MOTHERS, MOTHERING AND MOTHERHOOD IN LATE ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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Abstract.

The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive and interdisciplinary history of maternity in England from the mid-tenth to late-eleventh centuries. By examining a wide range of sources I have been able to identify many different perspectives on motherhood and to consider the ways in which these viewpoints related to each other and in which they could be deployed.

It begins by detailing the different sources I use and my methodological approach to the subject. Chapter one covers the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and chapter two covers the anonymous homiletic tradition attested to by the Blickling and Vercelli homilies. All these sources place maternity within the context of salvation history, but each chapter shows how each group of sources contains different paradigms of maternity.

Chapter three focuses on maternity within the context of Anglo-Saxon kinship. It uses wills and dispute settlements to examine how maternity could interact with other female familial roles and how it could function within wider kin-group networks. Chapter four provides case studies on the maternity of two successive Anglo-Saxon Queens, Emma and Edith. It discusses their use of the texts they commissioned, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* respectively, to claim and justify a maternal role in the succession struggles of the eleventh century. Chapters three and four show different forms of action that were open to mothers within late Anglo-Saxon society.

Contents.

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List of Abbreviations.

General.

B. A. R.	British Archaeological Reports.
E. E. M. F.	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile.
E. E. T. S.	Early English Text Society.
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series (Latina) Prima*. 221 Vols. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 1844-64.
T. R. H. S.	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

Editions of wills and charters.

(The initials are followed by the relevant document number from within the edition.)

R	*Anglo-Saxon Charters*. Ed. A. J. Robertson. Cambridge, 1939.
S	*The Electronic Sawyer*. www.trin.cam.uk/chartwww. Ed. P. Sawyer and S. Kelly.
SEHD	*Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Ed. F. E. Harmer. Cambridge, 1914.
W	*Anglo-Saxon Wills*. Ed. D. Whitelock. Cambridge, 1930.
Writ	*Anglo-Saxon Writs*. Ed. F. E. Harmer. 2nd Edition, Stamford, 1989.

Introduction.

Purposes.

Est quippe nullus dolor maior matri quam uidere uel audire mortem dilectissimi filii.[1] In this comment, Emma's Encomiast provides an apparently simple statement about a universal human bond, the all-encompassing love felt by a mother for her child. Yet even a cursory knowledge of English politics in the eleventh century problematises our interpretation of Emma's love for her children. She was the mother of three sons by two different royal fathers. Her first husband Æthelred was king of England 978 – 1016. Her second husband Cnut was a Danish king. He conquered England, and his marriage to Emma as queen of England was a way of legitimising his rule. Throughout her marriage to Cnut, Emma's sons by her first husband Æthelred resided in exile in her natal land of Normandy. In the succession struggle that followed Cnut's death she supported the claims of her son by him to the exclusion of her sons by Æthelred. The younger of those two sons, Alfred, was murdered in the course of this succession struggle. The Encomiast's comment on her grief over his death was intended not just as an expression of maternal feeling but as a way of exculpating her against accusations of complicity in Alfred's murder.

[Edith] studio pueros, qui ex regis genere dicebantur, enutrierit, docuuerit, ornauerit et omnem maternum affectum in eis effuderit.[2] Twenty-five years later, the Anonymous author describes Edith's maternal care of the royal boys at court. She fed,

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[1] A. Campbell (ed.). *Encomium Emmae Reginae, with a supplementary introduction by Simon Keynes* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 51-2, 'There is no sorrow greater for a mother than to see or hear about the death of a most beloved son'. Campbell's translation.

[2] F. Barlow (ed.), *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster* (Oxford, 1992, 2nd Edition), pp. 24-5, '[Edith] zealously reared, educated, adorned and showered with maternal love those boys who were said to be of royal stock'. Barlow's translation.

taught, clothed and loved them, activities which seem to be the everyday and expected tasks that a mother performs for her children. However, Edith was a childless woman. In contrast to Emma, the succession crises that she had to deal with in 1066 were precipitated by the death of her husband, Edward the Confessor, and their lack of sons and therefore of heirs.

The maternal careers of Emma and Edith indicate that modern opinions about normal motherhood are inadequate tools with which to comprehend Anglo-Saxon maternity. The quotations from the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* show how crucial maternal models were in defining female behaviour. Emma and Edith can also stand as images of the treatment of maternity within the extant Anglo-Saxon corpus. Anglo-Saxon maternity was extraordinarily complex and multi-faceted. It can be encountered and examined in terms of theology, society, culture and politics. Nevertheless, there are no extant Anglo-Saxon sources that deal specifically with Anglo-Saxon opinions about motherhood. Maternity is paradoxically both present in and absent from the sources; it pervades most aspects of Anglo-Saxon life and thought but is also extremely elusive. I have placed this complexity and mutability at the heart of my thesis.

I chose to focus on maternity from the mid-tenth to the late-eleventh centuries. Studying a relatively short period of time allowed me to examine the wide range of chronologically concurrent sources that considered motherhood. By narrowing my research chronologically, I have therefore been able to provide a comprehensive and interdisciplinary account of the many different perspectives on motherhood in late Anglo-Saxon England. I have also been able to consider the complex ways in which these viewpoints related to each other and in which they could be deployed. My

approach has the virtue of enabling my study to have both breadth and depth of interpretation, within the time and space constraints of a doctoral thesis. Examining a single type of source over a longer period of time would also have had its value, but would of necessity have provided a more limited and less integrated view on the multifaceted nature of Anglo-Saxon maternity. Focusing on a narrow segment of time while examining a wide variety of sources also avoids the methodological problems of using different types of sources from different historical periods. I chose the mid–tenth to late-eleventh centuries because this period was marked by increased centralisation of government, by two foreign conquests and by the Benedictine reform movement.

From the mid-tenth to late-eleventh centuries England became increasingly centralised but also experienced the disruption caused by Viking raids and the Danish and Norman conquests. Throughout the tenth century the authority of the English kings based in Wessex expanded outwards to incorporate Mercia, East Anglia and the North into a united English kingdom.[3] The process of unification was neither smooth nor uniform, and England continued to display internal divisions. In 957 and in 1016 royal authority was geographically split into two areas that were roughly coterminous with Wessex and Mercia.[4] Campbell convincingly argues for three different zones of royal authority: an area of palaces and councils, an area that was not visited or inhabited by kings under normal circumstances but which was incorporated into the kingdom through uniform institutions such as shires, and an area of frontier lordships.[5] Within the first two zones, the government of England was centralised. Coinage was standardised and recalled for reminting in a regular basis, laws were issued and royal authority was

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[3] P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), pp. 31-56.
[4] Stafford, *Unification*, pp. 48-9, 72.
[5] J. Campbell, 'The united kingdom of England: the Anglo-Saxon achievement', in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 47-50.

communicated and administered through the shire courts.[6] The Benedictine reform movement also aided the centralisation of England in ways that will be discussed below. It was perhaps the riches of a well organised and efficiently exploited kingdom that made England an attractive prospect for Viking warbands, the Danish kings and Duke William of Normandy. England was raided throughout the 990s and 1000s before being conquered by Swein in 1013 and again by his son Cnut in 1016. In 1066, Harold defeated his brother Tostig and the Norwegian king Harold Hardrada but was himself defeated and killed by the Normans. In late tenth- and eleventh-century England there were changes in the families who held high aristocratic and royal office, which were linked in part to these two foreign conquests.[7] The tensions caused by both unification and conquest were negotiated in part by marriage and the motherhood of heirs.[8] I demonstrate that during this period of contested succession, maternity acted as a site for the exploration of different ideas about kin-group structure and about the transmission of dynastic rights.

The Benedictine reform movement also provides a compelling reason for choosing the mid-tenth to late eleventh centuries as the historical period for my research. It is of interest for theological, political and social reasons, due to the desire of reformers to incorporate all aspects of English society into a regenerated Christian community. Doctrine was not seen to exist in an abstract world of theological inquiry. Instead, it was intended as an instrument to persuade the faithful to see their lives as part of a universal Christian history. It was transmitted through vernacular homilies in order

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[6] Campbell, 'United kingdom', pp. 31-53.
[7] R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991).
[8] E. Searle, 'Women and the legitimisation of succession at the Norman conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 3 (1980): 158-70; P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997); B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003).

to provide a guide to good Christian belief and behaviour and thus to save souls.[9] The historiography and history of the reform needs consideration here in order to situate my thesis in its context.

The reformers Dunstan, Oswald and Æthelwold were heavily involved in the factional politics of the late tenth century.[10] They influenced the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship and queenship by legitimising royal power through the use of heavenly parallels and divine sanction.[11] The Benedictine reform movement was also a symbol and a facilitator of the integration of Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia into the kingdom of England, because the monasteries were united by a single and centrally imposed Rule.[12] In the second generation of reform, Ælfric and Wulfstan were both interested in the institution and maintenance of the correctly ordered, Christian hierarchy, headed by the king. The Viking attacks were viewed as punishment for the sins of the English in departing from this ordered society.[13] Both men saw the regulation of sexual relations and gender as a crucial component in their desired Christian social order, and used homilies and law-codes to promote their views.[14] It is crucial to emphasise that the connections made between reform theology, sexuality and social order were not only deployed by churchmen. Reform theology was not monolithic but encompassed a wide range of differing views, for example on the constitution of a legitimate marriage. While

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[9] C. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis and London, 1999), pp. 55-7.

[10] D. Fisher, 'The anti-monastic reaction in the reign of Edward the Martyr', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1950-2): 254-70; B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988); N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (ed.), *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult* (Woodbridge, 1992); N. Brooks and C. Cubitt (eds.), *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996).

[11] M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990); R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (Princeton, 1995).

[12] Campbell, 'United kingdom', pp. 42-3; N. Banton, 'Monastic reform and the unification of tenth-century England', in S. Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity*, Studies in Church History 18 (1982), pp. 71-85.

[13] C. Cubitt, 'Virginity and misogyny in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England', *Gender and History* 12.1 (2000): 1-32; W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 1, E. E. T. S. os 76 and 82 (1966), XIII, ll 91-173; K. Jost (ed.), *Wulfstan, Die "Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical"* (Bern, 1959); D. Whitelock (ed.), *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (London, 1963, 3rd Edition).

[14] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 23.

reforming churchmen tried to make the mothering of heirs dependent on legitimate marriage, the various ways in which legitimacy could be formulated meant that mothers could manipulate different reform ideals to try to control inheritance patterns.[15]

Until the late twentieth century it was standard for scholars to see the Benedictine reform as a watershed between two types of homiletic theology. Pre-reform homilies, represented by the Blickling and Vercelli books, were disorderly and colourful. They drew heavily on proscribed apocalyptic sources in the Hiberno-Latin tradition. Post-reform homilies such as Ælfric's, by contrast, were orthodox and more uniform.[16] Clayton makes two important objections to this viewpoint. First, it assumes that Ælfric's theology was representative of reform theology as a whole. However, although his works were popular, reformed monks continued to read from the apocrypha he condemned. Second, there is no clear proof that the anonymous works all belong to the pre-reform period rather than to their late tenth-century manuscript context.[17] Clayton's arguments are strengthened by Gretsch's recent research which argues that the intellectual renaissance, represented by reformers such as Dunstan, Æthelwold and their pupils, started before they established close contacts with reform monasteries such as Corbie and Fleury. It drew, initially at least, on the late ninth-century revival transmitted directly through Æthelwold and Æthelstan's court.[18] Obviously one should not directly apply Gretsch's analysis of a tradition developed in the 930s and 940s at court and in a monastic circle at Glastonbury to the entirety of England during these decades, but it can still be argued that reform-period theology was

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[15] B. Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the politics of the tenth century', in Yorke, *Æthelwold*, pp. 65-88.
[16] M. McC Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto, 1977), p. 103; D. G. Scragg, 'The homilies of the Blickling manuscript', in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (eds.), *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 315; S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature, Including an Introduction on the Anglo-Latin Background by M. Lapidge* (New York and London, 1986), pp. 71-2.
[17] Clayton, *Cult*, pp. 22-3, 263-4.
[18] M. Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 4-5, 332-3.

not entirely dependent on Carolingian sources transmitted in the second half of the tenth century. When this is juxtaposed with the continuing transcription of anonymous vernacular homilies within the traditional reform period, despite being based on earlier theology, a paradigm emerges of two permeable intellectual traditions with a long period of overlapping use and transmission.

Late Anglo-Saxon society was marked by a tension between centralisation and disorder, by a shift in the composition of the ruling elite and by an intensifying interest in the connections between sexuality, gender and social hierarchy. These concurrent and overlapping strands in history mean that the mid-tenth to late-eleventh centuries provide a fascinating window through which to view the construction and deployment of different models of maternity.

Sources: Selection and methodology.

There are no extant Anglo-Saxon texts specifically about mothers, mothering or motherhood. Nor are there any Anglo-Saxon works similar to Dhuoda's *Liber manualis*, in which a Frankish mother provided for her son's Christian and political education in the form of a written set of instructions.[19] This maternal absence from the written record complicates my investigation into Anglo-Saxon maternity both in terms of my source selection and my methodological approach.

First, it has been necessary to examine a wide variety of different sources in order to study maternity as completely as possible within the time and space constraints

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[19] For an interpretation of this text see J. L. Nelson, 'Women and the word in the earlier Middle Ages', *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 53-78; M. A. Claussen, 'God and man in Dhuoda's *Liber manualis*', *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 43-52; M. A. Claussen, 'Fathers of power and mothers of authority: Dhuoda and the *Liber manualis*', *French Historical Studies* 19 (1996): 785-809.

of a doctoral thesis, and thus to avoid distorting my conclusions due to a concentration on one particular source. As will become evident throughout the body of my thesis, the different sources do not just provide different perspectives on and representations of maternity, they also indicate that multiple forms of motherhood operated in Anglo-Saxon England. A brief discussion of these differences is necessary here in order to explain my source selection. Chapters one and two examine the place of maternity within a selection of the religious literature of the period: chapter one covers the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and chapter two covers the homilies within the Blickling and Vercelli books. Each chapter shows how each group of sources contains different models of motherhood. The models in both these chapters indicate different attitudes towards maternity; however they do not show whether or not these attitudes were ever internalised by Anglo-Saxon mothers. Chapter three investigates the wills and dispute settlements of the period to see how maternity could interact with other female familial roles and how it could function within wider kin-group networks. Chapter four provides case studies on how maternity was deployed by two successive English queens in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*. Although so far as we know none of these sources were written by women, chapters three and four nevertheless show different forms of action open to mothers within late Anglo-Saxon society.

Second, it is no longer methodologically justifiable to treat historical documents as mimetic texts that provide a clear reflection of the world from which they derive. Post-modern theories about the meaning of language argue that language generates rather than reflects social meaning and thus challenge the existence of a reality accessible outside the text.[20] Foucault warns against assuming one version of reality that can be accessed by the historian, and against theorising texts as representing an ideal

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[20] G. M. Spiegel, 'History, historicism, and the social logic of the text', *Speculum* 65 (1990): 59-63.

independent of somehow more real lived experiences. Instead, experiences, institutions and texts should be analysed as different elements of history whose interactions should be examined to see the different ways in which realities could be constituted.[21] Historians influenced by Foucault have problematised the distinction between texts and their contexts, between literature and history. However, this treatment of historical texts runs the risk of eliding the division between texts and contexts and of denying the possibility of ever accessing any form of reality.[22] This need for caution with regard to historical sources is heightened in relation to my thesis given that none of the works I examine are concerned only with motherhood. My consideration of maternity therefore has to take into account its meaning and function within the wider concerns of the text. Spiegel's concept of texts as socially situated provides a way of examining maternity within Anglo-Saxon works and their social locations. She argues that a written work represents a moment of choice and of action that was designed to function within a specific political and social network. Texts can therefore be viewed both as products of and agents within particular societies. This methodology requires that the historian pays close attention to the form, content and social location of any particular work before making arguments about its social meaning.[23] It is a methodology that has implications for my treatment of the different sources I use and for the structure for my thesis. First, it provides a way in which the texts can be examined not only for examples of how maternity functioned within them, but also as a point of access for examining how maternity functioned through the text within a wider social world. However, because this methodology insists on the inter-related nature of the specific social location of a text or a group of texts and of their interpretation, explanations of my methodological treatment of particular types of texts will be placed within each individual chapter rather than in the introduction. Each chapter will therefore contain a lengthy preamble. This

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[21] M. Foucault, *L'Impossible Prison: Recherches sur le système pénitentaire* (Paris, 1980), pp. 24-5.
[22] Spiegel, 'History', pp. 70-1.
[23] Speigel, 'History', pp. 83-5.

approach is necessary because, as discussed above, I move between different types of texts, each of which is different in form and functioned differently within Anglo-Saxon society. The only exception to this methodological specificity is my use throughout my thesis of modern theoretical approaches to motherhood, which I will now discuss.

Modern methodologies of motherhood.

Modern scholars distinguish between mothers, mothering and motherhood as linked but distinct concepts. In her highly influential book on modern motherhood, Rich distinguishes between motherhood as the mother-child relationship experienced by individual mothers, and motherhood as an institution that aims to keep women and their reproductive capacity under male control.[24] Drawing in part on Rich's work, Ruddick argues for a distinction between the biological motherhood of pregnancy and childbirth, and the mothering provided by the person who looked after the child. She identifies three crucial elements of maternal action: mothers should preserve their child's life, nurture them and thus enable them to grow, and train them so that they are socially acceptable. These maternal tasks, she argues, are not necessarily provided by the person who gave birth to the child or even by a woman, but can be shared between parents and other care-givers. However, she insists upon the maternal nature of this behaviour; fathers in her schema are not the male counterparts to mothers but instead provide material support for childcare and arbitrate the child's social acceptability. For Ruddick, fatherhood is determined more by cultural demands than by the child's needs.[25] By using the work of these theorists it is possible to distinguish between the person of the mother, maternal behaviour or mothering, and motherhood as a cultural construct. It

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[24] A. Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (London, 1977), esp. pp. 12-25, 34-7, 72.

[25] S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London, 1990), esp. pp 17-21, 41-2; S. Ruddick, 'Thinking mothers / conceiving birth', in D. Bassin, M. Honey and M. M. Kaplan (eds.), *Representations of Motherhood* (New Haven and London, 1994), pp. 29-45.

also emphasises that maternal models of behaviour can be adopted by those who are not biological mothers, as we would understand the term today.

Modern scholars also highlight the relational nature of maternity. Mothers do not stand alone but work within the context of their relationships with their children and their wider family and societal groupings.[26] The placement of mothers within a web of various familial connections reminds us that mothers are not only mothers but also wives, sisters and daughters. It allows us space to draw broader conclusions about kin-group roles and relationships.

My thesis has also been critically informed by the argument that motherhood is not universal. 'Maternal practice begins in response to the reality of a biological child in a particular social world.'[27] As a form of human behaviour it is culturally constructed, and it is therefore a historically dependent rather than a universal experience. The socially specific nature of motherhood applies from the moment of conception, as a mother's experience of conception, pregnancy and childbirth are all dependent upon assumptions about the nature and meaning of reproductive systems.[28] This argument problematises modern conceptions about "normal" motherhood, and how mothers "ought" to feel for and act toward their children. For example, Scheper-Hughes challenges contemporary theories on maternal sentiment by theorising it as the product of a specific historical context. Mother love, she argues, embodies an ideological representation that is enabled by and grounded in particular economic and material conditions.[29] Rich also identifies and criticises modern assumptions about natural

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[26] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, pp. 12-3; Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, pp. 41-2.
[27] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, p. 17.
[28] C. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1991), p. 23.
[29] N. Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 354-6, 401-2.

motherhood: that maternal love is selfless; that mothers have no further identity beyond their relationships with their children; that mothers and children, rather than unrealistic social expectations, are the primary causes of each others' suffering. She analyses these ideas as leading to a paradigm of motherhood in which the parts of a mother's psyche that do not adhere to this idealised view are considered to be monstrous.[30] Treating maternity as historically specific opens up different lines of enquiry about mothers, mothering and motherhood in Anglo-Saxon England. What did 'mother'mean? What did mothers do? What ideas cluster around conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and the relationships mothers had with their children? Is it possible to determine constructs of good and bad mothers and, if so, on what basis was this judgement made?

Finally, motherhood theorists underline the importance of maternal agency.[31] While mothers can only mother according to the social patterns available to them, they can, as agents, select their maternal practices rather than passively reproducing those patterns. Furthermore, their own mothering can in turn influence the models available to others.

It has to be acknowledged that the work of modern theorists such as Rich and Ruddick comes out of socio-political debate on motherhood, gender and social organisation. Both argue from a feminist standpoint. For example Rich states, "[My] book is not an attack on the family or on motherhood, *except as defined and restricted under patriarchy*".[32] She sees her work as an exploration of the relationships between mothering and patriarchal power over social and economic organisation. She also hopes for the emergence of a collective, anti-patriarchal movement in which high value is placed on social and economic justice, diversity and personal development. Ruddick

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[30] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, pp. 22-3.
[31] Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, p. 21.
[32] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, pp. 13-4, emphasis hers.

and Rich both separate biological from social motherhood as a way of engaging with and challenging discourses of maternity in which women are of value only as mothers, and in which motherhood is used as a way of confining women socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. By theorising motherhood as socially rather than biologically determined, they open up space for change. Women can act as agents in their mothering by raising their children in a way that is determined by their own needs and the needs of their children rather than by the need of society for conformity. Theorising maternal behaviour as an intelligent and reflective process rather than as a natural instinct is also meant to raise the perceived status of mothers. Their work is ultimately intended as a path to social revolution, and not as a historical model. The biological / social distinction is therefore framed by contemporary political arguments. It is useful as a tool with which to problematise ideas about maternity, because theorising motherhood as a social construction allows us to examine its different historical manifestations rather than assuming that it is an unchanging and universal biological given. It is not however a distinction that would have been recognised in Anglo-Saxon England.

Historiography.

Before this thesis, one book has been written specifically about Anglo-Saxon motherhood. It is necessary to cover the aims and content of this book in some detail in order to indicate how my thesis provides a different perspective on maternity in this period. Dockray-Miller's book uses three post-modern theoretical approaches in order to 'illuminate Anglo-Saxon instances of the occlusion of maternity and to seek examples of maternal genealogy that have not been occluded even by largely patriarchal

textual transmission'.[33] She uses Butler's theory of performativity in order to clarify the notion of gender, which seems fixed and natural but which is actually a constant process that depends on repetition and reinscription in order to constitute identity.[34] Ruddick's three maternal tasks provide Dockray-Miller with examples of maternal work to seek amongst Anglo-Saxon mothers.[35] Finally, Iragaray's insistence on the need to reclaim maternal genealogies and reject patriarchal norms of social structure emphasises the need to look for maternal practice that does not serve only to reinforce patriarchal domination.[36]

Dockray-Miller uses these three approaches in order to examine three different groups of sources and, through them, different chronological periods. First, she uses a variety of textual evidence such as charters, saints' Lives, and Bede's History in order to analyse family relationships amongst religious women of the late seventh and early eighth century, in particular amongst the abbesses of Ely, Whitby and Minster-in-Thanet. Second, she examines late ninth- and early tenth-century sources such as the Mercian Register in order to provide a maternal genealogy for Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. Third, she analyses the mothers of *Beowulf*: Modthryth, Grendel's mother, Hildeburh, Hygd and Wealhtheow.

My thesis differs from Dockray-Miller's book in three main ways. First, my thesis does not focus on different periods throughout Anglo-Saxon history but instead concentrates on the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The sources I use are completely different from those covered by Dockray-Miller, and thus I provide a different

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[33] M. Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2000). She takes the term 'occlusion' from A. Newton, 'The occlusion of maternity in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*', in J. Carmi Parsons and B. Wheeler (eds.), *Medieval Mothering* (New York, 1996), pp. 63-76.
[34] Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood*, p. 3; J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, 1993), pp. 2-14.
[35] Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood*, p. 5; Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, pp. 17-23.
[36] Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood*, pp. 5-6; L. Iragaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. G. C. Gill (New York, 1993).

perspective on Anglo-Saxon maternity. Third, the methodologies I use to access sources and the ways in which I use those sources to illuminate Anglo-Saxon history also differ from Dockray-Miller's theoretical approaches.

Her book has been criticised for her argument that the nurturance and teaching provided by monasteries was maternal in nature and for her argument that Anglo-Saxon mothers did not seek thrones for their sons but instead tried to protect them from the violence of Anglo-Saxon society. Stafford argues that nurturance and teaching are typical of both male and female Western European monasticism, and that the examples of women such as Emma, Brunhild, Fredegund and Judith show that royal women did see the placement of their sons on the throne as one of their primary aims.[37] Dockray-Miller's interpretation of maternal action in these instances is explicitly informed by Rudick's characterisation of such work as maternal regardless of whether or not it is performed by the biological mother. Ruddick recognises that her philosophy is grounded in her own cultural background, but argues that her ideals cross social and cultural boundaries. Dockray-Miller adds that Ruddick's maternal tasks of preservation, nurturance and training also 'permeate historical boundaries' even though their specific manifestations can vary.[38] Ruddick's aims in writing her book, however, were concerned with informing and exploring maternal practice both philosophically and ethically, and her theories are therefore concerned more with the present and the future rather than with historical motherhood.

Dockray-Miller's insight into the possibilities of using modern theoretical approaches to motherhood has strongly influenced my work. Maternal scholars such as Rich, Ruddick and Scheper-Hughes provide me with a very valuable methodology

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[37] P. Stafford, 'Review of Mary Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England*', *Albion* 33 (2001): 430-2; Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood*, pp. 32, 113.
[38] Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood*, pp. 4-5.

through which maternity can be analysed as historically dependent rather than universal, as a form of behaviour that can be performed by those who are not mothers, and as a construct that can be used to describe relationships where motherhood, as a modern audience might understand it, does not exist. However, my arguments about Anglo-Saxon maternity use modern theory as a tool which facilitates close attention to ideas found in Anglo-Saxon sources about mothers, mothering and motherhood. The work of these theorists is particularly valuable for analysing those ideas that seem counter-intuitive, or even alien.

