkeit verleiht. Brk bezeichnet es als eine „confusion between *h* and *þ* ".[35] Er sagt, dass es für diese Verwechslung zehn Beispiele in den HL gibt, allein fünf davon befinden sich im MiM. Die Formen sind *wyþt* (7), *hiþte* (11), *syþt* (11), *heþ* (35) und *teh* (39). Er erklärt dieses Phänomen mit der Schwierigkeit, welche die anglonormannischen Schreiber mit den ihnen unbekannten Repräsentanten der Frikative hatten. Ein Blick auf die Paläographie des Textes in Kers Faksimile legt diesen Verdacht nahe, da sich <h> und <þ> in der Tat stark ähneln.[36]

Der Vollständigkeit halber muss hier noch <ȝ> erwähnt werden. Es wird ähnlich wie <þ> meist ersetzt, nämlich durch <y>. Hier gilt in etwa das, was für das Einsetzen von <þ> gesagt wurde, dass also Strömungen in der Forschungsliteratur zu erkennen sind. <ȝ> steht in der Handschrift wie generell in mittelenglischer Zeit für /j/ in einheimischen Wörtern und für /s/ oder /z/ in französischen Lehnwörtern (*encenȝ, romaunȝ*).[37] Betroffen im MiM sind davon *ȝef* (25) und *ȝeȝe* (35), die beide den Lautwert /j/ wiedergeben.

Andere orthographische Besonderheiten des Textes sind im Zeilenkommentar noch diskutiert. Die Interpunktion des vorliegenden Textes wird im Kapitel über die vorliegende Edition auch noch Thema sein. Was nun zunächst aber den Dialekt des MiM angeht, so ist die genaue Platzierung des Archetypen geradezu unmöglich. In etwa gilt das, was für die HL bereits festgestellt wurde. Dabei ist das westliche Mittelland für die Handschrift als Herkunftsort gesichert und für einige Texte wurde bemerkt, dass sie dort auf einen südlicheren Entstehungsort schließen lassen. Die ersten Angaben der Forschungsliteratur zur Herkunft des MiM stammen von Böd. In seinem Kommentar äußert er sich zum Thema: „Die Sprache gehört durchweg dem Süden an. Zu beachten ist die Graphie *sch,* die allerdings im südlichen Dialekte die bei weitem üblichere Bezeichnung des Zischlautes /ʃ/ ist, für welche die Handschrift aber regelmäßig <sh> verwendet".[38] Böd gibt einen ersten Anstoß, die nachfolgenden Forscher befassen sich jedoch nicht mehr mit dem Thema.

Die wichtigste Arbeit zur Herkunftsbestimmung ist Brooks „Original Dialects

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[35]   Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 4.
[36]   Ker, N. R. (Hg.) (1965), *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, Early English Text Society 255 (O.S.), London u.a.: Oxford Univ. Press, s. dort für den MiM fols. 114v und 115(r).
[37]   S. Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 4.
[38]   Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 175. Böd verwendet andere phonologische Symbole für die gegebenen Laute.

of the Harley Lyrics"[39]. Dort stellt Brook zwanzig Kriterien auf um eine Anordnung nach nördlichem, zentralem und südlichem Westmittelland als Herkunftsort zu erreichen. Dabei ordnet er den MiM der südlicheren Herkunft zu.[40] Das indizierende Kriterium sind die synkopierten Formen *strit* (1), *slyt* (3), *byd* (5) und *syt* (7) der dritten Person Singular Präsens Indikativ, die laut Brook auf diesen südlicheren Teil schließen lassen, dessen genaue Grenze bezeichnet er jedoch als ungewiss. Es ist das einzige Kriterium, dass Brook dem MiM zuordnen kann und so schließt er in seinem Fazit:

> Most of the English lyrics of MS. Harley 2253 are fairly close together in the MS.; on ff. 58 v. to 83 r. there are 34 English and 13 other pieces. Of the remaining six lyrics two (W.L. XIII [MiM], P.L. VII) are not near to any other lyrical poem, [...]. There is no evidence of the original dialect of W.L. III, and only slight evidence of that of P.L. III, W.L. II, XIII [MiM], and G.L. IV, VII. The other lyrics may be tentatively grouped as follows ...[41]

Laut Brook seien die Möglichkeiten für eine genauere Lokalisierung des MiM nicht hinreichend.

1968, also 35 Jahre nach Brooks Studie, gaben auch Bennett und Smithers eine Edition der HL heraus.[42] Im Kommentar machen sie drei Anmerkungen zur Herkunft des MiM. Zwei der sprachlichen Besonderheiten des Textes nehmen sie als Indiz, 1. die Endung *-en* in *doren* (14), *yboren* (12) und *yloren* (16) und 2. das metrisch bedeutsame *Y*-Präfix des Perfektpartizips. Diese beiden Kriterien schließen für BS das Ostmittelland und den Norden aus. Die Verbformen *bereþ* (2)*, *shereþ* (4), *wereþ* (8) und *to tereþ* (6) identifizieren sie als vom Autor stammend und nicht vom Schreiber eingesetzt (statt der nördlichen Form für die dritte Pers. Sg. Präs. Ind. *-es*). Sie schließen daraus und aus dem vorher Genannten, dass sowohl der Südosten, Südwesten und das südliche Westmittelland in Frage kommen.[43] Da sich Letzteres mit den Erkenntnissen Brooks deckt, obwohl sie sich zu seiner Studie nicht äußern, können diese Gebiete sich als wahrscheinlichste Herkunftsorte etablieren. Das Ergebnis ist eher unbefriedigend, der genaue Herkunftsort wird aber aufgrund der Beweislage auch nicht weiter zu erschließen sein.[44]

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[39] Brook, *Original Dialects* (1933).
[40] Ebd., S. 53.
[41] Brook, *Original Dialects* (1933), S. 59-60.
[42] Bennett, J. A. W. und Smithers, G. V. (Hg.) (1968), *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2 Aufl., Oxford: Clarendon Press.
[43] Bennett und Smithers, *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (1968), S. 331.
[44] Vgl. dazu auch Dickins, B. und Wilson, R. M. (Hg.) (1969), *Early Middle English Texts*, 7. Nachdruck [1951], London: Bowes & Bowes. Sie geben weitere interessante Merkmale des Textes an, die sie aber nicht auswerten und die für eine genauere Bestimmung des Dialekts offensichtlich nicht hilfreich wären.

1.3 Texteditionen

Zum MiM gibt es insgesamt 24 Editionen, dazu ein *Incipit* von Humphrey Wanley. Die meisten dieser Editionen sind Ausgaben der HL, in denen sich alle englischsprachigen Gedichte der *Lyrics* befinden. Zwei weitere Editionen geben nur den MiM heraus und beschäftigen sich in Form eines Aufsatzes intensiv mit dem Gedicht (Ris und Rog). Unter den Editionen kann man aber stufenweise Unterschiede in ihrer jeweiligen Herangehensweise erkennen. Eine rein neuenglische Übersetzung liegt nur von Sto vor, sie wird nur zur Vollständigkeit der bestehenden Editionen mit aufgeführt. Dun und Sis bieten leserfreundliche Versionen an, die weder den eigentlichen orthographischen Stand der Handschrift noch den neuenglisch korrekten Stand angeben.

Hier folgt eine Auflistung der Editionen in chronologischer Reihenfolge, so dass die Editionsgeschichte der HL und des MiM nachvollzogen werden kann. Dabei sollen die Editionen aber zunächst nur im Hinblick auf ihren Umgang mit dem MiM vorgestellt werden. Wer in den unterschiedlichen Editionen nach dem MiM sucht, wird feststellen, dass sich eine Unzahl von Nummern für die Einordnung des MiM innerhalb der HL angesammelt hat. Fast alle Editoren verwenden eine eigene Nummerierung. Viele beziehen sich auf frühere Nummerierungen und geben diese zusätzlich an, dabei handelt es sich am ehesten um die von Brk und Ker (Faksimile mit Nummerierung nach der Handschrift). Für die unterschiedlichen Nummerierungen des MiM folgt ein Überblick:

Rit: XVI	Wri: XXXIX	Böd: W.L. 13	Brw: 89
Ker: 81	BS: O VIII N	Brk: 30	DW: XXXI
Rog: IV	LH: 142	Tur: VII	KaA/KaM: 120a
Dav: 15	Sis: 54	Cas: L.S.13 (Böd)	Sto: 62
Dun: 114			

Die Tabelle macht deutlich, wie unterschiedlich das Ordnungsprinzip der jeweiligen Editionen ist. Größtenteils basiert es in den Editionen auf einer chronologischen Ordnung. Ker nummeriert die Texte der Handschrift konsequent durch, dort steht der MiM an 81. Stelle. Da Brw nur die englischsprachigen Texte der Handschrift ediert, ist der MiM innerhalb der Handschrift so an 30. Stelle. Ebenso hatte es Böd in seiner Edition vor Brw getan, allerdings kategorisierte Böd die englischsprachigen Texte, so dass daraus für den MiM die Nummer 13 in der Reihe der weltlichen Lieder (W.L.) der Handschrift resultierte. Ris und Gar führen wiederum keine Nummerierung und tauchen dementsprechend nicht in der Tabelle auf. Spe beschäftigt sich mit dem MiM in seinem Paragraphen 10. Zur Vollständigkeit müssen hier auch noch die Nummerierung von Brown und

Robbins[45] (2066) und Wells[46] (XIII,3) erwähnt werden, auf die sich z.B. KaA (und KaM) bezieht.

Zur Recherche unerlässlich ist die oben erwähnte Bibliographie[47] von 2005, die komplett ist und die genannten Editionen sowie alle Orte in der Forschungsliteratur aufführt, an denen der MiM auftaucht. Unter den Editionen hat sich eine kleine Zahl von Standardwerken durchgesetzt, mit denen sich alle anderen Editoren zwangsläufig beschäftigten, darunter ist Böddekers erste[48] und lange Zeit maßgebendste Version des Textes. Unverzichtbar aufgrund Ihrer sorgfältigen Vorarbeit im englischsprachigen Raum sind die Editionen von Brw und Brk, die im Folgenden erläutert werden. Eine Edition, die sich durch ihre abweichende Lesart an einigen Stellen des Textes von allen anderen abhebt, ist die Ausgabe von Rog, der sich dezidiert mit dem MiM beschäftigte. Gerade aber deswegen ist sie wahrscheinlich für nachfolgende Editoren der HL unbeachtet geblieben.

WANLEY, H. (Hg.) (1808-12), *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum. With Indexes of Persons, Places and Matters*, 4. Bde., London: Eyre, Strahan.
Laut Susanna Feins Bibliographie[49] befindet sich in Wanleys *Catalogus Brevior* ein *Incipit* zu den HL, dort seien vom MiM die ersten vier Zeilen angegeben. Für die vorliegende Edition konnten diese Zeilen jedoch aufgrund der Zugänglichkeit des *Catalogus* nicht berücksichtigt werden.

RIT (1829), S. 69-70.
Rit gibt die erste vollständige Edition des Textes heraus. Der Vorteil seiner Edition ist, dass er jedem Text eine Seite über dessen Inhalt mit hilfreichen Anmerkungen voranschickt. Unter Anderem befindet sich hier schon die genaue Angabe der Bibelstelle[50] die für die Entstehung der Folklore vom MiM eine entscheidende Rolle gespielt haben mag. Zusätzlich gibt er die Stellen in den zwei Shakespeare-Stücken an, die auf die Folklore Bezug nehmen, das sind *Midsummer Night's Dream* und *The Tempest*[51]. Eine erste Ausgabe erschien 1786-87[52], die für die vorliegende Edition benutzte Auflage ist eine Auflage von 1829. Rit emendiert an mehreren Stellen des Gedichtes. Zunächst ersetzt er <þ> durch <th> und <ȝ>

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[45]   Brown, C. und Robbins, R. H. (Hg.) (1943-1965), *The Index of Middle English Verse*, New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press.

[46]   Wells, L. E. (1916), *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, New Haven.

[47]   Fein, *The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253* (2005).

[48]   Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878).

[49]   Fein, *The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253* (2005), S. 4357.

[50]   S. dort die Angabe „*Numbers, xv. 32, et seq.*".

[51]   Ebd.

[52]   Fein, S. (2000), "Introduction", in: Dies. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 1-17, s. S. 3.

durch <y>. Auch sonst tendiert er zur neuenglischen Schreibung, als er z.B. *nadoun* (Hs.) zu *na down* emendiert (s. Ed.).

WRI (1842), S. 110-1.
Wri neigt wie Rit eher zu moderner Schreibung und ersetzt ebenso den obsoleten Zeichenbestand. Auch scheint er Komposita in einen neuenglischen Zustand zu überführen, indem er sie mit oder ohne Bindestrich trennt (z.B. *bot forke, hay-ward, y-loren,* vgl. Ed.).

BÖD (1878), S. 176-7.
Böddekers Ausgabe der HL enthält das einzige deutschsprachige Glossar und ist somit für die vorliegende Auseinandersetzung und Übersetzung von erheblicher Bedeutung. Zudem findet dort bereits eine erste kritische und wissenschaftlich fundierte Auseinandersetzung mit dem Text statt. Wie Rit schickt Böd den Texten einleitende Sätze voraus und weist ergänzend auf Wissenswertes hin, das sich beim MiM größtenteils nach den Kommentaren Ritsons richtet.

BRW (1932), S. 160-1.
Brw lieferte mit seiner Ausgabe der HL ein neuenglisches Glossar und ein im englischsprachigen Raum maßgebendes Standardwerk. Das verzeiht einige Nachlässigkeiten seiner Ausgabe. In seiner Rezension weist Brook darauf hin, dass Brw zwar *heþ* zu *heh* emendiert, aber *wypt* (7) und *teh* (39) unberührt lässt.[53] Da Brooks Glossar maßgebender und umgänglicher ist (s. z.B. *mawe* (38), das bei Brw unter *mahe* auftaucht) und dort teilweise auf Brw kritisch Bezug genommen wird, ist dessen Glossar für den Zeilenkommentar vorgezogen worden. Browns Edition ist ansonsten verlässlich und dicht am Original. Vor allem ist sie aufgrund der in der nachfolgenden Forschungsliteratur übernommenen Lesart des in der Handschrift mehrdeutigen *amarscled* (Brw: *a-marscled*) zu erwähnen.

BRK (1948, 4th ed. 1968), S. 69-70.
Brooks Edition wurde viermal aufgelegt, wobei die vierte Auflage für diese Arbeit genutzt wurde. Seine Edition ist vor allem wegen ihres einleitenden Teils sehr hilfreich. In dieser Hinsicht ist seine Edition für die Lektüre der HL unabdingbar. Neben seiner herausragenden Edition steht seine Beschäftigung mit den ursprünglichen Dialekten der HL, die genauso unabdingbar ist wie deren Edition selbst. In der Handschrift emendiert er die Textstellen, die er in seinem Einleitungsteil erläutert, darunter fällt z.B. die Emendation von *wypt* zu *wyht* (7) und *teh* zu *teþ* (39).[54]

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[53]   S. die Edition in Brown, *English Lyrics* (1962), S. 160-1.
[54]   S. Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 4. Er nennt dieses Phänomen „confusion of *h* and *þ*".

KʌA (1954), S. 307 und KʌM (1961), S. 473.

Kaiser ediert nach Böd als einziger deutscher Herausgeber die HL, wobei er anders als Böd kein Glossar führt. 1961 folgte der fünfte Neudruck in englischer Sprache (KaM), der bezüglich der Edition unverändert blieb und somit hier nicht extra erläutert werden muss.

SPE (1957), S. 92-3.

Spe beschäftigt sich wenig ausführlich mit dem MiM und liefert somit wenige Details und keine gesonderten Anmerkungen. Er emendiert wenig und orientiert sich stark an den großen Standards Brw und Brk.

CAS (1962), S. 210-1.

Das Erscheinungsbild dieser Ausgabe hebt sich augenmerklich stark von allen anderen Editionen ab. Cas ersetzt <þ> durchweg mit <ð>, wofür es aber keinen ersichtlichen Grund gibt, denn die Handschrift kennt kein <ð>.[55]

DAV (1963), S. 71-2.

Davies kommt dem unerfahrenen Leser entgegen, indem er die oben genannten Verwechslungen des Schreibers emendiert und auch sonst das Erscheinungsbild einiger Wörter zum Neuenglischen hin verändert (z.B. *hegge* (8) zu *hedge*). Besonders leserfreundlich wird die Ausgabe auch dadurch, dass er unterhalb des mittelenglischen Originaltextes eine vollständige neuenglische Übersetzung anbietet.

KER (1964), fols. 114v-115(r).

Ker macht die Handschrift mit seinem Faksimile dem kritischen Leser zugänglich, der sich dadurch selbst mit den Eigenheiten des MiM auseinandersetzen kann. Genau genommen ist Ker hier also nicht unter die Editionen zu zählen. Da die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Faksimile aber an Textstellen mit fragwürdigen paläographischen Ausdeutungen durchaus lohnenswert ist, soll Ker hier mit aufgeführt werden. Interessant ist an dieser Stelle, dass Rog, der sich acht Jahre später um eine Ausgabe des MiM bemüht und so auf das Faksimile hätte zurückgreifen können, sich stärker von den anderen Editoren abhebt (s. Sto). Gegen einen möglichen Einfluss des Faksimiles für dessen Edition spricht, dass er sich auch generell mit seiner Ausdeutung abhebt, denn sein durch besondere und andersartige Interpunktion gekennzeichnetes Textverständnis hat sich in späteren Editionen nicht durchgesetzt. Kers Faksimile führt einen guten einleitenden Teil, der schon auf die wichtigen Texteigenheiten eingeht und zur Lektüre der HL unverzichtbar ist.

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[55]   Vgl. Gretsch, *The Fair Maid of Ribblesdale* (1987), S. 287.

Sto (1964), 107-8.

Sto liefert die erste neuenglische Ausgabe der HL. Die Übersetzung weicht leider syntagmatisch sowie vom Wortschatz stark vom Original ab, gibt aber bis auf ein Detail den Sinn in guter Weise wieder und dem Leser einen richtigen Eindruck vom Tenor des Textes. Sto ist an manchen Textstellen etwas freier mit dem Text umgegangen, so übersetzt er die erste Zeile *Mon in þe mone stond & strit* mit „The Man in the Moon can stand or stride".[56] Da er eine neuenglische Übersetzung anbietet, ist seine Orthographie für die Emendationen der vorliegenden Edition nicht berücksichtigt.

BS (1968), S. 127-8.

BS bleiben dicht am Original und emendieren dementsprechend kaum, lassen sich aber trotzdessen von den anderen Editoren zu einigen Schreibungen beeinflussen, wie z.B. der von *bot-forke* (2), das in der Handschrift eindeutig als *botforke* erscheint. Dahingegen lassen sie *twybyl* (15) unberührt.