Stafford has written influentially and prolifically about Anglo-Saxon mothers. She emphasises how crucial it was for royal mothers to have one of their sons succeed to the throne as king in order to maintain their own power at court and in the kingdom. She has fruitfully analysed the importance of motherhood to queens in Anglo-Saxon England and has used an understanding of maternal relationships in order to expand our understanding of the nature of female power, of royal power and of factional politics.[39] My debt to her work will be evident in my footnotes. However, although she has briefly examined the ideology of motherhood in relation to queenly roles, in particular in connection to the Virgin Mary and Winchester, she has not systematically analysed the representation of maternity in the religious literature of the period.[40] The first two chapters of my thesis discuss the religious ideology of maternity, an understanding of which allows me to consider how maternal ideologies interacted with maternal behaviour in Anglo-Saxon England. My treatment of the religious literature is

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[39] P. Stafford, 'Sons and mothers: family politics in the early middle ages', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women*, Studies in Church History 1 (1978): 79-100; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*; P. Stafford, 'The portrayal of royal women in England, mid-tenth to mid-twelfth centuries', in J. Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1993), pp. 143-68; P. Stafford, 'Emma: The powers of Queen in the eleventh century', in A. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 3-26; Stafford, *Queen Emma*.

[40] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 75-81; Stafford, 'Portrayal of royal women', pp. 143-68.

facilitated by Clayton's work on the cult of the Virgin Mary, in which she provides very helpful information and discussion on the vernacular homiletic corpus.[41]

Maternity in late Anglo-Saxon England did not, of course, function in a cultural or social vacuum. It is important, therefore, to consider the historiography of motherhood in a wider European context. Heene has done valuable work on the religious ideals of motherhood and marriage in Carolingian Europe. She argues that most Carolingian authors held a positive view on marriage and motherhood, particularly in contrast to the opinions held by the patristic authors on which they drew.[42] Her book is a valuable resource which enables comparisons to be drawn between Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian works. The Benedictine Reform drew on Carolingian ideas and reinforced contacts between English and continental monasteries, with obvious implications for our understanding of Anglo-Saxon religious ideals of the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Atkinson's work on Christian motherhood provides a point of comparison with late antique maternal ideals and with the twelfth century, and thus a broader historical context.[43] Finally, Bynum's essay about the use of maternity to explore abbatial roles in relation to the monks and to Christ shows the varying ways in which cultural ideals can be deployed.[44]

Concepts of motherhood are obviously also linked to ideas about childhood. As noted above, mothering implies a relationship rather than an individual acting in isolation. The issue of maternal attachment to children in different historical periods has been highly contested. In the 1960s, Ariès argued that childhood was not recognised as

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[41] Clayton, *Cult*; M. Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon* (Cambridge, 1998).
[42] K. Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood and Women in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1997).
[43] Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*.
[44] C. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982).

a separate part of the human life-cycle until the sixteenth century. Before this period parents erected barriers against emotional attachment to their children who, because of high infant mortality rates, were more likely than not to die in infancy. Parents did not treat infants and small children as individuals.[45] Ariès' work has been convincingly criticised on the basis of both his methodology and his treatment of his sources. For example, Shahar argues that ineffective methods of childcare and a high infant mortality rate should not be interpreted as displaying a lack of parental care but as the consequence of contemporary social conditions, including limited medical skills. There is no necessary reciprocal relationship between demographic conditions and emotional attachment.[46]

The problematic relationships between infant mortality and parental attachment are sadly not confined to history. Scheper-Hughes explores child death and maternal love in her insightful yet controversial book, *Death Without Weeping*, which considers the maternal practice of "letting go" in the Brazilian shantytown Alto do Cruzeiro. "Letting go" describes the mortal neglect of children who are described by their mothers as not wanting to live. Scheper-Hughes argues that as a practice it is accompanied by maternal indifference to the lives and deaths of these particular babies. It is facilitated by their characterisation as angel-babies who want to return to heaven and by a slow process of anthropomorphisation.[47] She also places this maternal neglect within the context of political and social oppression, and of extreme deprivation. Her work is better substantiated than that of Ariès as it draws on her years of life and work in the Alto do Cruzeiro, first in the Peace Corps and then as an anthropologist. In her discussion on the cultural strategies by which women can defend themselves against

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[45] P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, 1962).
[46] S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990); B. Hanawalt, 'Child rearing among the lower classes of late medieval England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8 (1977): 1-22.
[47] Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping*, pp. 269-445.

constant sorrow, she states that ultimately, 'We may take the women at their word when they say, "No, I felt no grief".[48] The question remains as to whether the cultural practices and beliefs about angel-babies constitute mothers' experience of their relationships with their children, or whether they instead provide a resource with which women can protect themselves against grief caused by a high infant mortality rate. Scheper-Hughes records the opinion of another Alto woman, '"But to tell you the truth, I don't know if these stories of the afterlife are true or not. We *want* to believe the best for our children. How else could we stand the suffering?"'[49]

The work of Ariès and Scheper-Hughes highlights the extreme difficulty of accessing the emotional experiences of other people. Are emotions biologically determined and universal, or culturally specific? How far does the inner experience of emotion relate to its public expression? The lack of Anglo-Saxon sources that consider everyday and individual experiences provides another barrier to investigating the mother-child bond in this period.[50] Emma's grief at the murder of her son, as expressed in the *Encomium*, will be analysed in terms of her Encomiast's use of homiletic models and in terms of Emma's political circumstances when the *Encomium* was written. Her emotional reaction to Alfred's death is much more difficult to examine, as we lack the sources to investigate individual attachment directly. The issue can be linked to Scheper-Hughes' work on the mothers of the Alto do Cruzeiro: to what extent were Emma's emotions formed by her internalisation of Anglo-Saxon models of maternity; to what extent did she use those models as a way of coping with her emotions; to what

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[48] Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping*, p. 430.
[49] D. T. Linger, 'State of siege on the hill of the Cross', *American Ethnologist* 20.4 (1993): 844-7; Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping*, p. 364.
[50] C. Cubitt, 'The history of emotions: a debate – Introduction', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 225-7; B. H. Rosenwein, 'Writing without fear about early medieval emotions', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 229-34; P. Stafford, 'Review article: Parents and children in the early middle ages', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 257-71.

extent did she use those models as a way of expressing a culturally appropriate reaction? These issues cannot be easily resolved, but must be borne in mind throughout the thesis.

My thesis makes an original contribution to our understanding of late Anglo-Saxon England. None of my sources have been examined before for the perspectives they provide on motherhood and maternal action. As noted above, by using a wide range of sources I provide a comprehensive history of the different forms of Anglo-Saxon maternity, both in terms of how they related to each other and how they could be deployed. Furthermore, my exploration of maternity within Anglo-Saxon theology, society, culture and politics not only creates a history of motherhood, it also nuances and adds to our understanding of different aspects of Anglo-Saxon thought and behaviour.

Chapter One. *And to þam hy gesceop God ælmihtig; þæt hy 7 heora ofspring scoldan gefyllan 7 gemænigfyldan þæt on heofenum gewanod wæs:* Ælfric, Wulfstan and Christian parenting.

Introduction and methodology.

In the model of maternity that I discuss in this first chapter, motherhood is seen as part of a wider family grouping. The relationship between a mother and her children does not stand alone; instead mothers and fathers are associated together in their parental bond, which exists both between each other and between them and their children. The main authors I will consider in relation to this model are Ælfric and Wulfstan. I intend to argue that for both authors all family relationships are ideally subsumed not into the wider kin-group but into the Christian community, and that sexual reproduction and its consequences are understood in terms of salvation history: Creation, Fall and Redemption. They have to be analysed in terms of God's original plan for humanity, in terms of humanity's current fallen state, and in terms of the potential they have to interact with salvation. However, within this paradigm, Ælfric's and Wulfstan's views on parenting in general, and mothering in particular, differed strongly. While Wulfstan did not make a sharp distinction between mothers and fathers, for Ælfric mothers were hierarchically inferior and therefore subordinated to fathers. He displays little interest in motherhood as a theological theme, and in the rare instances where he does use it he distances it from the motherhood of normal human women. Having discussed Ælfric's and Wulfstan's theology on the nature of parenting, I will then move onto a discussion of their views on parental roles. I will argue that for both authors the importance of the relationships between parents and their children is seen in the expression of a religious and social relationship. Neither author places great

importance on what we would understand to be the biological relationship between a mother and her child, though for Ælfric bodily paternity is important. Finally, I will attempt to place these ideas within their societal framework.

Before turning to the main body of my argument, however, it is firstly necessary to contextualise the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan within a brief outline of their careers, and to explain my methodological approach.

Little is known about Ælfric's early life. He writes critically about his boyhood education by a priest with poor Latin. Later he was trained at Winchester by Bishop Æthelwold; this must have been between Æthelwold's arrival there in 963 and his death in 984. In 987 Ælfric was sent to the refounded abbey of Cerne Abbas in Dorset as monk and mass-priest, in which location he wrote homilies and, presumably, taught. In 1005 he was sent to another new foundation at Eynsham near Oxford as its abbot. The date of his death is unknown.[1] Ælfric's lay patrons included Ealdorman Æthelweard, the Chronicler, and his son Æthelmær, who founded Cerne Abbas and Eynsham. Both men were important members of Æthelred's court, kin to the king and also to Ealdorman Bryhtnoth.[2] Ælfric was also in contact with less powerful noblemen such as Wulfgeat, Sigefyrth and Sigeweard.[3] His ecclesiastical correspondents included the dedicatee of his Catholic Homilies Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, Ælfheah, Bishop of

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[1] P. Clemoes, 'Ælfric', in E. G. Stanley (ed.), *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature* (London, 1966), p. 179; J. Wilcox (ed.), *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham, 1994), p. 7.

[2] Wilcox, *Prefaces*, p. 9. For an account of Ælfric's opinions on late tenth-century politics see M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', in J. Roberts and J. Nelson (eds.), *Essays in Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy* (London, 2000), pp. 65-88. Æthelweard was prominent at court in the period of Æthelred's reign from 993 onwards, in which the king supported monastic reform and repented of his youthful indiscretions. It should be noted however that after Æthelweard's death in c. 998 Æthelmær did not directly succeed his father in office and that in 1005/6 he retired from court to his new foundation at Eynsham. Clayton, 'Ælfric', pp. 68-9, 85-6; B. Yorke, 'Æthelmær: The foundation of the abbey at Cerne and the politics of the tenth century', in K. Barker, (ed.), *The Cerne Abbey Millennium Lectures* (Cerne Abbas, 1988), pp. 15-25. For the different periods of Æthelred's reign see S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready': A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980).

[3] C. Cubitt, 'Virginity and misogyny in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England', *Gender and History* 12.1 (2000): 1-32.

Winchester and later Archbishop of Canterbury, Wulfsige, Bishop of Sherborne, and Wulfstan, whose career is detailed below.[4] Ælfric was not an isolated figure but was in contact with some of the most influential figures of his time. It is also important to stress that his relationships with these men were not one-sided, but formed part of a reform circle whose membership was comprised of the lay and ecclesiastical elite. Wulfstan, for example, reworked some of Ælfric's homilies. Bishop Wulfsige asked for his advice on matters of reform.[5]

The corpus of Ælfric's work has been firmly established by scholars such as Clemoes and Pope. He issued two series of *Catholic Homilies* in the early 990s; he reissued the first series with additions and amendments in 1005/6.[6] These works were intended for preaching to a mixed audience of monks and laity during the mass, though it should be noted that the second series might have required some selection and adaptation by the preacher.[7] His *Lives of Saints* were issued after his first issue of the two series of *Catholic Homilies*, but still in the early 990s. They were written for his lay patron Æthelweard and could have been used for private study or for public preaching.[8]

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[4] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 21.
[5] Cubitt, 'Virginity', pp. 21-2 and esp. n. 131; Wilcox, *Prefaces*, pp. 29-30; D. Bethurum (ed.), *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957), nos VI, XII, XVII.
[6] P. Clemoes, 'The chronology of Ælfric's works', in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins* (London, 1959), pp. 212-47; J. C. Pope (ed.), *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection* 1, E. E. T. S. os 259 (1967), pp. 136-45; P. Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, E.E.T S. ss 17 (1997); M. R. Godden (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, E.E.T.S. ss 5 (1979); B. Assmann (ed.), *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben, reprinted with a supplementary introduction by P. Clemoes* (Darmstadt, 1964). The precise dating of the first series of Ælfric's homilies is disputed. Clemoes argues for a date of 991, Godden for a date of c. 994. The argument centres around the dating of Archbishop Sigeric's death, based on the dating of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recensions and of two charters: S 882 and S 1377. However, a timespan of 991-4 is very precise for a medieval text, and further precision is not necessary for my thesis. The two position are set out in Clemoes, 'Ælfric', p. 179 and in M. R. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, E. E. T. S. ss 18 (2000), pp. xxxi-v.
[7] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 17; Wilcox, *Prefaces*, pp. 32-3; M. R. Godden, 'The development of Ælfric's second series of *Catholic Homilies*', *English Studies* 54 (1973): 209-16.
[8] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 17; Clemoes, 'Chronology', pp. 212-47; W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints,* 2 Vols, E. E. T. S. os 76, 82, 94, 114 (1966).

Ælfric was also responsible for a number of pastoral letters, biblical translations, individual homilies, occasional pieces, and a *Grammar* and *Glossary*.[9]

Archbishop Wulfstan was an important figure in the turbulent politics of late tenth- and early eleventh-century England. His early life is obscure, but it seems likely that he had some connections with eastern England as he is buried at Ely. In 996 he was consecrated as bishop of London. He remained there until 1002 when he transferred to the sees of Worcester and York, which he held in plurality until his death in 1023.[10] His career spanned the latter part of Æthelred's reign, the years of Danish conquest and Cnut's early year as king. There is no direct contemporary evidence to place him in monastic orders. The *Liber Eliensis* and John of Worcester both claim that he was a monk and an abbot before he became a bishop, but these sources of course post-date his death by about a century. Bethurum notes that of 116 bishops who were appointed between 960 – 1066, only fourteen were definitely in secular orders, and that none of the known seculars held York or Canterbury. She also notes that Worcester was a monastic see. Hill argues that although Wulfstan was more likely than not to have been a monk, the main focus of his career was the secular church.[11] Wulfstan played an active role in the politics of the period, a role that extended beyond the boundaries of his diocese. His regular attestation of the witness lists of charters 996-1023 indicates that he attended meetings of the Witan. In 1014 he consecrated Ælfing as bishop of London,

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[9] B. Fehr (ed.), *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics, Reprint with a Supplement to the Introduction by Peter Clemoes* (Darmstadt, 1966); S. E. Crawford, (ed.), *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, E. E. T. S. os 160 (1922, revised 1969); J. C. Pope (ed.) *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols, E. E. T. S. os 259 –60 (1967-8); J. Zupitza (ed.), *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar: Text und Varianten*, 2nd edition ed. H. Gneuss (Berlin, 1966). For a full account of his corpus see Clemoes, 'Corpus', pp. 212-47 and Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, pp. 136-45.

[10] D. Whitelock (ed.). *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (London, 1963, 3rd edition), pp. 7-10.

[11] Bethurum, *Homilies*, pp. 54-68; J. Hill, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, reformer?', in M. Townend (ed.), *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 311-2.

and in 1020 he consecrated Æthelnoth as archbishop of Canterbury and possibly Edmund as bishop of Durham.[12]

Wulfstan's extant corpus of work covers legal, social and religious matters.[13] He drafted the six later codes of Æthelred, V – VIII Æthelred, and also Cnut's two lawcodes, I – II Cnut.[14] He also produced the *Institutes of Polity*, a tract on the ideal ordering of a Christian society.[15] His religious works included a number of homilies,[16] a code for the secular priesthood known as the *Canons of Edgar*,[17] and a collection of canon laws formerly known as the *Excerptiones Pseudo-Egberti* but entitled *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection* by its most recent editors.[18] It is important not to draw too firm a distinction between Wulfstan's legal, social and religious works. Wormald has convincingly argued that Wulfstan was primarily interested in the reordering of the English into a holy Christian society, and that all his works were designed to pursue this end.[19]

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[12] D. Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, homilist and statesman', *T. R. H. S.* 24, 4th series (1942): 25-9; Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, pp. 7-28; Bethurum, *Homilies*, pp. 54-68.

[13] For a full consideration of the historiography of Wulfstan studies and the establishment of his corpus see P. Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-century state-builder', in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York*, pp. 9-28.

[14] K. Jost, 'Einige Wulfstantexte und ihre Quellen', *Anglia* 56 (1932), pp. 265-315; D. Whitelock, 'Wulfstan and the laws of Cnut', *English Historical Review* 63 (1948): 433-52; D. Whitelock, 'Wulfstan's authorship of Cnut's laws', *English Historical Review* 70 (1955): 72-85; Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan', pp. 10-11.

[15] K. Jost (ed.), *Die "Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical"* (Bern, 1959).

[16] Bethurum, *Homilies*. Her establishment of the homiletic corpus has been added to by J. Wilcox in his 'The dissemination of Wulfstan's homilies', in C. Hicks (ed.), *England in the Eleventh Century* (Stamford, 1992), pp. 199-217. He includes extra homilies from A. Napier (ed.), *Sammlung der ihm zugeschreibenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit* (Zurich, 1967). Bethurum accepted them as Wulfstanian but rejected them as homilies.

[17] R. Fowler (ed.), *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar*, E. E. T. S. os 266 (1972).

[18] This collection was compiled and possibly revised by Wulfstan. It was formerly thought that the collection pre-dated Ælfric's letters and that Ælfric used it as a source. However modern scholarship argues that it was compiled by Wulfstan and that it used Ælfric's letters as a source. For further discussion see Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan', pp. 16-7; P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume 1* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 213-9; J. E. Cross and A. Hamer (eds.), *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 17-22.

[19] Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 195-208, 449-65.

The identification of authorial voices for Ælfric and Wulfstan has an important methodological impact on my approach to their work. It means that each individual author's works can be discussed as a group; for example, arguments based on one homily can be substantiated by reference to other works in the corpus. It also allows for a broadly based consideration of each author's use of their source material. Ælfric self-consciously worked within a Carolingian genre of composition, in which the author aimed to transmit the authoritative voices of his predecessors by using their works to compile his own homilies.[20] In his first letter to Sigeric, Ælfric cites his sources as Augustine, Jerome, Bede, Gregory and sometimes Haymo.[21] He used three main homiliaries, those of Smaragdus, Haymo of Auxerre and Paul the Deacon.[22] Ælfric's use of other homilies in his own compositions should not of course be interpreted as mere translation or copying. He frequently altered and synthesised his sources in order to produce works that he felt were necessary for his audience to know.[23] Wulfstan also worked within the Carolingian tradition. His use of Ælfric's works has been convincingly demonstrated. However he also accessed Carolingian works directly. His sources include works such as the *Capitula* of Theodulf, the *Penitential of Pseudo-Theodore*, and the *Penitential of Pseudo-Egbert* which consisted primarily of material by Halitgar of Cambrai. His use of the name Lupus also follows Carolingian tradition.[24] Like Ælfric, Wulfstan worked at a distance from his sources. He too altered and synthesised them.[25] The use made by Ælfric and Wulfstan of their sources shows that

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[20] J. Hill, 'Authority and intertextuality in the works of Ælfric', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 131 (2005): 157-8.

[21] J. Hill, 'Translating the tradition: Manuscripts, models and methodologies in the composition of Ælfric's Catholic Homilies', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 79 (1997): 49; Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, Praefatio.

[22] Hill, 'Authority and intertextuality', p. 161; J. Hill, 'Ælfric and Smaragdus', *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): 203-37; C. L. Smetana, 'Ælfric and the homiliary of Haimo of Halberstadt', *Traditio* 17 (1961): 457-69; C. L. Smetana, 'Ælfric and the early medieval homiliary', *Traditio* 15 (1959): 163-204. Smetana incorrectly believed Ælfric's citation of Haymo to refer to Haymo of Halberstadt. This attribution has since been corrected to Haymo of Auxerre, see R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789 – 895* (London, 1977), pp. 172-4.

[23] Clemoes, 'Ælfric', p. 187; Hill, 'Translating the tradition', pp. 43-65.

[24] Hill, 'Archbishop Wulfstan', pp. 313-9; Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan', p. 29.

[25] A. Orchard, 'Crying wolf: Oral style and the *Sermones Lupi*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): 239-40.

their theology has to be considered as part of a broader European form of Christianity. While I use scholarship on their sources throughout the body of this chapter I have not identified new sources for ideas where those sources are currently unknown. Such a search is beyond the remit of my thesis and would not have been possible within my time and space constraints. However, since their principal sources have already been discovered, it has been possible to identify ideas about motherhood to which Ælfric would have had access, but which he chose not to transmit.

The position of Ælfric and Wulfstan as part of the Benedictine reform movement has also affected my methodological approach. As noted in the introduction, reform theology did not provide a monolithic block of ideas on which Ælfric and Wulfstan could draw. Many reformers tried to impose conformity on the observances of the clergy by promoting virginal monasticism as the true form of religious life.[26] The differences in the views of Ælfric and Wulfstan on sexuality are discussed below. It must be noted here that Ælfric used women and virginity as a way of talking about male monasticism.[27] There is a methodological tension between the nature of the texts and my use of them to investigate Anglo-Saxon motherhood. This tension cannot be easily resolved but must be kept in mind throughout the chapter. Despite Ælfric's preoccupation with male virginal monasticism it will nevertheless become clear that his presentation of women and sexuality is consistent not just in his treatment of virginity but also in his discussions about marriage and lay sexuality. Although his treatment of motherhood was not intended to provide a model, it is still possible to use it to discern his attitudes to maternity. The extent to which the ideas of Ælfric and Wulfstan might have affected their audiences will be discussed below in my consideration of the place of their works within their social framework.

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[26] C. Cubitt, 'Review article: The tenth-century Benedictine reform in England', *Early Medieval Europe* 6.1 (1997): 77-94; R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 170-201.
[27] Cubitt, 'Virginity', pp. 1-32.

Sin, sexuality and salvation: theologies of human reproduction.

Both Ælfric and Wulfstan thought that God created Adam and Eve so that they and their offspring could replace in heaven the angels who had fallen into hell. This can be seen in Ælfric's *De Initio Creaturae*, the first homily in his first series of Catholic homilies, and in Wulfstan's homily beginning *Incipiunt Sermones Lupi*, which is partly based on Ælfric's work.[28] Ælfric wrote:

> *Þa wolde god gefyllan 7 geinnian þone lyre þe forloren wæs of ðam heofenlicum werode, 7 cwæð þæt he wolde wyrcan mannan of eorðan, þæt se eorðlica man sceolde geþeon 7 geearnian mid eaðmodnysse þa wununge on heofenan rice þe se deofol forwyrhte mid modignysse.*[29]

Implicit in this is the idea that sexual reproduction was part of God's plan for humanity in its unfallen state, an idea that Wulfstan makes more explicit:

> *And to ðam hy gesceop God ælmihtig, þæt hy 7 heora ofspring scoldan gefyllan 7 gemænigfyldan þæt on heofenum gewanod wæs, þæt wæs ungerim þæt ðænon þurh deofles ofermodignese into helle behreas.*[30]

There is no known direct homiletic source for lines 63-6 of *De Initio Creaturae*, nor for the ideas it promulgates.[31] Ælfric's treatment in this homily of the creation and fall of the angels, which precedes this passage, draws primarily on a variety of scriptural passages, supplemented by works written or influenced by Gregory the Great.[32] The proceeding passage that describes God's actual creation of Adam and Eve closely

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[28] Clemoes, *Homiies* 1, I; Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI and pp. 293-8.
[29] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 62-6, 'Then God intended to fill and restore the loss that was completely lost from the heavenly throng, and said that he intended to make men from earth, that the earthly man would have to prosper/increase, and earn through humble-mindedness the dwelling in the heavenly kingdom that the devil had forfeited through pride'. My translation here and throughout, unless otherwise specified. For a reference to God giving Adam and Eve and their offspring the chance to dwell in paradise without death see Clemoes, *Homilies 1*, VII, ll150-6.
[30] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI, ll 36-9, 'And God Almighty made them, so that they and their offspring would have to fill and increase that which was wanting in the heavens, that was the countless number who through the devil's pride fell from there into hell'.
[31] M. Godden, 'The sources of Ælfric, Catholic Homily 1.1 (Cameron B.1.1.2)', 1999, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/, accessed March 2005.
[32] M. Fox, 'Ælfric on the creation and fall of the angels', *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 193-9.

follows Genesis 2.[33] The idea that God created man that he and his offspring could replace the fallen angels is not found in scripture. It is however found in the New Minster foundation charter of 966.[34] The document was composed by Bishop Æthelwold and it begins with an account of salvation history, starting with the creation and fall of the angels, and followed by the creation and fall of man. It was intended to be read out to the brothers at New Minster at certain points in the year.[35] Ælfric, as discussed in the introduction, was educated by Æthelwold, presumably at the cathedral school in the Old Minster, at some point between Æthelwold's arrival in 963 and his death in 984.[36] The New Minster charter was not necessarily the direct source for Ælfric's theory that God made man to replace the fallen angels, but it demonstrates that the idea was connected to his teacher and was circulating in Winchester in the 960s and 970s, and it seems reasonable to assume that Ælfric was inculcated with it at this time.[37] Neither Ælfric or Wulfstan directly address the concept of sex in paradise, though the New Minster charter states:

> *Non luxuria eum stimulabat nefaria, sed continentia competens constringebat ad premia.*[38]

The idea that Adam and Eve had sex in paradise was found in Augustine, who assumed that it must have happened as a consequence of God's command to be fruitful and

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[33] M.R. Godden (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, E. E. T. S. ss 18 (2000), pp. 8-9.

[34] S 745; A.R. Rumble (ed.), *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters* (Oxford, 2002), IV, p. 75, '*Cui universa totius cosmi superficie condita subiciens, seipsum suosque posteros sibi subiecit quatenus eius ex secutura posteritas angelorum suppleret numerum celorum sedibus superbia turgente destrusum*', 'Subjecting all things on the surface of the universe to man, He subjected man and his progeny to Himself, until his descendants to come should make good the number of angels driven out, full of pride, from the dwellings of heaven'. Rumble's translation.

[35] Rumble, *Winchester*, VI, p. 92. Unfortunately the part of the charter that states when in the year it should be read out is missing.

[36] J. Wilcox (ed.), *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham, 1994), p. 7.

[37] The idea is also found in *Genesis A* and in S 853, a Burton abbey charter issued by Æthelred to his scriptor Ælfwine. Johnson argues that *Genesis A*, the New Minster refoundation charter and S 853 all used a common source for the myth that God created the physical world as a direct result of the Fall of the angels. Ælfric and Wulfstan do not directly follow this account of creation, but the idea that God created mankind to replace the fallen angels forms part of the myth's cosmology. D. F. Johnson, 'The Fall of Lucifer in *Genesis A* and two Anglo-Latin royal charters', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 97.4 (1998): 500-21.