DW (1969), 123-4.

Dickins und Wilsons Ausgabe unterscheidet sich kaum von der Bennetts und Smithers (BS). Sie halten sich ebenso eng an die Handschrift und führen ebenfalls die Form der beiden bei BS vorgeführten Wörter. Lohnend ist jedoch die Beschäftigung mit den ausführlichen Anmerkungen ihres Kommentars.

Sis (1970), S. 132-3.

Sis emendieren stark und kommt dem unerfahrenen Leser somit entgegen. Aus editionsphilologischer Sicht ist ihre Edition aber daher wenig brauchbar und nützt eher aufgrund ihrer vollständigen Übersetzung im Fußtext.

Rog (1972), S. 52-3.

Rog liefert editionsphilologisch geradezu einen Spagat. Obwohl er teils zum Original zurückkehrt (*botforke*, keine Emendation der *h-þ*-Verwechslung, belässt <ʒ>), gibt er das <þ> zugunsten des <th> auf. Einzigartig unter den Editionen ist sein Textverständnis, das man seiner Interpunktion entnehmen kann (z.B. Einsatz des Fragezeichens bei *doren?* (14) und Verschiebung desselben vom *were* (17) zu *yfed* (18)). Er liefert während seiner dezidierten Betrachtungen einige Erkenntnisse zum Textverständnis, auf die später noch eingegangen wird.

LH (1974), S. 131-2.

Luria und Hoffman bieten dem Leser Übersetzungen einzelner Wörter, emendieren aber sehr stark und führen einige sehr eigenwillige Schreibungen auf,

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56   Stone, B. (1970), *Medieval English Verse*, Nachdruck [1964], Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, S. 107. Vgl. dazu Böddeker *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 73.

so z.B. *wypt* (7) zu *wight* (in anderen Editionen zu *wyht* emendiert) oder *pycchynde* (13) zu *pitchinde*. Generell emendieren sie *y* zu *i*, (*twybyl* 15) zu *twibil*, *ys* (24) zu *his*). Neben den einzelnen Wörtern geben sie zusätzliche Übersetzungen einzelner Zeilen, die so ihr Textverständnis darlegen.

R IS (1981), S. 42.
Ris beschäftigt sich, wie Rogers, dezidiert mit dem MiM. Seine Emendationen gleichen die Verwechslungen des Schreibers aus, dafür lehnt sich seine Lesart die Interpunktion betreffend stark an den Standard von Brk an. Dennoch geht er auf die entscheidenden Textstellen näher ein. In seinem kurzen Aufsatz greift er diese auf und überführt die bis dahin gesammelten Kenntnisse in ein Gesamtbild, so dass für die Beschäftigung mit Rissanens Edition unerlässlich ist.

G AR (1984), S. 653-4.
Garbatys Edition erweist sich dank seiner hinreichenden Erläuterungen, einzelner Glossen und einiger einleitender Sätze zum Text als sehr leserfreundlich. Passend dazu emendiert er die heiklen Textstellen, auf die schon mehrfach eingegangen wurde.

T UR (1989), S. 32-3.
Tur liefert noch einmal eine äußerst relevante Edition des MiM. Er geht zurück zum Original (auch wenn er sich an die standardisierte, handschriftenferne Schreibung *bot-forke* hält) und emendiert die Verwechslungen von Seiten des Schreibers nicht, weist aber im Gegensatz zu den anderen Editoren im Fußnotenapparat direkt auf die Verwechslungen hin und gibt dort die emendierte Fassung an. Dazu stehen einige Erläuterungen zum Verständnis einzelner Zeilen, die auch auf wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzungen hinweisen. So verweist er mehrfach auf den Aufsatz von Menner[57], den er in seine Erläuterungen einbezieht.

D UN (1995), S. 158-60.
Dun liefert eine wohl leserfreundlich gemeinte Edition des Textes. Sie macht dem Leser Zugeständnisse zur Aussprache, konfrontiert ihn aber dennoch mit eher ungewöhnlichen Markierungen, beispielsweise markiert Dun unbetonte Silben auf <e> mit einem diakritischen Zeichen <ë>, wenn die unbetonte Silbe gesprochen wird. Ein Glossar neben den Zeilen ermöglicht auch dem ungeübten Leser das Verständnis. Duncans alternative Schreibweisen sind für die vorliegende Edition nicht als Emendationen berücksichtigt.

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[57] Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949).

1.4 Die vorliegende Edition

Bei der Beschäftigung mit den unterschiedlichen Editionen findet man verschiedenste Textausdeutungen, die alle ihren Beitrag zum Verständnis des Textes leisten. Die Editoren haben durch die Art und Weise ihrer Darstellung des Textes - insbesondere durch ihre Interpunktion - verdeutlicht, wie sie den Text lesen. Allerdings hat jeder Editor seine eigenen editionsphilologischen Vorlieben umzusetzen versucht, so dass ein komplexes Gesamtbild einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Lesarten an ganz bestimmten Problemstellen des Textes entsteht. Deswegen will die vorliegende Edition dem Leser die Handschriftenwirklichkeit abbilden, damit dieser sich selbst unberührt von den so zahlreichen Ausdeutungen der früheren Editoren sein eigenes Bild vom Text machen kann. Unterhalb des edierten Textes findet man dazu die unterschiedlichen Lesarten der Editoren durch die Angabe ihrer Interpunktion und Emendation. Sie sind dort in chronologischer Reihenfolge aufgeführt, so dass dem Leser nicht nur unterschiedliche Interpretationen der Textstellen geboten werden, sondern auch die Entwicklung der Ausdeutungen über die zwei Forschungsjahrhunderte nachvollziehbar sein wird.

Die vorliegende Edition macht sozusagen den Schritt zurück zum Original, und das in einer puristischen Haltung, die alle Eigenheiten des Textes freilegt. Die Interpunktion ist einer der beiden Schlüssel für das Textverständnis. Sie gibt einerseits an, an welcher Stelle eine Pause im Vortrag bzw. das Ende eines Sinnabschnittes zu finden wäre, wobei Komma und Punkt jeweils unterschiedliche Pausenlängen repräsentieren. Andererseits geben Frage- und Ausrufungszeichen an, wie der Editor die vorhergehende Phrase verstanden und ausgedeutet hat. Wenn die vorliegende Edition nun die Handschrift wie beschrieben abbildet, also ohne interpretatorische und mit der textursprünglichen Interpunktion, dann gibt sie keinen Vorschlag für ein Verständnis des Textes. Dies wird einerseits vom Zeilenkommentar und den dortigen Anmerkungen, andererseits von der Übersetzung ausgeglichen. Die Übersetzung stellt den Versuch dar, sich so dicht wie möglich an das Original zu halten. Das gilt ebenso für die Syntax des Textes, umso mehr ist der Leser dadurch in der Lage, den Text seinem eigenen Gefühl nach auszudeuten.

Beim MiM kommt noch eine Besonderheit hinzu. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Gedichten der HL ist der MiM nicht in Versform aufgeschrieben, sondern als Prosa. Daraus ergibt sich, dass sich die Zeilenumbrüche des Gedichts nach dem Raum des Folios richten und somit im Hinblick auf dessen Versmaß und Endreim nicht passend gesetzt sind. Diesen Mangel hat die Edition wiederum ausgeglichen, denn die Versform erlaubt den unverhüllten Blick auf die Struktur des Gedichts.

Eine weitere Aufgabe der Interpunktion ist von Solopova beschrieben. Die Tatsache, dass der MiM als Prosa in der Handschrift aufgeschrieben ist, bedeutet,

dass die Interpunktion das Ende der Verse indizieren muss.[58] Die Zeilenumbrüche der vorliegenden Edition richten sich so wie ausnahmslos alle vorigen Editionen nach dem Endreim. Die Zeilenumbrüche entsprechen also nicht der Handschrift. Im Hinblick auf die Darstellung der Handschriftenwirklichkeit müsste das Gedicht ebenfalls in Prosaform wiedergegeben werden, so dass auch die Zeilenumbrüche wie im Original vorliegen. An dieser Stelle hat die vorliegende Edition jedoch ein Zugeständnis an die in der Literatur gewohnte Präsentationsform des Textes gemacht. Genau hierin unterscheidet sie sich von einer reinen Transkription des MiM. Ebenso wurde darauf verzichtet, die der Handschrift entsprechenden Zeilenumbrüche in der Edition zu markieren oder im Apparat anzumerken. Durch Beschäftigung mit dem Original wird klar, dass sie keinen Beitrag zum Textverständnis bieten. Im Gegenteil, die Gedichtform wird dem Text sehr viel eher gerecht. Die Ordnung nach dem Endreim ergibt ein Reimschema *abababab*. Danach ergibt sich auch eine Einteilung in Strophen, die schließlich in der Prosaform der Handschrift ebenfalls nicht existiert. Die zweite Strophe weist also ein Schema *cdcdcdcd* auf, die dritte *efefefef* usw. Die 40 Zeilen des Gedichts werden so in fünf Strophen zerlegt. Diese Struktur wird auch dadurch unterstützt, dass die acht Zeilen der vierten Strophe sich deutlich abheben, da sie direkte Rede enthalten.

Wie sieht die Interpunktion der Handschrift nun aus? Der Text des MiM enthält nur wenige unterschiedliche Interpunktionszeichen. Das ist einmal die *Virgula*, die im Text eine Pause markiert und bei den Editoren als Komma oder Punkt verwirklicht wird. Jane Roberts gibt sie in ihrem in dieser Hinsicht äußerst hilfreichen *Guide to Scripts* als / wieder.[59] Ferner enthält der Text den sogenannten *Punctus Elevatus* (bei Roberts eine besondere Schreibweise des Semikolons), der den Vorläufer des Doppelpunkts darstellt und eine Hebung der Stimme indizieren kann. Die Vorgaben Jane Roberts sind jedoch nicht dezidiert für den MiM geschaffen, der wie jeder Text seine ganz eigene Vorgehensweise verlangt. Dort, wo nach Roberts eine *Virgula* zu setzen wäre, befindet sich im MiM zumeist ein Satzende. Auch beginnt an diesen Stellen oft die nächste Zeile mit einem Großbuchstaben, der auch auf das Ende einer Satzeinheit bzw. den Beginn eines neuen Satzes hinweist (zu Großbuchstaben im MiM s. unten). Was den *Punctus Elevatus* dagegen betrifft, würde er die Sätze sinnlos zerschneiden. Hilfreich ist der *Guide to Scripts* also, was das Erkennen der Satzzeichen im MiM angeht. Das Übernehmen von Roberts Praktiken ist in diesem Fall nicht der einzuschlagende Weg. Die Satzstruktur des Textes würde durch die von Roberts vorgegebenen

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[58] S. Solopova, E. (2000), „Layout, Punctuation, and Stanza Patterns in the English Verse", in: Fein, S. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 377-89, s. S. 383.

[59] Roberts, J. (2005), *Guide to Scripts used in English Writings up to 1500*, The British Library 2005, Bury St Edmunds: St Edmundsbury Press. Für die Erklärungen ihrer Zeichen s. S. xiii.

Zeichen gebrochen werden. Wie kommt diese Diskrepanz zwischen den von Roberts beschriebenen paläographischen Praktiken und der Interpunktion im MiM zustande? Diese Frage kann nicht geklärt werden. Sollte man z.B. davon ausgehen, dass der Schreiber diese nicht bewusst gesetzt hat, und vielleicht nicht einmal den zu kopierenden Text selbst verstehen konnte, weil er der englischen Sprache nicht mächtig war? Die vorliegende Edition muss der Handschriftenwirklichkeit jedenfalls folgendes Zugeständnis machen: dort, wo sich nach Roberts ein *Punctus Elevatus* befände, wird kein Semikolon, sondern ein Komma gesetzt (bei Roberts wäre es ein /) und dort, wo sich eine *Virgula* befände, muss die indizierte Pause durch ein Semikolon ausgedrückt werden. Diese Umkehrung der Verhältnisse löst unwillkürlich Unbehagen aus, beim Lesen des Gedichts ergibt sich aber nur so eine sinnvolle Interpunktion, eine nämlich, die dem Inhalt der Zeilen entspricht.

Der Beginn eines jeden Gedichts wird durch ein *Capitulum sign* (Roberts: ¶) angezeigt, das also im Text nur einmal und zwar vor dem ersten Wort des Textes erscheint. Ebenfalls nur einmal erscheint ein Zeichen, dass ein *and* repräsentiert und als tironische Note bezeichnet wird (ꝛ). Beide sind in der Edition wiedergegeben. Wie im Apparat unter dem Text angegeben, ersetzen manche Editoren letzteres durch eine ausgeschriebene Form *ant* bzw. *and*, oder durch ein Et-Zeichen (&). Drei Varianten des Schrägstrichs (kaum von Bindestrichen zu unterscheiden), die in der Handschrift erscheinen, sind nirgendwo in der vorliegenden Literatur gekennzeichnet oder beschrieben. Sie markieren offensichtlich eine Pause im Text. In der vorliegenden Edition werden sie schlicht als Bindestriche wiedergegeben.

Der Leser sollte auch beachten, dass die Edition - nach dem Vorbild der Handschrift - Großbuchstaben verwendet (vgl. <þ> und <Þ>). Diese enthält der Text jedoch nicht etwa für Eigennamen oder um Wortarten zu kennzeichnen, sondern an Stellen im Text, die man als Anfang eines Satzes deuten würde. Es wäre also berechtigt, vor diesen Stellen Punkte zu setzen. Für die Darstellung der Handschriftenwirklichkeit werden diese aber ebenfalls ausgespart und nur die tatsächlichen Satzzeichen angegeben. Ein Zugeständnis an die Wiedergabe des Textes ist die Nichtbeachtung eines Großbuchstaben, der als Fehler des Schreibers gedeutet werden muss, da er keinen Sinn erkennen lässt. Beispiel dafür sei, wenn ein Großbuchstabe sich innerhalb eines Wortes befindet. Für solche Arten von Details erweist es sich als unabdingbar, die Handschrift bzw. das Faksimile selbst heranzuziehen, so gut die Handschrift hier auch beschrieben und wiedergegeben sein möge.[60]

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[60]   Dazu empfiehlt sich Ker, *Facsimile* (1964), s. dort S. 85-6.

2. Text

    ¶   Mon in þe mone stond ꝰ strit,

              on is botforke is burþen he bereþ -

              hit is muche wonder þᵗ he nadoun slyt,

              for doute leste he valle he shoddreþ ant shereþ;

5   When þe forst freseþ muche chele he byd,

              þe þornes beþ kene is hattren to tereþ;

              Nis no wyþt in þe world þat wot wen he syt,

              ne bote hit bue þe hegge whet wedes he wereþ -

1 ꝰ] *ant* Rit, Wri, KaA, KaM, Spe, Cas, BS, Brk, DW. *and* Dav, Sis. & Böd, Brw, Rog. *strit*] *streit* Rit.   2 *botforke*] *bot forke* Wri, Böd. *bot-forke* Brw, Brk, BS, DW, LH, Ris, Sis, Tur.   3 *þᵗ*] *þat* Böd, Kai, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, Ris, Gar, Tur. *that* Rit, Wri, Spe, Dav, Sis, LH. *tht* Rog. *ðat* Cas.   *nadoun*] *na doun* Gar. *na down* Rit, Dav. *n'adoun* BS, LH, Tur. *n'adown* Sis.   4 *valle*] *valle,* Böd, Brw, DW, LH.   5 *freseþ*] *freseth,* BS, DW, LH.   6 *kene*] *kene,* Wri, Böd, Brk, DW, Rog, Ris, Tur.   *to tereþ*] *to-tereth / to-tereþ* Rit, Wri, Brw, Brk, DW, Spe, Sis, LH, Kai, Dav, Ris, Gar. *totereþ / totereth* BS, Tur.   7 *wyþt*] *wyht* Böd, Brk, Rog, Ris. *wight* LH, Sis.   8 *ne*] *ne,* Rit, Wri, Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, LH, Ris, Tur.   *hegge*] *hegge,* Rit, Wri, Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, LH, Ris, Sis, Tur.

[Fol. 115r]

Whider trowe þis mon ha þe wey take,

10   he haþ set is o fot is oþer to foren;

ffor non hiþte þat he haþ ne syþt me hym ner shake,

he is þe sloweste mon þat euer wes yboren;

Wher he were oþe feld pycchynde stake,

for hope of ys þornes to dutten is doren;

15   He mot myd is twybyl oþer trous make,

oþer al is dayes werk þer were yloren;

Þis ilke mon vpon heh when er he were,

wher he were y þe mone boren ant yfed;

He leneþ on is forke ase a grey frere,

20   þis crokede caynard sore he is adred;

Hit is mony day go þat he was here,

ichot of is ernde he naþ nout ysped;

He haþ hewe sumwher a burþen of brere,

þare fore sum hayward haþ taken ys wed;

9 *take,*] *take?* Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, Dav, DW, Rog, LH, Ris, Tur.   11 *hiþte*] *hihþe* Böd. *hihte* Brk, Ris. *highte* LH, Sis.   11 *syþt*] *syht* Böd, Brk, Ris. *syþ* Brw. *sight* LH.   12 *yboren;*] *yboren!* Tur.   14 *doren;*] *doren?* Rog.   15 *twybyl*] *twy-byl* Wri. *twibil* LH, Dav.   17 *when er*] *whener* Rit, Brk, LH, Ris. *wher er* Böd. *when-er* Brw.   18 *yfed;*] *yfed?* Rog.   20 *crokede*] *crockede* Böd.   20 *adred;*] *adred!* Tur.   24 *hayward*] *hay-ward* Wri.

25   Ȝef þy wed ys ytake bring hom þe trous,

        sete forþ þyn oþer fot stryd ouer sty;

        We shule preye þe haywart hom to vr hous,

        ant maken hym at heyse for þe maystry;

        Drynke to hym deorly of fol god bous,

30   ant oure dame douse shal sitten hym by;

        When þat he is dronke ase a dreynt mous,

        þenne we schule borewe þe wed ate bayly;

        Þis mon hereþ me nout þah ich to hym crye,

        ichot þe cherl is def þe del hym to drawe;

35   Þah ich ȝeȝe vpon heþ nulle nout hye;

        þe lostlase ladde con nout o lawe;

        Hupe forþ hubert hosede pye,

        ichot þart amarscled in to þe mawe;

        Þah me teone wiþ hym þat myn teh mye,

40   þe cherld nul nout adoun er þe day dawe -

25 *ytake*] *ytake,* Brk, DW, Rog, LH, Ris, Tur.   *trous,*] *trous!* BS, Tur   26 *fot*] *fot,* Rit, Wri, Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, Rog, LH, Ris, Tur.   *sty;*] *sty!* BS, Tur.