[38] Rumble, *Winchester*, VI, p. 77, 'Abominable wantonness did not arouse him, but an appropriate continence constrained him for its own rewards'. Rumble's translation.

multiply. He argued, however, that it occurred as an act of will rather than through desire.[39] It is possible that this idea was taken from an Augustinian source, though the line of transmission is unknown. Although the New Minster charter indicates that Ælfric was aware of this idea it was one he chose not to expound explicitly in his homilies. This was possibly because the first series of homilies, unlike the charter, were designed to be read to the laity, who were in Ælfric's opinion less likely than the religious to be able to appreciate the distinction in God's plan for humanity between sex through will and sex through lust.

It is now necessary to turn to the theology of human reproduction within the fallen world in the thought of Ælfric and Wulfstan. Lynne Grundy has convincingly argued that Augustinian ideas about the Fall were hugely influential on Ælfric. Augustine did not see sexuality as a cause of the Fall, but he did see desire as a result of the Fall and as the transmitter of original sin. Once Adam and Eve were cast out of paradise, reproduction was no longer possible without desire, and that desire transmitted original sin across the generations.[40] Ælfric also saw original sin as inherent in all humanity from birth:

> *Ælc man bið mid synnum gestryned and geboren ðurh adames forgægednysse. ac he bið eft criste acenned on ðære halgan gelaðunge. þæt is on godes cyrcan þurh fulluht; þæt wæter aðwehð þonne lichaman and se halga gast aðwehð ða sawle fram eallum synnum. and se gefulloda man bið þonne godes bearn gif he on riht hylt fæder 7 meder. þæt is crist and his bryd seo ðe dæghwomlice acenð gastlice cild.*[41]

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[39] J. Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague, 1978), pp. 25-7. For Augustinian influence on Ælfric see L. Grundy, *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology* (London, 1991), esp. pp. 88-95 for the creation and fall of the angels and man.

[40] Grundy, *Books*, p. 95-6; Augustine, *De peccato originali*, XXXVIII.43, in C. F. Urba and J. Zycha (eds.), *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, CSEL 42 (1902), p. 201 ll 3-4.

[41] Godden, *Homilies 2*, I, ll 110-6, 'Each man is begotten in sin and born through Adam's transgression, but he is then born to Christ in the holy assembly, that is through baptism into the church of God. The water cleanses the body and the Holy Ghost cleanses the soul from all sin. And the baptised man is then the child of God if he rightly holds father and mother, that is Christ and his bride, she who daily bears spiritual children'.

This homily is an interesting example of the process of reflection in Ælfric's mind on his earlier work. The extract quoted here has no direct source.[42] He had earlier remarked that man was born to sinful flesh, but here he develops the idea.[43] Unlike Augustine, Ælfric did not explicitly locate the transmission of original sin in desire,[44] but he does perhaps imply it when he states that Mary was not defiled but hallowed through conception, that she alone gave birth without experiencing desire, and that her experience of childbirth was uniquely painless.[45] Nevertheless, in Ælfric's thought original sin is transmitted through the generations by sexual reproduction, a form of parenthood that he contrasted directly with the spiritual cleansing and rebirth in Christ provided by the spiritual father and mother of all Christians: Christ and his bride the Church. The effect of this contrast is to highlight the sinfulness of bodily reproduction.

Wulfstan also linked sexual reproduction to the Fall, but not in an identical way to Ælfric. Unlike Ælfric, in his vernacular homilies he did not teach about baptism as a form of rebirth. In his vision of an ideal Christian society, the *Institutes of Polity*, he described baptism as a way of admitting people into the Christian Church, but this entry took the form of a contract with God,[46] an ideal that he transmitted to the laity in his homilies. Baptism acted as a *wedd* or contract in which an individual's belief and behaviour on earth was regulated by God's command, and which offered eternal life and happiness in exchange for each Christian's obedient fulfilment of their promises.[47] Wulfstan did order the baptism of babies within thirty or thirty-seven days,[48] but he did not explicitly teach that human beings are born in sin in his extant vernacular homilies.

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[42] Godden, *Introduction*, pp. 346-7, 349.
[43] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XI, ll 144-5. See also Godden, *Homilies* 2, XIII, ll 126-7 and XV ll 107-11; Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, XI, ll 134-5.
[44] Grundy, *Books*, pp. 98-9.
[45] Clemoes, Homilies 1, II, ll 196-7; Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 37-41, 83-5.
[46] *I Polity* 120-3, 128 / *II Polity* 226-9, 234, pp. 155-6, 164.
[47] Bethurum, *Homilies*, XIII, ll 19-25.
[48] Fowler, *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar*, 15; Napier, *Sammlung*, XXIV, p. 120, ll 8-9.

The absence of the idea that baptism is a form of rebirth from Wulfstan's extant vernacular corpus requires careful consideration. Arguments from negative evidence always carry the risk that apparent absence is merely an accident of survival. Godden has recently argued that it is possible Wulfstan did not have copies of all Ælfric's works.[49] However, the idea of baptism as rebirth is found in Copenhagen 1595, a manuscript which was produced at Worcester between 1002-16, and which contains glosses, corrections and titles in Wulfstan's own hand in every quire. The manuscript contains a sermon in Latin composed largely from excerpts from Augustine's *De baptismo contra Donatistas* and from his *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*.[50] Cross argues that this sermon, along with three others in the collection, looks like a composition made by Wulfstan in Latin as preparation for 'later elaboration into the vernacular'.[51] Wulfstan did include in his Old English *Sermo de Baptismo* a passage from this Latin sermon on the importance of the act of baptism rather than the priest who performs the ritual.[52] However, he did not include in any of his extant vernacular homilies the Latin homily's main argument about rebaptism, that there are two births, one into mortality and the flesh, one into spirituality and eternity, and that each birth occurs only once:

Quomodo uterisnon potest repeti, sic nec baptismum.[53]

Nor did he include the lengthy exposition from the Latin sermon that compares those born from the church to those born from freeborn mothers like Sarah, and those born from heretics to those born from maidservants like Hagar. It is of course possible that he preached this sermon in the vernacular from his Latin notes.[54] However, he did not

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[49] M. R. Godden, 'The relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric: A reassessment', in M. Townend (ed.), *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 96-7.
[50] T. N. Hall, 'Wulfstan's Latin sermons', in M. Townend (ed.), *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 96-7, 100.
[51] J. E. Cross and J. Morrish (eds.), *The Copenhagen Wulfstan Collection: Copenhagen Konelige Bibliotek Gl. Kgl. Sam. 1595*, E.E.M.F. 25 (1993), p.19; Hall, 'Wulfstan', p. 100.
[52] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VIIIc, ll 36-45; Hall, 'Wulfstan', pp. 100, 136-7.
[53] Hall, 'Wulfstan', p. 136.
[54] I owe this suggestion to Dr. Elizabeth Tyler.

translate it into his vernacular written sermons as they are represented in the surviving record. The survival of two of his vernacular homilies on baptism that do not explain baptism as rebirth indicates that Wulfstan did not consider the idea as the only means of teaching his audience. It also suggests that it is at least possible that he considered it to be an inappropriate form of exposition. His vernacular sermons explaining basic Christian ideas such as the Lord's Prayer, the creed and the significance of baptism were presumably produced not just for his personal use but also for distribution among his pastoral clergy, so that they could preach them to their parishioners. It is possible that Wulfstan did not include Augustine's ideas about rebirth through baptism and his comparison of free women with good priests and maidservants with heretics because he felt that the idea was too complex and open to misinterpretation if he was not there to prevent any misunderstanding. The idea of a contract was probably more easily understandable than that of rebirth, as it was rooted in everyday experience and did not require explanation.

Wulfstan did however link sexual reproduction to the Fall in his homily *Incipiunt Sermones Lupi*. After his account of the creation and fall of the angels, and God's creation of Adam and Eve so that they and their offspring can replace them, he continues:

> *Þa beswac deofol 7 forlærde his wif ærest 7 heo hine syððan þæt hy abrecan Godes bebod 7 ætan of ðam forbodenan wæstme. And sona swa þæt wæs þæt hi swa gedon hæfdon, þa hæfdon hy forwohrte hy sylfe 7 wurdon of þære myrhðe aworpene þe hy ær on wæron, 7 on þis wræclice lif bescofene 7 her syððan on earfoðan 7 on geswince wunedon; 7 of heom twam is eall mancynn cumen... And syððan aa swa heora ofspringes 7 mancynnes mare wearð, swa deofol ma and ma manna forlærde.*[55]

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[55] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI, ll 46-52, 56-7, 'Then the Devil deceived and misled his wife, and she him [Adam] after, that they should break God's command and eat from the forbidden fruit. And as soon as they had done this, then they ruined themselves, and they were cast out from the bliss that they were previously in, and thrown into this life of exile, and then they dwelt here in hardship and in tribulation, and from these two has all mankind come... And ever since, as their offspring and mankind became more, so the devil has deceived more and more men'.

Instead of filling heaven and replacing the fallen angels in bliss as they were supposed to, Adam, Eve and their offspring had to toil on earth, and subsequent generations continued to listen to the devil's teaching and so do the devil's work. Although Wulfstan did not directly link the transmission of original sin with sexual reproduction as Ælfric did, he forms a nexus which connects the Fall, reproduction, and damnation in humanity.

Ælfric and Wulfstan differed even more strongly in their ideas about parenting within the Christian community.

As discussed above, Ælfric associated sexual reproduction with the transmission of original sin and consequently with humanity in its fallen state. He saw baptism and entry into the Christian church as a second birth, which removed this taint of sin. However, although a monk himself, he was not dealing with an entirely monastic society, and so he had to consider the issue of sexual reproduction and parenting within the context of Christian marriage. In Ælfric's thought, this theme connected with issues of gender within the family unit, and was a site of considerable tension.

Despite his association of the conception of children with the Fall, Ælfric did allow that sexual intercourse within marriage was permitted, as long as it was undertaken for the sole purpose of procreation. He states in a letter to Sigeferth:

Gesceafta ne beoð for nanum oðran þinge astealde, butan for bearnteame anum.[56]

A chaste marriage therefore entailed abstention from sex when the woman was pregnant or menstruating.[57] His instructions on abstinence are addressed to men rather than

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[56] Assmann, *Homilien*, II, ll 160-1, 'Creation is established for nothing else, except for childbearing alone'; P. Jackson, 'Ælfric and the purpose of Christian marriage: A reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, lines 120-30', *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2000): 242-4. For the relevance of Ælfric's theology on chaste marriages for his patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær, see R. K. Upchurch, 'The Legend of Chrysanthus and Daria in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', *Studies in Philology* 101.3 (2004): 250-69.

women, and therefore assume that the man will be the active partner in initiating sex.[58] Assuming that couples lived chastely within their marriage, having sex only for children, they would be granted a thirty-fold reward, hierarchically subordinated to chaste widows and virgins, but still taking their place in heaven.[59] Ælfric, then, defines all Christians eschatologically according to their sexual status, and situates the production of children within a Christian framework.

His placement of chaste marriage couples within a Christian framework did however cause Ælfric some discomfort, a discomfort that is evident in his homily for the Nativity of the Virgin.[60] Although in his first series of homilies he refused to provide a homily on the subject, for fear of falling into heresy, he later supplied this homily in his reissue of the series c. 1005-6.[61] The homily concerns itself with and offers instructions for the correct Christian behaviour of lay and religious men and women, and thus assumes a mixed audience.[62] It demonstrates the tension within Ælfric's thought between the idea that sexual reproduction within a chaste marriage can be placed within a Christian framework, and the idea that sexuality is associated with the transmission of original sin. In the homily, Ælfric states categorically that chaste married couples who are united for the sake of the children they can bring to the faith will receive their reward in heaven, though they will shine less brightly than virgins or chaste widows.[63] He even states that a humble-minded wife is more pleasing to God

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[57] Godden, *Homilies* 2, VI, ll 120-3, J. C. Pope (ed.), *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection* 2, E.E.T.S. os 260 (1968), XIX, ll 111-4.
[58] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 17.
[59] Assman, *Homilien*, III, ll 367-82; Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, IX, ll 205-13;Godden, *Homilies* 2, IV, ll 299-305 and VI, ll 118-35; Jackson, 'Ælfric', pp. 240-5.
[60] Assmann, *Homilien*, III.
[61] P. Clemoes, 'The chronology of Ælfric's works', in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins* (London, 1959), pp. 245-6; M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary', *Anglia* 104 (1986): 294-5.
[62] M. Clayton, 'Homiliaries and preaching in Anglo-Saxon England', *Peritia* 4 (1985), p. 239. While it instructs female virgins not to be proud, it also instructs parents not to offer inferior children to the service of God, using the examples of both Abraham and Anna, and it contains other instructions to the laity about not offering inferior gifts to God's church.
[63] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 131-6, 510-31.

than a proud virgin, though his emphasis seems to be more on forbidding pride than praising matrimony.[64] However, despite this, he nevertheless insists that unlike virgins, those who dwell in marriage do not completely sacrifice their sexuality to God, and that they must wash away their guilt with alms.[65] Although he allows the theoretical ideal of a Christian chaste marriage in which sexuality is regulated by the need for children, when he turns to concrete guidelines for behaviour, he still assumes that sexuality within marriage requires atonement, and thus implicitly suggests that sexuality even within a Christian chaste marriage remains tainted by sin.

Ælfric possibly emphasised his point on the impure nature of sexual reproduction by the use of the parable of the sower. Immediately after he states that married people need to atone for their incomplete sacrifice to God, he poses a question.[66] Some people, he says, ask why God wants to create children from *dyrnum forligrum*, as no child can exist unless God creates it, body and soul. Ælfric answers these people by the use of a metaphor:

> *Gif hwa forstelð hwæte and þæt forstolene sæwð, hwæt ah þæt corn geweald, þæt hit wearp se sædere mid unclænre handa on ða clænan moldan, oððe hwi sceolde seo eorðe hyre wæstmas ofteon ðam unscyldigum sæde for ðam scyldigan sædere, þonne god wyrcð oft micel to gode of manna unrædum þurh his micclan godnysse.*[67]

A precise interpretation of this passage depends on what Ælfric meant by *dyrnum forligrum*. It could be intended to denote evil adultery, or evil fornication, as the word *forligr* can be used for either. It is possible that he is only answering the question of why God allows children to come from adulterous relationships, a theme addressed by

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[64] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 392-408.
[65] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 300-5.
[66] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 306-18.
[67] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 311-7. 'If someone stole wheat, and sowed what they stole, who has power over the corn, that the sower sowed with unchaste hands into the chaste earth? Or why must the earth withhold her fruit from the sinless seed on account of the sinful sower, when God often works greatly to the good from the folly of men, through his great goodness'.

Augustine in one of Ælfric's sources for the homily, *De bono coniugali*.[68] However, two points within the passage suggest that Ælfric also intended sexual reproduction within marriage to be understood. First, the passage is placed between his instructions that those who are married are not completely pure and need to wash away their sins with alms, and his injunction that virgins must not scorn their mothers even though the virgins are pure and their mothers are sexually active women. The pre- and proceeding passages allude to sex within marriage, and so the context suggest that Ælfric intended his metaphor to be understood as referring at least in part to sexual reproduction within marriage. Second, his use of the metaphor of the sower suggests a comparison with the parable of the sower in Matthew, a parable which was used in medieval exegesis as a basis for the thirty-, sixty- and one hundred-fold rewards in heaven.[69] Ælfric, unlike Augustine, interpreted this reward as being based exclusively on a person's sexuality, as regulated by chaste marriage, chaste widowhood and virginity respectively.[70] There was no reward at all assigned for unregulated sexuality,[71] and so Ælfric's use of this metaphor suggests that he intends sexual reproduction within marriage to be understood here. Possibly *dyrnum forligrum* was intended to denote marital intercourse that was not regulated by the need for children. The passage, taken as a whole, implies that although God can redeem the outcome, sexual reproduction involves sin. Ælfric does not allow for the possibility that God will purify the process even within marriage.

The reasons for this anxiety about sexuality can possibly be found in the fact that Ælfric operated within the milieu of the Benedictine Reform and more specifically in his education at Winchester. The reformers tried to impose conformity on the

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[68] This interpretation is assumed by Clayton, 'Nativity', p. 309.
[69] I owe this suggestion to Morgan Hogarth.
[70] Augustine explicitly refused to assign these rewards to specific gifts in one of Ælfric's main sources for this homily, *De sancta virginitate*. P. G. Walsh (ed. and trans.), *Augustine, De Bona Coniugali, De Sancta Virginitate* (Oxford, 2001), *De sancta virginitate*, CXLVI pp. 132-3; Clayton, 'Nativity', p. 311.
[71] Jackson, 'Ælfric', p. 242

observances of the clergy, a conformance that was rooted in the promotion of virginal monasticism as the true from of religious life, and therefore in a repudiation of sex.[72] Ælfric's teacher Bishop Æthelwold was a particularly vigorous proponent of this ideal, and in 964 he forcibly expelled the secular married clergy from the Old and New Minsters at Winchester.[73] Indeed, the refoundation charter of New Minster blames Eve for destroying Adam with the ways of a woman and with seductive blandishments.[74] The process of reform at other houses was much more gradual, to the extent that it cannot be accurately dated.[75] The connection of women and sexuality with the Fall will be discussed more fully below. However, while this connection was a powerful weapon specifically against the secular married canons,[76] the expulsion of the canons and the connection of the Fall with sexuality suggests that reformist anxiety about sexuality was particularly highly charged at Winchester. It is therefore possible that Ælfric's distaste for sexuality within marriage comes specifically from his education and residence there.

Ælfric's ideal Christian marriage was moreover strongly gendered with reference to the interconnected issues of sexuality and power. This had an impact on his promulgation of parental roles within marriage, which were likewise strongly gendered. His views can be explored by using his account of the marriage of Abraham and Sarah in his homily *Kalendas Ianuarii Octabas et Circumcisio Domini* as a starting point and focus for discussion.[77] Obviously Abraham and Sarah lived before Christ and were therefore subject to the Old rather than to the New Law. The distinction between the

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[72] C. Cubitt, 'Review article: the tenth-century Benedictine reform in England', *Early Medieval Europe* 6.1 (1997): 77-94.
[73] J. Bately (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition 3, MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), *sa* 964; S. Keynes (ed.), *The Liber Vitae of New Minster and Hyde Abbey*, E.E.M.F. 26 (1996), p. 25.
[74] Rumble, *Winchester*, IV, p. 78.
[75] Wilcox, *Prefaces*, p. 4 n11; N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church at Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 – 1066* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 255-6.
[76] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 3; P. Stafford, 'Queens, nunneries and reforming churchmen: Gender, religious status and reform in tenth- and eleventh-century England', *Past and Present* 163 (1999), pp. 5-12.
[77] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI.

Old and the New Law is an important theme that runs through this homily.[78] Nevertheless, Ælfric quotes Paul's comment that all Christians are Abraham's seed, and Peter's presentation of Sarah as a model for all faithful women,[79] which enforces the didactic nature of the homiletic form and makes them a direct model for Christian married couples.

Within this homily, although Abraham and Sarah exemplify a chaste couple, Sarah is a more sexualised figure than Abraham. At the point in the homily where Ælfric recounts the moment at which they become parents, Abraham is identified by name but Sarah is identified as his *gebedda*, his bed companion, a term that emphasises her sexual identity.[80] Cubitt has convincingly argued that Ælfric sexualised women in his writings more consistently than men. Unlike men, women are often described as sexual temptresses, for example Jezebel is identified as a woman who enticed her husband to cruelty and to provoke God, and who after his death lived in *fulum forligere*.[81] On the other side of the same coin, the female saints who form the subject of Ælfric's saints' lives are all virgins, and all except Æthelthryth are martyred. His male saints are less easily categorised.[82]

Given that Ælfric associated sexuality with original sin, this greater sexualisation of women than men, even within a Christian context, has a huge impact on his representation of maternity, and this can be connected to his ideas about the Fall and

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[78] C. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis and London, 1999), p. 117.
[79] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI, ll 115-20. This passage was taken from Bede, see Godden, *Introduction*, p. 50. For the biblical injunctions see Galatians 3:9 and 1 Peter 3:6.
[80] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI, ll 40-1.
[81] Cubitt, 'Virginity', pp. 8-9, 16; W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints Volume 1*, E.E.T.S. os 76 and 82 (1881-5), XVIII, ll 270-1; see also eg Skeat, *Lives* 1, VIII, ll 9-17 on Aphrodosia the prostitute and her nine vile daughters, who tried to entice St. Agatha to abandon Christianity with their prostitute-like ways.
[82] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 15; R. Waterhouse, 'Discourse and hypersignification in two of the *Saints' Lives*', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts* (New York, 1996), p. 339.

the sin of Eve. While Ælfric does not consistently single out Eve as being to blame for the Fall,[83] he does present the pain of childbirth as God's punishment on women for Eve's actions. He translates Genesis closely, including its statement that God punishes Eve by multiplying her miseries and her pregnancies, by making her give birth in pain and sorrow, and by placing her under the dominion of her husband. Adam's punishment, in contrast, is not located in sexuality or in its consequences.[84] Ælfric did not see the Old Testament as a record of long ago times with no relevance to contemporary lives. He was of course concerned that it had to be correctly understood, citing in the preface to his translation of Genesis the perils of the unlearned misunderstanding the difference between the Old and New Law. However, by the process of interpretation of Old Testament stories as a prefigurement of the New Law instituted in Christ, Ælfric presents a view of history in which events are collapsed into one another. While time is linear, the significance of events is universal. Eve therefore is not just a historical figure but a woman whose actions define the status of all mothers who follow her. Ælfric's connection of maternal pain in childbirth, sexuality and the Fall was not limited to his translation of Genesis but can also be seen in his comment that Mary gave birth without pain because she remained a virgin.[85]

Ælfric's explicit contrast of Mary and Eve within the context of salvation history also highlights his association of sexuality, maternity and the Fall. Eve and Mary are not just implicitly but explicitly contrasted in two of Ælfric's homilies:

> *Uton beon eac gemyndige hu micelre geðincðe sy þæt haligan mæden Maria cristes moder; Heo is gebletsod ofer eallum wifhades mannum... Ure ealde moder Eua us beleac heofenan rices geat and seo halige Maria hit eft us geopenode.*[86]

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[83] For example see Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, l 111 which picks out Adam as transgressor.

[84] S. J. Crawford (ed.), *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, E.E.T.S. os 160 (1922), p. 90.

[85] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, II, ll 196-7.

[86] Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 292-8, 'Let us all be mindful how great the rank is of the holy maiden Mary, the mother of Christ. She is blessed over all wives... Our old mother Eve locked the gate of the kingdom of haven against us, and the holy Mary then opened it to us'; See also ll 79-86 for Ælfric's affirmation of Mary's uniqueness in bearing a child while remaining a virgin and untouched by lust.

Us becom deað 7 forwyrd þurh wif, 7 us becom eft lif 7 hredding þurh wimman.[87]

Eve as mother denied heaven to humanity; Mary as a virgin and mother of Christ opened the gates of heaven. Their respective roles in Fall and Redemption were also promulgated in the refoundation charter of New Minster and in the charters of Abingdon. In the New Minster refoundation charter Eve's seductive wiles convince Adam to eat the apple, which contrasts to Mary's virginal womb, from which Christ was born to remove the shadow of sin.[88] Ælfric's thoughts on this subject can be placed firmly within the context of the Æthelwoldian strain of the Benedictine Reform. His reflections on Mary as a salvational figure who is both mother and virgin will be considered below. For now it is sufficient to note that whatever significance he attached to Mary's maternity, he took pains to emphasise its uniqueness. In the passage cited above she was as *mæden* exalted over all other *wifhades mannum*. This is in the context of a homily which states that Christ that Christ chose a *clæne mæden* rather than a *wif* as his mother. Her exaltation is not as a virgin over women but as a virgin over sexually active women. Mary's virginal maternity was furthermore unachievable by any other woman, before or since, as she gave birth without the touch of a man and without desire.[89] The pure, virginal maternity of Mary emphasises the sinful sexual maternity of Eve, and Eve rather than Mary is 'everywoman'.

As discussed above, Ælfric drew a strong connection between sexuality and the transmission of original sin. Although he allowed for the possibility of a chaste marriage, in which sexual intercourse was undertaken only for the sake of children, this has to be set against his sexualisation of women, the association between Eve, childbirth and the Fall, and the unique purity of Mary's motherhood. These factors combine to

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[87] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XIII, ll 72-3, 'Death and destruction came to us through a wife, and then life and salvation came to us through a woman.'
[88] Rumble, *Winchester*, IV pp. 77-9.
[89] Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 37-41, 83-5.

indicate that for Ælfric, the maternity of all women, except Mary, must be tainted by sexuality and aligned with the Fall, even within the context of Christian marriage. In his homily on Christ's circumcision, at the precise point at which he discusses Abraham and Sarah as parents, Abraham is just Abraham, while Sarah is his *gebedda*. Parental roles were strongly gendered as maternity, unlike paternity, is inextricable linked to sexuality and the Fall.

Ælfric's gendering of parental roles was not limited to the association of female sexuality and therefore of maternity with the Fall. The power relationships within his ideal family unit were also strongly gendered:

> *Petrus eac se apostol tihte geleaffulle wif to eadmodnysse 7 gemetfæstnysse þus cweþende; Swa swa sara gehyrsumode abrahame: 7 hine hlaford het, þære dohtra ge sind wel donde. 7 na ondrædende ænige gedrefednysse.*[90]

The potential threat posed by Sarah's sexuality is contained by her humility and obedience to her *hlaford*, her lord and husband Abraham. Just as Eve was placed under the dominion of her husband in Genesis, so Sarah provides a model of wifely submission which is enjoined on all Christian women. The homily on Christ's circumcision is concerned with the differences between the Old and the New Law, but this passage makes it clear that Eve's punishment had not been redeemed by Christ's crucifixion.

Ælfric's gendered hierarchy of authority was not limited to the relationship between husband and wife. This can be seen in his explanation of God's renaming of Abram and Sarai as Abraham and Sarah.[91] Abram, meaning *heahfæder*, is replaced by Abraham, meaning *manegra þeoda fæder*. Fatherhood here becomes a divinely

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[90] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI, ll 116-20, 'Also Peter the Apostle urged faithful women to obedience and modesty, saying thus: Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord; you are their daughters, doing well and not fearing any affliction.'
[91] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI, ll 33-48.

appointed authority. The circumcision of the old law is patriarchal as only men bore the sign of the covenant in a father-son line fulfilled in Christ. Sarah, however, is not a matriarchal figure. Sara is translated as *min ealdor* and Sarah as *ealdor*. Ælfric explains that she moves from being *hire hiredes ealdor* to being *forðrihte ealdor*, that is, *ealra gelyfedra wifa moder*. While Ælfric uses fatherhood to convey authority over peoples, motherhood is not used to convey family authority. Furthermore, fatherhood is used to designate authority over nations, but Sarah's motherhood is only over believing women, and even that is only after the intervening step of a non-gendered parental authority.

Abraham's position as divinely appointed patriarch in this homily fits into Ælfric's theology of patriarchy, a strong theme that runs throughout his writings. For example, the *Sermo de Memoria Sanctorum* states:

> *We magon niman gode bysne ærest be ðam halgum heah-fæderum, hu hi on heora life gode gecwemdon and eac æt þam halgum þe þam hælende folgodon.*[92]

The sermon traces the careers of the patriarchs in succession to one another through the Old Testament in great individual detail, as they were intended to provide models for good conduct, for example the innocence and righteousness of Abel, the devotion of Enoch, the faith and obedience of Abraham and so on. The patriarchal succession of the Old Testament is considered by Ælfric in many other homilies[93] and in his treatises on the Old and New Testament.[94]

In his exposition of trinitarianism Ælfric can be seen to establish God as the ultimate patriarchal figure:

> *An anginn is ealra þinga, þæt is god ælmihtig... þeos þrinnes is an god. þæt is se fæder 7 his wisdom of him sylfum æfre acenned. 7 hyra begra willa þæt is se halga gast. he nis na acynned ac he gæð of þæm fæder 7 of ðam sunu gelica; þas*

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[92] Skeat, *Lives* 1, XVI, ll 9-12, 'We can take a good example first from the holy patriarchs, how they in their lives served God, and also from the saints who followed the Saviour'.
[93] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, III, XXXVI.
[94] Crawford, *Heptateuch*, pp. 25-80.

> *þry hades syndon an almihtig god, se gewohrte heofenas 7 eorðan 7 ealra gesceafta.*[95]

As Grundy argues, while Ælfric is careful to argue for a God in whom all three persons are equal and inseparable, he still sees the father as 'the beginning of all beginnings', because while the Son and the Spirit exist in relationship to the Father, the Father 'derives his nature from no other'.[96] His transmission of orthodox trinitarian theology establishes the Father as the all-powerful creative force behind the universe, in a passage he placed at the beginning of the first homily in his first series of homilies. He deliberately established paternal power as the beginning of all things at the beginning of his exposition of the Christian faith, as an initial principle that set the tone for all that came after.

God's paternal creation of the world is echoed in Ælfric's attribution of the creative ensouling aspect of pregnancy to him:

> *Nu ge magon tocnawon þæt ure sawle ne cumað of fæder ne of meder, ac se heofonlica fæder gescypð þone lichaman and hire geliffæst mid sawle.*[97]

This comment is not, according to Pope, to be found in any of Ælfric's immediate sources. However, it can be seen as an affirmation of orthodox Catholic teaching against Traducianism, a heresy which taught the spiritual generation of the soul by both parents and which was papally condemned in 498.[98] Ælfric's establishment of God as Father not only presents the act of creation as intrinsically paternal, echoing the eternal birth of the Son from the Father, it also has the effect of bolstering paternal power and authority.

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[95] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 1, 17-21, 'There is one beginning to all things, that is God Almighty... This threeness is one God, that is the father and his wisdom ever born from him, and the will of them both, that is the Holy Spirit. He is never born but goes from the father and from the son alike; these three persons are one God, who made the heavens and the earth and all creation.'

[96] Grundy, *Books*, p. 46.

[97] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, II, ll 232-4, 'Now you can know that our souls do no come from the father nor from the mother, but the heavenly father shapes the body and quickens it with the soul'. See also Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 170-6 and XX ll 260-5.

[98] M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 16.

Ælfric's reinforcement of human paternal power through its association with God as Father can also be seen expressed in the power of husbands over wives, and in the effect this has on the relative power and prestige of maternity. In Ælfric's first homily, God creates a man out of earth and names him Adam. He later creates a woman out of Adam's side, and asks him what she is to be called:

> *Þa cwæð Adam. heo is ban of minum banum 7 flæsc of minum flæsce. beo hire nama virago þæt is fæmne for ðan ðe heo is of hire were genumen. Þa sette adam eft hire oðerne naman aeua þæt is lif for ðan ðe heo is ealra lybbendra modor.*[99]

This passage comes from the homily discussed above in which Ælfric's exposition of the trinity establishes the paternal nature of creation, and it raises two interlinked issues. First, in naming Eve, Adam shares in the paternal power of God, and his power can therefore be seen as patriarchal in nature. Second, God's creation of Eve out of Adam's side and Adam's naming of her as Eve make her maternity dependent on and secondary to Adam's paternal power over her. Ælfric saw obedience to God as the primary duty of Adam and Eve and their disobedience as leading to the Fall,[100] he praised Abraham for his obedience to God,[101] and he promulgated obedience to God's commands as meriting eternal life.[102] While the patriarchs were obedient to God, their intrinsically paternal power was buttressed by their relationship with God and by God's designation as Father and Creator throughout Ælfric's writings. On one occasion he does state:

> *Ure ealde fæder Adam us gestrynde to deaðe and Crist us gestrynð gastlice to ðan ecan life.*[103]

This single example of disobedient paternity connected to the Fall has to be set in the context of his generally positive view of fatherhood. In presenting Abraham as a model for all Christians and Sarah as a model for Christian women Ælfric extends this

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[99] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 90-4, 'Then Adam said, she is bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh. Her name is virago, that is woman, because she is taken from her man. Then he later assigned her another name, Eve, that is life, because she is the mother of all living'.
[100] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 69-83.
[101] Skeat, *Lives* 1, XVI, ll 25-9.
[102] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VI, ll 95-7.
[103] Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 117-9, 'Our old father Adam begat us to death and Christ spiritually begets us to eternal life'.

paradigm of authoritative paternity and dependent maternity out of the age of the patriarchs to become the model of ideal family relationships for his audience.

To a limited extent Ælfric does address maternity as a theological theme. He considers the Church as mother, the motherhood of Mary, and the martyr mothers. Even when he discusses maternity in this non-sexual context, the connection of maternity to sexuality and the Fall is still problematic for him, and it remains subordinated to patriarchal power. However, he does consider rebirth in the church, maternal grief and maternal intercession as channels through which maternity mediated salvation. Mary's maternity is at the forefront of this consideration; however, he is more interested in her salvational virginity than in her salvational maternity.

Ælfric's treatment of Mary's motherhood provides another indication that human maternity was a problematic issue for him. Her maternity was important to him in the context of his concern to teach his audience to understand correctly the dual human and divine nature of Christ. He emphasised that when Christ was born of Mary he remained God as well as becoming man because both natures were necessary for the salvation of humanity.[104] He taught that Christ had two births, as he is eternally born from his father without any human mother, and he was born of his mother without any human father.[105] Christ's human nature was crucial as it was only through his humanity that he could suffer and die, and in doing so redeem mankind. He explains Christ's words on the cross in such terms:

> *Þa clypode drihten to his dreorian meder, efne her hangað nu ðin sunu, fæmne; swilce he cwæde þis is ðin gecynd ðus ðrowigendlic ðe ic of ðu genam.*[106]

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[104] Clemoes (ed), *Homilies* 1, XIII, ll 153-9; Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, I, ll 405-9; Assmann, *Homilien*, III ll23-4; Grundy, *Books*, p. 59.

[105] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, I, ll 241-4; Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 1-12.

[106] Godden, *Homilies* 2, XIV, ll 264-7, 'Then the lord called out to his sorrowing mother, "Woman, truly your son hangs here now," as if he said "this is your nature suffering thus, that I took from you"'; B. C.

Mary, as his mother, was the source and guarantor of Christ's humanity, and as such she played an important role in salvation.

Her role in this context was however subordinated to the redeeming power of her son, and this subordination can be specifically located in the nature of her maternity:

> *And þæt Word is gewohrt flæsc, 7 hit wunode on us. Nis þæt halige Word awend to flæsc, ac se heofonlice Ætheling her on þas woruld com, 7 þa menniscnysse genam of Marian innoðe, soð man acenned on sawle and on lichaman 7 wunode swaþeah God on þære godcundnysse, an ælmihtig Hælend, us to alysende.*[107]

Mary's maternity is defined not in terms of any social relationship between them but as a result of the human nature that Christ took from her womb. In this sense, her maternity can be seen as subordinate, as her son took his humanity from her and was the active partner in incarnation. Ælfric also emphasised the subordinate nature of Mary's maternity in his statement that Christ created his mother before he was born of her.[108] His description of Mary as a created being like all others, except for Adam, Eve and Christ,[109] can be seen as part of his concern to demonstrate that Mary was completely human, a concern that was motivated by his desire to stamp out heretical speculation about her birth and the need for her humanity to guarantee the humanity of Christ.[110] The effect of this was to subordinate her maternity as well as her humanity to the creative power of her son. The subordinate nature of Mary's maternity parallels the subordination within marriage of women to their husbands, and the effect this has on their maternal status and power. In Mary's case however she is dependent on her son who is also her bridegroom and her Creator.

Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 47-51. See also Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 20-6; Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, Xia, ll 7-11, 88-9.

[107] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, I, ll 403-8, 'And the Word is made flesh, and it dwelt among us. It is not that the Holy Word changed into flesh, but that the heavenly Ætheling came here into this world and took human nature from Mary's womb, true man born in soul and body, and yet dwelt as God, in divinity, one almighty God, in order to redeem us'. See also eg Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, II, ll 175-6.

[108] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 26-7; Godden, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 203-5.

[109] Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 59-69.

[110] Grundy, *Books*, p. 64.

When Ælfric uses the metaphor of the Church as mother it is frequently in connection with the rebirth of Christians in baptism. His homily *De natale Domini*, in the second series of homilies, provides a full exposition of his thoughts on the subject:

> *Ælc man bið mid synnum gestryned and geboren ðurh adames forgægednysse, ac he bið eft criste acenned on ðære halgan geladunge þæt is on godes cyrcan þurh fulluht; þæt wæter aðwehð þone lichaman and se halga gast aðwehð ða sawle fram eallum synnum, and se gefulloda man bið þonne godes bearn gif he on riht hylt fæder and moder, þæt is crist and his bryd, seo ðe dæghwomlice acenð gastlice cild and hwæðere ðurhwunað on clænum mægðhade.*[111]

While Christians are reborn though the church, they are purified through the Holy Ghost. The church's role as mother is portrayed in association with Christ, her bridegroom and with the Holy Spirit. Her maternity is solely concerned with childbirth. Ælfric does not extend the metaphor of motherhood to explain any other functions of the church, such as nurturing and teaching. Moreover, on every occasion on which he describes the church as mother, he also emphasises the spiritual nature of her maternity and her perpetual virginity. When placed in the context of baptism, this sets up an implied opposition between the spiritual, virginal maternity of the church with the bodily sexual maternity of the human mother. This opposition emphasises the distance between the two types of maternity.

Ælfric also connects maternity to the themes of grief and affective suffering. This can be seen in his treatment of the mothers of the martyred innocents,[112] of Mary suffering through Christ's death,[113] and of the mother of Nain.[114] Female grief has been

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[111] Godden, *Homilies* 2, I, ll 110-7, 'Each man is begotten in sin and born through Adam's transgression, but he is afterwards born to Christ in the holy assembly, that is through baptism into the church of God; the water cleanses the body and the holy Ghost cleanses the soul from all sin. And the baptised man is then the child of God, if he rightly holds his father and mother, that is Christ and his bride who daily gives birth to spiritual children and yet continues in pure virginity'. See also Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, IV, ll 263-4 and XXXV, ll 40-6; Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, XXII, ll 130-8 and XXXIX, ll 90-2; Assman *Homilien*, III, ll 85-130.

[112] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, V, esp. ll 48-53, 93-112.

[113] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, IX, ll 163-80 and XXX, ll 124-5.

[114] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, VI ll 184-95.

seen as a representation of the powerlessness of women. However, it has recently been argued that mourning should not be analysed as a sign of passivity, but as an active role in Anglo-Saxon culture with its own connotations and consequences.[115] For Ælfric, maternal mourning was an aspect of kin-based grieving for family members who were assumed to be either dead or marked for death. It seems likely however that alongside his association of the whole family group with grief, Ælfric saw mourning as a distinctively maternal activity. When he describes the grief of the heathens, the whole family mourns. When he describes mourning within a Christian context, however, it is a maternal role.

Ælfric's association of grief with maternity can be seen most strongly in his exclusive assignation of vicarious suffering to the mother–child bond. While all family members grieve, only mothers grieve to the extent that they share in the suffering of their children. Medieval devotion to Christ suffering through his humanity and to Mary's suffering through her compassion for him seems to have become a predominant form of piety in the eleventh century. No single area or time of origin has been found, but it was particularly marked in the Benedictine monasteries of Northern Europe.[116] Ælfric's writings on maternal grief share in this form of piety. As discussed above, Christ's anguish on the cross was a theological necessity for Ælfric. Christ had to be human in order to redeem mankind, and his suffering was a sign of his humanity. However, Mary's sorrow, which was not necessary for human salvation, was also important to him. In his homily on Mary's assumption, which was based on the *Epistola ad Paulam et Eustochiam*, he keeps the idea that Mary made Christ's death her own, but he adds a longer description of her state of mind:

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[115] P.C. Ingham, 'From kinship to kingship: Mourning, gender and Anglo-Saxon community', in J.C. Vaught with L. D. Bruckner (eds.), *Grief and Gender, 700-1700* (New York and Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 17-8.

[116] R. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800 – 1200* (New York, 2002), pp. 60-1.

> *Hire sawul wæs swiðe geangsumod mid micelre þrowunge. Þa ða heo stod dreorig forn angean cristes rode 7 hire leofe cild geseah mid isenum næglum on heardum treowe gefæstnod.*[117]

This addition emphasises her grief and connects it to her feelings for Christ as her child, which roots her suffering very firmly in her maternity. Ælfric also connects maternal grief and affective suffering in his homily on the Innocents.

The maternal grief of the mothers of the martyred innocents and of Mary was not however self-enclosed or powerless. Instead, it functioned as a form of shared martyrdom. Ælfric comments on the mothers of the innocents:

> *Eadige sind þa innoðas þe hi gebæron; 7 þa breost þe swilce gesicton; Witodlice þa moddru on heora cildra martyrdome þrowodon; þæt swurd þe ðære cildra lima ðurharn becom to þæra moddra heortan. 7 neod is þæt hi beon efenhlyttan þæs ecan edleanes, þonne hi wæron geferan þære ðrowunge.*[118]

Like their children, the mothers are martyred though the actions of Herod, who is described as *arleasa*, impious, a man who persecutes the faithful. Mary is also martyred through partaking in the suffering of her son:

> *Næs seo eadige Maria na ofslegen ne gemartyod lichomlice, ac gastlice. Þa ða heo geseh niman hire cild 7 adrifan isene næglas þurh ða handa 7 þurh ða fet: 7 syððan mid spere gewundian on ða sidan: þa wæs cristes þrowunge hyre þrowung; And heo wæs mare þonne martyr, for ðon þe mare wæs ða hyre modes þrowung þonne wære hyre lichoman gif heo wæs gemartyrod wære.*[119]

The bond that exists between mother and child is so strong that a mother suffers more in her soul through imaging the suffering of her children than martyrs suffer physically in the body from the tortures they endure. The mother-child bond, a relationship which for

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[117] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 137-40, 'Her soul was exceedingly anguished with great suffering when she stood, sorrowing, opposite the cross of Christ, and saw her beloved child fastened with iron nails to the hard cross'; B. C. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography and the Art of the Monastic Revival* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 97-8.

[118] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, V, ll 107-12, 'Blessed are the wombs that bore them, and likewise the breasts they sucked. Truly the mothers suffered through their children's martyrdom; the sword that ran through their children's limbs came to the mothers' hearts. And it is needful that they are partners in the eternal reward, when they were companions in suffering.'

[119] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, IX, ll 170-6, 'The blessed Mary was not slain or martyred bodily but spiritually. When she saw them take her child and drive iron nails through the hands and through the feet, and then wound the side with a spear, then Christ's suffering was her suffering. And she was the more a martyr, because the suffering of her mind was greater than [the suffering] of her body would be, if she were martyred'. See also Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 135-45.

Ælfric is normally connected to the Fall, sexuality and death, is transformed through mutual torment into a vehicle for eternal life and salvation for mother as well as martyr. Maternal martyrdom in Ælfric's thought is based on an emotional connection between mother and child rather than on a biological relationship. Ælfric does not for example invoke the biblical idea that a woman can be saved through childbearing.[120] Nevertheless, while the mother's suffering is in her soul and thus transcends her sexuality and her body, it is still based ultimately in her grief at the death of her children. Maternal martyrdom is the only instance in Ælfric's homilies in which a mother can claim a reward in heaven based on a bond with her children rather than on her sexual status, and Ælfric does not ascribe this type of martyrdom to any other familial, social or religious bond.

Ælfric also hints at a connection between maternity, grief and *memoria*. In early medieval Europe, the idea was prevalent that women were involved not just in public mourning but also in the tradition of *memoria*, a tradition in which the dead were kept present for the living.[121] Strategies which ensured this included liturgical commemoration, the recitation of songs and dancing at the graveside, the provision of tapestries embroidered with the deeds of the kindred and, in Dhuoda's case at least, the provision of a teaching manual for a distant son.[122] Keeping *memoria* alive guaranteed eternity for the community of believers, both the living and the dead,[123] it also underpinned political strategies in which families legitimised their claims to land and status by inheritance.[124] There has been some debate over the extent to which women retained responsibility for *memoria*, especially for prayers for the dead, in late tenth-

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[120] 1 Timothy 2:13-15.
[121] P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), p. 54.
[122] M. Innes, 'Keeping it in the family: women and aristocratic memory, 700 – 1200', in E. van Houts (ed.), *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 18-20, 24-9.
[123] E. V. del Alamo and C. S. Pendergast, 'Introduction', in E. V. del Alamo and C. S. Pendergast (eds.), *Memory and the Medieval Tomb* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 1-3.
[124] Innes, 'Aristocratic memory', p. 20.

and eleventh-century Europe. Geary argues that there was a shift away from women to monks as professional holders of family memory, a point disputed by van Houts.[125] The argument is however more a question of emphasis and balance rather than contradiction, as Geary implicitly allows for continuing collaboration between monastic and lay *familiae* in his analysis of female donors, a collaboration upon which van Houts insists.[126] It should be noted that this association between women, memory and the dead is an association based on kindred ties but not, except in the case of Dhuoda, specifically on maternity.

Ælfric does suggest a connection between grief, maternity and memory in the sense that he uses maternal grief as a way of understanding Christian witness. He portrays the mother of Nain as following the corpse of her son in the funeral procession, and says that she can be understood as a type of the church, sorrowing for the sins of her children.[127] Mary's witness of Christ on the cross is strongly linked to her grief at his death. She subsequently passes into the care of John, and teaches the disciples what she witnessed of Christ's humanity, a humanity that he took from her, and which both she and they understood through the offices of the Holy Ghost.[128] Ælfric's connection of grief to *memoria* is not however as firm as his connection of maternal grief to shared martyrdom, as Christian witness is by no means an exclusively or even a primarily maternal activity. For example, in the homily on the Assumption that describes Mary teaching the apostles, Mary is linked in her witness to the apostle John, who provided a written gospel account of Christ's life. Ælfric furthermore links Mary and John in this homily not only by their shared witness and Christ's committal of Mary into John's

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[125]Geary, *Phantoms*, pp. 62-3; E. van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe* (London, 1999), pp. 13-4.
[126] Geary, *Phantoms*, pp. 68-9; van Houts, *Memory*, pp. 13-4.
[127] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, VI, ll 84-95.
[128] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 52-60.

filial care, but also by their shared virginity. It was their shared virginity which, according to Ælfric, determined Christ's choice of John to care for his mother.[129]

Although Ælfric linked salvation to maternal grief through the ideas of maternal martyrdom and witness, it should be noted that he also very firmly distanced this maternal salvation from the possible experience of normal human mothers. Mary's maternity, as argued above, was presented as uniquely sinless and therefore unachievable by all other mothers. Ælfric links the maternity of the martyr mothers to Mary through his evocation of Simeon's prophecy, "a sword will pierce your heart".[130] Just as the martyred innocents explicitly prefigure Christ, so their mothers implicitly prefigure Mary. He also explicitly stated that the mothers of the martyred innocents are, through their fulfilment of Ezechial's prophecy about Rachel weeping for her children, a type of the church.[131] The mother of Nain is also represented as type of the church, weeping for the sins of her children.[132] The church, as well as Mary, was virgin as well as mother.

Ælfric's concern to separate the salvational power of mourning maternity from the lived experience of mothers can perhaps also be seen in his *Lives of the Saints*. In his *Lives* he frequently uses his accounts of peoples' actions to illustrate ideas found in his *Homilies*.[133] Vicarious maternal martyrdom is conspicuous by its absence from the *Lives*. Even in the context of the persecutions of the early Church Ælfric does not allow that sexual maternity could lead to salvation. The heathen mothers of saints grieve for the oncoming martyrdom of their children, but this grief is represented as an anti-Christian force by and through which mothers try to persuade their children to renounce

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[129] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 32-42.
[130] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, V, ll 108-10 and IX, ll 169-70.
[131] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, V, ll 116-22.
[132] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, VI, ll 194-5.
[133] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 7.

Christ.[134] Once converted, or if already Christian, mothers are physically rather than spiritually martyred alongside their children.[135] They do not grieve, but rather encourage their children to death, and therefore to eternal life:

> *Þa wundrode heora modor þæt hi swa wel ongunnon, and heo mid bliþum mode hyre bearn æfre tihte ælcne onsundron and sæde heom eallum. Ne fegde ic eowre lima ne ic eow lif ne forgeaf, ac middan-eardes scyppend eow sealde gast and lif, and he eft eow forgifð þæt ece lif mid him swa swa ge nu syllað eow sylfe for his æ... Gemiltsa me, min sunu, ic ðe to men gebær, beseoh nu to heofonum and besweawa þas eorðan and ealle ða gesceafta þæt him on synd nu, and understand be ðam hu se ælmihtiga god hi ealle gesceop, butan antimbre, of nahte, and ne forhta ðu ana for ðysum feondlican cwellere, ac underfoh þone deað swa swa ðine gebroðre dydon, þæt ic ðe underfo on eadignysse mid heom.*[136]

Ælfric's use of the word *underfon* evokes baptismal sponsorship, and in that sense he hints that the mother of these martyrs can be seen as a type of the church, though which believers are reborn. She urges her sons to salvation, but while she does not deny her maternity, Ælfric makes her, in her exercise of her maternal role, represent her mothering as secondary to and dependent upon the creative power of God.

In one sense, Ælfric's portrayal of maternal grief and its use as a basis for Christian salvation can be seen as part of a tradition of affective suffering. His evocation of the anguish of Mary at the cross and of the mother of the martyred innocents at the deaths of their children draws on a monastic tradition in which monks were encouraged to participate through their imaginations in the death of Christ.[137] The way in which he treats Mary's anguish suggests an identification with the suffering Christ which is

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[134] Skeat, *Lives* 1, IV, ll 195-201 and V, ll 34-9.
[135] Skeat, *Lives* 1, IV, ll 408-20; W.W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* 2, E.E.T.S. os 94 and 114 (1966), XXV, ll 195-9 and XXXV, ll 211-39.
[136] Skeat, *Lives* 2, XXV, ll 161-7, 175-82, 'Then their mother wondered that they strove so well, and with a joyous spirit she continually incited each one of her children individually, and she said to them all, "I did not join your limbs, nor did I give you life, but the creator of the world gave you soul and life, and he will give you again eternal life with him, just as you now give yourselves for his law... Have mercy on me, my son, I bore you to humanity, behold the heavens and consider the earth, and all creation that is on it now, and understand by it how God Almighty created them all, without one timber, and from nothing, and do not, you alone, dread the devilish murderer, but accept death, so that I may accept you in blessedness with them'.
[137] For this see R. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London, 1953), pp. 209-44; Fulton, *Judgement*, pp. 204-32.

specifically maternal. However, although his portrayal of maternal grief can be found primarily in his first series of Catholic Homilies, which aimed to provide priests with homilies to preach to a primarily lay audience,[138] he discourages women from claiming salvational maternal mourning for their own. Grief was obviously a very strong concept, and Ælfric either could or would not make it a non-maternal attribute, but by placing it in the realms of metaphor he diluted the extent to which it was available as a source of power and prestige to mothers.

The final theological theme that Ælfric invokes through maternity is that of intercession. The idea of Mary as an intercessor to her son for humanity was well established by the late tenth century. It was linked both to her virginity and to her maternity: to her maternity because her son took his human nature from her body, and to her virginity because she is free from the sins from which her petitioners need forgiveness.[139] Ælfric presents Mary as an intercessor in his homily on her Assumption. Interestingly, where he directly presents Mary as intercessor it is her maternity that he emphasises. In the short passage which recounts the delivery of Theophelus from his compact with the devil, the blessed Mary informs him that she has interceded for him with her son the judge.[140] In the longer account of the delivery of Bishop Basil and his town from the wrath of the apostate Julian, Basil orders the townsfolk to pray in a church dedicated to Mary so that God, through the intercession of his mother, might save them all from Julian.[141] Mary responds to his prayers as queen of the heavenly court, and orders the martyr Mercurius to slay Julian.[142] When Ælfric describes Mary as an intercessor for his audience he states that God will grant much to her because he was

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[138] Wilcox, *Prefaces*, pp. 32-3.
[139] Raw, *Crucifixion*, pp. 101-2; Fulton, *Judgement*, pp. 206-8.
[140] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 196-8.
[141] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX ll, 227-31. For a slightly expanded account of this incident see Skeat, *Lives* 1, III, ll 205-88.
[142] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 231-44.

born in his humanity, for the salvation of the world, through her.[143] By making this connection between Christ's salvation of the world and Mary's intercession for the salvation of individual believers Ælfric creates a continuum in which motherhood shares in the redemptive nature of Christ. However, in the context of his teachings on Mary's contribution to Christ's humanity, Ælfric also places Mary's intercession within the broader ambit of her virginity. As argued below, for Ælfric Mary's maternity was only possible because of her virginity and perfect obedience to God. The impression that Ælfric is placing limitations on the intercessory nature of maternity is reinforced by the structure of the homily. His homily is, he says, taken from a letter by Jerome to a holy widow and many virgins.[144] He then continues by briefly discussing the Annunciation and the crucifixion, before moving onto his discussion of the Assumption which forms the main body of the homily. Throughout this part of the homily Mary's virginity is emphasised to a greater extent than her maternity. He reiterates the uniqueness of her virginity and fecundity, and the nature of her perpetual virginity and incorruption.[145] Only then does he turn to her maternal intercession. Her maternity is therefore preconditioned, though the structure of homily, by her virginity.