33 *nout*] *nout,* Rit, Böd, BS, Tur.   34 *def*] *def,* Rit, Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, Rog, Ris. *def;* LH, Tur.   34 *to drawe;*] *drawe!* Rit, Wri, Böd, Brw, Brk, DW, Ris. *todrawe!* BS, LH, Tur.   35 *ich ȝeȝe*] *ic yeghe* Rit.   35 *heþ*] *heþ,* Tur. *heh,* Böd, Brw, Brk, Ris. *hegh,* LH.   37 *Hupe forþ*] *Hupe forth/forþ,* Rit, Böd, Brk, BS, Rog, LH, Ris, Tur.   *hubert*] *Hubert!* Rit. *Hubert,* Wri, Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, Rog, LH, Ris, Sis, Tur.   *hosede*] *osede* Böd.   *pye,*] *pye!* Böd, Brw, Brk, BS, DW, Rog, LH, Ris, Sis, Tur. 38 *amarscled*] *amarstled* Rit, Böd. *a-marstled* Wri. *a-marscled* Brw.   *teh*] *teþ/teth* Böd, Brk, LH, Ris, Sis.   40 *cherld*] *cherl* Böd, Brk, LH, Ris, Sis.

3. Übersetzung

Der Mann im Mond steht und schreitet [voran],

auf seiner Forke trägt er seine Bürde.

Es ist sehr wundersam, dass er nicht herunter schlittert,

aus Furcht, [dass] er falle, schaudert und schwankt er.

5   Wenn der Frost beißt, erträgt er viel Kälte.

Die Dornen sind scharf und zerreißen seine Kleidung.

Es gibt keinen Mann auf der Welt, der weiß, wann er sitzt,

noch, sei es nur die Hecke, welche Kleider er trägt.

Wohin glaubt dieser Mann den Weg eingeschlagen zu haben?

10   Er hat seinen einen Fuß vor den anderen gesetzt.

Durch die Eile, die er nicht hat, sieht man ihn nie kommen.

Er ist der langsamste Mann, der je geboren wurde.

Ob er auf dem Feld war, Pfähle pflanzend,

in der Hoffnung auf seine Dornsträucher um seine Heckenlöcher zu flicken?

15   Er muss mit seinem Doppelbeil noch andere Bündel schlagen

oder sein ganzes Tageswerk wäre verloren.

Genau dieser Mann hoch oben, wann er vorher [dort] war,

ob er im Mond geboren und genährt wurde,

er lehnt [nun] auf seiner Forke wie ein grauer Bruder.

20   Dieser geschundene Faulenzer, schmerzlich verschreckt ist er.

Es ist lange Zeit her, dass er hier [auf Erden] war.

Ich weiß von seinem Auftrag, den er nicht erfüllt hat:

Er hat irgendwo ein Bündel Dornsträucher gehauen

dafür hat ihm ein Feldhüter ein Pfand abgenommen.

25   „Wenn dein Pfand genommen ist, bring das Bündel [erst einmal] heim.

Setz deinen anderen Fuß vor, schreite über den Steig.

Wir werden den Feldhüter heim zu unserem Haus bitten

und ihm Gemütlichkeit in Vollendung bereiten,

trinken ihm gut zu mit sehr gutem Trank

30   und unsere Hausdame soll sich zu ihm setzen.

Wenn er betrunken ist wie eine getränkte Maus,

dann werden wir das Pfand beim Vogt einlösen.“

Dieser Mann hört mich nicht, obwohl ich zu ihm [herauf] schreie.

Ich weiß, der Kerl ist taub - der Teufel soll ihn holen!

35   Obschon ich herauf schreie, will er [einfach] nicht eilen.

Der lustlose Bursche kennt das Gesetz nicht.

„Hüpf voraus, Hubert, du Elster in Hosen.

Ich weiß, du bist verwirrt bis ins Mark.“

Obwohl ich mit ihm zanke, dass meine Zähne wackeln,

40   der Kerl will nicht herunterkommen, bevor der Tag graut.

4. Zeilenkommentar

1 *Mon*

Im westlichen Mittelland bewahrte sich die Qualität *o*. Das Westgermanische /a/ nahm vor nasalen Konsonanten die Qualität /å/ an. Die Schreibung *o* erschien im Spätaltenglischen im anglischen Dialekt und bewahrte sich nur im westlichen Teil bis in die mittelenglische Periode hinein.[61] *Mon* wird als erstes Wort in vielen Editionen in Kapitälchen gesetzt, was aber nicht auf der Handschrift beruht.

1 *mone*

Der Mond hat morphologisch betrachtet eine interessante Wandlung erlebt. Während er in altenglischer Zeit, so wie heute noch im Deutschen, maskulin war[62], so ist mit dem Zusammenfall der bestimmten Artikel zur mittelenglischen Zeit hin sein grammatisches Geschlecht durch diesen nicht mehr zu erkennen gewesen. Von muttersprachlicher Wahrnehmung her scheint er aber sein Geschlecht gewandelt zu haben. So wird er nicht erst im Neuenglischen, sondern offensichtlich auch im Mittelenglischen schon weiblich klassifiziert, was sich im MiM nicht erkennen lässt, wohl aber in Brk Nr. 11, „lenten is come wiþ loue to toune"[63]. Dort ist die Rede vom Mond mit *hire lyht* (25). Das Possessivum gibt hier eindeutig das grammatikalische, weibliche Geschlecht an. Übrigens ist beim Gegenstück zum Mond, der Sonne das gleiche Phänomen in umgekehrter Weise zu beobachten. Das OED verzeichnet zum Mond unter s.v. *moon* 1a, *se mona* aus dem Jahr 888 und außerdem unter 1b: „Since the disappearance of the grammatical genders of OE., in which *móna* was masc., the feminine pronoun has commonly been used in referring to the moon, even when no personification is intended". Dort ist ein Textbeispiel aus dem Jahr 1290 aufgeführt, in dem sein Geschlecht bereits feminin ist. Das passt auch zum weiblichen Geschlecht, das man in den HL an besagter Stelle finden kann.

Die Beobachtung dieser Geschlechtsumkehrung lässt wohl folgenden Schluss zu: Als germanische Sprache führte das Altenglische typischerweise eine maskuline Form. Dagegen führen romanische Sprachen für diese Himmelskörper das gegenteilige Geschlecht. Zur mittelenglischen Periode hin wandelte sich bedingt durch den französischen und lateinischen Einfluss auf die Sprache das Geschlecht hin zur romanischen Form.

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[61] Nach Mossé, F. (Hg.) (1977), *Mittelenglische Kurzgrammatik. Lautlehre, Formenlehre, Syntax*, 2. Aufl., München: Hueber, S. 41.
[62] S. Bosworth, J. und Toller, T. N. (Hg.) (1996), *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Nachdruck [1898-1921], London: Oxford Univ. Press, s.v. *móna*.
[63] Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968).

1 *stond*

DW zeigen, dass im Gedicht Abweichungen bezüglich der Bildung der dritten Person Indikativ Präsens und der zugehörigen Endung *-eþ* bestehen, so wie in *bereþ* (2) und *freseþ* (5). Sie weisen neben *stond* auf folgende Abweichung hin: *byd* (5), *syt* (7), etc. Böd hat schon eine Regelhaftigkeit in dieser Formenbildung erkannt. Er weist darauf hin, dass nach stammhaftem <t> und <d> keine typische *eþ*-Endung vorkommt (Böd Gr, s. S. 73).[64]

1 *strit*

Rit ist der einzige Editor, der ein <e> einfügt und es zu *streit* emendiert, ohne dies jedoch zu kommentieren. Von Seiten der Handschrift ist diese Emendation nicht nachzuvollziehen. Von solchen orthographischen Eigenheiten aber abgesehen, gibt es für Brook einigen Grund, *strit* in seiner Behandlung der „Original Dialects"[65] aufzugreifen. Die vier Endreimwörter der ersten Strophe sind *stryt* (1), *slyt* (3), *byd*, (5) und *syt* (7). Er sagt, diese synkopierten Formen der dritten Person Singular Präsens Indikativ indizieren einen südlichen Dialekt, es könne jedoch keine exakte Grenze angegeben werden.[66] Es handelt sich dabei um einen seiner Anhaltspunkte, die nur bedingt verlässlich sind. Er ordnet den MiM schließlich wegen dieses Kriteriums den südlichen HL zu.[67] Böd glossiert ‚schreiten, sich fortbewegen'. Die Bedeutung wird vom MED (s.v. *strīden* 1a) gestützt. Etwas freier übersetzt Sis, „the man in the moon stands in full stride"[68]. Da es sich bei *strit* nun eindeutig um ein Verb handelt, ist diese Übersetzung nicht vertretbar. Sto hat in seiner neuenglische Übersetzung „can stand or stride" angeführt.[69] Damit umgeht er den Umstand, dass bei den Formen die Standardendung für die dritte Person synkopiert und assimiliert wird. Er fasst die beiden Formen also als Infinitive auf. Da dieser Ausfall aber schon bei Böd geklärt wird, ist auch diese Übersetzung nicht zu stützen. Dun ersetzt in seiner Edition das <d> durch ein <t> (*stont*). Warum er dies tut, gibt er jedoch nicht an.

1 *stond ꝫ strit*

Menner wirft auf, es könnte statt der üblichen Interpretation „stands and strides" auch *stond astrit* sein, was er für sinnvoller hält. DW stellen aber fest, dass das

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[64] Vgl. Mitchell, B. und Robinson, F. C. (2007), *A Guide to Old English*, 7. Aufl., Oxford u.a.: Blackwell Publishing, S. 43-4.

[65] Brook, *Original Dialects* (1933).

[66] Brook, *Original Dialects* (1933), S. 50.

[67] Ebd., S. 53, vgl. S. 51.

[68] Sisam, *Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse* (1970), S. 132.

[69] Stone, *Medieval English Verse* (1970), S. 107.

NED[70] *astride* nicht vor dem 17. Jahrhundert nachweisen könne. In der vorliegenden Edition wurde steht und schreitet beibehalten, da es der Bildsprache des Gedichts entspricht und gerade der enthaltene Widerspruch den Reiz des Ausdrucks ausmacht. Dem MiM sind keinerlei Bewegungen anzusehen, der Mond hingegen ist fortan in Bewegung über das Himmelszelt, so steht der MiM still und bewegt sich doch fort. Zur Morphologie sei noch erwähnt, dass hier ebenso wie bei *stond* (1) die Endung *-eþ* regelkonform nicht vorhanden ist.

2 *is*

Ein augenscheinliches Phänomen des MiM ist das Auslassen des <h> im männlichen Possessivum *his* bzw. *hys*. Dabei ist *is* die häufigere Form, *ys* erscheint zweimal als das Possessivum (14 und 24) und einmal als Form von *buen* (25). Der Hauchlaut ist mittelenglisch zeitweilig aufgegeben worden.[71] Interessanterweise ist bei *heyse* (28, neuenglisch *ease*) das genau gegenteilige Phänomen zu beobachten.

2 *botforke*

Böd glossiert ‚Heugabel' und teilt im Text zu zwei Wörtern (*bot forke*). Es gibt jedoch keinen erkennbaren Grund, warum das Kompositum nicht als solches wiedergegeben werden sollte. Das Hauptwort *forke* stellt für die Übersetzung keine Schwierigkeit dar, im Deutschen kann es schlicht als Forke übersetzt werden. Viel interessanter ist *bot*. Als die Form *botforke*, wie sie in der Handschrift zu finden ist, kann keine Etymologie im MED erschlossen werden. Dort ist unter s.v. *forke* 1a allerdings der Hinweis auf die Zusammensetzung *botforke* gegeben. Ein Sinn kann sich erschließen durch das Hauptwort s.v. *bat* 1a, das als ‚war club or mace' beschrieben wird. Die kriegerische Konnotation dieser Zuordnung nutzt Bessai für die Erklärung seines Textverständnisses. Um seine These zu stützen, wäre dieses *bot* das vom Dichter gewählte.[72]

2 *burþen*

Im Englischen drückt die Form s.v. *burden, burthen* (OED) heute sowohl eine materielle Last, wie auch eine Last im übertragenen Sinne aus (vgl. 1. A load, 2. *fig.* Load of labour, etc). Diese Doppeldeutigkeit kann im Deutschen nur schwer umgesetzt werden, da sie dort genauer bestimmt ist (Bürde und Bündel). Die Bürde hat stärkeren figurativen Charakter und wird so von Böd Gl verstanden

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70 Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232. Die Bezeichnung NED steht für *New English Dictionary*, das heute als *Oxford English Dictionary* bezeichnet wird.

71 Brunner, K. (Hg.) (1962), *Die Englische Sprache,* Bd. 2, 2. erw. Aufl., Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, Bd. 1, S. 414-5.

72 Bessais Ausdeutung wird im Kapitel 5 ausführlicher erläutert.

(‚Bürde, Last'). Die englischsprachigen Glossare von Brw und Brk glossieren ‚bundle', was das Material bezeichnet, das der Mondmann auf seiner Forke trägt. In diesem Zusammenhang taucht es auch in Zeile 23 auf, als *burþen of brere* (Böd Gl ‚Dornstrauch'). Gerade aber die Doppeldeutigkeit scheint der Dichter im Sinn gehabt zu haben, denn seine Bürde muss der Mondmann nicht nur tragen, sondern auch ertragen.

2 *bereþ*

BS beschäftigen sich in ihrem Zeilenkommentar auch mit der Herkunft des MiM. Die Verbalformen *bereþ, shereþ* (4) usw. könnten keine Ersetzungen des Schreibers sein, sondern seien die des Autors. Sie schließen den Norden und das östliche Mittelland aus[73], sie geben jedoch auch zu, dass die Herkunft nicht genauer zu bestimmen sei.

3 *þ*ᵗ

Die Darstellung ist eben die der Handschrift, wobei es sich um eine verkürzte Form der Konjunktion *þat* handelt. Alle anderen Editionen, ausgenommen Rog (*thi*), schreiben die Form als *þat / that* aus, indem sie das <a> einfügen.

3 *nadoun*

Es gibt in den unterschiedlichen Editionen mehrere unterschiedliche paläographische Ausdeutungen zu *nadoun*. Das MED unterstützt die Form, die auch in der Handschrift genauso vorkommt. Es wird aufgeführt unter s.v. *nadoun* 4, wobei es sich um eine Kontraktion handelt, die mit ‚not down' erklärt wird (*ne adoun*). Andere Schreibweisen sind im Apparat unter der Edition angegeben, eine interessante findet sich bei Meroney[74], der die Lösung als schlechte Syntax ansehen würde und so *na doun* präferiert. Für eine Übersetzung schlägt er „that he never slides down" vor. Damit entfernt sich seine Lösung jedoch nicht weit vom Verständnis anderer Editoren. In der nachfolgenden Forschungsliteratur wird sein Kommentar nicht diskutiert.

4 *shoddreþ*

Grammatisch und etymologisch ist die Form recht einfach zu beleuchten, vgl. MED s.v. *shŏderen* a). Menner hat angeregt, dass sich hinter *shoddreþ* die Vorstellung verbirgt, dass es das Schimmern des Mondlichts suggeriert, was die Qualität der

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[73] Bennett und Smithers, *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (1968), s. S. 331.
[74] Meroney, H. (1947), „Lines-Notes on the Early English Lyric", *Modern Language Notes* 62, S. 184-7, s. S. 187.

Bildsprache des Gedichts einmal mehr vorführt.[75]

5 *byd*

s. Anm zu *stond* (1)

6 *þornes*

Brook sagt, das Wort solle sich wie *hegge* auch auf das Bündel beziehen, das der Mondmann bei sich haben soll und zieht dazu Shakespeares *Midsummer Night's Dream* III, i heran, der „bush of thorns" enthält.

6 *to tereþ*

Die so getrennte Form repräsentiert den Status der Handschrift. Da es aus formaler Sicht eigentlich ein Kompositum darstellen würde, haben einige Editoren die Form verbunden oder mit einem Bindestrich darauf hingewiesen. Nur Böd und Tur haben es getrennt wie hier dargestellt, BS haben es zusammengefügt, die anderen Editoren verbanden die getrennten Elemente mit einem Bindestrich. Das MED hat s.v. *tŏtēren* (v.(2)) 4 (a) und gibt dort im Zitat die Form mit Bindestrich an. Die Übersetzung aus Böd Gl kann vom MED gestützt werden und ist deutsch ‚zerreissen'.

7 *Nis*

Die Kontraktion wird von Böd Gr als solche aufgeführt, die eigentliche Form ist *ne is*.[76] Im Zusammenhang muss die Stelle wie oben mit ‚Es gibt keinen' verstanden und übersetzt werden.

7 *wyþt*

Die meisten Editoren übernehmen diese Verwechslung, die ja von Brk beschrieben wird und emendieren nicht. Immerhin eine Handvoll Editionen kommen dem Leser, der Brk nicht kennt, in dieser Hinsicht entgegen. Leider gibt Brk keine Gründe an, die für die Verwechslung von <þ> und <h> in Frage kämen. Wenn von einem anderssprachigen Schreiber ausgegangen wird, dann könnte an dieser Stelle ein Lese- und/oder Übertragungsfehler der Grund für die Verwechslung sein, genauso gut aber mangelnde Sorgfalt seitens des Schreibers. Brk stellt fest, dass sich diese Verwechslung von <þ> und <h> in den HL

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[75]   S. Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949), S. 3.
[76]   Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949), S. 88.

zehnmal, aber im MiM vermehrt, nämlich fünfmal finden lässt.[77] Man könnte also davon ausgehen, dass sich im Original des Gedichts vom MiM einige Graphien von <h> befanden, die einem <þ> so ähnlich waren, dass der Schreiber diese falsch erkannt und übertragen hat. Denn eins ist in der überlieferten Handschrift dieses Schreibers auch für den Laien augenscheinlich: sein <h> und <þ> können zwar bei genauer Betrachtung auseinander gehalten werden, sehen sich aber überaus ähnlich, de facto ist es nur ein Strich, nur ein Schwung, der den Unterschied macht. Wenn nun spekuliert würde, dass sich im Original des MiM wie bei ihm selbst <h> und <þ> stark ähnelten, könnte man hier leicht auf einen Lesefehler schließen. Wie auch immer die Vorlage des MiM ausgesehen hat, der Schreiber hatte wohl eine in diesem Detail schlechte bzw. ungenaue Vorlage. Dafür spricht die Tatsache, dass diese Verwechslung, wie Brk sie beschreibt, größtenteils nur im MiM auftaucht.

Die Frage stellt sich nun freilich, ob dem Original oder der überlieferten Handschrift in der Edition größere Bedeutung beigemessen werden sollte. Die leserfreundlichere Entscheidung ist die Emendation, da sich *wypt* weder im MED noch in einem anderen der verwendeten Wörterbücher findet. Zudem sähe der deutschsprachige Betrachter die Verwandtschaft zum deutschen *Wicht*. Die Bedeutung unterscheidet sich jedoch zum mittelenglischen *wyht*, da es im Kontext allgemeiner als ‚Geschöpf, Ding' (Böd Gl, s.v. *wyht*) bezeichnet werden muss.

Hier sind für den Zeilenkommentar noch einmal die betroffenen Formen des MiM: neben *wyht* stehen: *hiþte* (eigentlich *hihte*) (11)[78], *sypt* (eigentlich *syht*)[79] (11), *heþ* (eigentlich *heh*) (35), *teh* (eigentlich *teþ*) (39).

7 *wen*

Brk gibt in seiner Einleitung zu den orthographischen Besonderheiten der HL an, dass es elfmal zu Verwechslungen zwischen anlautendem *w-* und *wh-* kam. Er schließt daraus, dass die Laute schon zu dieser Zeit den gleichen Lautwert besaßen.[80]

7 *syt*

s. Anm. zu *stond* (1)

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[77]   Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 4.
[78]   Wobei hier die Übersetzung ‚haste' (Brk Gl) ist, und das <þ> dem näher ist als das <h>.
[79]   Wobei hier unklar ist, ob nicht doch ein <þ> möglich ist, wie McSparran, *Language of English Poems* (2000), S. 411, argumentiert.
[80]   Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 4.

8 *bue*

bue ist eine Konjunktivform vom Infinitiv *buen* (Böd Gl, s.v. *buen*; Gr S. 76).

8 *hegge*

Böd gibt fälschlicherweise in seinem Glossar 'Hexe' als Bedeutung an. Dabei mag sich zwar ein Sinn erschließen, kein anderer Editor hat jedoch 'Hexe' glossiert. Die Herleitung der Bedeutung Hecke ist zudem belegbar. Das MED führt es s.v. *hegge* (a) auf. Menner widmet dem Wort viel Aufmerksamkeit. Altenglisch gibt es neben *hecg* auch *hege*, wobei ersteres eher lebendes und letzteres eher totes Material bezeichnet[81]. Es wird also eine genauere Bedeutung unterschieden. Daneben existiert auch noch das damit nicht verwandte *hay*, 'hay' und ein im Zusammenhang bedeutsames *hæg*, das Menner als 'enclosure' bezeichnet (vgl. dazu OED s.v. *hedge* sb., 'planted closely to form a boundary between pieces of land'). Diese Bedeutung könnte dem Verständnis von *hayward* (24) neue Interpretationsmöglichkeiten eröffnen. Der *hayward* wäre demnach kein 'Heckenwart', sondern eher 'Umhegungs- oder Gehegewart'. Müller nennt ihn in diesen Zusammenhang passend „Feldhüter"[82]. Der Feldhüter hat dabei bestimmte Aufgabenbereiche, die im Verlauf des Gedichtes noch angesprochen werden. So nimmt der Feldhüter dem Mondmann ein Pfand oder Unterpfand ab, weil der Mondmann sich gesetzes- oder regelwidrig verhält. Der *hayward* wäre Menner zufolge verantwortlich für das tote Heckenmaterial, also die „enclosure" wie Menner sie bezeichnet. Im Zusammenspiel der vielen ähnlichen Formen können detaillierte Bedeutungsunterschiede aber nicht genau untersucht werden, da auch schon am Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts einige der Formen ineinander greifen und/oder obsolet sind.

8 *wedes*

wedes wird als 'Kleider, Kleidung' bei Böd Gl s.v. *wedes* angegeben. Das MED hat s.v. *wēde* (n.(2)) (a) mit der Bedeutung 'garment'. Ein Synonym in der gleichen Strophe ist *hattren* (6), das aber im Gegensatz zu *wedes* an dieser Stelle nicht alliterieren würde.

9 *Whider*

Böd und das MED weisen eindeutig auf *whider* als Interrogativpronomen hin, Böd Gl: 1. 'fragend, wohin', MED s.v. *whider* (adv. & conj.) (1.). Das Wort ist zentral für

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[81]   Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949), S. 5.
[82]   Müller, A. (1911), *Mittelenglische Geistliche und Weltliche Lyrik des XIII. Jahrhunderts, mit Ausschluß der politischen Lieder. Nach Motiven und Formen*, Halle a.d.S.: Niemeyer, S. 154.

die Bedeutung der Zeile. So verstehen sie viele Editoren als Frage.

9 Whider *trowe þis mon ha þe wey take*

Malone und nach ihm DW schlagen vor, dass *ha* sein Suffix *-þ* verloren hat, da der Laut ohnehin folgen würde, *ha þe wey take*. DW äußern sich jedoch nicht zu Brooks Vorschlag. Der greift Malones Idee auf, meint aber, das *trowe* dann nicht erklärbar sei. Sein eigener Vorschlag ist, dass *trowe* das *-þ* verloren hat, und *ha* den Infinitiv darstellt. Sis deuten die Stelle, indem sie ein *we* einfügen: „Whider trowe we (!) this man ha the way take?" (‚wohin glauben wir, hat dieser Mann den Weg eingeschlagen?'). Die Übersetzung der Stelle ist schwierig. Die vorliegende Übersetzung geht davon aus, dass beide, sowohl *trowe* als auch *ha* das *-þ* eingebüßt haben. Dadurch ergibt sich die vorliegende Übersetzung „Wohin glaubt dieser Mann den Weg eingeschlagen zu haben?". Das setzt ein erforderliches *he* zwischen *mon* und *ha* voraus und wäre damit plausibler als das einfügen des *we* wie bei Sis.

10 *o*

o erscheint zweimal als eigenständiges Wort im MiM, und anhand von Bödekkers Gl s.v. *o* in zwei Formen. Hier erscheint es Böd nach als Form von *on, one* mit der Bedeutung ‚einer, e, es'. In Zeile 36 erscheint es hingegen als ‚of' mit der Anmerkung ‚Bildungsmittel des gen. quant.'.

11 *ffor*

Keiner der Editoren äußert sich über das Erscheinen der Doppelkonsonanz, einige emendieren die Form zu *for,* was nicht extra im Emendationsapparat aufgeführt worden ist, da es nur von einer Seite einen Vorschlag zu einer anderen Ausdeutung gibt. DW schlagen vor, *ffor … haþ.* als Phrase zu verstehen, und diese als „despite his efforts"[83] zu lesen. Die vorliegende Übersetzung hält sich abermals so streng als möglich an den Wortlaut. Dieser wäre genau genommen: „Durch keine Eile, die er hat, sieht man ihn nie kommen". Im Original befindet sich ein Widerspruch. Hat der Mondmann Eile oder nicht? Man kann davon ausgehen, dass es sich um einen gewollten Widerspruch handelt. Wie schon in der ersten Zeile bewegt sich der Mondmann und tut es doch wieder nicht. Die doppelte Verneinung, (vgl. Anm. zu *naþ nout* (22)) ist in diesen Fall in ihrer Funktion als verstärkend zu verstehen. So wird der Widerspruch in der Übersetzung übernommen und nicht aufgelöst: „Durch die Eile, die er nicht hat, sieht man ihn nicht näher kommen".

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[83]   Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.

11 *hipte*

 Böd glossiert ‚Eile', das MED verzeichnet *highthe* (n.) mit der Bedeutung ‚haste'.
Böd und Brk emendieren zu *hihpe* und *hihte*, die Handschrift enthält, wie man dem
Faksimile entnehmen kann, *hipte*. Siehe dazu die Anm. zu *wyht* (7).

11 *syht*

Siehe Anm. zu *wyht* (7).

11 *ner*

Das MED verzeichnet es als Präposition und unter a) mit ‚to come or go close to
or towards', also dt. ‚näher'. Möglich ist aber auch MED s.v. *nĕr* (adv. 1a mit der
Bedeutung *never*). DW geben in ihrem Zeilenkommentar an, dass wie in *Del* (34)
ein inlautendes <v> ausgefallen sei, daher handelt es sich in der Übersetzung um
diese Form.

11 *shake*

DW führen in ihrem Zeilenkommentar *shake* und *make* (15) als Infinitive auf,
geben dort aber auch an, dass der Infintiv in seiner zu erwartenden Form als
maken (28) auftaucht.
    Semantisch betrachtet ist das Wort nicht der Erwartung entsprechend vom ne.
to shake zu verstehen, sondern Böd glossiert ‚sich schnell bewegen' und das MED
hat auch diese Bedeutung s.v. *shāken* (v.) 1(a) neben der heute Üblicheren (s. 2(a)).

12 *euer*

Dies ist das erste Beispiel für die orthographische Verwendung von *u* und *v* im
Gedicht. Es handelt sich dabei nicht nur um ein Phänomen im MiM, und nicht
nur um eine Eigenheit der HL, sondern um ein mittelenglisches Phänomen.
Brook stellt es in seiner Einführung vor.[84] Es wird in der Handschrift keine
Unterscheidung von <u> und <v>, weder als Vokal noch als Konsonant
gemacht, beide werden quasi austauschbar benutzt. Andere Beispiele im MiM sind
vpon (17), *ouer* (26), *vr* (27).

12 *yboren*

DW zeigen, dass es zwei Arten von Perfektpartizipien gibt, nämlich einerseits die
Formen mit *y*-Präfix und andererseits solche ohne. Im MiM sind beide vorhanden,

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[84]   Brook, *The Harley Lyrics* (1968), S. 3.

also einmal *yboren*, *yloren* (16), *ytake* (25), etc., auf der anderen Seite *boren* (18), *taken* (24), *take* (9), *hewe* (23) und *dronke* (31).[85] Das Präfix entspricht dem Perfektpräfix *ꝺe-*, das im Neuenglischen obsolet ist und hier in einer dialekten Ausprägung vorliegt.

13 *Wher*

Böd Gl gibt an, es sei eine Kontraktion von *wheþer*, das er als ‚als ob' glossiert. Er gibt im Gl eine Übersetzung an: „als ob er auf dem Felde wäre".[86] Für *wher* in Zeile 18 ebenso: „als ob er auf dem Monde geboren wäre".[87] Die Tatsache, dass der Dichter es verkürzt, ist einer von Böddekers Kritikpunkten am Gedicht, da sich der „gebildetere Dichter"[88] solcherlei Kontraktionen nicht erlaube. Das genaue Verhältnis vom Archetyp und der überlieferten Version kann jedoch nicht mehr geklärt werden. Möglicherweise handelt es sich nur um eine Kontraktion von Seiten des Schreibers statt des Dichters. Daher sollte Böd dieses nicht von vorneherein dem Dichter anlasten. Zudem könnte man argumentieren, dass der Dichter sich bewusst um eine volksnahe und der Realität entsprechende Sprache bemühte.

13 *oþe*

Böd Gr erklärt die Kontraktion als *on þe*.[89] In den unterschiedlichen Editionen kann man die beiden Elemente auch getrennt finden. Die vorliegende Edition orientiert sich an der Handschrift.

13 *pycchynde stake*

Brk Gl erkennt es als Präsenspartizip, glossiert ‚making fast' und gesteht ein, dass die Bedeutung „obscure" sei. Das MED gibt s.v. *picchen* (v.) (1(a)), ‚To thrust (sth.), drive (a stake); ~ in (o, to, into), stick, thrust, or drive (sth.) into (sth.); surround (a wood) with a palisade' an. Das ODEE gibt an, dass das Verb mit dieser Bedeutung neuenglisch nicht mehr gebräuchlich ist (s.v. *pitch²*). Das enthaltende *-nd* weist es als Partizip aus, wobei es die einzige *nd*-Form des Gedichts ist.[90]

stake ist im MED als *stāke* (n.) (1(c)) 'a piece of wood used as a weapon or a walking stick, a staff' glossiert. Die Tatsache, dass es auch als Waffe bezeichnet wird, spricht wieder für Bessais These (dazu mehr im Kapitel 5).

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[85] Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 231.
[86] Böd Gl s.v. *wheþer*.
[87] Ebd.
[88] S. Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 175.
[89] Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 176.
[90] Zu Präsenspartizipien s. Brunner, *Die Englische Sprache* (1962), Bd. 2, S. 351-63.

14 *ys*

s. Anm. zu *is* (2)

14 *to dutten is doren*

Der hier beschriebene Vorgang wird von Menner als zentrales Motiv des Textes verstanden. Er stellt einen essentiellen Arbeitsschritt für das bäuerliche Leben der Zeit dar. Auf die Hintergründe, wie sie von Menner beschrieben werden, wird im Verlauf der Betrachtungen noch eingegangen werden. Hier soll zunächst das Verständnis der Stelle geklärt werden. Es geht darum, dass der Bauer Löcher in seinen Hecken hat, die er mit Sträuchern stopfen will, um diese undurchlässig für das Vieh zu machen, also: *to dutten his doren* ‚um seine Löcher (Tore / Türen) zu schließen / stopfen'. Dafür steht *dutten* (Böd Gl ‚verschliessen' von ags. *dyttan*, MED s.v. *ditten dor* (1(b)), ‚to block a doorway; shut or fasten a door', Brk Gl ‚to close, stop up') und *doren* (Böd Gl *dore* ‚Thor, Thür', MED s.v. *dore*, (1(a) und (b)): a) A doorway serving as entrance and exit of a building or an enclosure, doorway, gateway; (b) the door or gate which shuts an entrance', Brk Gl *doren*, 'doors'). Das MED gibt also die entscheidenden Hinweise für den vorliegenden Zusammenhang, einmal ist unter Bedeutung (a) *enclosure* angegeben, zweitens unter (b) *gate*, dt. Gatter. Die Übersetzung hat sich an der an späterer Stelle zu erläuternden Ausdeutung orientiert und das Wort „Heckenlöcher" eingesetzt.

15 *myd*

myd ist eine der beiden Formen die dt. ‚mit' ausdrücken können. Die andere ist ebenfalls im Text vorhanden, *wiþ* (39). Die Erste ist im Neuenglischen obsolet. Dessen Platz wurde von *wiþ* übernommen, wobei die genauere Bedeutungsunterscheidung um das Zuwiderhandeln verloren ging. Der Unterschied wird durch den Zusammenhang mit dt. ‚wider' klarer, was das ODEE auch so angibt (s.v. *mid*, †A. ‚denoting opposition'). Im MiM wird dieser Gegensatz deutlich im Gebrauch in Zeile 39, *teone wiþ hym þat myn teh mye*. *myd* wird laut MED selten nach 1400 (s.v. *mid* (prep.(1)). Das OED ist genauer (s.v. *with* A): *with* „has taken over in the ME period the chief senses belonging properly to OE. *mid*."

15 *twybyl*

Das Kompositum ist im MED zu finden unter *twĭbil* (n.): ‚(a) An ax with two cutting edges; a battle-axe [quots. a1460]; also *fig.;* (b) a two-edged carpenter's tool, a mortising ax, an adz, etc.; also *person.;* ?also, a boring tool, wimbel, gimlet; (c) a two-edged mattock, pickax; also, a mattock having two crooked prongs.' Die Doppelfunktion als Arbeitswerkzeug und Waffe gibt Bessais Ausdeutung einmal

mehr eine Berechtigung. In der Handschrift ist das Kompositum eindeutig wie angegeben zu lesen, einige Editoren setzen einen Bindestrich ein, wohl um dessen Zusammengehörigkeit zu verdeutlichen (s. Apparat unter der Ed.).

15 *make*

s. Anmerkung zu *shake* (11)

16 *dayes werk*

dayes werk könnte der Paläographie der Handschrift nach auch als *dayeswerk* gelesen werden. Diese Lesart findet sich aber bei keinem der Editoren und wäre auch nicht bedeutungsunterscheidend. Im Deutschen drängt sich das Kompositum geradezu auf (Tageswerk), und eventuell lag es dem Schreiber der Handschrift auch in dessen Original als solches vor, wobei er sich bewusst für eine Zweideutigkeit entschied. Das OED enthält auch das obsolete s.v. *daywork*. Ein Blick in das MED bringt s.v. *dai-werk, -work, daies werk* (n. & phr.) hervor, ,(a) A normal day's work; a day's customary service; also, a day's fighting; (b) as a land measure: a plot of land that can be plowed by one team in one day'. An dieser Stelle könnte wiederum Bessais These ansetzen, denn unter (a) enthält es im selben Lemma ,A day's fighting', dort finden wir also ebenfalls den Hinweis auf die oben genannte Zweideutigkeit.

16 *were*

s. Anm zu *wher* (13)

16 *yloren*

s. Anm zu *yboren* (12)

17 *ilke*

Böd Gr widmet *ilke* einen eigenen Abschnitt unter den Pronomen. *ilke* ist eine Analogiebildung zu *þilke* und ist abhängig von vorhergehendem *þis* und *þat*. Zur Bedeutung gibt Brk Gl ,same, identical', etwas genauer gibt das MED s.v. *ilke* ,that (this) very same' 1(c).

17 *vpon*

s. Anm. zu *euer* (12)

17 *when er*

Die Form glossiert Böd nicht, Brk Gl gibt die Bedeutung ‚whenever' und erklärt es als Kontraktion von altenglisch *hwenne* und *æfre*. Das MED führt unter s.v. *whanne-ever* (conj.) auf. Über die Worttrennung äußern sich die Editoren nicht, einige emendieren zu einem Wort (s. Apparat).

18 *wher*

s. Anm zu *wher* (13)

18 *y the*

Wri fügt es zusammen, obwohl es in der Handschrift sogar durch Zeilenumbruch getrennt ist. LH geben es als *i'* an.

18 *mone*

s. Anm zu *mone* (1)

18 *yfed*

Brk Gl (s.v. *yfed*) weist auf die Bedeutung ‚to feed' hin. Im Hinblick auf die Textstelle scheint Brk aber die Bedeutung ‚to rear' bevorzugt zu haben. Der Zusammenhang im Text deutet auf dieses Verständnis jedenfalls hin. Der Sprecher stellt zu Anfang der dritten Strophe die vorwurfsvolle Frage, ob der MiM dort geboren und aufgewachsen ist, er scheint wenig Ahnung vom Leben bzw. dem Gesetz zu haben (s. Z. 36) und lehnt auf seinen Stab wie ein grauer Mönch (s. Anm. zu *grey frere*), was man als Vorwurf in Sinne des Ausspruchs ‚hinter dem Mond/auf dem Mond leben' lesen sollte. Das MED kennt die Bedeutung und gibt auch die Verbindung ‚born and raised' an, die hier so verstanden werden muss, s. MED s.v. (4(c)) ‚to nurture, rear, bring up; *boren and fed*, born and raised'. In der Übersetzung wurde bewusst versucht, diesen vorwurfsvollen Ton zu übertragen.