While the motherhood of Mary, the Church and the martyr mothers was distanced from the maternity of human mothers, Mary does however stand as an explicit example to virgins in her free choice of virginity and in her obedience. Within this context, Ælfric uses her motherhood of Christ as a way of teaching his conception of the spiritual motherhood of virgins. In his homily on Mary's Nativity, he exhorts virgins not to complain that they cannot be virgins and mothers like Mary, but then consoles them that virgins can be the mothers of Christ:

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[143] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll ll 265-9.
[144] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 17-20.
[145] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXX, ll 25-32, 40-52, 60-1.

> *And se ylca is ealra mædena wurðmynt, þe hine lufiað gehealdenre clænnysse and hi magon beon Cristes moddru eac, gif hi wyrcað on life his fæder willan.*[146]

Here Ælfric emphasises that Mary's maternity lay in her obedience to God as father, and he uses this maternal obedience as a model for virgins. It is interesting that even in an explicitly spiritual and non-sexual context, Ælfric still construes maternity in terms of submission to paternal power. In doing so he follows his source, Augustine's *De Sancta Virginitate*,[147] but his treatment provides a parallel to the submission of mothers whose maternity is based on their sexuality.

Mary's maternity is restricted by Ælfric as a model in comparison to the material that he gained from his source material. In this section of the homily he draws on Augustine's *De Sancta Virginitate*. He follows Augustine in his statement that virgins, like Mary, are the mothers of Christ, as long as they do the will of the Father.[148] Augustine however continues by arguing that every devoted soul is the mother of God, and that both married women in the faith and consecrated virgins are Christ's mothers spiritually because they do the will of the Father, a connection between obedience and fecundity that Augustine grounds in evangelisation and the bringing of children to faith through baptism. He does draw a distinction between spiritual and bodily motherhood, as he states that married women who bear children in the flesh are mothers of Adam not of Christ, but their care to ensure that their children are baptised into the church ensures that this bodily motherhood does not bar them from their spiritual motherhood of Christ.[149] Ælfric's restriction of this model of spiritual motherhood operates in two spheres.

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[146] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 212-5, 'And that same is the honour of all virgins who love him, retaining virginity, and they can likewise be the mothers of Christ, if they, in life, do the will of his father'.
[147] M. Clayton, 'The sources of Assmann 3 (Cameron B.1.5.8)', 1990, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/, accessed March 2005.
[148] Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, c. V
[149] Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, cc V – VI.

First, he limits its applicability to virgins. His omission of the possibility that married women could be the spiritual mothers of Christ indicates that Ælfric did not want to create an association between motherhood in its sexual fallen state and the virginal, redeeming motherhood of Mary. The distance between the two states could not be transcended by allowing mothers to participate in spiritually mothering Christ. The reason for this is possibly to be found in Ælfric's thought on obedience and the Fall.

For Ælfric, the original sin was deliberate disobedience to God. After the Fall, sin became inherent in human nature, transmitted by human reproduction, and is continually re-enacted by those who turn away from God's commands.[150] In order to turn back to God, human beings need his help, or grace, because they are unable to choose to do good without it. God's grace both prepares and supports human will to act rightly. The potential for human beings to turn back to God was made possible by Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection.[151] Ælfric begins his homily on the Annunciation by recounting that man broke God's command and so was delivered into hell with all his offspring. At the Annunciation, Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, and was thus purified from and shielded against sin. Her maternity is then made possible by her free acceptance of God's will.[152] Mary's obedience leads to her maternity, but her motherhood of God is made possible by her obedience and her virginity. The obedience which defines Mary's motherhood and the spiritual motherhood of virgins reinforces the idea of sexually-based motherhood as hierarchically subordinated to patriarchy. However, for Ælfric, all except Christ are conceived in unrighteousness and born in sin,[153] and by implication mothers who are made so through sexual intercourse cannot share in Mary's perfect, virginal obedience.

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[150] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, VII, ll 150-1, 186-9; Grundy, *Books*, pp. 92-101.
[151] Godden, *Homilies* 2, V, ll 227-32; *Skeat*, Lives 1, XVII, ll 266-7; Grundy, *Books*, pp. 101-3, 139-40.
[152] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XIII, ll 4-10, 131-5, 148-51.
[153] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XIII, ll 136-41.

Their sexuality, as discussed above, is tainted by sin even if it is regulated within marriage.

Ælfric not only restricts spiritual motherhood of Christ to virgins, he also limits the model of spiritual maternity that he offered them. Unlike Augustine, he does not develop the idea of obedience to God's will in terms of evangelisation or baptism. Ælfric's understanding of virginal maternity is restricted to obedience.

Despite his exposition of maternity as a vehicle for salvation, Ælfric concentrated on Mary's salvational virginity at the expense of her salvational maternity. An analysis of a passage from his homily on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary supports this contention:

> *Eadig is Maria, þæt heo his modor is, ac heo is eadigere þurh his geleafan, þæt heo on hine gelyfð, þæs lyfigendan godes sunu, and heo hine on mode hæfð, þone þe heo to man gebær. Heo behet gode hyre mægðhad æt fruman, þæt heo lybban wolde hyre lif on mægðhade, sylfwilles for gode, na for neadunge... God mihte hi hatan þæt heo healde hyre mægþhad to swilcere acennednysse, ac wæs swa þeah hyre willa mærlicor, þæt heo wolde hyre sylf hyre mægðhad behatan þam heofonlican gode, ærðan þe heo wiste, hwæne heo acennan sceolde, and wæs gode gehalgod be hyre agenum cyre, na swylce geneadod mid nanre hæse, eallum mædenum to bysne, þe on mode geceasað þæt hi for Cristes lufon on clænnysse þurhwunion.*[154]

This passage contains a complex set of interlocking ideas. Mary's maternity is holy, but she is holier through faith, a faith that is inextricably linked to her lifelong virginity, chosen freely for love of God. She made this decision without knowledge of the consequences, and it was this free choice that meant God could call her to such a birth. Her faith, her will and her virginity form a matrix though which she is suited to be made

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[154] Assmann, *Homilien*, III, ll 185-91, 198-204, 'Mary is holy because she is his mother, but she is holier through his faith, because she believes in him, the living son of God, and she possesses him in her mind, who she bore to humanity. She pledged her virginity to God from the beginning, because she wanted to live her life in virginity, of her own free will for God, not through any compulsion... God could call her to such a birth because she possessed her virginity, but she was greater in her purpose, because she herself wanted to promise her virginity to heavenly God, before she knew she must give birth, and because she was hallowed to God by her own choice, not because she was so compelled by any command, [she is] an example to all virgins who choose in their minds that they will remain in virginity for love of Christ'.

the mother of God, and as such her maternity is predicated not just on God's power but also on her virginity. The passage indicates that for Ælfric, Mary's virginity was not passively salvational, but that her free choice of virginity meant that she undertook an active role in redemption. God hallowed her through her own choice and so to a certain extent the power of God and the virginity of Mary can be seen as interdependent factors in salvation. The independently chosen nature of Mary's virginity contrasts with and emphasises the passive nature of her maternity, which as argued above was entirely dependent on her son. Ælfric's elevation of Mary's salvational virginity can be placed within the context of the reform milieu of Winchester and Abingdon. In the refoundation charter of New Minster Mary's virginal womb is the channel for the coming of Christ to mediate between man and God, in contrast to the seductive blandishments of Eve, who brought destruction and misery on herself, Adam, and all their offspring.[155] The distinction between the two women draws into sharp relief the redeeming virginity of Mary and the sinful sexuality of Eve.

So it can be seen from the above discussion that Ælfric marginalized the idea of maternal salvation by removing it from the sphere of ordinary human motherhood. Mothers were discouraged from internalising the attributes of salvational motherhood and from accessing the prestige and power the association carried. This is in direct contradiction to his treatment of fatherhood. In Ælfric's treatment of paternity fathers shared in the patriarchal power of God. He sees fatherhood as a continuum, in which a link is possible between the human and the divine. His treatment of motherhood by contrast sets up two opposing types of maternity with a distance between them that cannot be breached. I would argue that this distancing was a deliberate strategy, not a

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[155] Rumble, *Winchester*, IV pp. 77-9.

coincidental result of his source materials or a mere reflection of the society that shaped him and within which he operated. My argument is supported by three main points.

First, his separation of salvational maternity from bodily motherhood is consistent throughout his works. There are no examples in which he allows for the possibility, even inadvertently or by implication, that sexually active women could share in the motherhood of Mary, or of the Church, or even of the martyr mothers. Ælfric altered his source material where it contradicted his schema, as can be seen in his treatment of Augustine's exposition on the spiritual motherhood of all faithful souls. It is also interesting to note in connection with this point that another of his principal sources, the *Homiliary* of Paul the Deacon, explicitly states that Mary's love for her son makes her a refuge for mothers as well as virgins,[156] an idea that Ælfric never covers. The accumulation of virgin-mothers and women whose maternity was figural of virgin mothers on the one hand, and the idea that the maternity of normal human mothers was rooted in sin, sexuality and the Fall on the other, is telling.

While Ælfric consistently created a separation between bodily and spiritual maternity, it has to be observed that he did not develop maternity as a prominent theme in his works, or use it outside the specific areas of grief and intercession. This is in contrast to his greater interest in fatherhood. He does make one single reference to the idea of mothers as teachers within the context of the virginal maternity of the church,[157] but he does not develop the reference elsewhere, nor does he provide any concrete examples of mothers as teachers. This severely limited application of maternity to either human or divine relationships is not because he had no models available, he rather chose not to use the models at his disposal. The idea of the Church as the spiritual

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[156] K. Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood and Women in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1997), p. 166 and n491; Paul the Deacon, *Homiliae*, *PL* 95, col. 1572.
[157] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, XXXIII ll 23-4

mother of all Christians through her teaching can for example be found in Ambrose's work.[158] Carolingian writers such as Paschasius Radbertus and Hincmar of Rheims use maternal metaphors to describe abbots, bishops and Christ.[159] Later medieval writers do use maternal imagery, both to portray Jesus and Paul as mothers to the soul and to represent male religious authority figures. Anselm in his prayer to St. Paul contrasts the different spheres of paternity and maternity. Fathers are associated with authority and protection, mothers with affection, kindness and compassion. Bernard of Clairvaux associates the abbot's discipline with fatherhood but his gentleness with motherhood, and uses the idea of Jesus and the abbot as mothers who suckle their young with divine teaching. Of course, his maternal imagery is located firmly within a male monastic environment. It is linked to spiritual relationships, not biological ties which have to be renounced for Christ, and there is no suggestion that women, either religious or lay, should share in this spiritual maternity.[160] Ælfric, however, does not even allow for an extensive use of maternal ideals even if they are applied to men. His occlusion of maternity suggests that he used maternity as a model where it was impossible to avoid, that is where it is made necessary through his concern to demonstrate Christ's humanity, and perhaps where a wider association of maternity with the attributes of grief and intercession made it impossible to ignore. Otherwise, he omits the idea entirely.

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[158] G. de Nie, '"Consciousness fecund through God": from male fighter to spiritual bride-mother in late Antique female spirituality', in A. B. Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* (New York and London, 1995), pp. 130-2.

[159] C. W. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 126-7; Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Sancti Adalhardi*, *PL* 120, col 1543D; Hincmar, *Opisculum LV Capitulorum adversus Hincmarum Laudunensem*, *PL* 126, col 4888; Hincmar, *De Praedestinatione Dei et Libero Arbritrio, Posterio Dissertatio*, *PL* 125, col 375.

[160] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 112-20; Anselm, *Opera Omnia*, 3, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 33, 39-41; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistula* 201, *PL* 182, cols. 369 B-C; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistula* 322, in *ibid.*, col. 527C; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera* 1, ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais (Rome, 1957), pp. 47-50.

Third, his treatment of maternity as defined through sexual reproduction fits into his wider anxiety about women and sexuality. Clayton has argued that the importance of the Virgin Mary and of virginity to the reform movement was linked to the demands of reformers for clerical celibacy.[161]As such, the elevation of virginity and the derogation of sexuality were useful weapons against the unreformed religious they sought to remove and replace.[162] The corresponding disparagement of women and sexuality was not however kept in the realms of metaphor or analogy, nor confined to use against priests and their wives. Cubitt argues that Ælfric represents women as defined by their sexuality in a way that men are not. Ælfric's anxiety about the sexuality of the women he does present as role models for women is marked. In his homily and commentary on Judith, he is careful to emphasise her chastity. The biblical version depicts Judith setting out to seduce Holofernes in order to lull him into a false sense of security. Ælfric, unlike Aldhelm, is troubled by the idea that sexuality could be exploited for the greater good. He downplays Judith's deliberate enticement of Holofernes' desire; instead Holofernes is solely responsible for his feelings. Judith can therefore act as a chaste widow and as an exemplar for *nunnan* in the maintenance of their chastity.[163] His treatment of Esther is even more affected by his concerns about her sexuality. He tones down Esther's year-long beautification process for the king, and he completely omits the idea that she and the other concubines were to be brought to the king's bed for one night each so he could make a decision between them. Instead, he implies that Esther alone was brought to

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[161] M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990).
[162] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 3; Stafford, 'Queens, nunneries and reforming churchmen', pp. 5-12.
[163] H. Magennis, 'Contrasting narrative emphases in the Old English poem *Judith* and Ælfric's paraphrase of the book of Judith', *Neuphililogische Mitteilungen* 97 (1996), pp. 61-5; M. Clayton, 'Ælfric's Judith: manipulating of manipulated?', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994), pp. 221-5. His address of the homily to *nunnan* indicates an audience of consecrated women, probably widows. He is not addressing *myncenan*, or female monks, whose religious life was more strictly regulated, Cubitt, 'Virginity', pp. 9-10. For an account of the differing religious practices of Anglo-Saxon women see P. Halpin, 'Women religious in Anglo-Saxon England', *The Haskins Society Journal* 6 (1994), pp. 97-111 and B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, 2003).

Ahasuerus, who fell in love with and married her.[164] As a chaste widow, Judith is beyond childbearing and Esther, though a wife, is not a mother. Ælfric is obviously deeply concerned about their sexuality but he manages to contain it through his treatment of their narratives. Motherhood however precluded this possibility, as it was of necessity preconditioned by sexuality. For Ælfric, mothers were defined only by their sexuality, with its associations with sin and the Fall. Within this paradigm, Ælfric could not allow mothers to transcend their confinement, through the use of a religious role or otherwise. He could not therefore allow the possibility of an association between bodily maternity and maternally mediated salvation.

It is now necessary to turn to Wulfstan's treatment of maternity as a theme. As argued above, Wulfstan like Ælfric was concerned about sexuality and its connection with the Fall. Wulfstan's concern about the proper regulation of sexuality was however limited to its regulation within marriage, and did not have the same effect of gendering parental roles. In his concept of an ideal Christian society, as found in the *Institutes of Polity*, the kin-group does not play a major role.[165] However his section *Be læwedum mannum* is entirely devoted to the regulation of marriage and sexuality by churchmen. Wulfstan begins the section by stating the rightness of churchmen instructing laymen on how to most rightly keep their marriage, before going on to make stipulations about remarriage and the times in which sexual intercourse was not allowed.[166] Wulfstan's concern for the regulation of marriage and sexual intercourse centres round the direction

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[164] M. Clayton, 'Ælfric's Esther: A *Speculum Reginae*?', in H. Conrad-O'Briain, A. D'Arcy and J. Scattergood (eds.), *Text and Gloss: Studies in Insular Language and Literature Presented to Joseph Donavon Pheipher* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 91-3; H. Magennis, '"No sex please we're Anglo-Saxons?" Attitudes to sexuality in Old English prose and poetry', *Leeds Studies in English* ns 26 (1995), pp. 8-9.

[165] The subdivisions of an ideal Christian kingdom are into *oratores*, *laboratores* and *bellatores*, who support a Christian king. Wulfstan's treatment of these sections of society are followed by chapters on the responsibilities of those in religious orders, secular officials and the laity, before a concluding section on the responsibilities of all Christian people. Underpinning each societal division is the Church, *I Polity* 32/ *II Polity* 30, '*Forðan soð is, þæt ic secge, awæcige se cristendom, sona scylfð se cynedom*', 'Because what I say is true, if Christianity should fall then the kingdom will immediately totter'.

[166] *I Polity* 87-92/ *II Polity* 187-97, pp. 230-8.

and authorisation of married couples by men in orders, but he ignores the interaction of married couples within the wider kin-group, including their relationships with their children.

Wulfstan's treatment of the interactions of parents with their children is not therefore found in his discussions on the correct ordering of society. They can be found instead within his homilies, within the context of his instructions on the need for parents to bring their children to the faith through baptism and teaching in the basics of the Christianity.[167] This subject will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter. For now it is sufficient to note that unlike Ælfric, Wulfstan does not strongly gender parental roles. Generally he uses the gender-neutral term *yldran* to refer to both parents. As he does not distinguish between paternal and maternal duties he does not set up a hierarchy between fathers and mothers. Ælfric uses the paternity of God to reinforce the patriarchal authority of human fathers in relation both to mothers and to their children. Wulfstan does refer to God as father, but he uses this attribution to reinforce the authority of both parents over their children. Parents have a duty to God to fulfil the promises they made to him on behalf of their children,[168] but children have a duty to their parents to listen to their instructions.[169] It is also noteworthy that unlike Ælfric, Wulfstan does not associate fallen sexuality specifically with women. He does not create a contrast between the roles of Eve and Mary, or categorise women by their sexuality.

There are only two occasions in which Wulfstan alludes to the idea of maternity. He does describe the church as mother on one occasion:

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[167] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VIIIb, VIIIc, Xc.
[168] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VIIIc, ll 129-38.
[169] Bethurum, *Homilies*, Xc, ll 176-7.

Ealle we habbað ænne heofonlicne fæder ond ane gastlice modor, seo is ecclesia genamod, þæt is Godes cyrice, ond ða we sculan æfre lufian ond weorðian ond næfre hyre derian wordes ne weorces, ac griðian hy symle ond healdan unwemme ond a butan glemme. La hwæt, fremað cyrichatan cristendom on unnyt, forðam ælc þæra bið Godes feond þe bið Godes cyrcena feond, ond ðe Godes cyrcena riht wanað oððe wyrdeð. And egeslice spæc Gregorius be ðam þa ða he þus cwæð: Si quis ecclesiam Dei denudauerit uel sanctimonia violaverit, anathema sit, ad quod respondentes omnes dixerunt, amen. Se ðe Godes crican, he cwæð, rype oððe reafige oððe halignessa grið scyrde oððe wyrðe, a he forwyrðe; ond Romana witan him andwyrdan sona ond anmodlice cwædon, amen, ealle; þæt bið on englisc, swa hit geweorðe.[170]

This is a passage from Wulfstan's vernacular treatment of a Latin sermon he wrote based on Atto of Vercelli's *De Pressuris Ecclesiasticis*.[171] The subject of church abuse was presumably very important in the violent politics of the late tenth-and early eleventh-century England, and Wulfstan frequently refers to it. As this is the only occasion in his vernacular writings where Wulfstan refers to the Church as mother it seems safe to conclude that the idea was not important to Wulfstan. He presumably used the metaphor primarily because it was in his source material dealing with his principal interest in the passage, that is the abuse of the Church. However, it is interesting to note that he does modify his Latin homily. While he keeps the idea of the church as mother he omits the idea of the church as bride of Christ and lady of all.[172] It is possible therefore that his injunctions against injuring and defiling the church may reflect an attitude that children should honour and protect their mothers, but it is impossible to speculate further on this without further evidence.

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[170] Bethurum, *Homilies*, Xc, ll 41-54, 'We all have one heavenly father and one spiritual mother, she is called ecclesia, that is, God's Church, and we should always love and honour her, and never injure her by word or deed, but protect her always and hold her pure and without blemish. Well then, put Church-persecutors into iniquity in Christendom, because all who are the enemies of God are the enemies of God's Church, and the Church of God is right to curtail or injure them. And Gregory spoke threateningly about them when he spoke thus: *Si quis ecclesiam Dei denudeuerit uel sanctimonia uiolerit, anathema sit; ad quod respondents omnes dixerunt, amen*. He who violates or pillages God's Church, or who injures or corrupts the holy sanctuary, he says, let him be damned eternally, and the Roman witan answered him immediately and said with one accord, amen, that is in English, so be it'. These ideas are also found in *I Polity* 98-114/ *II Polity* 203-219.

[171] Bethurum, *Homilies*, p. 323; Atto of Vercelli, *De Pressuris Ecclesiasticis*, *PL* 134, col. 88.

[172] Bethurum, *Homilies*, Xb, ll 31-4, *nam spiraliter Deus pater noster est et ecclesia mater nostra, quos debemus semper honare. Ecclesia enim sponsa Christi est et omnium domina*, 'Now spiritually God is our father and the church is our mother, who we ought always to honour. The Church is the bride of Christ and the lady of all'.

Wulfstan also briefly considers Mary as mother. His treatment of Mary's motherhood of Christ indicates his desire to represent it as both miraculous and ordinary. This tension springs from his concern to explain the human and the divine nature of Christ. On the one hand, he stresses her virginity:

> *Ac God ælmihtig ðurh his mildheortnesse, þa þa he wolde mancynn of deofles gewealde ahreddan, þa sende he his heahengel Gabriel to ðam mæran mædene, Sancta Marian, ond he hyre gecydde þæt heo scolde geberan Godes sunu. And sona swa he þæt word gecwæþ heo hit mid geleafan underfeng, þa wearð heo þurh haligne gaste on innoðe geeacnod ond mid þam, cilde wearð sona, ond þæt gebær ða hit tima wæs, eallum middanearde to soðan helpe. Hit weox þa syððan ond ðeah on menniscnesse, swa his sylfes willa wæs, oð se tima com þæt he furðor openlice cydde þurh ða wundra þe he worhte þæt he wæs soðlice Godes sylfes sunu.*[173]

As in Ælfric's treatment of Mary, her motherhood is based on submission to God's will and preconditioned by her virginity. However for Wulfstan Mary's motherhood was also preconditioned by her personal understanding, a factor that was not linked to her sexuality. Her maternity is less passive than in Ælfric's works.

<u>Parental responsibilities: The right of a child to eternal life.</u>

Having considered maternity as a theological theme, it is now necessary to turn to Ælfric's and Wulfstan's treatment of mothering within their paradigms. What do mothers do? What forms of interaction and bonds do they have with their children?

The main duty of both parents to their children, in the thought of both Ælfric and Wulfstan, was to bring them to God through a Christian upbringing, that is to say through baptism and the provision of a Christian education. Baptism was the first

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[173] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VII ll 38-49, 'But God almighty, as he wanted to save mankind from the Devil's dominion, then through his mercy sent his archangel Gabriel to the glorious maiden, Saint Mary, and he told her that she must bear God's son. And as soon as he spoke that word, and she understood it in faith, then she conceived the Holy Ghost in her womb, and she was immediately with child, and she bore it, when it was time, being a true helper to all the world. It grew after in humanity, just as his own will was, until the time came when he more openly showed through the miracles that he worked that he was truly God's own son'.

sacrament within Christian life in the middle ages. Since Augustine of Hippo's work it seems to have been formulated as a form of exorcism, an external application of grace which redeemed the original sin inherent in humanity and thus delivered the baptised person from the devil. Originally baptism was an episcopal office but by the tenth century in England it was commonly performed by priests. However, the promises of *credo* and *abrenuntio* made at baptism, either by or on behalf of the one baptised, were also necessary in order that the baptised person might be admitted into the Christian church.[174] In Anglo-Saxon England children were generally presented by their parents and spoken for by a godparent who was the same sex as them. The godparent's duty did not however end at baptism, as they were expected to act as guarantors of the promises they had made, teach their godchild the Lord's Prayer and Creed, and provide a good example of Christian living. These duties were developed in sixth-century Gaul and became standard in the medieval West. They were promulgated in England in eighth-century councils such as *Clofesho*.[175] Ælfric's and Wulfstan's attribution of responsibilities in the provision of a Christian upbringing differed between each other.

Ælfric states that:

> *Ða unwittigan cild gehealdende in ðam fulluht þurh geleafan ðæs fæder and ðære meder, and ðurh forspræce þæs godfæder.*[176]

Parents have a duty to present babies for baptism, so that they do not die unbaptised and thus forfeit eternal life.[177] He also implies in this homily that in doing so parents take responsibility for their part in the transmission of sin to their babies:

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[174] P. Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c. 200 – 1150* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 114-5; J. H. Lynch, *Christianising Kingship: Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca and London, 1998), p. 58; M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002) p. 185.

[175] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, pp. 175-87; S. Foot, '"By water in the spirit": the administration of baptism in early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 175-7, 190-2; J. H. Lynch, '*Spiratale Vinculum*: The vocabulary of spiritual kinship in early medieval Europe', in T. F. X. Noble and J. J. Contreni (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Richard E. Sullivan* (Kalamazoo, 1987), pp. 185-7.

[176] Godden, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 271-2, 'The unknowing child is saved by baptism through the faith and the father and mother and the advocacy of the godfather'.

> *Nu stent ðeos gesetnys on godes geladunge þæt man ða unsprecendan cild fullige and hi beoð gehealdene þurh oðra manna geleafan, swa swa hi wæron þurh oðra manna synna geniðerade.*[178]

However, while parents present their child, it is the godfather who makes the necessary renunciation of the devil and declaration of faith for the child,[179] and the teacher who has a responsibility to teach true belief in Christianity so that the child can earn salvation through a knowledge of God's ways.[180] Ælfric's assignation of a teaching role to a teacher rather than the godparent is unusual. Apart from that his description of the different tasks is within the norm of the medieval West. However, when placed in the context of his great anxiety about sexual reproduction and the transmission of sin, his treatment of the duties of parents in baptism places as much weight on their role in the potential damnation of their child as in its salvation.