19 *forke*

s. Anm. zu *botforke* (2)

19 *ase a grey frere*

Müller weist durch seine Übersetzung darauf hin, dass es sich bei diesem ‚grauen Bruder' um einen Franziskanermönch handelt.[91] Dieser Vergleich ist so passend, da er die Farbe des Mondes unterstreicht. Wie dieser im MiM beiläufige Vergleich genau verstanden werden sollte, ist nur noch schwer nachzuvollziehen. Fakt ist, dass eine gewisse Kritik geäußert wird, wie sie Jeffrey auch beschreibt: Der MiM hätte „anti-fraternal overtones, specifically, in fact, satirizing sluggardy ‚ase a grey frere'"[92].

20 *crokede caynard*

Böd glossiert für *caynard* ‚Faulenzer, Tagedieb', und führt es auf afrz. *cagnard* zurück. Das MED enthält s.v. *cainard* und unterstützt die Bedeutung mit ‚sluggard, slob'. Zu dem dazu alliterierenden *crokede* (bei Böd *crockede*) glossiert Böd ‚krumm, schief', vom Verbum *crocken*, ‚krümmen, biegen'. Im MED findet sich interessanterweise die Verbindung s.v. *crokede mone* 1a, was als *crescent moon* übertragen wird. Das Wort passt also im Gedicht in dreifacher Hinsicht, nämlich a) zum dubiosen Charakter des MiM, b) in der sprachlichen Verbindung mit dem für das Gedicht zentralen Himmelskörper und c) da es alliteriert.

20 *sore*

sore, hier als Adverb zu *adred* (s. nächster Kommentar) gebraucht, ist neuenglisch als solches durch das Suffix gekennzeichnet, s. Brk Gl ‚sorely' (vgl. auch Anm. zu *deorly* (29)).

20 *adred*

Brk glossiert ‚afraid', nach ae. *ofdrǣd(d)*, wohingegen Böd Gl *ondrēd* angibt. Diese offensichtliche Diskrepanz wird durch das MED ausgeglichen, das beide Formen anführt, s. MED s.v. *adrēden* (v.) ‚LOE *ādrǣdan*, beside earlier *ondrǣdan* & *ofdrǣdan'*, (für die passende Bedeutung im Zusammenhang s. 3a).

22 *Ichot*

Hier handelt es sich um eine weitere Kontraktion, diesmal von *ich wot* (s. Böd Gr, S. 88).

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91 Müller, *Mittelenglische Geistliche und Weltliche Lyrik* (1911), S. 154.
92 Jeffrey, D. (2000), „Authors, Anthologists, and Franciscan Spirituality", in: Fein, S. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 267.

22 *ernde*

Brk Gl gibt ‚errand', Böd Gl enthält die übertragene Bedeutung ‚Auftrag'. Das MED ergänzt dabei s.v. *ĕrend(e* (4), ‚Any business or activity that one is engaged in; specif., business negotiation'. Die Übersetzung Brooks trifft den Zusammenhang besser. Genauer als die Bezeichnung ‚Auftrag' bezieht sich ‚Besorgung' (‚errand') auf das *brere* der folgenden Zeile, das der MiM besorgen muss, um seine Hecke zu stopfen. Im Zusammenhang mit der Verbalform *ysped* am Ende derselben Zeile fügt sich die Übersetzung mit ‚Auftrag' jedoch besser ein.

22 *nap nout*

Dadurch, dass sich *nap* als Kontraktion von *ne hap* auflöst, ergibt das *nout* eine doppelte Verneinung (*ichot of is ernde he nap nout ysped*). Diese muss vor dem Hintergrund des mittelalterlichen Verständnisses aber nicht logisch, sondern emphatisierend verstanden werden. Eine doppelte Verneinung ist also immer noch eine Verneinung, die beiden negativierenden Elemente heben ihre Aussage nicht auf, durch ihre Häufung bestärken sie sich gegenseitig. Erst im Zeitalter der Aufklärung setzt sich im Englischen, wie im Deutschen, die Überzeugung durch, die Sprache müsse einer entsprechenden mathematischen Logik folgen.

22 *ysped*

Böd Gl hat zwar auch eine Bedeutung ‚sich beeilen' (*speden* 1), die dem ne. *speed* nahe kommt, hat aber auch die Bedeutung, die Brk Gl einzig angibt, nämlich ‚succeeded' (*ysped*), das entspricht dem MED s.v. *ispēden* (v.) 1(b).

23 *hap hewe*

hewe ist Partizip zu *hewen* (Böd Gl), dt. ‚hauen', das im Englischen auch noch als *hewn* (s. Brk Gl, Partizp zu *to hew sth.*) vorhanden ist.

23 *sumwher*

Die Verbindung zu ne. *somewhere* ist leicht ersichtlich, doch obwohl die Handschrift die Form eindeutig als ein Wort schreibt, trennt Wri es. Interessanterweise macht die Handschrift aber den Anschein, als ob das *sum-* nachträglich eingefügt worden wäre. Denn auch die Graphie <w> macht an dieser Stelle eher den Eindruck eines Großbuchstaben; leider kommentiert Wri seine Trennung nicht.

24 *þare fore*

Das Wort ist in der Handschrift eindeutig getrennt, manche Editoren verbinden es hin zur ne. Form *therefore*.

24 *hayward*

Zur Bedeutung s. Anm. zu *hegge* (8). Zwei orthographische Eigenheiten hält die Handschrift an dieser Stelle bereit. Einerseits finden wir an im gleichen Gedicht eine abweichende Schreibung (*haywart* (27)), andererseits ist in der Handschrift das Kompositum zwar zusammengeschrieben, die zweite Silbe beginnt aber eindeutig mit einem Großbuchstaben. Dabei scheint es keine sinnvolle Erklärung dafür zu geben, ein Fehler des Schreibers wäre demnach die naheliegendste.

24 *ys*

s. Anm. zu *is* (2)

24 *wed*

DW kommentieren, dass lateinisch *vadium* ein Rechtsbegriff mit der Bedeutung „security for the payment of a fine"[93] war. Böd Gl erklärt es als verwandt zu nhd. ‚Wette', und schreibt „Unterpfand als Zeichen einer Rechtsverbindlichkeit". Brk glossiert ‚pledge', was wiederum dt. ‚Pflicht' (s. ODEE ‚pledge') entsprechen würde. Die etymologischen Zusammenhänge sind jedoch nicht zwingend verbindlich für unsere Ausdeutung. Was im Kapitel 5 noch ausführlicher diskutiert wird, dürfte verdeutlichen, dass die Bedeutung ‚Pfand' sich durchaus in den kulturellen Zusammenhang einpasst.

25 *þy*

An dieser Stelle zeigt sich, dass der Sprecher den Mondmann duzt, vgl. *þyn* (26) und *þart* (38). Das Siezen ist dem Altenglischen wohl noch unbekannt gewesen, laut Mossé verbreitet es sich ab dem 13. Jahrhundert: „Man siezt einen Höhergestellten; ein Jugendlicher siezt einen Erwachsenen, [...]. Unter Gleichgestellten siezt man sich in guter Gesellschaft, im Volk duzt man sich natürlich auch weiterhin"[94]. Der Gebrauch sei aber unregelmäßig, manchmal wechselten die Formen innerhalb von Gesprächen, wenn sich der Ton ändere oder sogar willkürlich innerhalb von Sätzen. Der Sprecher scheint jedenfalls im Mondmann einen Gleichgesinnten zu sehen oder stellt ihn einfach auf seine Stufe,

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93   Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.
94   Mossé, *Mittelenglische Kurzgrammatik* (1977), S. 119.

indem er ihn duzt. Wie verbreitet das Siezen zum Zeitpunkt der Entstehung in England auch war, man kann davon ausgehen, dass der Autor sich bewusst für das Du, bzw. „dein" entschieden hat.

25 *ytake*

s. Anm. zu *yboren* (12)

25 *trous*

trous ist ein altfranzösisches Lehnwort, wenn man Böd Gl (frz. *trousse* zu lat. *tortus* von *torquere*') und Brk Gl (‚OF *trousse*') glauben möchte, die ‚Pack, Bündel' und (‚bundle') glossieren und in der Bedeutung auch vom MED gestützt werden. Allerdings gibt das MED unter s.v. *trŏus(e* (n.) 1a einen altenglischen Ursprung an, nämlich ‚OE *trŭs*' (ebd.). Eine altenglische Form führen auch BT auf, s.v. *trŭs, es*; n. Dem MED zufolge ist eine Existenz ab 1293 gesichert. Das ODEE (s.v. *truss*) führt ebenfalls frz. Formen an, weist aber darauf hin, dass es ‚of unkn. origin' sei. Als letzte Instanz gibt das OED unter der neuenglische Form s.v. *truss* eine Vielzahl bedeutungsähnlicher Glossen an und weist dabei ebenfalls auf den frz. Ursprung hin.

Die Widersprüchlichkeiten in Bezug auf den Ursprung können insofern hier vernachlässigt werden, als dass die Bedeutung eindeutig von allen gestützt wird, wobei das MED etwas genauer für unseren Zusammenhang unter (a) ‚Brushwood (small branches, twigs, etc.) for making hedges' glossiert.

26 *Sete*

s. Anm. zu *bring* (25)

26 *þyn*

s. Anm. zu *þy* (25)

26 *stryd ouer sty*

stryd ist eine orthographische Variante von *strit*, das in Zeile 1 vorkommt. Hier steht es im Imperativ, der sich in dieser Form nicht von der dritten Person Singular Indikativ Präsens unterscheidet. Hier erscheint es in einem Gefüge, dessen Bedeutung sich nicht sofort erschließt und das von den übersetzenden Editoren unterschiedlich gehandhabt wird. Unumstritten ist das Verständnis als ein eigenständiges Satzgefüge, das in der Handschrift nur nicht durch besondere Interpunktion abgesetzt ist. Entscheidend für die Bedeutung ist zunächst noch *sty*. Böd glossiert es als ‚Steg', dessen Verwandtschaft offenkundig ist, Brk Gl gibt ne.

,path'. Das MED glossiert ebenfalls ,a path' (s.v. *stīg*), ebenso BT. In Klu findet man die Verbindung zu ,Steig' (s.v. *Steig* m. per. reg.). Der Sinn der Phrase wird durch den Kontext klarer. Der MiM soll auf Anraten des Sprechers einen Schritt wagen, über ein symbolisches oder tatsächliches Hindernis. Mit dem Vorhergehenden „sete forþ þyn oþer fot" fordert er ihn auf, anzufangen. Dabei geht es wohl weniger um das Zurücklegen einer Strecke, als vielmehr um eine symbolische Handlung. So versteht es auch Böd. Er bezeichnet *sty* als Ironisierung des Zwischenraums zwischen Erde und Mond.[95]

27 *preye*

Der ne. Reflex *pray* ist ne. archaisch, wenn es die Bedeutung ,bitten' betrifft. Böd Gl enthält diese Bedeutung, Brk gibt hingegen für die Verwendung im MiM ein übertragene Bedeutung ,invite' an. Das MED unterstützt ihn dabei unter s.v. *īpreien* (v.), 3 ,to invite (sb. to a place or feast)', die genaue Angabe mit zitierter Textstelle findet man unter s.v. *preye(n)*. Diese Bedeutung scheint im Kontext die passende zu sein. Das OED ist aber noch genauer: s.v. *pray*, v., †2., ,to beg or entreat (a person) to come to a feast, or the like; to invite, *obs*.'. Mit genau dieser Bedeutung müsste an dieser Stelle die Form verstanden werden.

28 *heyse*

s. Anm. zu *is* (2).

28 *for the maystry*

Die Wendung ist hier idiomatisch zu verstehen. Für sich genommen trägt *maystry* die Bedeutung ,Herrschaft, Überlegenheit', enthält aber laut Böd Gl den übertragenen Sinn ,meisterhafte That'. Brk glossiert das Idiom in seiner Ganzheit ,in the highest degree, extremely' und kann als Ursprung afrz. ,maistrie' und sogar als Idiom ,pour le maistri' anführen. DW nennen es ein "common ME [middle english] idiom"[96], das im vorliegenden Zusammenhang so viel bedeutet, wie „as if aiming at mastery"[97]. In der vorliegenden Übersetzung wird die Konnotation durch „ihm Gemütlichkeit in Vollendung bereiten" (s. oben) ausgedrückt.

29 *deorly*

Böd weist *-ly* als geschwächte Form von *-liche* aus, diese Endung bildet im

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[95]   Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 177.
[96]   Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.
[97]   Ebd.

Mittelenglischen das Adverb[98]. In der Form ist bereits die Endung verkürzt. Böd glossiert *deore* mit 2) ‚lieb, theuer', vgl. dazu Brk Gl ‚affectionately' und MED s.v. *dērelī* (adv.(1)) (a).

29 *fol god bous*

Das MED enthält s.v. *bŏus* (n.) mit ‚Intoxicating drink'. Mit der anderen aufgeführten Form *boos* erscheint es nur zweimal in der me. Periode, vgl. ODEE ‚booze'. Eine der wenigen Formen, die ihm zugeordnet werden können, ist mittelniederländisch *būsen*, ‚drink to excess' (ODEE). Auch möglich ist die Bezeichnung als Trinkgefäß, weswegen Brk Gl auf ndl. ‚buise' (‚drinking-vessel') verweist. Auf diese Bedeutungen hat auch Böd Gl schon hingewiesen. Im Zusammenhang bezieht sich *fol* eher adverbial auf *god* (OED: s.v. *fol*, obs. Form of FOOL, FULL).

30 *dame douse*

Böd glossiert *dame* mit ‚Herrin, Hausfrau', und versteht *douse* als dazugehöriges, nachgestelltes Adjektiv ‚lieb, theuer' (vgl. OED s.v. *douce*, dem ein ironische Konnotation anhaften soll), beide Wörter sind frz. Ursprungs. Dem schließen sich die nachfolgenden Editoren an. Dazu kommt noch ergänzend von Seiten Dickins und Wilsons die Feststellung, dass *Douce* ein gewöhnlicher weiblicher Vorname in mittelenglischer Zeit war.[99] Ris macht jedoch eine entscheidende Anmerkung zu dieser Stelle und deutet sie um. Während der ersten drei Strophen berichtet der Sprecher, den der Leser sich laut Ris wie einen *minstrel*-Vorträger vorstellen soll, über den Mondmann und seine Eigenheiten. In der vierten Strophe wendet er sich dem Mondmann zu, um ihm die Lösung seines Problems, nämlich die Rückerhaltung des Pfands, zuzuschreien. In der fünften Strophe gibt er dieses Vorhaben auf und entlädt seinen Frust über die Tatsache, dass der Mondmann nicht auf ihn hören will. Die *dame douse* trägt ihren Teil zur Lösung des Problems bei. Ris schlägt vor, sich den Vortrag des Gedichts in einer Taverne vorzustellen, die Dame könnte in dem Fall auch die „hostess of the tavern"[100], die Dame des Hauses sein. Im Vortrag erreicht das Gedicht so einen komischen Höhepunkt, indem es Anwesende oder Bekannte in das Geschehen mit einbezieht, denn auf diese Taverne würde sich auch die Einladung in *vr hous* in Zeile 27 beziehen. Nach dieser Deutung von Ris könnte man sinngemäß auch zu einer *dame d'house* (wörtlich: Dame des Hauses) weiterdenken, dieser Vorschlag stammt aber wiederum nicht von Ris und besitzt keine wissenschaftliche Fundierung. Das Geschehen findet ein abgerundetes Ende mit der von Ris formulierten

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[98]   Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 56.
[99]   Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.
[100] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980), S. 44.

Feststellung „See now, it's of no use. He won't come down before dawn."[101]

31 *dronke ase a dreynt mous*

Einige Editoren und Forscher, die sich mit dem MiM beschäftigt haben, fanden diese Form im idiomatischen Wortschatz der Epoche wieder, so mindestens zweimal bei Chaucer. Holthausen macht darauf aufmerksam, dass man das Idiom ‚betrunken wie eine Maus' bei Chaucer finden kann.[102] Einmal befindet sich die Wendung in der *Knight's Tale*, Zeile 1261. Auch Brook findet es bei Chaucer, aber an anderer Stelle, im Prolog der *Wife of Bath*, Zeile 246. DW geben die gleiche Stelle an, sie schließen, es sei „evidently a common proverbial expression".[103]

32 *schule*

schule bedarf hier einer Erwähnung, nicht nur als Beispiel für Präterito-Präsentien (s. Böd Gr, S. 79), sondern auch, weil die Schreibung von *shule* (27) über einen Raum von wenigen Zeilen variiert. Zudem ist es die einzige Graphie <sch> für /ʃ/ im Gedicht, vgl. *shoddreþ* (4), *shereþ* (5), *shake* (11), *shal* (30). Für den Laut setzen agn. Schreiber in der mittelenglischen Periode zunächst <s> oder <ss>, dann <sch>, bevor sich <sh> durchsetzt.[104]

32 *borewe þe wed*

borewe ist hier offensichtlich nicht mit der Bedeutung vertreten, die es heute im Englischen innehat, denn es geht dem Sprecher sicher nicht darum, dass der Mondmann seinen vergebenen Pfand beim Feldhüter borgt, sondern ihn zurückerhält. So glossiert Brk auch *borewe* ‚to obtain'. Böd hat es noch genauer in den Sinn des Gedichts einpassen können, er glossiert ‚durch Bürgschaft freimachen, einlösen' und für ein anderes Gedicht der HL (G.L. I, Zeile 73) ‚retten, erlösen' (vgl. MED s.v. *borwen* (2.)). Hungerford sagt: "R. J. Menner infers from the last two lines that the peasant-narrator is suggesting that they steal enough money from the hayward to buy illegally the pledge from the baliff (p. 12)" [105]. Hungerford schließt also, dass es sich beim *borrowing* hier um einen Diebstahl handelt. Ein ironischer Unterton wäre dem Gedicht nicht fremd und würde sich so gut in den Zusammenhang einfügen.

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[101] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980), S. 44.
[102] Holthausen, F. (1893), „Zu Alt- und Mittelenglischen Denkmälern", in: *Anglia* 15, S. 187-203. Holthausen gibt keine näheren Angaben, wo die Stelle bei Chaucer zu finden sei, sondern verweist auf eine andere Stelle, s. S. 189.
[103] Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.
[104] nach Mossé, *Mittelenglische Kurzgrammatik* (1977), S. 31.
[105] Hungerford, L. F. (1973), *A Dappled Thing. The Cultural and Critical Milieu of Harley 2253*, Diss., Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. Microfilms, S. 308.