Wulfstan, however, saw the responsibilities of parents in the Christian upbringing of their children as covering a wider range of duties. Although his homilies provide for both adult and infant baptism, infant baptism seems to have been the ideal, to avoid the horror of an unbaptised infant being condemned to hell. The onus to ensure infant baptism seems to have fallen both on the priest and the child's relatives:

> *And we biddað and beodað, þæt ælc cild sy binnan þrittigum nihtum gefullad; gif hit þonne dead weorðe butan fulluhte, and hit preoste gelang sy, þonne ðolige his hades and dædbete georne; gif hit þonne þurh maga gemeleaste gewyrðe, þonne þolige se, þe hit on gelang sy, ælcere eardwununge and wræcnige of earde oððon on earde swiðe deope gebete, swa biscop him tæce.*[181]

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[177] Godde, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 255-6.
[178] Godden, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 257-60, 'Now the law stands in the assembly of God that unknowing children are baptised, and they are saved through the faith of others just as they were utterly condemned through the sins of others.'
[179] Godden, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 273-86.
[180] Godden, *Homilies* 2, III, ll 287-90.
[181] Napier, *Sammlung,* XXIV p. 120 ll 12-15, 'And we pray and command that each child be baptised within thirty nights, if it should die without baptism, and this is the priest's responsibility, then he should lose his orders and earnestly do penance, if it should happen through the carelessness of a relative, then the one whose fault it is should lose all dwelling in his home country and should be banished from his homeland, or he should do penance very earnestly in his own region, as the bishop instructs him'.

Here the responsibility for baptism is shared between the priest who performs the ceremony and the relatives who bring the baby for baptism. While the homily uses the word *magan*, which can denote any relative, in the rest of Wulfstan's teachings on baptism he tends to focus more specifically on the parental duty of raising children in the Christian faith. In his homily *Her Ongynþ be Cristendome* he instructs his audience:

> *Paternoster ond credan mymerian þa yldran ond tæcan heora gingran mid rihtan geleafan... And doð swa ic lære, hyran þa gingran georne heora yldran, ond lufian ond læran þa yldran heora gingran: ond ða þe lifes weg lædan cunnan gebringan on rihtwege þa ðe ær dweledan.*[182]

This passage indicates Wulfstan's placement of parental duties within a Christian salvational context in two ways.

First, Wulfstan envisages parents as responsible for preparing their children for baptism and thus entry into the Christian community by teaching them the paternoster and creed. In contrast to his delineation of human history before Christ, in which generation followed generation in thrall to the devil, Wulfstan teaches that the Christian way of life and thus salvation and a return to the perfection of life in paradise can be passed from generation to generation by parental teaching, love and example. This point can be emphasised by reference to his Homily *De Baptismo*:

> *7 butan hit gelæste, ðonne hit ylde hæfð, eal þæt on his gogoðe for hit Gode wæs behaten, hit mot forweorðan æt his endedæge, gyf hit Godes lage forgymde, syððan hit ða ylde 7 þæt andgyt hæfde þæt hit Godes lage gyman mihte. Þonne agan þa yldran eac on cristenum folce ðæs oferþearfe þæt hi heora gingran Gode gestrynan 7 hi deofle ætwænian; forðam eal þæt hi to unrihte gedafiað heora gingran, eal hit byð ongean þæt ðe hy Gode beheten þa hy him fulluht begeatan, 7 ealles ðæs hy motan stið wite ðolian æfter Godes dome, butan hy hit gebetan þæs ðe hy don magan.*[183]

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[182] Bethurum, *Homilies*, Xc, ll 169-79, 'Parents should remember the paternoster and creed and instruct their children with true faith... And do as I teach, young people should listen to their parents, and parents should love and teach their young; and then through the way of life you lead you can guide them into the path of righteousness that you dwelt in before'.

[183] Bethurum, *Homilies,* VIIIc, ll 129-38, 'And when it is old enough, it must fulfil without exception all that was promised to God for it in its youth, and it must perish at the end of its days if it should slight God's law after it had the age and the understanding that it must heed God's law. Then the parents amongst the Christian people also have an especial need that they beget/win over their children to God and that they deliver them from the devil, because everything that they allow their children to do unrighteously is all against that which they promised to God for it when they had them received in

The use of *gestrynan* is particularly interesting as it carries the sense both of 'to beget', 'to increase' and 'to win over'. As discussed above, Wulfstan's treatment of the sexual aspect of human reproduction was informed by his anxiety about its link to the fall of humanity. However, within his homilies, sexual reproduction can be redeemed by parental direction of their children towards God and salvation and thus their fulfilment of God's original intention for mankind. Wulfstan's direction of parents rather than godparents to perform this task is unusual in the context of orthodox Christian teaching.

The baptism of a child into the Christian community also sets up a hierarchical relationship between God and the child's parents. Just as children must listen to their parents, their parents have an obligation to fulfil the promises they made to God at the baptism of their children, under threat of eternal damnation. These contrasting relationships of parental similarity with yet subservience to God serve to make the parent–child bond sacred, as they locate their kinship within the wider dynamic of salvation.

Neither Wulfstan nor Ælfric differentiate directly between the duties of the father or the mother in this issue. However, Ælfric explicitly contrasts the need for salvation through baptism with the transmission of original sin while Wulfstan concentrates more on the possibility of redemption. Wulfstan therefore presents a more positive and active view of parenting that is in line with his views on sexuality. Unlike Ælfric, he does not explicitly teach that human beings are born in sin. He teaches that generation followed generation in thrall to the devil after the Fall, but he does this only in the context of his exposition of salvation history; unlike Ælfric he does not consider

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baptism, and for all of this they must suffer a stern punishment after God's judgement, unless they repent while they are still able'. Wulfstan's concern that parents should raise their children in the law of God can also be seen in his Latin homilies, the *Sermo ad coniugatos et filios*, and the *Sermo ad viduas*, Hall, 'Wulfstan's Latin sermons', pp. 123-5, 127-8.

the subject in any other context. Wulfstan's less dogmatic view of sexuality can be supported by his more relaxed view of clerical celibacy. While he preferred that the clergy should be celibate, he stated that a married priest was not to lose status.[184] He also revised Ælfric's first Old English Pastoral Letter by omitting deacons and mass-priests from Ælfric's list of those who are forbidden to have any other woman than a close female relative in his house.[185]

While the views of Ælfric and Wulfstan on the positive aspects of the Christian relationship between parents and children were non-gendered, their views on the negative aspects of this concentrated around the role of the mother, although not in identical ways. Abortion and infanticide are condemned by both Ælfric and Wulfstan, and their condemnation focused on the mother's role. A mother was expected to support her child's right to life and potential for salvation.

Ælfric deals with abortion and infanticide in two of his homilies: in his *De Auguris* in his *Lives of Saints*[186] and in his *Sermo ad Populum*.[187] He explicitly places his condemnation of these practices in the context of salvation:

> *Sume hi acwellað heora cild ærðan þe hi acennede beon, oððe æfter acennednysse, þæt hi cuðe ne beon. Ac heora yfel is egeslic, and endeleaslic morð þær losað þæt cild laðlice hæðen, and seo arleasa modor, butan heo hit æfre gebete.*[188]

Mothers who practice abortion and infanticide will not be saved unless they repent ever after. The word *arleasa* is used by Ælfric to denote a persecutor of the faith and of the

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[184] T. E. Powell, 'The "three orders" of society in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994), pp. 122-3; R. Fowler (ed.), *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar*, E.E.T.S. os 266 (1972), c. 68a.
[185] D. Whitelock, M.Brett and C. N. L. Brooke (eds.), *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents relating to the English Church, I: A.D. 871-1204*, I, 278; Jackson, 'Ælfric', p. 247 and n41.
[186] Skeat, *Lives* 1, XVII, ll 151-6.
[187] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, XI, ll379-80.
[188] Skeat, *Lives* 1, XVII, ll 151-6, 'Some of them murder their children before they are born, or after the birth, so that they will not be known. But their evil is awful, and to endless death they will lose the child, a hateful heathen, and [also] the faithless mother, unless she ever repents it'.

faithful, such as Herod,[189] Saul[190] and Antiochus.[191] It sets up these mothers in semantic opposition to the mother of the martyred boys in his homily on the Maccabes. She denounced the *arleasa cynincg* Antiochus, and the wealth he offered her to save the life of her final child if she could persuade him to renounce his faith. Instead she preferred that both she and her son should receive death followed by eternal life in heaven rather than a transitory life on earth followed by eternal damnation. Mothers who practice abortion and infanticide are seen as evil not just because they kill their children but also because their actions condemn them to die unbaptised and under the stain of original sin, a sin which Ælfric associated particularly with mothers. They deny their children a relationship with God and therefore the possibility of salvation. His over-riding concern with the baptism and salvation of the child is also attested to in his private Latin letter to Wulfstan, in which his opinion that a child should be cut by Caesarian section from the body of its dead mother is based primarily on the need to baptise it and thus save it from Hell.[192]

In this homily Ælfric also associates abortion and infanticide with adultery, with female sexuality uncontained within the bounds of marriage and uncontrolled by a husband, an association also found in his *Sermo ad Populum*, where *myltestran* who kill their children before they became men are condemned at the day of judgement.[193] This should be seen in the context of female sexuality and subordination within marriage discussed above. Mothers who abort their children provide a rare example of women who act independently without reference to the authority of the earthly or heavenly fathers of their children. Ælfric does not explicitly state that the actions of these women are wrong because they act independently, but an association between independent

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[189] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, V, l 123.
[190] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, III, l 111.
[191] Skeat, *Lives* 2, XXV, l 168.
[192] Fehr, *Hirtenbriefe*, 2a, c. II.
[193] Pope, *Supplementary Homilies* 1, XI, l 379-80.

action, uncontrolled sexuality and sin can be made. Furthermore, the independence of these mothers is circumscribed by God's ultimate power over them. Unless they repent and submit to penance, they too will suffer the everlasting death to which they condemn their children. While Ælfric opens up the possibility of independent maternity, it is simultaneously closed down by its dire consequences and by God's overarching power.

Wulfstan's treatment of mothers who kill their children is not developed in his homilies. On three occasions he includes *bearnmyrðran* in his lists of sinners, once in association with *wiccan* and twice in association with *myltestran*.[194] There is an association made between abortion or infanticide and illicit sexuality, but it is not explained. The subject is dealt with in slightly more detail in his canon law collection, which in its A recension attests to his collection of a canon that deals with the penance that should be assigned to women who kill their children.[195] First, it distinguished between women who kill before and after forty days from conception, with a higher penalty assigned to the latter offence. This relates to medieval theories about ensoulment of the foetus, which was generally held to take place at forty days.[196] Second, the canon states that there is a great deal of difference between a woman who kills her child because of the difficulty of feeding it, and a fornicator who does it to conceal her sin. This distinction is in keeping with the medieval penitential tradition in which the circumstances of the sin were taken into account when deciding how severe the sin was, and the level of penance needed for its expiation.[197]

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[194] *wiccan*: Bethurum, *Homilies*, XIII, l 94; *myltestran*: Bethurum, *Homilies*, XX (EI), l 163 and Napier, *Sammlung*, LX, p. 310 l 2.
[195] J. E. Cross and A. Harmer (eds.), *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 109-11, canon 102.
[196] M. Deegan, 'Pregnancy and childbirth in the Anglo-Saxon texts: A preliminary survey', in M. Deegan and D. G. Scragg (eds.), *Medicine in Early Medieval England* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 23-4.
[197] A. J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, 1983), pp. 6-11.

Wulfstan had an intense interest in penitential texts and practices. He saw them as a route to salvation both for individuals and for the English people, and as such as an integral part of his pastoral duties. His lawcode of 1008 (V Æthelred) urged frequent confession on every Christian, and his lawcode of 1009 (VII Æthelred) stipulated a general penance for the population.[198] As penance was assigned as a route to salvation, Wulfstan's treatment of women who practised abortion or infanticide can be seen as implicitly located in his schema for salvation, intended as a palliative measure. Both this and the careful distinction made between different types of abortion suggest a focus on redeeming rather than condemning such mothers.

It should be noted that although Wulfstan collected this canon from the penitential of Pseudo-Theodore, it is not attested to in recension B of his canon law, nor did it find its way into his *Canons of Edgar*, a vernacular text that was probably issued by Wulfstan to direct his diocesan clergy.[199] However, a penitential prescription for women who practice abortion can be found in the *Penitential of Pseudo-Ecgberti*, which is found in three manuscripts associated with Wulfstan either in terms of content or location.[200] This work was a four part penitential that drew on a variety of sources including Halitgar's handbook, the Old English 'scrift book' and the penitential of Cummean.[201] The penance is specifically for women who practice abortion or infanticide on account of illicit sexual activity, and does not make any distinction according to the timescale of the action. It does not deal with women who commit

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[198] Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 108, 146-7.
[199] Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 208-9; Fowler, *Canons of Edgar*, pp. xxviii-ix.
[200] J. Raith (ed.), *Die Altenglische Version des Halitgarschen Bussbuches* (Hamburg, 1933), II.2, pp. 16-7; Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 133-5; H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, 2001), 59.5: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 190, s. xi ¾, Exeter provenance containing many items by Ælfric and Wulfstan; Oxford, Bodlean Library Junius 121 s.xi ¾ and additions s. xi 2 and s. xi ex, Worcester provenance; Oxford, Bodlean Library Laud Misc. 482, s.xi med or xi2, Worcester provenance.
[201] Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 133-5.

abortion or infanticide for any other reason.[202] Whether this was deliberate or coincidental is uncertain. The most that can be stated that Wulfstan and his circle allowed for the possibility that a priest might have to prescribe penance for the practice.

While both authors place abortion and infanticide in the context of salvation, and both assume maternal rather than paternal responsibility, Ælfric is far more condemnatory than Wulfstan of the practice. While Ælfric allows for the possibility of penance, for him this penance has to be everlasting. He concentrates on the sin far more than the remedy, and he does not allow any individuality or extenuating circumstances to the mothers. Instead he places all mothers in the same category of sexual sinners. In contrast, Wulfstan places a limit on the penance needed, and he allows for the consideration of different cases as individually motivated. This distinction between the two might be partly caused by the difference in genre; Ælfric deals with the subject within the exhortatory tradition of homilies, whereas Wulfstan treated it in within the more flexible remit of the penitentiary. It has to be said however that regardless of genre the differences between the thought of the two authors reflects their different approaches to women and sexuality, as Ælfric assumes a connection between women, sin and sexuality that is not made by Wulfstan.

Having considered the upbringing of children within a Christian context, it is now necessary to turn to social relationships between mother and child. There is little indication in either Ælfric's or Wulfstan's works that mothers were directly involved in the physical care of infants. There is a slight suggestion in one of Wulfstan's homilies

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[202] Raith, *Bussbuches*, II.2, *Be þam wifmen þe hig forligeð 7 þonne for ege hire bearn fordeð. – Gif <hwylc> wif hire cild mid drence oððe mid oðrum mislicum þingum, oððe formyrþreð syððan hit forð cymð, fæste X ger: þa III on hlafe 7 on wætere, 7 þa VII swa hire scrift hire mildheortlice tæcan wylle*, 'About those women who commit fornication and then kill their child out of fear. If <such a> woman murders her child within her, with a drink or with various other things, or kills it immediately after it comes out, she should fast 10 years: three on bread and water, and seven just as her confessor would mercifully assign her'.

that responsibility for this was given to someone else. In a passage on Christ's upbringing he states:

> *Þa he cild wæs, eall hine man fedde swa man oðre cild fedeð. He læg on cradole bewunden ealswa oðre cild doð; hine man bær oð he sylf gan mihte. Þurh ælc þing seo menniscnes adreah þæt hyre to gebyrede. Hine þyrste hwylum 7 hwilum hingrode. He æt 7 dranc, 7 ægðer he þolode ge cyle ge hæten. Eall seo menniscnes þolode þæt menn to gebyrede, forþam þe he wæs soð man þurh his medrengecynd.*[203]

Here Wulfstan is concerned to stress the ordinariness of Christ's humanity which he possessed though his mother's nature. Mary's contribution of her humanity to Christ is made explicit here, in his position as man as well as God, and this hints perhaps at a concept of maternal inheritance. It should however be noted that her nature is all that Wulfstan describes her as contributing, as she does not explicitly contribute to his upbringing after his birth. Instead Wulfstan uses the passive mode to describe the care of Christ. This suggests perhaps that caring for babies and infants was not necessarily a maternal role, as the description is situated where Wulfstan explicitly emphasised the normality of Christ's upbringing. One can suggest, very tentatively, that this may reflect an aristocratic experience of child-rearing, as Wulfstan's homilies may have been preached to a court audience.

The idea that mothers should be involved in the care of infants is certainly not universal. In late Republican and imperial Rome, for example, the physical care of babies and young children was seen as low status and, in aristocratic families, was undertaken by paid wet nurses and by slaves. Motherhood was associated with authority and with ensuring the correct education of older children. Personal relationships were

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[203] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI, ll 164-71, 'Then he was a child, and he was fed as all other children are fed. He lay swaddled in his cradle just as other children do; he was carried until he could walk by himself. Humanity was performed through each thing that happened to him. Sometimes he thirsted, and sometimes he hungered. He ate and drank, and suffered both heat and cold. In his humanity he suffered all that all befalls men, because he was true man through inheritance from his mother'.

expected to be close, but to develop when the child grew older.[204] There is no direct evidence for the status of the physical care of infants in later Anglo-Saxon England. It is perhaps indicative that in Ine's lawcode a thegn was allowed to take his reeve, his smith and his *cildfestran* with him on his travels. It appears that in earlier Anglo-Saxon England at least it was assumed that an aristocratic mother would not necessarily nurse her own children.[205] This attitude might have persisted, certainly Bishop Æthelwold was in the care of a nurse at an early age.[206] While mothers are depicted in childbirth, enthroned holding their newborns and playing with their children, there is only one representation of a woman breastfeeding her child, in an illustration of Psalm 130 in the Utrecht Psalter.[207]

Neither author displays much interest in motherhood as a means of transmitting a positive descent line. Ælfric however has a strong interest in patrilineal succession. As argued above, he established an interaction between Father and Son in the trinity as the original creative impulse, which was echoed in his creation of Adam, Eve, all other humans, and Jesus Christ. He authorised the father-son succession of the patriarchs, which continued into the times of the judges, the prophets and after Christ. Karkov argues that the text of Ælfric's translation to Genesis, in which father begets son and women are almost entirely absent from the process, is reinforced by the illustrations, in which women are seen with their husbands, looking after children but not giving birth to them.[208] The combination of Ælfric, text and image suggests the possibility that in a family unit where women were of low importance in transmitting kinship this lesser

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[204] S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London and Sydney, 1988), esp. pp. 120-34.
[205] S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon Children* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 70-1; *Ine* 63.
[206] Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St. Æthelwold*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), chapter 5.
[207] This illustration can be found in H.-W. Goetz, *Frauen im frühen Mittelalter: Frauenbild und Frauenleben in Frankenreich* (Weimar, 1995), plate 8. I owe this reference to Dr. Katy Cubitt. This work was produced in Rheims c. 830, but it had been taken to England by c. 1000, and its illustrations were used as a model for the Harley Psalter, produced at Christ Church Canterbury.
[208] Karkow, 'Genesis', pp. 221-9.

status was associated with an emphasis on raising rather than bearing children. It is important not to create a circular argument, but the association of low status maternity with raising children might indicate that raising children was itself of low status, an idea that will be examined further in chapter three.

Ælfric and Wulfstan in their social context.

So while Ælfric and Wulfstan both located maternity within the family unit and within a Christian framework of salvation, their thoughts on maternal roles differed. It is now necessary to try and place their ideas within a social framework, first by briefly considering the impact their aims of their texts, their careers and their assumed audiences had on their ideas on maternity, and second by looking at their views in a wider social and textual context.

Ælfric's and Wulfstan's placement of social relationships within the context of salvation history can be seen as part of their concern for the souls of their audiences. Ælfric's use of the vernacular was, as he himself states, intended to further the preaching mission of the church by making holy scripture and exegesis available to the simple, and thus direct the behaviour of all Christians. This education in orthodox doctrine was necessary in order that Christians might not fall into heresy and be damned, but instead be strengthened in the faith.[209] Wulfstan also emphasised the need for bishops and mass-priests to preach a correct understanding of the faith, so that their congregations could lead a true Christian life and not lose their souls at judgement day.[210] Although both Ælfric and Wulfstan were concerned with the day of judgement and with salvation these were not abstract theological concerns but issues which had an

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[209] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, Præfatio; Lees, *Tradition*, p. 109.
[210] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI ll1-14.

impact on daily life and, through that impact, on life for all eternity. The combination of didactic context and of the immediate concern with salvation indicates that, whatever the audience reception, Ælfric and Wulfstan intended the content of their homilies to have an all-embracing effect on people's lives. Their homilies are obviously influenced by the society within which they were written, but they are not mere reflections of that society. They are instead active agents for social change.

Ælfric and Wulfstan followed quite different career paths, as noted in the introduction. Ælfric was highly intellectual and steeped in the ideology of the Benedictine Reform. His primary career, however, was as a monk, a mass-priest and an abbot. While his patrons and correspondents were the lay and ecclesiastical elite, men heavily involved in politics and the running of the country, he himself remained at one remove. He was primarily concerned with monastic issues such as virginity and child oblation. He was dogmatic rather than pragmatic in outlook; he was prepared to insist on absolutes rather than compromise. For example he admonished Archbishop Sigeric about the perils of drunkenness and he castigated Wulfstan about the involvement of English bishops in secular affairs such as the administration of justice at the expense of time spent in religious pursuits such as teaching their pupils, attention to scripture and spending time with their monks. He was particularly critical of bishops who sold holy oil and justice, a vehement attack which Whitelock suggests might have been directed at Wulfstan himself.[211] Ælfric's condemnation of ecclesiastical involvement in justice marks him out as particularly hardline in a society where bishops routinely sat with ealdormen in judgement at the shire courts. Even the sale of justice could possibly refer to payments made for advocacy, a relatively standard practice in Anglo-Saxon England as attested to by the wills.

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[211] Fehr, *Hirtenbriefes*, 2a c. XV; Godden, 'Relations', pp. 355-6; D. Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, homilist and statesman', *T.R.H.S.* 4th Series, 24 (1942), pp. 25-45.

Wulfstan by contrast was a bishop and archbishop who might not even have been a monk.[212] He was involved in the administration and governance of both church and kingdom, indeed Wormald argues that for Wulfstan the two were ideally analogous, as he was primarily interested in the reordering of the English kingdom into a holy society.[213] While Wulfstan undeniably held strong views on the need for both lay and religious people to lead a Christian life, he was pragmatic and prepared to compromise. For example, he toned down Ælfric's strictures on clerical celibacy.

The different careers and outlooks of the two men certainly influenced their treatment of maternity. Ælfric's obsession with virginity and his attendant tension about sexual activity, which determined his view of maternity, grew out of the focus of the Benedictine Reform on monastic virtues, which reform advocates tried to extend out to apply to the laity. Wulfstan as archbishop was more concerned with providing instruction in the teaching of the basics of Christian faith than with teaching theological subtleties.[214] Correct sexual behaviour, as defined by the regulations of the reforming church, appears to have been too much for him to expect even from his clergy. His discussion of parental duties is informed by the need to promulgate teaching the basics of the need for baptism, the paternoster and the creed, rather than complex teaching on the exact nature of the transmission of original sin.

Linked to the issue of the authors and their careers is the question of their expected audiences. Clayton has argued that Ælfric assumed an audience for his homilies that was similar to congregations he was familiar with in Winchester and

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[212] See above, introductory section.
[213] Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 195-208, 449-65.
[214] J. Wilcox, 'The dissemination of Wulfstan's homilies', in C. Hicks (ed.), *England in the Eleventh Century* (Stamford, 1992), p. 201.

Cerne, in which the laity from the surrounding area would have been preached to in the monastic church, with the monks also present. The *Regularis Concordia*, for example, assumes lay attendance at the main mass on Sundays and feast days, though Ælfric himself observed that forty homilies a year was the most that lay minds could be expected to take in. Both series of Catholic Homilies contain instructions aimed at both secular and monastic audiences, although the monastic elements are more marked in the second series. Ælfric also appears to have considered that the homilies might be used for devotional reading, either by an individual or a small group. His *Saints' Lives* were intended for this second type of audience, specifically for an elite and well educated but secular audience, that is for Æthelweard, Æthelmær and their circle.[215] Ælfric's assumed audience therefore would include highly educated monks and elite laymen, and possibly laywomen, and a more general lay congregation who were nevertheless fairly well versed in Christian teaching by virtue of their association with a monastic church. Although he did provide an explanation of the paternoster and creed, his delineation of male and female roles within the family unit was informed by his provision of systematic and wide-ranging Christian teaching to an audience that had already been thoroughly Christianised. More specifically, it has to be noted that his gendering of family roles made men rather than women the more active part of his audience.[216] His representation of motherhood as based in sexuality and sin was primarily based on the idea of women's passive, ontological state of being rather than on deliberate choice.