32 *ate*

ate ist kontrahiert aus *at þe*. Das Aufeinanderfolgen des Frikativs auf den dentalen Plosiv stellt eine schwierige Aussprache dar, die durch die Kontraktion eine erhebliche Vereinfachung erfährt. In dieser Funktion erscheinen Kontraktionen auch außerhalb der HL in mittelenglischen Texten.

32 *bayly*

bayly ist in der Handschrift kurios zeilenweise getrennt. *bay* steht am Ende der Zeile und wird gefolgt von einem kommaähnlichen Zeichen. In der folgenden Zeile befindet sich die zweite und letzte Silbe mit kapitalisiertem <L>. Das Wort wirft aber auch auf semantischer Ebene Probleme auf. Böd glossiert einerseits *bayly* als ‚Amt, Macht' und andererseits *bailif* für ‚Vogt, Verwaltungs- oder Polizeibeamter, Exekutivbeamter des Sheriff'. Böd möchte sich offenbar nicht auf eine der Bedeutungen festlegen, zumindest gibt er W.L. XIII zu keiner der beiden Glossen an. Brk glossiert schlicht ‚bailiff, steward', hat sich also wohl auf das Verständnis des Titels einer Person festgelegt. Das MED zitiert den MiM in der Version Brooks, und so ist es auch in die vorliegende Übersetzung eingegangen.

34 *ichot*

s. Anm. zu *ichot* (22)

34 *cherl*

cherl taucht in der Handschrift einmal in dieser Form und einmal als *cherld* (40) auf. Wie bei *dame douse* (30) beschrieben, lässt der Sprecher seiner Bosheit über die Ignoranz des MiM freien Lauf. Man erkennt also schon ohne Kontext die negative Konnotation, die dieses Wort besitzt. Die Negativbedeutung, aber auch eine neutrale Bedeutung führt Böd Gl an: ‚Kerl, ungeschliffener Bursche' und ‚Mann, Mensch'. Brk Gl führt nur die neutrale Bedeutung, die er als ‚man' angibt. Beide ignorieren die alternierende Schreibung in ihren jeweiligen Angaben. Das MED befindet sich semantisch in etwa dazwischen, vgl. s.v. *cherl* 3(a) ‚A man, fellow, chap'. Da die nahe liegende deutsche Form *Kerl* negativ oder ironisierend konnotiert ist, würde sie wohl dem Ton des Gedichts auch entsprechen.

34 *def*

Böd und Brk glossieren ‚taub' (bzw. ‚def') und diese Bedeutung findet sich natürlich auch im MED s.v. *dēf* (adj. (& n.)), 1(a) ‚Unable to hear; of a person, an ear, hearing: deaf'. Sucht man weiter in Richtung einer negativen Behaftung, was dem Tenor der Textstelle unbedingt entspräche, findet man im MED eine Bedeutung unter 2(b) ‚unwilling to hear'. Das schiene dem zu entsprechen, worüber sich der Sprecher im Laufe der Strophe so arg erregt. Leider lässt sich

eine Bedeutung wie die Entwicklung von dt. *doof*[106] nicht herleiten, man kann aber mutmaßen, dass der Dichter eine derartige Zweideutigkeit bewusst eingebaut hätte (vgl. auch OED s.v. *deaf* unter 3.).

34 *the del him to drawe*

del als *deuel*[107] zählt laut Böd zu den Kontraktionen, die sich der „gebildetere Dichter"[108] nicht erlauben würde. Einige Editoren geben *Del*, indem sie die Form als Eigennamen kapitalisieren, die Handschrift kennt solcherlei Praktiken aber nicht, so ist z.B. auch die *dame douse* klein geschrieben. *to* und *drawe* sind in der Handschrift getrennt, das MED kennt es als Kompositum, s.v. *tōdraven* (v.), so setzt Brk (u.a.) die Form in seiner Edition auch als *to-drawen* um. Dieser drastische Ausspruch des Sprechers (MED s.v. *tōdrauen* (v.) 1(a) ‚To pull (sb., limbs) apart, dismember (sb.)') erscheint wie eine übliche sprichwörtliche Wendung, die hier offensichtlich ihren Teil zur Derbheit der Sprache leistet. In der Übersetzung wurde eine entschärfte und im Deutschen bekanntere Wendung gewählt: „der Teufel soll ihn holen!"

35 *heþ*

Siehe Anm. zu *wyht* (7). Die korrekte Form wäre *heh*.

35 *nulle*

Zunächst handelt es sich bei *nulle* um eine Verschmelzung des Negationspartikels mit *wolle* (s. Böd Gl *nulle*, vgl. Böd Gr S. 88, *nul = ne wul*). Als Kommentar zur Edition (S. 177) gibt Böd an, das *he* sei schlicht vor der Form ausgelassen und würde als Subjekt ergänzt werden müssen. Brk Gl aber führt an, es sei wohl eher eine Kontraktion von *nul he* oder *nulle he*. BS sprechen sich für die Lösung *nulle he* aus, geben jedoch zu, dass sie dabei nur mutmaßen.[109] Keine weiteren Editoren abgesehen von DW äußern sich dazu, diskutieren den Sachverhalt oder erläutern ihre jeweilige Entscheidung.[110] Vermutlich kann der Blick auf das Ende der Strophe etwas zur Auflösung der Form beitragen. In Zeile 40 taucht die Form als (*þe cherld*) *nul* auf, dort steht der kürzeren Form *nul* ein Subjekt voran. Da das Subjekt im Partialsatz zu *nulle* fehlt, ist *nul he* durchaus plausibel, da es das Subjekt des Satzes darstellen würde.

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[106] Kluge, F. und Seebold, E. (Hg.) (1995), *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, 23. erw. Aufl., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. Siehe s.v. *doof*, die Entwicklung im Dt. von *taub* zu *doof* geschieht nicht früher als im 20. Jahrhundert, ausgehend vom Berliner Dialekt.

[107] Schreibung nach Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen* (1878), S. 175.

[108] Ebd., S. 175.

[109] Bennett und Smithers, *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (1968), S. 331.

[110] Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 233. DW äußern sich zwar dazu, listen beide Möglichkeiten aber nur auf und entscheiden sich auch für keine der beiden.

35 *hye*

hye steht unter Böd Gl *hyȝen*, ,eilen' (Brk Gl ,to hasten'). In der Zeile steht die Form der Syntax und dem flektierten Hilfsverb zufolge im Infinitiv. Das MED kennt die entsprechende Form s.v. *hīen* (v.) 2 (a) und weist auf ae. *hīgian* hin. Dass die sonst zu erwartende Infinitivendung *-en* hier nicht vorkommt, mag vielleicht ein Indiz für eine sprachliche Progressivität sein, da sich die Endungen, seien es die der Substantivdeklination oder die der Verbalflexion, bereits zu Beginn der altenglischen Periode abschwächen und später verfallen.[111]

36 *lostlase ladde*

Hier befindet sich wieder eine alliterierende Namensgebung des Mondmanns (vgl. *crokede caynard* (20)). Sie besteht aus ne. *lust*, dem Suffix *-less* und *lad*, wobei *lust* ne. sowie zum Teil auch schon me. (MED s.v. *lust* 1(c)) sexuell konnotiert ist, hier aber lediglich auf die Trägheit des Mondmannes anspielt (OED s.v. *lust* (vgl. die unterschiedlichen Lemmata)).

36 *con nout o lawe*

con von ae. *cunnan* enspricht nhd. sowohl *können* als auch *kennen*, worauf schon Böd Gl hinweist. Die Form der dritten Person Singular Präsens Indikativ ist unkompliziert, die Bedeutung für das Verständnis der Zeile ist somit aber zweideutig. Eine mögliche Lesart ist die von Menner. Er versteht es als „can't change his custom"[112], was von DW kritisiert wird. Sie schlagen vor, „knows nothing of the law", im Sinne „doesn't realize what a serious position he is in and so won't hasten."[113] Menners Vorschlag ist etwas unglücklich, genauso kann man jedoch behaupten, dass DW unpassenderweise nur eine von mehreren gleichwertigen Lesarten bedenken. Zudem ist das Verständnis von *lawe* mit Bedacht zu wählen. Böd Gl gibt für die Zeile ,gute Sitte, Anstand' (4) an, Brk führt ,law' auf, woran sich DW ohne Infragestellung anlehnen. Dazu kommt noch von Seiten des MED s.v. *laue* (n.) 9(c) die Bedeutung, die an Böd angelehnt ist. Keine dieser Lösungen ist optimal, weswegen durch die Übersetzung der Begriff *System* vorgeschlagen wird, nämlich mit dem Verständnis des me. *lawe* als Instrument des Regierungssystems, obwohl diese Wort wiederum andere Konnotationen in sich tragen kann. Es wird damit aber suggeriert, dass der Sprecher weiß, mit dem bürokratischen Apparat der Herrschaft umzugehen und sein Wissen an den MiM weitergeben möchte. Dabei könnte man behaupten, er entlarvt im Handumdrehen das System auch noch als korrumpiert. Dies mag dem Leser zunächst zu weit gehen, die soziopolitische Tiefendimension des Gedichts, die im nächsten Kapitel

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[111] Vgl. Mossé, *Mittelenglische Kurzgrammatik* (1977), S. 71-2.
[112] Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949), S. 2.
[113] Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 232.

beleuchtet werden wird, ist jedoch immens.

Nach den Erörterungen sind folgende Lesarten möglich: Der Vorwurf von Seiten des Sprecher ist entweder a) nach kennen: ‚er (MiM) kennt das Gesetz/System nicht' oder ‚er weiß nichts vom Gesetz (*o lawe*)' oder b) nach können: ‚er kann das Gesetz nicht (anwenden)' oder ‚er weiß nicht, das Gesetz anzuwenden' oder ‚er weiß nicht, mit dem System umzugehen'. Der Leser mag sich selbst die für ihn wahrscheinlichste aussuchen, für die Übersetzung wurde diejenige gewählt, die am dichtesten den Wortlaut des Originals widerspiegelt.

37 *hubert*

Reiss hat darauf hingewiesen, dass der Name Hubert lange Zeit für Kopfzerbrechen bei den Chaucer-Kommentatoren gesorgt hat, da er in den Handschriften des 14. Jahrhunderts unüblich sei.[114] Reiss stellt nun also die Verbindung zum MiM her. Geradezu bestechend viele Parallelen zeigt er für die beiden Charaktere auf, so dass es als fast als gesichert gelten könnte, dass Chaucer den MiM gekannt habe und ihn auch bei seinem Publikum als bekannt annahm. Dabei verbindet er nicht nur die Parallelen des MiM mit dem Bruder *Huberd*[115], sondern kann ihn auch der Elster (ne. *magpie*) zuordnen. Alle drei zeichnen sich durch ihre „thieving propensity"[116] aus. Ris fügt der Diskussion hinzu, der Name entstamme dem *Roman de Renart*, den er näher beschreibt indem er den Charakter *Hubert L'Escoufle* vorstellt.[117] DW diskutieren den Sachverhalt nur kurz, schließen aber damit ab, dass Hubert entweder ein traditioneller Name für eine Elster oder für den MiM sei.[118]

37 *hosede pye*

Kaum ein anderer Ausdruck ist schwerer zu deuten, die Editoren und Forscher bieten vielfältige Erklärungen dazu an. Zunächst emendiert Böd die Form zu *osede pye*, welches er dann mit ‚Weinpastete (?) zu *osey* (?), Bennenung einer Weinsorte, die mehrfach erwähnt wird' glossiert. Im Hinblick auf die Ergebnisse der nachfolgenden Forschung ist diese Emendation letztlich nur irreführend. Brk geht schon in eine andere Richtung und glossiert ‚wearing hose', dahin geht auch das MED s.v. *hōsen* (v.), P.ppl. *i)hōsed*, *ōsed*, (b) ppl. *hosed*, 'furnished with or having hose; clad in or wearing hose'. Meroney kritisiert die Lösung von Brw Gl[119] ‚hoarse magpie'. Meroney kann jedoch wenig Nachvollziehbares hinzufügen. Zu *hosede*

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[114] Reiss, *Chaucer's Friar* (1963), S. 483.

[115] *Huberd* lässt sich im *General Prologue* finden, in Zeile 269, s. Benson, L. D. *et al.* (Hg.) (2006), *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3. Nachdruck. Oxford u. a.: Oxford Univ. Press, dort S. 27.

[116] Reiss, *Chaucer's Friar* (1963), S. 481.

[117] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980), S. 45.

[118] Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 233.

[119] Meroney, *Line-Notes* (1947), S. 187, vgl. dazu Brw Gl.

sagen DW, es sei "provided with hose"[120]. Die Elster habe, so DW, schwarze Beine unter ihrem weißen Bauch, so dass es den Anschein macht, sie trage Strümpfe. Hier hätte man wiederum eine im Gegensatz zu Meroney sinnvolle Ergänzung der kontextkritischen Beleuchtung von *hosede pye*. Ob eine Verbindung zu Chaucer (vgl. *hubert* (37)) jedoch tatsächlich zu erkennen wäre, soll noch zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt geklärt werden.

38 *þart*

Böd Gr (S. 88) erkennt es als Kontraktion von *þou art*.

38 *amarstled in to the mawe*

Es handelt sich um die umstrittenste Wendung des Gedichts. Sie ist nicht nur inhaltlich nicht eindeutig zu klären, sondern gibt bereits in der Handschrift ein Rätsel auf. Hier sind zur Verdeutlichung die verschiedenen Lesarten: *amarstled*: Rit, Böd. *a-marstled*: Wri. *a-marscled*: Brw. *amarscled*: Brk, Ris, BS, LH, Tur, DW, Spe, KaA, KaM, Rog, Gar, Dav, Sis, Cas. Es wird deutlich, dass die Forschung nach Brw dessen Lesart übernommen hat. Meroney fasst die neue Lesart wie folgt zusammen. Vorhanden sei eine Metathese von me. *malscred* 'bewildered', von ae. *malscrung*. So würde man lesen „I see you are crazy to the core"[121], also in dem Sinne ‚Du bist ein komplett Verrückter'.

Aber obwohl die Lesart von Brw in den nachfolgenden Editionen übernommen wurde, wurde das Verständnis auf vielerlei Weise umgedeutet. Menner findet z.B. ein westmittelländisches *mascle* vom altfrz. *mascle*, ‚stain, spot', weswegen er „stained into its maw"[122] übersetzt. Brook entgegnet Brown, dass die Orthographie *sc* ungewöhnlich wäre und der Sinn dadurch nicht klarer würde. DW kritisieren ebenfalls, *marshalled* sei in Form und Sinn schwierig. Aber auch Brooks NED-Version „stuffed full (of drink)", der er selbst den Kommentar „obscure" beisetzt, gäbe laut DW keinen Anhaltspunkt zur Etymologie. DW selbst schließen sich aber niemandes Vorschlag an und resümieren, dass keine der vorgeschlagenen Lesarten überzeugend sei. Das MED s.v. *amarscled* (ppl.) gibt ‚?Spotted; ?bewildered' aufgrund der Thesen von Menner und Meroney.

Die Lesart der vorliegenden Edition grenzt sich nochmal von allen vorigen ab. Frank Bessai hat einen Aufsatz zum MiM verfasst, bei dem er den Text als einen Vorboten des Bauernaufstandes von 1381 interpretiert. Dabei fordere der Sprecher den Mondmann (und suggestiv den Hörer) auf, sich gegen die Herrschaft aufzulehnen. Diese These muss später ausführlicher behandelt werden. Ihr folgend gibt es aber aus den verschiedenen eben vorgestellten Varianten eine wahrscheinlichere Lesart, die Bessai selbst zwar nicht so beschrieben hat, die sich

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[120]   Dickins und Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts* (1969), S. 233.
[121]   Meroney, *Line-Notes* (1947), S. 187.
[122]   Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949), S. 13.

aber in seine Idee einfügt. Er geht nicht auf *amarscled* ein, wenn dann würde er textkritisch wohl dafür plädieren, dass der MiM von den Aufforderungen des Sprechers in der letzten Strophe schlicht verwirrt wäre, was der Lesart von *bewildered* am nächsten käme. Auf diese Weise ist auch die vorliegende Übersetzung letztlich angelegt worden.

   mawe wird von allen Editoren gleichermaßen erkannt als ‚Magen' (Böd Gl, vgl. Brk Gl ‚stomach'). Die Wendung kann sinngemäß nur bedeuten, dass der Mondmann im höchsten Grade *amarscled* ist, was im Deutschen etwa mit „erschüttert bis ins Mark" zu vergleichen wäre. *in to* erscheint in den Editionen in unterschiedlichen Formen. Es wird von Böd belassen (entsprechend der Handschrift), Brw verbindet es (*in-to*) und Brk emendiert es zu *into*. Da es den Sinn aber nicht beeinflusst, bedarf es hier keiner weiteren Kommentare.

39 *me*

Da der Kontext eindeutig die Form des Nominativ verlangt, müsste eigentlich *ich* an dieser Stelle zu finden sein. Es würde daher als Beispiel für die Umgangssprache des Gedichts zu deuten sein. Im Hinblick auf die Derbheit des Textes hat der Dichter anscheinend mehr Augenmerk auf dessen Unterhaltungs- faktor als auf grammatische Korrektheit gelegt.

39 *wiþ*

s. Anm. zu myd (15)

39 *teþ*

Siehe Anm. zu *wyht* (7).

40 *cherld*

s. Anm. zu *cherl* (34)

40 *nul*

s. Anm. zu *nulle* (35)

40 *nul nout adoun*

‚Der MiM will nicht herunter' wäre der zu lesende Sinn, dadurch wird klar, dass das zu erwartende Verb in der Grundform fehlt, möglich wäre z.B. *cŏmen* oder *cumen* (MED s.v. *cŏmen*).

5. Sinn und Unsinn im *Mann im Mond*

Die Stärke des Gedichts ist offensichtlich sein Humor, obgleich im Folgenden festgestellt werden soll, dass dem Gedicht auch ernsthafte Züge anhaften können. Worin liegt aber der Humor des Gedichts? Dies ist die Frage, die Ris in seinem Artikel zu klären versucht[123], aber auch andere haben sich mit dieser Frage beschäftigt. Dabei ist allein schon, wie Moore feststellt, die Erzählsituation das eigentlich Komische, nämlich die Tatsache, dass der Poet bzw. der Sprecher den Mondmann direkt anspricht.[124] Eine zweite, relativ offensichtliche Quelle des Humors ist die derbe Umgangssprache, wie sie von Ris umschrieben wird. Er listet einige Beispiel dafür auf, das sind u.a. *fol god bous* (29), *dronke ase a dreynt mous* (31), *þe Del* (Hs.: *del*) *him to-drawe* (Hs.: *to drawe*) (34) usw. Es fällt auf, dass diese derberen Begriffe zum Ende des Gedichts gehäuft auftauchen, und zwar ab der vierten Strophe, die Ris für den „comic climax"[125], den komischen Höhepunkt des Gedichts hält. Was die Entwicklung der komischen Dramatik des Textes angeht, so würde ich aber behaupten, dass es sich weniger um einen Wirkungshöhepunkt handelt, sondern eher um eine Wirkungssteigerung zum Ende hin. Müller beschreibt die Umgangsprache als die „Töne der Volkspoesie"[126]. In dieser Bezeichnung könnte sich noch ein weiteres Detail verstecken. Das Gedicht kann zwar durchaus den Ansprüchen eines gebildeten Publikums genügen, vor allem aber ist es wohl aufgrund seiner Sprache dem Volk zugänglich gewesen, und wenn man Bessai glauben möchte, wurde es sogar genau für die bäuerliche Bevölkerung geschrieben.[127] Zudem kann man davon ausgehen, dass die Legende vom Mondmann gemeinhin äußerst populär gewesen sein muss. Das bescheinigt die Fülle der unterschiedlichen Versionen der Legende und die Tatsache, dass sie auch in Form von *nursery rhymes* Eingang in die Haushalte aller Bevölkerungsschichten und zu Menschen jeden Alters hatte. Dazu kommt die nächtliche Omnipräsenz des zugehörigen Himmelskörpers an sich und in den vielen anderen Legenden. Kurzum, man kann davon ausgehen, dass die Thematik ein breites Publikum ansprach.

Dazu kommt von Ris noch der Hintergrund des Gedichts im Hinblick auf den Vortrag, die *live performance* sozusagen. Wie schon im Kommentar bei der *dame douse* angesprochen, schlägt Ris vor, den MiM vor dem Hintergrund dieser

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[123] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980).
[124] S. Moore, *Secular Lyric* (1951), S. 96.
[125] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980), S. 44.
[126] Müller, *Mittelenglische Geistliche und Weltliche Lyrik* (1911), S. 155.
[127] S. Bessai, *A Reading of the Man in the Moon* (1972).

Vortragssituation zu verstehen.[128] Ziel des Sprechers in der von Ris beschriebenen Situation wäre es, die gute Stimmung seiner Zuhörer hervorzurufen. Der Vortragende ist gezwungenermaßen in der Lage, dass die geschenkte Aufmerksamkeit mit einem hinreichenden Unterhaltungswert ihre Berechtigung findet. Laut Ris bedeutet dies aber noch nicht, dass das Gedicht als typische „minstrel composition"[129] kategorisiert werden sollte, denn das würde auch nicht zu den ernsten Untertönen passen, auf die noch eingegangen werden soll. Zweifelsohne ist ein Unterhaltungswert aber bewusst enthalten, und ohne ihn wäre der MiM wohl mit geringerer Wahrscheinlichkeit tradiert und kopiert worden.

Müller schreibt auch: „die Sprache des Gedichts ist ungezwungen, die gewählten Vergleiche wirken unmittelbar. Direkte Rede ist reichlich verwendet und ruft lebendige Wirkung hervor."[130] All diesen Feststellungen kann man nur zustimmen, letztendlich ist der entscheidende Punkt die Gesamtheit all dieser Faktoren, die eine einzigartige Atmosphäre und einen liebenswerten Ton schaffen, der dem Gedicht seine Anziehungskraft verleiht. Es ist eine Art Humor, die man von Chaucer gewohnt ist. Man muss dabei freilich nicht vom Zufall sprechen, denn wenn von einer Entstehung des Gedichts um 1300 ausgegangen wird, dann könnte die Handschrift nur 40 Jahre später zur Geburt Chaucers noch so populär gewesen sein, dass er den MiM noch kannte, bzw. gar mit ihm aufgewachsen ist. Die Überlieferungssituation der Handschrift gestaltet sich jedoch komplexer, als dass man gesicherte Aussagen dazu machen könnte. Auf die Verbindung des MiM zu Chaucer sind schon andere Forscher aufmerksam geworden. Wie schon erwähnt widmet Reiss diesem Thema besondere Aufmerksamkeit und gibt die entscheidenden Gedanken vor[131]. Im Zeilenkommentar ist bei der Diskussion des Namens Hubert schon ein Grund genannt worden, weshalb Chaucer den MiM gekannt haben könnte. Aber auch andere Indizien können dabei angeführt werden. So greift Chaucer auf einige umgangssprachliche Wendungen zurück, die beim MiM gleichermaßen auftauchen. Man findet in der *Knight's Tale* in Zeile 1261 „We faren as he that dronke is as a mous"[132]. Dabei kann die Nähe zur vorliegenden Zeile 31 natürlich auch schlicht bedeuten, dass die Wendung zum umgangssprachlichen Korpus der Zeit gehörte, aber sie kann auch als Indiz für die Bekanntheit des MiM für Chaucer dienen. In der *Wife of Bath's Tale* findet man die Wendung nochmals: „Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous"[133] (Z. 246). So hat Rit zwar noch nicht auf die Verbindung zu Chaucers *Huberd* hingewiesen, aber dafür hat er auf noch eine andere Stelle hingewiesen, nämlich auf eine Wendung

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[128] Rissanen, *Colloquial and Comic Elements* (1980), S. 44.
[129] Ebd., S. 43.
[130] Müller, *Mittelenglische Geistliche und Weltliche Lyrik* (1911), S. 155.
[131] Reiss, *Chaucer's Friar* (1963).
[132] Benson, *Riverside Chaucer* (2006), S. 42.
[133] Ebd., S. 108.

in *Troilus*, die da heißt „lest the chorle may fall out of the moone"[134]. Es wurde bereits auf das Auftauchen des MiM bei Shakespeare aufmerksam gemacht. Bei ihm lässt sich im Grunde nicht mehr als eine Anspielung auf die Folklore finden. Ein Indiz dafür, dass Shakespeare die Handschrift bekannt gewesen sein könnte, gibt es nicht. Es kann also nicht geklärt werden, ob Shakespeare tatsächlich das Gedicht hätte kennen können. So ist der Hinweis Ritsons zwar interessant, er lässt jedoch keine weiteren Schlüsse zu.

Zunächst soll auf die Folklore vom Mondmann eingegangen werden. Es gibt unzählige Versionen der Geschichte vom MiM, auf eine bloße Aufzählung derer soll hier aber verzichtet werden. Glücklicherweise gibt es neben den zahlreichen, teils gravierende Unterschieden auch Gemeinsamkeiten, die sich auf einige wesentliche Punkte konzentrieren. Ris geht vom Gedicht her davon aus, dass die Hörer die Geschichte vom MiM genau kannten. Zunächst aber sollte man zum möglichen Ursprung der Geschichte zurückgehen. Es gibt die Verbindung zu einer alttestamentarischen Episode, auf die schon Rit in seinem Kommentar hinweist. An einer Stelle, die Rit als *Numbers, xv. 32, et seq.* angibt[135], wird ein Mitglied der Gemeinde Moses dafür gesteinigt, dass er am Tag des Sabbat Stöcke sammelte. Ob dieses Ereignis den Ursprung der Mondmannfolklore oder nur eine spätere Verknüpfung mit heidnischen Erzählungen darstellt, ist nicht zu klären, jedenfalls sind ihr die anderen Versionen der Folklore in vielen Punkten ähnlich. Eine Sammlung der verschiedenen Geschichten befindet sich in Sabine Baring-Goulds „Curious Myths of the Middle Ages"[136]. Sie greift auch die sogenannten *nursery rhymes* auf, die den MiM zum Thema haben. Was schnell augenscheinlich wird, ist, dass jede Region eines Landes oder Landteils ihre eigene Geschichte erzählt. Neben einem Mann im Mond stößt man z.B. auch auf eine Frau im Mond, die oft, aber nicht zuverlässig, zusammen mit dem Mann im Mond wohnt. Ihr Hintergrund ist zumeist, dass sie am Sonntag Butter gerührt hat. So werden die Mondflecken in einer Weise gedeutet, die sie mit ihren Utensilien zeigt. Neben dieser weiblichen Figur tauchen auch zwei Kinder auf, die im Englischen als Jack und Jill bekannt sind. Ihre Wurzeln gehen evtl. ins Skandinavische zurück, wobei der ihnen nach der Legende zugeschriebene Gegenstand oft ein Wassereimer ist. Baring-Gould erwähnt im Zusammenhang auch das vorliegende Gedicht, leider aber nur beiläufig. Einen kürzeren Überblick bietet Hazlitt in seinem *Dictionary of National Faiths*[137]. Er kommt zwar nicht auf das Gedicht zu sprechen, für die Folklore allgemein bietet er jedoch dezidierte Informationen. Aufschlussreich sind die deutschen Arbeiten von Schneller, der über die Sage in Wälschtirol geforscht

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134 Ritson, *Ancient Songs* (1829), S. 68.
135 Ebd.
136 Vgl. z.B. Baring-Gould, S. (1872), *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, London: Rivingtons, S. 201.
137 Hazlitt, W. C. (1905), „Man in the Moon", in: Ders. (Hg.), *Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles. A Descriptive and Historical Dictionary,* Vol. 2, London: Reeves and Turner, S. 384.

hat[138], sowie der populäre Band Grimms über deutsche Mythologie[139], der die Sage ebenso aufgreift. Bächtold-Stäubli reiht sich mit seinem *Handbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*[140] in diese Werke ein. Er stellt jedoch anders als seine Kollegen schon diejenigen Punkte der verschiedenen Versionen auf, die in allen Versionen immanent sind. Viele Geschichten erzählen von einem Mann, der den Sabbat oder Sonntag entheiligt, indem er Stöcke oder Reisigbündel sammelt. Andere erzählen von einem Dieb, der von irgendeiner Instanz dazu verurteilt wird, für sein Verbrechen ewig im Mond zu frieren. Eine andere Version erzählt, dass der Mann mit Dornsträuchern anderen Menschen am Sonntag den Zugang zur Kirche verbaut. In all den Versionen spielen Bündel, seien es Dornen oder Reisig oder einfach Sträucher eine Rolle, und die Mondflecken werden dahingehend interpretiert, dass er diese Utensilien erkennbar bei sich trägt. In anderen Versionen kommt ein Hund in die Geschichte hinzu. Diese eben beschriebenen Versionen stellen nur einen Teil der Folklore dar, da die Details stark von Region zu Region variieren.

Es soll als Nächstes ein ganz anderer Aspekt des Gedichts aufgegriffen werden. So könnte das Gedicht auch eine Moral enthalten, die nicht im üblichen Sinne offensichtlich ist, sondern sich subtiler offenbart, nämlich durch den Platz des Gedichts innerhalb der anderen Werke der Handschrift. Stemmler setzt sich intensiv mit der Frage auseinander, ob die HL eine bloße Zusammenwürfelung der Texte darstellen oder ob sie durch Ordnungsprinzipien einem bestimmten Aufbau folgen.[141] Er kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die Gesamtüberlieferung kein übergreifendes Gesamtkonzept erkennen lässt. Wohl aber seien angelegte Gruppierungen erkennbar, was er damit erklärt, dass dem Schreiber zu Beginn seiner Tätigkeit nicht die Gesamtheit der Texte vorlag, sondern dass er über einen Zeitraum von ca. 1330 bis 1347 solche vorgenommen hat. Er nennt die Handschrift daher letztendlich eine *Anthology*, und falsifiziert damit den Begriff *Miscellany*, der sich durch die Forschungsliteratur zieht. Eine entscheidende Entdeckung hat aber Carter Revard in dieser Hinsicht gemacht. Er argumentiert, dass der, welcher die HL angelegt hat, mit genauso viel Bedacht vorgegangen ist, wie Chaucer, als er z.B. seine *Knight's Tale* bewusst vor seine *Miller's Tale* platziert hat[142]. Revard sieht den Zusammenhang zu den beiden vorhergehenden

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[138] Schneller, C. (1867), *Märchen und Sagen aus Wälschtirol*, Innsbruck.

[139] Grimm, J. (1854), *Deutsche Mythologie, Bd. 2*, 3. Aufl., Göttingen: Dieterich.

[140] Bächtold-Stäubli, H. (Hg.) (2000), *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 3. Aufl., Berlin: De Gruyter.

[141] Stemmler, T. (2000), „Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts. MS Harley 2253, for Example", in: Fein, S. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 111-22. Vgl. zum Fazit S. 120.

[142] Vgl. Revard, *French Fabliau Manuscripts* (2000), S. 271. Eventuell wäre es lohnenswert, die Frage zu klären, inwieweit das beschriebene Ordnungsprinzip Einfluss auf spätere Werke anderer Autoren wie Chaucer gehabt haben könnte.

Gedichten der Handschrift, das sind „Urbain le Courtois" (Ker 79) und der „Song of Trailbaston" (Ker 80). Bei beiden handelt es sich um frz. Versdichtungen. Revard sagt:

> This is a sequence made for a more than casual reader: first, a poem of standard courtly advice; next, a dramatic monologue which is a Falstaffian invitation to become a Robin Hood; finally, a dramatic monologue that is a parody of good advice, shouted up to a fictitious Man in the Moon by a peasant who knows how to get round manorial law by pimping and bribery.[143]

Die Idee ist, dass auf die ernst gemeinte Moral eine Parodie folgt, dass genau so eine Reihenfolge zur Zeit der Anlegung der Handschrift als richtig oder angemessen empfunden wurde. Dieses Anordnen von Texten belegt Revard an Beispielen ganz anderer, früherer Texte bei denen diese Vorgehensweise als gesichert gelten kann.[144] Bei dieser Erkenntnis ist freilich eine ernst gemeinte Aussage des Textes fragwürdig, aber diese offenbart sich eventuell auch so subtil, dass sich nicht einmal der Zusammensteller selbst über diese im Klaren gewesen sein muss.

Welche anderen Deutungsversuche beschäftigen sich aber direkt mit dem Inhalt des Textes? Rog versucht, das Gedicht als Allegorie zu verstehen. Er deutet den MiM als einen „weyward friar of a mendicant order"[145]. Seine Bürde sei ein Bündel weltlicher Sünden. Er geht aber auch noch einen Schritt weiter, so repräsentiere der Mondmann die gesamte Menschheit. Der Sprecher des Gedichts mahnt den Menschen zur Buße, und wirft ihm auch noch eine weitere Sünde vor, nämlich die der Trägheit. Der MiM sei nicht nur der *slowest man ever born*, sondern ist zu träge um den entscheidenden Schritt zur Buße zu tun. Der *haywart* wird in diesem Zusammenhang als Christus gedeutet, allerdings erscheint Rogers Interpretation an dieser Stelle unklar und letztlich abwegig. Dafür wird Rog auch schon von Susanna Fein kritisiert, sie nennt seinen Versuche einer Deutung als Allegorie „needlessly unfunny"[146].

Wie gezeigt wurde, interpretiert Rog den MiM also auf einer Ebene christlicher Mythologie. Bei diesem Aspekt soll zunächst verblieben werden. Es ist insofern keinesfalls abwegig, da schließlich die beschriebene alttestamentarische Episode im Zusammenhang mit der Legende steht. Zudem scheint sie noch mit einem anderen Teil des Alten Testaments verknüpft zu sein. Diese offenbarte sich durch Forscher, die den MiM mit dem Brudermörder Kain aus der Genesis in Verbindung brachten. Das geschah aber nicht erst durch die Forschung, die Verbindung zu Kain bestand in der Tat schon früher. Bennet und Gray machen

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[143]   Revard, *French Fabliau Manuscripts* (2000), S. 271.
[144]   Ebd.
[145]   Rogers, *Image and Abstraction* (1972), S. 55.
[146]   Fein, *The Lyrics of MS Harley 2253* (2005), S. 4203.

darauf aufmerksam, dass sich diese Verknüpfung zweier Legenden bis zu den Texten Dantes zurückverfolgen lässt. Sie behaupten, im *Purgatorio II* spiele Dante darauf an, dass es sich beim Mondmann um niemand anderen als den Brudermörder handele, der zur Strafe in den Mond verwünscht wurde.[147] Grimm hat darauf auch schon das Augenmerk gelenkt, er findet den MiM zweimal im Dante: Im *Purgatorio 2, 50* und im *Inferno 20, 126*.[148] Dazu leitet er noch zu einem anderen Werk über, nämlich Praetorius *Weltbeschreibung* 1, 447[149]. Eine genaue Auseinandersetzung mit der Legende von Kain ist aber zu weitführend und würde hier nicht passen. Für eine genaue Diskussion des Sachverhalts kann auf Rogers verwiesen werden, der alle möglichen Indizien für eine Diskussion gesammelt hat. Rog nutzt die Indizien als Fundament für seine Allegorie, die sich letztlich in den Bereich des eher Abwegigen begibt. Wie nun aber die Verbindung von Kain und dem MiM auch immer gestaltet sei, wichtig für die vorliegenden Sachverhalte ist die Tatsache, dass das Gedicht eine Verbindung zu Kain zu suggerieren scheint. Keiner der Forscher hat sich dazu in irgendeiner Art geäußert, aber es gehört nicht viel dazu, zu erkennen, dass der MiM in Zeile 20 *crokede caynard* genannt wird. Ob es sich bei der Wortähnlichkeit um eine Anspielung handelt, bewegt sich freilich im Bereich der Spekulation. Es lässt sich etymologisch keine Verbindung von *caynard* zum Kain der Bibel herstellen (s. Zeilenkommentar). Denkbar wäre jedoch die Anspielung von Seiten des Dichters. Wenn es sich dann um eine Anspielung handelte, hätte er sein Gedicht um eine weitere Dimension bereichert, sei es auch nur ein beiläufiger Kunstgriff gewesen.

Die entscheidende Phase der Ausdeutung um die soziopolitische Dimension des MiM von Seiten der Forschung beginnt mit Menner[150]. Ausgangspunkt für seine Studien zum MiM waren das Studium der Lebensbedingungen der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung zur Zeit des Dichters. Dazu hat er sich intensiv mit den Arbeitsvorgängen beschäftigt, welche die bäuerliche Bevölkerung im Einzelnen leisten musste. Im MiM deutet er mit seinem Instrumentarium die Stellen des Gedichtes, die auf die Arbeiten der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung anspielen. Der MiM ist voll von solchen Elementen. Einige Bereiche des alltäglichen bäuerlichen Lebens finden sich nach Menners Beschreibungen im Gedicht wieder. Einerseits kultivierten sie Felder, andererseits züchteten sie Vieh. Das *hedging*, das Anlegen und Pflegen von Hecken, sei ein elementarer Teil der alltäglichen, bäuerlichen Arbeitswelt gewesen. Die Hecken schützten die Felder einerseits vor Verwindung, aber vor allem vor den Tieren, die sie in den mit Hecken angelegten Wiesen hielten. Dabei ist es unbedingt nötig, dass diese Hecken so dicht sind, dass sie die Tiere innerhalb der Absperrungen (*hǽg*) hielten (vgl. Kommentar: *hayward* (24)).