The audiences of Wulfstan's homilies would have been more varied. He provided homilies which translate and explain the paternoster,[217] creed,[218] and ten

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[215]Clayton, 'Homiliaries', pp. 230-42; Wilcox, *Prefaces*, p. 50; Clemoes, *Homilies*, Praefatio.
[216] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 17.
[217] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VII, ll 7-8, 26-49 and VIIa, ll 8-16.
[218] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VIIa, ll 20-41.

commandments,[219] he also explains how men were made,[220] the basic significance of baptism,[221] and accounts of biblical history including of course the incarnation of Christ.[222] The content of Wulfstan's homilies provides an important guide to their reception. His teaching mission for the Church had as its main aim the education by bishops and mass-priests who as Christians who could then live a true Christian life. Hill points out that Wulfstan's archdiocese of York lay outside the main spread of Benedictine Reform.[223] It is possible therefore that, unlike Ælfric, Wulfstan assumed an audience of lay-people who had not been exposed to a Christianising process of the intensity and type of those who lived further south. He seems to have aimed them either at this lay population, or at secular priests who would in turn preach what they had learnt to their lay congregations at mass. Wulfstan's code for secular priests, the Canons of Edgar, instructs priests to preach every Sunday,[224] while his canon law collection states that seculars *qui in natali Domini et Pascha et Pentecosten non communicauerint, catholici non credantur*,[225] providing for an expected minimum three times a year at which the laity would be exposed to homiletic preaching. However, some of Wulfstan's homilies were intended for a different type of audience. The address in one manuscript witness to Bethurum Homily XIII to *þegnas... gehadode 7 læwede* makes it possible that some of Wulfstan's homilies were preached at meetings of the Witan and the shire courts.[226] Wilcox has also argued that Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi* was originally preached in a very political, public and aristocratic context, that is at the witan meeting that had initially been called for the coronation of Swein and that due to Swein's death ended up

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[219] Bethurum, *Homilies*, Xc, ll23-30.
[220] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI, ll142-56.
[221] Bethurum, *Homilies*, VIIIb and VIIIc.
[222] For example Bethurum, *Homilies*, VI and VII, ll 38-49
[223] Hill, 'Wulfstan', p. 312.
[224] Fowler, *Canons of Edgar*, 52.
[225] Cross and Hamer, *Canon Law,* B44, 'Secular people who have not taken communion on the Lord's Nativity, Easter and Pentecost are not believed to be Catholics'. Trans. Cross and Hamer.
[226] Bethurum, *Homilies*, p. 225.

deciding to invite Æthelred back to the kingdom.[227] Wulfstan's very public career had an impact on his gendering of parental roles. His outlook was hierarchical, administrative and male. His lawcodes and his Institutes assume that the significant gender is male. His work within the Witan and the shire courts may have caused the lack of gender distinction in his model of parental duties, as well as a deliberate decision not to teach complex Christian doctrine. He assumed a predominantly male audience, and that the female position with the family was subsumed by association with the male. His subordination of female agency was more subtle than Ælfric's explicit placement of women under patriarchal authority, but it might therefore also have had less of an effect on his audience.

Ælfric's use of father-son genealogies and his lack of interest in maternal contribution to descent can be compared to the genealogies of the royal house of Wessex. Anglo-Saxon kings modelled their kingship on the authority of Old Testament patriarchs and represented themselves as their direct descendents. The promotion of kingship as directly descending from the patriarchs was an ongoing tradition in the ninth and tenth centuries; it is first attested to in the genealogy of King Æthelwulf in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, updated to include Alfred in his Life by Asser, and updated again to include Edgar and his sons Edward, Edmund and Æthelred in the late tenth century.[228] The genealogical tradition is an indication of a society in which title to land, status and office was legitimised through claims to biological descent.[229] For the Anglo-Saxon kings, the ultimate authorisation of both their position and kingship as a system

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[227] J. Wilcox, 'Wulfstan's *Sermo ad Lupi ad Anglos* as political performance: 16 February 1016 and beyond', in *Wulfstan*, pp. 375-96.
[228] Karkov, 'Genesis', pp. 210-1; *Chronicle sa* 855 (MSS ADE) and *sa* 856 (MSS CF); Keynes and Lapidge, *Asser's Life of Alfred*, pp. 67-8; London, BL, Cotton Tiberius B.V.
[229] D. N. Dumville, 'Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists', in P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (eds.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp. 73-104.

of government was expressed though both biblical precedent and patrilineal descent.[230] There was no room in this paradigm for maternal contribution to the ongoing and divinely authorised descent line of kingship. While Ælfric does not explicitly connect the West Saxon kings to the Old Testament patriarchs he does place the kingship of Alfred, Æthelstan and Edgar, victorious against the heathens, in the same model as Old Testament and Roman figures who won victory though divine support. His version of patriarchal descent nevertheless draws from and implicitly authorises the patrilineal succession of his aristocratic patrons.

Ælfric's model of father-son descent lines can more specifically be compared to the translation into Latin of a version of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle made by his patron, Æthelweard.[231] Æthelweard was himself a direct patrilineal descendent of King Æthelwulf. The version of the Chronicle that he translated was a recension of which his translation is now the only surviving witness, although from AD 30 – 891 and from AD 947 – 75 his exemplar was very similar to recension A.[232] He translated it into Latin and divided it into four books, each prefaced by a letter to its intended recipient, his distant cousin Matilda, Abbess of Essen. In his translations of the chronicle text, vertical kinship relations are transmitted entirely by men. This is the case even in Æthelweard's reiteration of the details of his relationship with Matilda in book four, in which Matilda is the only woman involved.[233] His other accounts of royal genealogies in books two and three are completely male.[234] Elsewhere in the *Chronicle*, women are only mentioned as sisters and as wives. Ælfric and Æthelweard both promulgate a view of

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[230] Daniel Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japeth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons', *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002), pp. 13-46.
[231] A. Campbell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962).
[232] Campbell, *Chronicle*, pp. xvii-xviii.
[233] Campbell, *Chronicle*, p. 39.
[234] Campbell, *Chronicle*, pp. 18, 33.

the kin-group in which patrilineal descent is of paramount importance in establishing claims to royal blood.

The position of women in the homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan are also partly analogous to their changing position in late tenth- and early eleventh-century lawcodes, unsurprisingly as the later codes were drafted by Wulfstan himself. Women in the laws are generally discussed in the context of sexual crimes or more broadly in terms of remarriage. As legal entities they are covered by the wergild of the men they are most closely associated with.[235] Wulfstan's later laws under Cnut contained intensified legislation on the position of women and marriage. Ælfric and Wulfstan 'belong to a milieu in which... women's role [was] associated with the perils of sex, marriage and childbearing rather than with the religious sphere and spiritual power'.[236]

However, Ælfric's homilies in particular demonstrate that trying to confine women to family roles was not without its perils. Historiographically speaking, the power of men in Anglo-Saxon England has been analysed in terms of male power associated with legal rights, patrilineal land transfer, and legitimate membership of the administrative bodies of the Anglo-Saxon state such as the shire and hundred courts and the witan. Female agency by contrast has been seen in the context of women wielding power through and within the family. Ælfric tries to present a picture of a timeless and divinely authorised family unit in which maternity is firmly subjugated to the law of the father. He wanted secular women to be defined as wives and mothers, but they had to be his type of wives and mothers. His need to create a paradigm in which sexual maternity was specifically not authorised by association with spiritual maternity, and more particularly his careful removal of maternal intercession from the sphere of human

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[235] Cubitt, 'Virginity', pp. 22-3; V. Thompson, 'Women, power and protection in tenth- and eleventh-century England', in N. J. Menuge (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Law* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 2-5.
[236] Cubitt, 'Virginity', p. 23.

mothers, suggests a society in which maternity was a powerful source of authority, at least to some women. If maternity was not a potential threat to his creation of an ideal Christian society, it seems unlikely he would have felt the need to circumvent it to such a great extent.

The attempts of Ælfric and Wulfstan at social control and their desire to create a kingdom of Christian families obviously links to the Christianisation of society and the extent to which the Church could penetrate family life. The differences between Ælfric's and Wulfstan's representations of parental roles perhaps indicates different levels of penetration according to geographical area and proximity to monastic churches. Ælfric could aspire to influence the specific details of and ideologies behind family organisation. Wulfstan had to be content with instructing parents to provide a Christian upbringing for their children.

Conclusions.

In conclusion, Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works indicate that within a model in which parents act in association with each other, significant differences in the details of that interaction are possible. This can be supported by an examination of Æthelweard's *Chronicle*. Although in the main body of the text descent was entirely reckoned through the male line, in his letter to Matilda that prefaces the first book of the chronicle, the line of descent includes women, albeit in the context of establishing descent from King Æthelwulf. The differences between Ælfric and Wulfstan and within Æthelweard's chronicle suggest that models of maternity in Anglo-Saxon England were not rigid and hermetically sealed off from each other, but that it was possible to take attributes of maternity from a model without necessarily taking on all its connotations.

Chapter Two. *Hire flæsc is of minum flæsce:* Eve, Mary and corporeal maternity in the Blickling and Vercelli Homilies.

Introduction and methodology.

This chapter will examine a model of motherhood in which maternity was based primarily on the relationship between mother and child, and was independent from the relationships between husband and wife, and between father and child. The model is found in the homilies of the Blickling and Vercelli books, and these collections will therefore be used as a basis from which to explore it. The ideas about maternity found in these homilies are set out in the context of salvation history: Fall, Redemption and Judgement. Unlike the models of maternity found in the homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan, however, in the Blickling and Vercelli homilies the link between maternity and salvation is manifested in a form of motherhood that is grounded in the body, and more particularly in the womb. Motherhood is understood in terms of conception, pregnancy and childbirth. This is due to a preoccupation in the homilies with two linked concerns: the transient, post-lapsarian, corporeal state of man, which through the incarnation of Christ could be transformed into eternal life. Maternal wombs, in particular those of Mary and Eve, are a way in which the homilists explore salvation history.

The anonymity and variety of the authors of these two collections of homilies raises an important methodological issue that needs discussion before the main argument of the chapter can be addressed. Unlike the homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan, these collections have no single authorial voice. The content of the two books cannot be unthinkingly conflated ether internally or with each other. The Blickling book is a

homiliary comprised of eighteen homilies that follows the *temporale* and *sanctorale* of the church year. An overlap of content connects it to eight other homiletic manuscripts. It was compiled by two scribes, probably over a period of time, and has been argued on linguistic grounds to be of Mercian origin.[1] The Vercelli book is not a homiliary but contains twenty-three homilies and six religious poems, and does not follow any specific ecclesiastical order. The Vercelli manuscript originates from south-east England, probably from Saint Augustine's, Canterbury. Scragg convincingly argues on the basis of the transmission history of Vercelli homilies II, XIX, XX and XXI that the author of XIX, XX and XXI and the scribe of the Vercelli book both worked in the same library, during the tenure of Archbishop Dunstan. Its content connects it to twenty-five other homiletic manuscripts and through them to Christ Church, Canterbury, and Christ Church's daughter house at Rochester.[2] The Blickling and Vercelli homilies, then, are from different geographical areas and from textual traditions even in their two shared items, which are not close in their readings.[3] Each book does display internal cohesion of theme and tone. Both books are strongly eschatological and concerned with the need for salvation. The Blickling homilies teach about confession, redemption and repentance; repentance is achieved through faith and grace, and displayed through almsgiving and other good works. These homilies are compassionate and benevolent in tone.[4] The Vercelli book by contrast, while also concerned with themes of repentance and redemption, is harsher in tone and prescribes ascetic remedies

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[1] D. G. Scragg, 'The homilies of the Blickling manuscript', in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (eds.), *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.299-316; D. G. Scragg (ed.), *The Vercelli Book*, E.E.T.S. os 300 (1992), p. xxiv.

[2] Scragg, *Vercelli*, pp. xxxvii-viii, xl-xlii, lxxiv-ix; D. G. Scragg, 'An Old English homilist of St. Dunstan's day', in M. Korhammer (ed.), *Words, Texts, and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 181-92.

[3] Scragg, 'Blicking', pp. 305, 315-6. The shared items are Blickling Homily IX / Vercelli Homily X and Blickling Homily XVII / Vercelli Homily XVIII.

[4] S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature, including an introduction on the Anglo-Latin Background by M. Lapidge* (New York, 1986), p. 72; I. Ranum, 'Blickling homily X and the millennial apocalyptic vision', *In Geardagum* 19 (1998): 44-5; M. A. Dalbey, '"Souls' Medicine": Religious psychology in the Blickling rogation homilies', *Neophilologus* 64 (1980): 470-1.

for sin.[5] Nevertheless, while the homilies within both books were not randomly selected, they were not compiled around the theme of maternity.

A methodology is needed, therefore, which allows for a consideration of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies as a variety of different sources, but which still allows for a systematic and thematic analysis of maternity within the broader soteriological concerns of the compilations and which does not break down into a disjointed series of examinations of maternity in each individual homily. It should be noted that while the concepts of maternity in the Blickling and Vercelli books are not uniform, they are based on the same assumptions and expressed in similar ways. The fact that the paradigm of maternity found in the homilies of both books is not the viewpoint of one author but is contained in a variety of different homilies from various regions suggests that this model of maternity was widely promulgated in Anglo-Saxon England. The use of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies in particular can be justified because they provide a window onto a specific model of maternity, an examination of which forms the focus of this chapter. However, where possible, an attempt will be made to situate this type of maternity not just in the Blickling and Vercelli manuscripts but also within its wider homiletic background.

The second methodological point that needs discussion is the issue of the sources of the various homilies in the two books. This issue is particularly difficult to address because, as will be noted in the main body of the chapter, many of the passages about maternity within the individual homilies have not been sourced at all, or have a

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[5] Greenfield and Calder, *Critical History*, p. 73; P. E. Szarmach, 'The Vercelli homilies: style and structure', in P. E. Szarmach and B. F. Huppé (eds.), *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds* (Albany, 1978), p. 262; E. O'Carragain, 'How did the Vercelli collector understand the *Dream of the Rood*?', in P. M. Tilling (ed.), *Studies in English Language and Literature in honour of Paul Christopherson* (Belfast, 1981), pp. 66-8.

known ultimate source but no known intermediary sources.[6] Many of the homilies these passages come from draw on Latin rather than Old English sources, at least where these sources can be detected, and their Latin sources were not all composed in England. English vernacular homilies drew on a larger Christian theological framework. The use of Latin sources should not of course be cited as evidence that the ideas transmitted in the homilies were necessarily alien to Anglo-Saxon audiences. Recent scholarship has pointed to the importance of transmission, revision and variation in examining the meaning, at any specific time, of ideas contained within the texts.[7] A detailed analysis of the origins and transmission of the ideas about maternity found in the Blickling and Vercelli homilies is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, placing them within their homiletic context, so far as is possible from the extant literature, will provide some evidence as to their prevalence. It is possible that the ideas about maternity contained in the Blickling and Vercelli books did not originate in England. However, this chapter will investigate their promulgation rather than their inception.

Having treated these methodological issues, it is now possible to return to the main arguments of the chapter. The main threads of argument that will run through the chapter are that maternity was corporeally based, that it was used to think about salvation history, and that on the whole a theologically positive view of motherhood was presented to the audiences of the homilies. I will start by examining maternity purely as it related to pregnancy and childbirth, and the way that this model related to ideas about the Fall and redemption. I will then move on to a discussion of the roles that

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[6] The principle exception to this general observation is Blickling homily I. Its main source is Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 120, a seventh-century North African Christmas homily. M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 222-30; For *Sermo* 120 see *PL* 39, cols 1984-7.

[7] A. J. Frantzen and C. L. Venegoni, 'The desire for origins: An archaeology of Anglo-Saxon studies', *Style* 20 (1986): 142-56; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 193-4; M. Swan, 'Memorialised readings: Manuscript evidence for Old English homily composition', in P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 205-17.

corporeal motherhood could be used to claim. Finally, I will analyse how far the homilies can be used to think about the lived experiences of Anglo-Saxon mothers.

Corporeal maternity in the context of salvation.

The essential feature of maternity within both books is that it is physically grounded in the body, and based upon pregnancy and childbirth rather than in a social relationship between mother and child. This is the case in all the Blickling homilies that touch upon motherhood: I, V, VII, IX, XIII and XIV. Motherhood is intrinsically womb-based in Vercelli homilies IV, VI, VIII, X, XV and XVII. Only in Vercelli homily I is maternity expressed without being directly based in the body.[8] It is important not to analyse this corporeal understanding of maternity reductively. Bodies are experienced and understood according to cultural expectations. Not only should they be analysed within their social system, they can also be used as a means of understanding this system. This is particularly true of medieval societies, as the Christian understanding of salvation tended to be embodied within the context of the human and divine body of Jesus Christ.[9] In all the homilies in the Blickling and Vercelli books in which maternity is touched upon, it is connected to ideas about the Fall, incarnation and salvation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the homilists' treatment of maternity centres around Mary, both in conjunction with Eve and Elizabeth in the Blickling homilies and on her own in both sets of homilies. The homilists' treatment of the maternity of ordinary mothers also relates to the theme of salvation history, as it occurs in the context of passages that discuss the transient nature of the fallen human body.

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[8] In Vercelli homily I Mary's motherhood of Christ is not predicated on the body. However the relevant passage closely follows the crucifixion account in John.

[9] N. Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkley, 1992), pp. 13-7; P. McCracken, 'The body politic and the Queen's adulterous body in French Romance', in L. Lomperis and S. Stanbury (eds.), *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 48-9; K. Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 1-3, 44.

Consequently, one must examine how the homilists used their womb-based conception of motherhood to generate meaning within the context of their concern for salvation.

It should be noted that in almost all of the homilies that consider maternity, motherhood is not represented within the context of the marital unit and is therefore independent of the husband–wife relationship. The parental unit is considered only in Blickling homilies XIV and XV. Blickling homily XIV treats maternity partly within a broader family framework. Blickling homily XV does not directly consider maternity but does refer to the Pauline model of a wife who is obedient to her husband and children who are obedient to their parents. Unlike in Ælfric's homilies motherhood is not explicitly presented as subordinated to fatherhood, but the family model it presents is more similar to Ælfric's thought on the subject than to the model of motherhood represented in the other homilies in the Blickling book.

Both the Blickling and Vercelli books attest to a belief that Mary's maternity was, in partnership with God, a source of salvation for humanity:

> *Ond eall ðæt wæs gelæsted siððan heofenas tohlidan ond sio heahmiht on þysne wang astah, ond se halega gæst wunode in þam æðelan innoðe ond in þam betstan bosme ond in þam gecorenan hordfate, ond in þam halegan breostum he eardode nigon monað. Ond þa ealra fæmnena wuldor cende þone soðan scyppend ond ealles folces frefend ond ealles middangeardes hælend ond ealra gasta nerigend ond eallra sawla helpend, ða se ælhmihtega dryhten in þas woruld becwom ond menniscne lichoman onfeng æt Sancte Marian. Þurh þa byrðran we wæron gehælede, ond þurh þæt gebiorðor we wurdon alysede, and þurh ða gesamnunge we wæron gefrioðode feonda gafoles, ond þurh þone tocyme we wæron geweorðode ond gewelgode, ond gearode.*[10]

[10] *Vercelli*, X, ll 14-25 and *Blickling*, IX, p. 105, 'And all that was accomplished when the heavens sprung apart, and the high power descended to this place, and the Holy Spirit dwelt in the throne-worthy womb, and in the best bosom, and in the chosen treasure chest, and he inhabited the holy breast for nine months, and the honour of all virgins bore the true Creator, and the comforter of all people, and the saviour of all the world, and the preserver of all spirits, and the helper of all souls, when the almighty lord came to his world and took a human body from Saint Mary. By the mother/child-bearer we were saved, and through the birth we were redeemed, and through the union we were freed from the tribute of the devil, and through the advent we were made worthy and enriched and pardoned'. This passage is also found in two other homilies, see below and note 14. My translation here and throughout.

The author of the homily meditates on Mary's womb in a series of rhetorical phrases, the accumulation of which emphasise its hallowed nature as Christ's dwelling place. These descriptions are paralleled by a series of attributes of the Holy Spirit, which entered into her. The effect of this technique is to create a partnership between Mary and God in the salvation of mankind. This impression is made more concrete later in the homily. While Christ is the active partner, who takes human nature from Mary, Mary's maternity is crucial to the union of human and divine natures in Christ's incarnation. It is through the union of both that humanity is redeemed, and thus Mary's motherhood is salvational. This passage forms part of an introduction to a homily that is preserved in nine different manuscripts.[11] The homily starts with a piece about the incarnation, from which this passage is taken, and continues with a brief account of Christ's life on earth, in which he performed miracles and brought salvation to many.[12] The main body of the homily is comprised of a Last Judgement scene and exhortations on the need to live a virtuous life. The emphasis in the introductory section on Mary's role in redemption is implicitly heightened by the eschatological content of the rest of the homily, as her maternity is necessary for the incarnation and the salvation of humanity.

The ideas contained in the homily seem to have been fairly widespread in England. The introductory material to the homily, in which the cited passage is located, has no known source. Scragg suggests that as the linguistic rhetorical strategies it uses are commonplace in Old English eschatological homilies, it was probably composed in Old English as an introduction to the rest of the homily.[13] This does not mean that the ideas about Mary's maternity and the incarnation it contains originated in late Anglo-

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[11] For details of the different manuscript versions of the homily see *Vercelli*, pp. 191-5. I have used Scragg's sigla where I refer to specific manuscripts.

[12] *Blickling*, IX, p. 106 and *Vercelli*, X, ll 25-35.

[13] *Vercelli*, pp. 191-2. The main body of the homily is comprised of reworked and translated Latin sources, primarily Paulinus of Aquileia's *Liber exhortationis ad Henricum comitem* and a pseudo-Augustine sermon from the Caesarian *Collectio quincaginta*. *Vercelli*, pp. 191-2 and n1; K. Jost, *Wulfstanstudien* (Bern, 1950), pp. 246-7; W. Becker, 'The Latin manuscript sources of the Old English translations of the sermon *Remedia Peccatorum*', *Medium Ævum* 45 (1976): 145-52.

Saxon England, but it does suggest that they were thought about and perhaps modified rather than merely transmitted. The popularity of the ideas can perhaps also be seen in their manuscript transmission. The passage discussed does survive only in four manuscript versions of the homily. It is found in the Blickling and Vercelli books, in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 419 and 421 (N), and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 302 (K).[14] Although the introductory material is only incorporated into four out of nine manuscripts, those manuscripts do cover a broad time-span. The Blickling and Vercelli books date from the latter part of the tenth century, but the homilies they contain predate their manuscript context. Version N is dated by its manuscript to the first quarter of the eleventh century, and version K is from the eleventh or twelfth century.[15] The ideas also seem to have been geographically widespread. The Blickling book is probably of Mercian provenance; the Vercelli book and the version found in manuscript K are of south-eastern origin, probably from Canterbury.[16]

The idea that Mary's maternity was a source of salvation for humanity is also found in Blickling homily I, on the Annunciation. In this homily her acceptance of Christ into her womb can be seen as a type of intercession for humanity. While she ponders Gabriel's word at the Annunciation, he speaks:

> *"Eala þu eadige Maria, eall þeos gehæft-world bideþ þinre geþafunge; forþon þe God þe hafaþ to gisle her on middangearde geseted, ond Adames gylt þurh þe sceal beon geþingod ond þæm þe geara abolgen wæs for manna synnum, þæt he þone halgan ham beleac; þurh þe sceal beon se ingang eft geopenod, ond þu gehelpest þysses menniscan cynnes."*[17]

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[14] The passage is almost identical in all surviving copies, apart from some minor variations in spelling. The only two differences between the versions are that in the Blickling, K and N versions *ælmihtega drihten* is replaced with *se goldbloma*, and that the Blickling and N versions add the words *þæra unwemman fæmnan* after *Sancta Marian*.

[15] *Vercelli*, pp. xxx – xxxii.

[16] See above and H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, 2001), numbers 108-9.

[17] *Blickling*, I, pp. 8-9, '"Oh you blessed Mary, all this condemned world awaits your consent, because God has set you here on the earth as a hostage, and Adam's guilt must be interceded for through you, and to him who was so angry because of the sin of men that he locked up the holy dwelling place; through you the entrance must now be opened, and you shall aid mankind."'

The entire homily centres around the importance of Mary's womb and her spoken consent to Christ's incarnation and the world's salvation. In its primary source, pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 120, Gabriel states that even God waits for Mary's consent.[18] The homilist obviously found God's explicit dependence upon Mary too problematic but despite his toning down of the source material Mary's womb-based maternity remains a powerful basis for intercession that links her to the divine. Unlike in Ælfric's treatment of the Annunciation, her consent is not made dependent upon her virginity. Mary's maternity in this homily is particularly authoritative. However, the homily is extant solely in the Blickling manuscript and there is no extant analogue from Anglo-Saxon England. The methodological problems associated with arguing from absence mean that it is impossible to theorise the extent to which these ideas circulated.

The emphasis in these passages on Christ's humanity as well as his divinity, and the concentration on Mary's contribution to his humanity, can be seen as emblematic of early medieval Christology and the theology of redemption. The first passage was composed in England, probably in the ninth or tenth centuries. The Latin source for the Blickling Annunciation homily was composed in late sixth- or early seventh-century North Africa and was probably transmitted to England via Italy, though as noted above the translator adapted the ideas contained in the source.[19] The roots of these ideas can, however, be found in a series of disputes about the precise nature of Christ that were instrumental in forming doctrine in the fifth century. The ideas of Nestorius were anathematised by the Council of Ephesus in 431, and the ideas of Eutyches were condemned at Chalcedon in 451.[20] The Council of Ephesus confirmed Mary in the title

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[18] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 225; Pseudo Augustine, *Sermo* 120, *PL* 39, cols 1984-7.
[19] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 223.
[20] B. C. Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Thought* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 7-8. Nestorius argued that there were two persons in one Christ, and Eutyches argued that Christ had only one nature.

theotokos, the Godbearer, which underlined the two natures of Christ.[21] As *theotokos* Mary guaranteed Christ's humanity and thus his anguish on the cross. His suffering humanity was necessary for his crucifixion to have meaning and to redeem mankind. The two councils established as orthodox doctrine the idea that Christ was one person with two natures. Given that these disputes centred around the humanity and divinity of Christ, Mary's corporeal relationship with Christ and therefore her contribution to salvation was inevitably heightened.

In contrast to Mary's maternity, Eve's motherhood in the Blickling annunciation homily was firmly rooted in the Fall:

> *Ond wæs se dom oncyrred Euan ungesælignesse þæt hire wæs togecweden, þæt heo cende on sare ond on unrotnesse þa hire bearn. Maria cende þonne Drihten on blisse; Eua cende þurh firenlust. Maria cende þone mildheortan ond þone unscebþendan Crist on hire innoþe, Eua bær tearas on hire innoþe. Maria brohte þurh heo þone ecean gefean eallum middangearde; Eua cende hire bearn on sare; forþan þe heo on synnum geeacnod wæs... Seo æreste modo þyses menniscan cynne wræcwite middangearde brohte, þa heo Godes bebodu abræc; ond on þus wræcwite aworpen wæs. Heo hæfde hire sylfre gewohrt þæt mæste wite ond eallum hire cynne, ge þæt wite wæs to þæs strang þæt æghwylc man sceolde mid sare on þas world cuman, ond on sorghum beon, ond mid sare of gewitan, ond nu þeos halige fæmne Sancta Maria brohte eallum geleaffullum þæs bletsunga ond ece hælo.*[22]

The source for this section of the homily, Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 120, was not greatly altered in translation.[23] Eve's contribution to the fall and its consequences for her children, all mankind, are here contrasted with Mary's role in the salvation of the faithful in a passage that is highly reminiscent of Jerome's argument that death entered

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[21] C. W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1991), pp. 113-4.