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147 Bennett, J. A. W. und Gray, D. (Hg.) (1986), *Middle English Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, S 22.
148 Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (1854), S. 682.
149 Ebd.
150 Menner, *The Man in the Moon and Hedging* (1949).

Entstehen Löcher durch Verwitterung oder andere Einwirkungen, muss die Hecke wieder verdichtet werden, dazu benutzt der Bauer Teile von Sträuchern, Bündeln und von lebenden Hecken, um diese „toten" Hecken zu flicken. Im MiM erscheinen diese Schritte als *ope feld pycchynde stake* (13, auf dem Feld Stäbe in die Erde treiben, an denen die Hecken befestigt werden) oder *pornes to dutten ys doren* (14, Dornen, um seine Türen/Tore zu schließen, gemeint sind die Löcher in den Hecken). Die Zeilen 15 und 16 werden so verstanden, dass der MiM, d.h. der Bauer, mit seinem Beil andere Bündel schlagen muss, weil sonst sein Tageswerk, i.e. die kultivierten Felder, verloren ist. Nun kommt der Dichter im Laufe seiner Erzählung dazu, dass der Feldhüter dem MiM ein Pfand oder Unterpfand abgenommen hat, weil der MiM irgendwo ein Bündel Dornsträucher geschlagen hat (s. Zeilen 23-4). Moore fügt der Problematik, die man hier beobachtet, noch eine weitere Erkenntnis bei. Er redet von einem „vexatious problem of protecting the manorial hedges from the ravages of a peasantry often in need of fuel."[151] Sträucher und Reisigbündel dienten der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung auch als Brennstoff, wobei dieser in einem Maße verwendet worden wäre, durch das sich die Besitzer der Ländereien dazu veranlasst sahen, ihre Materialien vor einem zu hohen oder unkontrollierten Nutzen von Seiten der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung zu schützen. Dazu diente der Feldhüter, der *hayward*. Er kontrolliert und überwacht die Situation und verhängt bei Missbrauch oder Diebstahl offensichtlich Strafen oder verlangt ein Pfand vom Übeltäter, so wie man es im MiM miterlebt. Wie DW beifügen, übergibt der Feldhüter das Pfand dem Vogt, dem *bailiff* (Hs.: *bayly*).

Vor diesem Hintergrund klarer, wie die vierte Strophe des Gedichts verstanden werden sollte. Der Sprecher verrät dem MiM aus Mitleid über seine Situation, wie er sich aus dieser Misere befreien kann. Offensichtlich beschreibt der Sprecher einem Außenstehenden wie dem MiM, wie dieses System (Revard nennt es oben *manorial law*) funktioniert und auf welche Weise die üble Tat wieder bereinigt, bzw. wie der Strafe im Nachhinein entgangen werden könne. Man könnte dem Diskurs an dieser Stelle noch beifügen, dass der Sprecher das System nebenbei noch als korrupt entlarvt, indem er den Genuss von Alkohol und netter Gesellschaft als Instrument dieser Vorgehensweise vorschlägt. Hierbei besteht noch die genaue Frage nach dem Verständnis von *borewe*. Beabsichtigt der Sprecher, dem Feldhüter die Strafe auszureden, um beim Vogt davon befreit zu werden, oder plant er, dem Feldhüter in dessen geistiger Umnachtung das Pfand als Geldwert zu stehlen, um sich beim Vogt freizukaufen? Diese Frage ist in der Forschungsliteratur zum Thema leider nicht beantwortet worden. Entscheidender als die Antwort ist jedoch die Art und Weise, wie dieser Monolog vor dem beschriebenen Hintergrund, den man Menners Studie zu verdanken hat, verstanden werden muss. Diesem Verständnis des Textes haben sich die nachfolgenden Forscher im Grunde genommen angeschlossen, viele sehen inzwischen im MiM eindeutig ein

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[151]   Moore, *Secular Lyric* (1951), S. 97.

Beispiel für die komplexen soziopolitischen Beziehung zwischen der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung und dem zeittypischen Beamtenwesen, sowie dem offensichtlichen Unmut der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung hinsichtlich ihrer Situation.[152] So haben Renwick und Orton dieses Textverständnis anscheinend verifiziert, indem sie behaupten, dass für eine Gesellschaft, die das Gedicht tradiert hat, offensichtlich ein „common understanding"[153], ein allgemeines Verständnis der Situation existierte. Dabei ist die Textanalyse wie von Menner erhalten nicht starr und abschließend für die Analyse des MiM. Wie man am Beispiel Rogers sieht, lässt sich der MiM auf dieser Grundlage noch in andere Richtungen weiterdeuten.

So hat es auch Bessai getan, der mit seiner Ausdeutung in eine vollkommen andere und weitaus politischere Dimension des Textes einführt. Der Beitrag Bessais[154] war im Laufe dieser Arbeit schon öfters präsent und soll nun erst einmal beschrieben werden. Bessai sieht im MiM einen sozialen Wandel. Der MiM steht symbolisch für die gesamte Unterschicht. Das Beamtenwesen, im Text repräsentiert durch Feldhüter und Vogt, steht für die gesamte Riege der Herrschaft und so der Unterschicht gegenüber. Er versteht das Gedicht als Allegorie, in der sich die Ereignisse des Bauernaufstandes von 1381 vorausahnen lassen. Dabei muss man natürlich auf den zeitlichen Abstand zur Komposition des Gedichts aufmerksam machen. Jedenfalls geht es für Bessai im MiM darum, dass der Sprecher das Volk zur Rebellion aufrühren will, indem er ihre Situation schildert und den Ruf nach mehr Freiheit und Selbstbestimmung formuliert. Die Hecke versteht Bessai zum Beispiel als „manorial bondage"[155], also als beengenden herrschaftlichen Zwang und eine Unterdrückung, unter der die Bevölkerung leide. Dabei streue der Dichter eindeutige Zeichen in sein Gedicht ein, er benutze laut Bessai eine Bildsprache, die auf Konfrontation und Kampf ausgerichtet sei. In diesem Zusammenhang erwähnt er das *twybyl* (15). Es lässt sich nicht von der Hand weisen, dass ein zweischneidiges Beil weniger als Arbeitsgerät sondern als Waffe anzusehen wäre. Diese Zweideutigkeit des Arbeitgerätes ist zweifelsohne ein interessantes Indiz. Bessai hätte jedoch um seine Thesen zu stützen mehr solcher Entdeckungen machen können. So ist im vorliegenden Zeilenkommentar an zwei weiteren Stellen aufgedeckt worden, welche Zweideutigkeiten sich noch im Gedicht befinden. Einerseits war es das Hauptwort *stake* (13), das genau wie *twybyl* eine ähnliche Konnotation besitzt, andererseits war

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[152]   Vgl. Scattergood, J. (2000), „Authority and Resistance. The Political Verse", in: Fein, S. (Hg.), *Studies in the Harley Manuscript. The Scribes, Contents and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Inst. Publ., Western Michigan Univ., S. 163-201, s. S. 189 und 190.

[153]   Renwick und Orton, *Beginnings of English Literature* (1952), S. 92.

[154]   Bessai, *A Reading of the Man in the Moon* (1972).

[155]   Bessai, *A Reading of the Man in the Moon* (1972). S. 121. Übrigens kann man wissenschaftsgeschichtlich die Frage aufwerfen, ob Bessai selbst durch den Zeitpunkt seines Aufsatzes dem Geist seiner Zeit entspricht. Als er seinen Aufsatz verfasste, war gerade die 68er Bewegung zum Erliegen gekommen.

es die Form *dayes werk* (16), die genauso die Konnotation in Richtung einer Waffengewalt trägt. Dabei lassen sich noch weitere Indizien für Bessais Lesart finden. Einmal ist das umstrittene *botforke* (2) noch hinzuzuziehen. Wie im Zeilenkommentar schon angedeutet, könnte sich *bot* vom ae. *bat* herleiten (wenn der lange Vokal (?) verdumpft worden wäre), was eine kriegerische Konnotation mit sich führt (s. Zeilenkommentar *botforke* (2)). Zudem wurde im Vorausgehenden schon festgestellt, dass der Sprecher das System als korrupt hinstellt. Diese Idee ließe sich mit der Lesart Bessais freilich vereinbaren.

Den Konflikt mit der Obrigkeit, den der Mondmann im Gedicht hat, kann Bessai natürlich einfach als tatsächlichen soziopolitischen Konflikt verstehen. Er liest das Aufsammeln des Gestrüpps am Ende der zweiten Strophe als den ersten „act of political self-interest", wobei die sofortige Bestrafung durch die Obrigkeit das große Übel darstellt. *Sete forþ þyn other fot*, wie es im Gedicht heißt, bedeute daher so viel wie eine Parole zum Weitermachen, zum weiteren Handeln gegen die Obrigkeit auf einem richtigen Weg. Dieser Weg wird schon zu Beginn der ersten Strophe suggeriert. *Whider trowe þis mon ha þe way take?* (9) liest Bessai als direkte Einführung zu dem Weg, den man gegen die Obrigkeit einschlagen soll.

Nun liefert die Lesart Bessais durchaus genügend handfeste Indizien, sie ist aber im nachfolgenden Diskurs unbeachtet geblieben. Vielleicht liegt es daran, dass sie bei erster Betrachtung zu weit hergeholt erscheint, als dass sie eingehender wissenschaftlicher Verifizierung standhalten könnte. Hinzu käme nach der vorliegenden Betrachtung die Nachlässigkeit bei der Unterstützung seiner Thesen mit Textstellen. Als eine denkbare Lesart sollte sie aber keinesfalls vernachlässigt werden und hat im Gegensatz zu einigen anderen Beiträgen ein ganz neues Textverständnis offen gelegt.

Die beschriebenen Interpretationsansätze sind für sich allein genommen wenig zufriedenstellend. Es kann an dieser Stelle aber versucht werden, auf der Grundlage des gesamten Fundus des Zusammengetragenen einen eigenen Deutungsversuch zu wagen. Carter Revard weist darauf hin, dass der Sprecher im MiM einen „fellow peasant"[156], also einen Gleichgesinnten erkennt. Dafür spricht auch eine Feststellung im Zeilenkommentar, nämlich dass der Sprecher den Mondmann duzt. Laut Mossé wären sie also Gleichgesinnte und im gleichem sozialen Stand (s. *þy* (25), natürlich nicht zwangsweise). Für diese Sichtweise würde wohl auch Bessai plädieren. Der Sprecher bringt den Mondmann mit seinem Duzen also auf seine soziale Ebene. Auch Hungerford ist darauf bereits zu sprechen gekommen. Er sagt, der Sprecher sympathisiere mit dem Mondmann.[157] Die Basis dieser Sympathie sind die Gemeinsamkeiten der beiden Akteure. Dabei wird über weite Teile des Stückes der Mondmann beschrieben. Daher wäre anzunehmen, dass er den zentralen Charakter des Stückes darstellt. Darin kündet

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[156]   Revard, *French Fabliau Manuscripts* (2000), S. 271.
[157]   Hungerford, *A Dappled Thing* (1973), S. 308.

sich schon an, worum es im Text viel eher geht. Der zentrale Charakter des Stückes ist eigentlich weniger der Mondmann, als vielmehr der Sprecher des Gedichts und das, was man über ihn lesen kann. Diese Feststellung stützt sich unter anderem darauf, dass Carter Revard davon ausgeht, dass es die „cunning stupidity"[158] des Sprechers ist, die im Mittelpunkt der Dramaturgie stehe. Er schlägt dementsprechend vor, dass man dem Gedicht einen passenderen Titel geben könnte, z.B. „A legal eagle counsels the Man in the Moon"[159]. An anderer Stelle spricht Revard auch vom Gedicht als eine „confessional satire"[160], also von einer Satire eines Geständnisses. Diese Kategorie enthielte einen Sprecher, der sich über eine tadelnswerte Situation auslässt, indem er aber nichts anderes als sein eigenes Fehlverhalten offenbart und an den Pranger stellt.

Ich denke, aufgrund dieses Verständnisses wäre es geradlinig und konsequent, den MiM einmal folgendermaßen zu lesen. Der Dichter hat einen biographischen Hintergrund, der ihm die Einsicht sowohl in die Praktiken des bäuerlichen Lebens als auch in die Probleme dieser Bevölkerungsschicht verleiht. Besonders im Hinblick auf soziale Reibungspunkte zwischen dieser und der administrativen Verwaltung scheint er Bescheid zu wissen. Ob der Angesprochene sich nun gegen diese auflehnen möchte oder nicht, als Auslöser für das Verfassen eines Gedichts über die gemachte Erfahrung reichte vielleicht schon ein Schlüsselerlebnis. Das wäre eine schlechte Erfahrung mit dem administrativen System, das er als korrumpiert empfindet und in seiner künstlerisch formulierten Enttäuschung ein Publikum mit breiter Zustimmung findet. Er könnte aus der eigenen Erfahrung - die er den Ratschlägen des Sprechers für den MiM zufolge besitzt - ein Gedicht formulieren, in dem er eine Situation aufbaut, die eindrücklich eine Geschichte erzählt. Er verarbeitet sie in einem Gedicht, das sich als zentralen Charakter eine sympathische, trottelige und allseits bekannte Figur aus der Mythologie sucht. Er konfrontiert diesen Charakter in seinem Gedicht mit einer Situation, die er selbst erlebt hat und welche ihn in Konflikt mit den Behörden gebracht hat. Dieser Misere vermochte er auf gerissene Art und Weise zu entgehen. Er entging ihr genau durch die Tatsache, dass das System korrumpiert ist und ihm die passenden Lücken dazu bot. Darüber könnte er genauso froh sein, wie es verabscheuungswürdig wäre. Jedenfalls kumuliert die Situation in ein absurdes Szenario, in dem sein gesamter Frust offenbar wird. Dabei entlädt sich einerseits der Ärger über die Behörden wie andererseits über die eigene Person. Im Gedicht projiziert er diesen Ärger eindrücklich auf den beschriebenen Trottel, der allseits bekannt ist und sich gegen die Vorführung seiner Person nicht erwehren wird.

Dies ist nur ein möglicher von vielen möglichen Interpretationsansätzen. Dabei mag er exemplarisch dafür stehen, dass vor allem die soziopolitische Ebene

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[158] Revard, C. (2001), „The Papelard Priest and the Black Prince's Men", in: *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23, S. 359-406, s. S. 378, Nr. 62.

[159] Revard, *Papelard Priest* (2001), S. 378, Nr. 62.

[160] Ebd., S. 395.

des Gedichtes genug für derlei Betrachtungen bietet. Wie man auch immer den MiM liest, die Untertöne des Gedichts ließen allerlei Sinn erkennen und so muss man feststellen, dass es sich - aus jeglicher Perspektive betrachtet - eben nicht um Nonsens handeln kann, wie es sich in vielen Erwähnungen des Gedichts immer noch hält. Anders ausgedrückt: Der Text trägt einen Sinn, der eben nicht darin besteht, dass es sich um Nonsens handelt.

6. Fazit

Das Ende der Betrachtungen bringt uns an den Anfang der Arbeit zurück. Die Faszination, die der Mond und insbesondere seine Mondflecken auf den Menschen ausüben, mag hinter den etwas unromantischen, wissenschaftlichen Betrachtungen dieser Arbeit zurückgetreten sein. Was die sprachwissenschaftliche Analyse des Gedichts anbelangt, so mussten einige Fragen, die wohl auch in der nachfolgenden Forschung nicht zu klären sein werden, offen bleiben. Dazu kommen die Fragen nach der Autorschaft des Textes und seiner genauen Herkunft, sowie nach dem legendären Ursprung des Gedichtes und seiner Figur, dem Mondmann. Es konnte aber gezeigt werden, dass eine wissenschaftliche Betrachtung des Gedichts lohnt. Dabei betrifft es nicht nur die sprachlichen Merkmale des Textes, die es zu einer Rarität machen. Auch die Frage nach seiner Gattung und der Vergleiche mit anderen, ähnlichen Texten stellt ein Feld dar, das an anderer Stelle dezidierter betrachtet werden sollte und weiter reichende Erkenntnisse bieten würde. Auch historisch und sozialhistorisch lieferte der Text den Ausgang für wichtige und ernsthafte Erkenntnisse, die ihn weit von seiner Kategorisierung als Nonsens entfernen. Alles andere als sinnlos erscheint die Verknüpfung mit den soziokulturellen Details, die aus der Erzählung des Sprechers entnommen werden können und welche einmal mehr den historischen Hintergrund der Zeit beleuchten. Sei es die komplexe Beziehung unterschiedlicher gesellschaftlicher Schichten oder das ganze politische System, das als mögliches Thema des Gedichts identifiziert werden konnte, Sinn trägt es allemal.

Aber so sehr das Gedicht zu loben ist, von literaturkritischer Seite erfuhr es weniger Anerkennung. Die Leistung des Dichters war in dieser Arbeit nur nebensächlich betrachtet worden. Wie jedoch der Zeilenkommentar vermuten ließ, scheint die literarische Qualität des Gedichts unter der Tatsache gelitten zu haben, dass es nicht mehr im Original vorliegt, sondern in einer kopierten und übertragenen Version des Schreibers der HL. Darunter litt jedenfalls der humorvolle Gehalt des Gedichts nicht. Über allen literarischen Leistungen seiner Epoche steht Chaucer. Doch das Gedicht vom MiM zeigt, dass auch an anderer Stelle und eine Zeit lang vor Chaucer mittelenglische Dichtung gefunden werden kann, die durch ihren Humor besticht und Chaucer selbst inspiriert haben mag. Das Verhältnis von Chaucer und dem MiM konnte hier zwar diskutiert werden,

die Ergebnisse sind jedoch am ehesten ein Ausgangspunkt für weitere Studien. Es ist zu vermuten, dass mehr sprachliche Mittel bei Chaucer entdeckt würden, die auf den MiM zurückgehen könnten.

Nun steht die Signifikanz des Gedichts also außer Frage, dennoch würde ich den Text auch fernab wissenschaftlicher Auseinandersetzung jedem interessierten Leser empfehlen, der sich mit den sonst teilweise trockenen und schwer zu erschließenden Texten der Epoche beschäftigen möchte. Die vorliegende Übersetzung und die modernen englischen Editionen liefern einen Einblick die Welt des Gedichtes, das es jedem Leser nahe bringt. Den emotionalen Zugang bietet die Folklore des Gedichts schon für sich genommen. Wer sich mehr für den Hintergrund interessiert, wird in dieser Arbeit alle wichtigen Ausgangspunkte für eine weitere hinreichende Recherche gefunden haben, mindestens bis „þe day dawe".

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