[22] *Blickling*, I, pp. 3-5, 'And the judgement that was spoken against Eve for her unholiness, that she bear her children in suffering and sorrow, was transformed. Mary bore the Lord in joy, Eve gave birth through carnal lust, Mary bore the merciful and innocent Christ in her womb, Eve bore tears in her womb. Mary brought forth through herself eternal joy for all the earth, Eve bore her children in suffering, because she had conceived in sin... The first mother of mankind brought forth vengeance on the earth when she broke God's command, and she was cast down in this vengeance. She had made a great vengeance for herself and all her kin, and the vengeance was so powerful that each man must come into the world in suffering, and be here in sorrow, and depart in suffering. And now the holy virgin Saint Mary brought forth this blessing and eternal salvation for all the faithful'.

[23] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 223.

the world through Eve, and life through the virginity of Mary.[24] Maternity is directly connected to sin, sexuality and death and to salvation and life. Eve's maternity is portrayed as a judgement, rooted in sin. As a consequence, it is a source of pain and suffering not just for all mothers in childbirth but for the lives and deaths of her children, all humanity. The idea that women's pain in childbirth was a punishment from God was based ultimately on Genesis 3:16, a verse in which God condemns all women to painful childbirth and to subordination under their husbands' dominion.

As discussed above, this homily and its source do not appear to have circulated widely in Anglo-Saxon England. The idea that Mary cancelled out the sin of Eve appears to have been well known, as attested by the homilies of Ælfric and the charter proems.[25] However, the belief that the pain of women in childbirth was a punishment from God seems to have had a more limited circulation. It is present in Ælfric's homilies but does not appear in any other vernacular homilies or in the medical corpus.

It is now necessary to turn from the ideas that surround the womb-based motherhood of Mary and Eve to the maternity of normal human mothers. Because the homiliaries were compiled from a variety of different sources they do not present a uniform ideal of maternity. It is presented as tainted by the Fall in Vercelli XVII and possibly in Blickling XIV, but a more complex paradigm is deployed in Blickling V and Vercelli IV.

The idea that maternity was tainted by sexuality can be found in Vercelli homily XVII:

> *Þæt wæs in þære Godes æ þæt swa hwylc wif swa bearn cende, þæt heo ne moste in þæt Godes templ ingangan ær ðan feowertigan dæge wære, ac heo sceolde on*

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[24] J. Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague, 1975), p. 70.
[25] See above in chapter one. Examples of proems can be found in S 745, S 658, S 673.

> *þam fæce gebidan to clænsunge hire lichoman. And þonne þy feowertig dæge wære, heo þonne sceolde þæt bearn gebringan to þam Godes templ. For þan þe ealle wif þe tymende syndon hie sendon on þam bebodum, for ðan seo eadigu cwen Sancta Maria, Cristes moder, heo clæne abad þæs feowertigan dæges, nalles þæt heo þæs ænige þearfe hæfde þæt heo swylc wære on clænnesse hire lichoman... for ðan þe heo wæs unmælu ond clæne butan eallum synnum, ond heo in clænnesse mægðhade a ðurhwunode.*[26]

This passage explains that Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the temple after forty days to fulfil the law of God. The purity and virginity of Mary is contrasted with the need of all other women for purification. The passage implies that childbirth is unclean because of the necessarily sexual and therefore sinful nature of normal conception; Mary, like all other women, has given birth, but unlike all other women she remained a virgin. This need for purification is moreover legislated for by divine law, indicating an ontological nature to the impurity of childbirth. The connection between the Fall and childbirth is not spelt out but it is clearly present. It should be noted, however, that while the homilist is anxious to explain why Mary went for purification the main body of the homily focuses on the meeting between Christ and Simon.[27] The idea about maternity found in the homily is not the primary message conveyed by the homilist.

No definite source has been detected for this section of the homily. The homilist seems to draw on the tradition of Ambrosius Autepertus in his reference to Matthew 5:17 where Christ claims to fulfil the law, but this reference is the sole connection between the two versions.[28] Furthermore, the homily is only found in the Vercelli manuscript, and is the only Old English homily I have found that discusses Mary's

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[26] *Vercelli*, XVII, ll 30-8, 40-1, 'That was according to God's law that as each woman bore a child, then she could not go within God's temple before forty days went past, but she must wait for this time for the purification of her body. And when it was the fortieth day, then she must bring the child to God's temple. Because all women who were giving birth sent themselves according to the commandment, so the blessed queen Saint Mary, Christ's mother, she waited, pure, those forty days, not because she had any such need that she be cleansed for the purity of her body... because she was immaculate, and pure, without sin, and she dwelt in pure virginity throughout'.

[27] M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 60, 69-72.

[28] *Vercelli*, p. 278 and n1; Ambrosius Autpertus, *Sermo in Purificatione Sanctae Mariae*, in R. Weber (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* (1979), pp. 985-1002.

purification in this way. Ælfric provides instructions for the Candlemass procession in his Second Letter to Wulfstan, and also a homily for the Purification.[29] However, he does not discuss the reason why Mary submitted to the law, and so he does not in this instance draw a marked contrast between her virginity and the sexuality of other women.[30]

The Vercelli purification homily should not, however, be interpreted as an indication that childbirth was widely regarded as a source of impurity. It is difficult to get a sense of the extent to which Anglo-Saxon women were considered unclean after childbirth. In the seventh century the *Canons* and *Penitential of Theodore* both forbid menstruating women and new mothers to enter the church. In the early eighth century Bede promulgated the opposite position by reproducing a letter from Pope Gregory to Augustine of Canterbury. Gregory argues in the letter that the Levitical tradition should be understood allegorically, and that the sinful nature of generation was to be found in sex, not in the pain of childbirth. Exclusion of new mothers was therefore itself a sin. Neither Gregory's nor Theodore's position can be demonstrated to have gained a greater consensus than the other in the succeeding three centuries.[31] It should also be noted that there is no evidence of purification ceremonies held for women after childbirth extant in Anglo-Saxon England. While the rite of churching derived from the idea of Mary's purification, the earliest extant rites for the ceremony are from late eleventh-century Germany, and the liturgy is not found in English manuscripts earlier than the fourteenth

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[29] Bedingfield, *Liturgy*, pp. 50-72; P.Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, E. E. T. S. ss 17 (1997), IX; B. Fehr (ed.), *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics, Reprint with a Supplement to the Introduction by Peter Clemoes* (Darmstadt, 1966), p. 215.

[30] Clemoes, *Homilies* 1, IX, ll 4-16.

[31] R. Meens, 'Questioning ritual purity: The influence of Gregory the Great's answers to Augustine's queries about childbirth, menstruation and sexuality', in R. Gameson (ed.), *St. Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 175-8; J. M. Pierce, '"Green women" and blood pollution: Some medieval rituals for the churching of women after childbirth', *Studia Liturgica* 29.2 (1999): 196-7; B. R. Lee, 'The purification of women after childbirth: A window onto medieval perceptions of women', *Florilegium* 14 (1995-6):43-55; K. Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood and Women in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp. 218-21.

century Sarum rite.[32] Anglo-Saxon texts on the Purification do not make any connection between Mary's purification and the needs of contemporary women. Ælfric's homily for Candlemass suggests a mixed audience, and his Second Letter to Wulfstan contains instructions that both monks and laity should take part in the Candlemass procession. However, Mary is not the central figure in any of the rites or homilies for this feast. Instead, the emphasis was placed on Simeon's acceptance of Christ as the Messiah who would light up the path to salvation.[33] The Vercelli homily suggests that the homilist could not assume his audience would understand that childbirth was connected to impurity. On the contrary, the idea of purification is carefully explained, as is Mary's reason for performing a ritual she did not need.

A trace of the idea that childbirth is connected to the Fall through the sexual nature of conception can perhaps be seen in Blickling XIV, an account of the birth of John the Baptist. It states that the *cennende*, the parents of John the Baptist, lived a life free of sin, even though Elizabeth did not bear a child until old age. The messenger of Christ had to be born into a suitable vessel:

> *Ond þa þe æghwylc mennisc leahter on þæm eadigan Sancte Iohanne cennendum gestilled wæs, ond hie on eallum heora life orleahtre gestodan, þa sona seo unwæstmfæstnes fram him fleah, ond sona heora ylda geliffæsted wæs, ond geleafa ond seo clænnes onfeng.*[34]

It is possible that this passage was intended to convey the idea that John's parents had to conceive him without desire, as it states that when they were free from sin in their entire lives, then they conceived through faith and in purity. At the very least the emphasis placed on the need for John to be conceived in purity and the lifetime it took for John's parents to be suitable suggests a connection between normal conception and sin.

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[32] Pierce, '"Green women"', pp. 198-206.
[33] Bedingfield, *Dramatic Liturgy*, pp. 50-72; P.Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, E. E. T. S. ss 17 (1997), IX, ll 244-51; Fehr, *Hirtenbriefe*, p. 215.
[34] *Blickling*, XIV, p. 163, 'And when every human sin in the parents of the blessed St. John was restrained, and they stood blameless in their entire lives, then immediately unfruitfulness fled from them, and immediately their age was made vigourous, and their faith and purity conceived.'

However, the passage does not draw a direct connection between maternity, sexuality and sin as Ælfric and the homilist of Vercelli XVII do. First, for John to be born it was necessary for both his parents to live a pure life. The sexuality of his mother Elizabeth is not singled out as particularly morally charged in comparison to that of her husband. The lack of gendering of sexuality can also be seen in the use of the word *cennende* to denote 'parents'. It carries connotations of conception and corporeality, but it is applied to both parents equally. Second, it should be noted that in this homily chastity is not explicitly singled out as a pre-eminent virtue. Rather, the homily teaches that both parents had to lead a completely virtuous life in order to be worthy parents to Christ's messenger. The source for this homily is Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 199.[35] I have been unable to find any parallels to the ideas about parenthood found in this homily.

Normal human maternity is also referred to in one Blickling homily and one Vercelli homily in connection with the transient post-lapsarian state of humanity. The way it is used in both homilies is remarkably similar, and in order to discuss it thoroughly it is worth quoting extensively from the relevant sections of both homilies. Blickling homily V states:

> *Hwæt is þæt lif elles þysses middangeardes buton lytelu ylding þæs deaþes?... Swyþe soþlice we magon geþencan þæt hit biþ deaþes ylding, swiþor þonne lifes. Hwylc man is þæt mæge ariman ealle þa sar ond þa brocu þe se man to gesceapen is? On synne he bið geeacnod, ond on his modor sare he bið acenned, on hungre, ond on þurste, ond on cyle he bið afeded, on gewinne ond on swate he leofaþ, on wope ond on unrotnesse ond on sare his lichoma sceal her wunian, ond þonne se synfulla on þæm hellefyre cwicsusle his lif geendaþ. Wa biþ þonne þæm mannum þe ne ongytaþ þisse worlde yrmþa, þe hie to gesceapene beoþ, ond hie nellaþ gemunan þone dæg heora forþfore, ne þone bifgendan domes dæg, ne hie ne gelyfaþ on þæt ece wuldor þæs heofenlican rices, ne hie ne ongytaþ þæt hi on fruman to Godes hiwunga gesceapene wæron, ond eac to þon ecan life, na to þon ecan deaþe.*[36]

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[35] M. McC Gatch, 'Eschatology in the anonymous Old English homilies', *Traditio* 21 (1965): 121; Pseudo Augustine, *Sermo* 199, *PL* 39, 2117-8.

[36] *Blickling*, V, pp. 59-61, 'What is the life of this earth except a short delay of death?... Very truly, we can think that it is a delay of death, rather than of life. What man is there that can number all the suffering and the sickness to which man is created? In sin he is conceived, in his mother's suffering he is born; on hunger and on thirst and on cold he is fed; through toil and through sweat he lives; in weeping and in

Vercelli homily IV argues:

> *Her is sio lænelice wynsumnes, ond eft ascortaþ. Nis ænig man þæt to þæs mycel age þæt he ne scyle his unwillan alætan his æhta ond on unmyrhðe his lif geendian. Mid glædnesse ond mid willan we bioð on ure modor hrife, ond hwæðre þurh sar hie us acennaþ. Sume we beoð acende her to lifienne on wædle, sume medomlicor, sume þonne gyt ufor to ðam mæstan welan, ond þeahhwæðre he sceal þurh sar sweltan, ond on unmyrhðe his lif geendian. Men þa leofestan, earnien we us on þysse worulde þæs ecan gefean, se næfre ateorað nænigum þara þe his earnian wile... þonne be þære oðre worulde bið þam eadigan þær æghwæt myrges ond þam scyldigan þær æghwæt unrotlices.*[37]

In the Blickling homily, life's pain starts with the sin of conception, which leads to the suffering of childbirth, which echoes and is linguistically linked to the suffering of life, a suffering that inevitably ends in death. Motherhood is the result of sin and the cause of pain for both mother and child. The Vercelli homily contains nearly identical ideas. It does not refer to the sin of conception. Instead, it establishes two interesting contrasts. The joy and gladness of the unborn babies in their mothers' wombs is compared to the suffering that childbirth causes mothers. While the potential for life is a joyful experience, the birthing of life is suffering, and this suffering is the limit of the maternal experience. Men may suffer, but motherhood is suffering. Furthermore, despite the joy of life, as in the Blickling homily, the suffering of motherhood leads inexorably to and is linguistically linked with the suffering of death, which eclipses any other experience. Both homilies link the suffering of life and death to the transitory, fallen nature of the human body, through the juxtaposition of the temporary travails of earthly life and the eternal reward of punishment to be allotted at judgement day. Maternity is not a major theme in either homily, but it is used in both to point to the corporeal nature and limited

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sorrow and in suffering his body must dwell here; and then the sinful one must end his life in the torturous fires of hell. Woe to those men who do not perceive the poverty of this world to which they are created, and to those who will not consider the day of their passing, nor the terrible day of judgement. Nor will they have faith in the eternal glory of the heavenly kingdom, nor will they perceive that they were created in the beginning to the likeness of God and also to eternal life, not to eternal death'.

[37] *Vercelli*, IV, ll 10-9, 21-3. 'Here is transitory joy, and then it passes away. There is no man, however much he owns, that must not unwillingly let go of his possessions and end his life in sadness. With gladness and with joy we are in our mothers' wombs, and nevertheless they bear us in suffering. Some of us are born to live in wan, some in moderation, some higher yet in great abundance, yet he must die in suffering and end his life in sadness. Dearly beloved, in this world let us merit for ourselves eternal joy that will never fail any of those who want to merit it... There, in the other world, everything will be of joy for the blessed, and everything will be of sadness for the sinful'.

time-span of mortal life. Sex, suffering and death are bound up in the fallen nature of humanity, but in both homilies the pain of maternity embraces all three issues, and the maternal body is a site for God's punishment of humanity.

Despite the connection drawn between maternity and the Fall, in neither homily is a simple equation drawn between the two ideas. The pain of maternity cannot be seen primarily as a sign that the sin of Eve devolved upon all women, and thus as a sign of the inferiority of women, as it is in Ælfric's theology. The absence of this link can be seen partly in the absence of the clear association between women, sexuality and the Fall that predetermines much of Ælfric's treatment of maternity. For example, the sin of conception is not mentioned in the Vercelli homily, and is not attributed specifically to the mother in the Blickling homily. Furthermore, while the maternal body can be seen as a microcosm of God's punishment of humanity in both homilies, the word *sar* is used to describe the suffering that is inherent in the fallen nature of mankind, as well as specifically maternal pain. This use of language creates a paradigm in which the maternal body shares in God's punishment of humanity, but not in a way that makes the punishment of women through motherhood distinctive. The lack of distinction between God's punishment through maternity and his broader punishment of mankind means that maternity is not peculiarly associated with the Fall and the sexual transmission of original sin. The minimal association of maternity with a view of tainted sexuality can perhaps also be seen in the absence, in the Blickling and Vercelli homilies, of the idea of the church as virgin mother, who is needed to purify her children from original sin through a second, virgin birth. More positively, in contrast to Ælfric's work, maternal pain in these homilies occurs in a context where the emphasis is not on the Fall and sexuality but on the transience of life and the inevitability of judgement. The final judgement, unlike God's first punishment of humanity, is not based on gender

demarcations. This emphasis also minimises the association of maternity with sexuality and of sexual sin with women. The correlation of motherhood with the transience of the body rather than with specifically female sexual sin forms a paradigm of maternity in which the pain of childbirth does not make motherhood a condition more dishonourable or subjected than the fallen state of all humanity.

It is difficult to place these ideas within the wider homiletic context of Anglo-Saxon England. Blickling homily V has not yet been sourced by the *Fontes* project, and I have been unable to discover any close parallels in the extant corpus. The relevant passage of Vercelli homily IV is also unsourced both by *Fontes* and by its editor. Scragg argues that the vocabulary of the first part of the homily, from which this passage is taken, suggests 'an early or non West-Saxon origin'.[38] The entire homily, including the cited passage, is also found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41, a manuscript from the early- to mid-eleventh century. The Corpus Christi version was probably copied in southern England and was at Exeter by the third quarter of the eleventh century. The homily was drawn upon by the compiler of an eschatological piece found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library 201 and by the compiler of Napier 30, but these two compilers did not use the reference to maternity.[39] Nevertheless, because the manuscript transmission and vocabulary of the Vercelli homily indicate either a wide geographical circulation or a long history of use, and possibly both, I suggest that the ideas about maternity contained within the homilies were similarly widespread.

The theologically positive viewpoints of womb-based motherhood found in Blickling I, V and IX, and in Vercelli IV and X, are substantiated in their manuscript

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[38] *Vercelli*, p. 90 and n2.
[39] *Vercelli*, p. 87; Napier 30 is taken from Oxford, Bodlean Library, Hatton 113.

context by the place of sexuality in the Blickling and Vercelli compilations. It is difficult to discuss the theme systematically because of the compiled form of the homiliaries. However, a brief survey of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies shows that the regulation of sexuality is not a central feature of the homilies' teaching on a good Christian life as it is in all of Ælfric's works. In the Blickling homilies carnal lust is on one occasion added to the list of sins taken from a source,[40] but it is still only one sin amongst many, including gluttony, boasting, vanity, giving false judgements and not tithing.[41] In the Vercelli homilies sinfulness is not centred round sexuality either, as greediness, fornication, sloth and unhappiness, avarice, vainglory, envy, anger and pride are all equally considered to be cardinal sins.[42] By contrast, important virtues are the Pauline faith, hope and love in the Vercelli homilies[43] and humility, patience, mercy and liberality to the poor in the Blickling homilies.[44] The audiences of the Vercelli homilies are promised a one hundred-fold reward in heaven for good deeds performed for the poor,[45] while the audiences of the Blickling homilies are promised the same reward for the payment of tithes to be used for the same purpose.[46] The source for this idea in the Vercelli homily is a Pseudo-Augustine *sermo* found in the Caesarian *Collectio quinquagentia*, a version of which seems to have circulated widely in tenth-century England.[47] In neither homiliary is virginity presented as a model for emulation deserving of a hundred-fold reward, or as an ideal for a good Christian life which, if not maintained, requires compensating for, as it is in Ælfric's works. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the homilies of the Blickling and Vercelli books the sin of conception and its connection to the Fall is not associated above all with the mother as is in Ælfric's

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[40] Dalbey, '*Soul's Medicine*', p. 474; *Blickling*, VIII, pp. 99-101.
[41] *Blickling*, V, p. 59; *Blickling*, VIII, p. 95; *Blickling*, X, p. 109.
[42] *Vercelli*, III, ll 21-4.
[43] *Vercelli*, III ll 2-3.
[44] *Blickling*, III pp. 27, 33-42; *Blickling*, X, p. 109.
[45] *Vercelli*, X, ll 144-9.
[46] *Blickling*, IV, p. 41.
[47] This version was drawn upon by Ælfric in his second series Catholic homily VII. The version found in these homilies is also found in translation in Salisbury, Cathedral Library 9. These three versions have similar readings that are different to the continental version printed in *PL* 39, 2340-42. *Vercelli*, p. 192 n1.

homilies. This is because the Fall is not explained as being primarily Eve's fault. In the Blickling homilies it is blamed on Adam as well as Eve.[48] In the Vercelli homilies Eve, unlike Adam, is never specifically blamed for the Fall.[49] Mary's motherhood, while virginal, still shares its basis with the motherhood of other mothers, that is, pregnancy and childbirth. The homilies do not primarily define Christians according to their state of chastity, nor represent sexuality in connection with maternity as a particularly charged form of sin. Collectively and individually, the homilies stand in contrast to Ælfric's works, and indicate that a primarily positive and unmisogynistic conception of pregnancy and childbirth circulated in the homiletic literature of Anglo-Saxon England.

The representation of maternity in the homilies of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies was not confined to childbirth but moved beyond them to encompass the role of intercession. This can be seen in Blickling homily VII. This homily combines the themes of Christ's Descent into Hell and Judgement, which are linked by the need of humanity for salvation, and by the homily's introductory statement that Judgement Day will occur on Easter Day. The homily contains an exhortation to its audience to learn from the example of Christ to live a life that will merit salvation. It then narrates the story of Christ's descent into Hell. After Christ has released the holy souls, Adam appeals for mercy and is released from his bonds:

> *Eua þagyt on bendum ond owope þurhwunode; heo cwæþ: "Soþfæst eart þu, Drihten, ond rihte syndon þine domas; forþon þe mid gewyrhtum ic þas þrowige. Ic wæs mid weorþmende on neorxna wange, ond ic þæt ne ongeat, ic wæs wiþermede ond unwisum netenum gelic geworden. Ac þu Drihten scyld minre iugoþe ond min, onunwisdomes ne wes þu gemyndig, ne ne ahwyrf þu þine onsyne, ne þine mildheortnesse from me, ne þu ne gecyr on erre from þinre þeowene; gehyr þu arfæsta God mine stefne, mid þære ic earm to þe cleopie; forþon on sare ond on geomrunge min lif ond mine gear syndon fornumene. Drihten, þu wast mine geheowunga, þæt ic eom dust ond axe, gif þu mine unrihtwisnesse behealdest. Ic þu halsige nu Drihten, for þinre þeowene Sancta Marian þa þu mid heofenlicum wuldre geweorþodest; hire innoþ þu gefyldest nigon monaþ mid ealles middengeardes weorþe; þu wast þæt þu of minre dehter,*

[48] *Blickling*, II, p. 25; *Blickling*, VIII, p. 89.
[49] *Vercelli*, XI, ll 46-8; *Vercelli*, XIV, ll 17-20.

> *Drihten, onwoce; and þæt hire flæsc is of minum flæsce, ond hire ban of minum banum. Are me nu, min Drihten, for hire wuldres weorþmyndum; are me unsæligost ealra wifa, ond min Scyppend miltsa me, ond genere me of þysses deaþes bendum." Drihten Hælend þa wæs miltsiende Euan, ond raþe hire bendas wæron onlysede. Heo cleopode þa and þus cwæþ: "Sy þin nama, Drihten, gebletsad on worlde; forþon þe þin mildheortnes is mycel ofor me; nu þu generedest min sawle of þære neoþeran helle."*[50]

The two ways in which maternity is used to explore salvation history, as a mark of punishment and a source of suffering, and as a source of redemption and honour and a medium for intercession and salvation, are linked here by Eve. She bases both her right to appeal through Mary and Mary's right to intercession in a dual corporeal motherhood. Given that Adam pleads for forgiveness purely on the grounds that Christ made and fashioned him, it is interesting that Eve cites her motherhood of Mary, and Mary's motherhood of Christ. In one sense this invocation can be seen as appropriate as it continues the theme begun in Blickling homily I, where Eve and Mary are presented as direct contrasts and where Mary's success mitigates Eve's failure. Just as Adam is absolved by the new Adam, Christ, so Eve is pardoned on account of the new Eve, Mary.[51] However, Eve's pleas on the grounds of her motherhood of Mary and Mary's motherhood of Christ can also be understood on another level, that of shared maternity. Eve pleads on the basis of a dual corporeal motherhood, and her praise of Christ after her liberation echoes Mary's Magnificat in Blickling homily I. By alluding to the biblical passage in which Adam names Eve as 'woman' the homilist might have

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[50] *Blickling*, VII, p. 89, 'Eve remained in bonds and weeping. She said, "You are righteous, Lord, and your judgements are just, because I suffer this deservedly. I was in paradise with honour and I did not perceive it, I was perverse and became like the ignorant animals. But you, Lord, shield of my youth and of me, do not be mindful of my ignorance, do not turn your countenance or your mercy from me, do not turn in anger from your handmaiden. Hear my voice, oh compassionate God, with which I am calling you, because my life and my years have been used up with suffering and with grief. Lord, you know my creation, that I am dust and ashes, if you behold my unrighteousness. I implore you now, Lord, for the sake of your handmaid Saint Mary. When you honoured her with heavenly glory, you filled her womb with the glory of all the earth. You know, Lord, that you are born from my daughter, and that her flesh is from my flesh, her bone from my bone. Pardon me now, my Lord, for the honour of her glory. Pardon me, the most unholy of all women, and my Creator have mercy on me, and deliver me from the bonds of death." The Lord Saviour then was merciful to Eve, and immediately her bonds were loosed. She called out then, saying thus, "May your name, Lord, be blessed in the world, because your mercy over me is great. Now you have freed my soul from the lower Hell."'

[51] M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 147-50.

intended to suggest Eve's pre-lapsarian state, when she had not yet sinned. In Blickling homily VII the similarities between Eve and Mary are emphasised rather than their differences.[52] Eve provides a model of a woman who, despite her state of sin, can use her motherhood to access the motherhood of Mary and Mary's powers of intercession. Bedingfield argues that the congregation were intended to empathise with Adam and Eve as penitent and redeemed sinners, and that the direct dialogue strengthened this identification.[53] If, as is extremely likely, the homilies in the Blickling book were intended at least in part for a lay congregation, then Eve was an example of maternal intercession available to lay Anglo-Saxon women, and the homily provides a soteriological paradigm in which maternity could lead to salvation.

Situating Eve's appeal in relationship to similar incidents in other Anglo-Saxon texts is a complex process, as her appeal is extant in different forms in one Latin *oratio*, two vernacular homilies, the *Old English Martyrology* and the vernacular poem *Christ and Satan*. The presence of the idea, in ninth- and tenth-century England, of Christ's descent into Hell, derives from the Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 160, *De Pascha*. Adam's and Eve's appeal to Christ is found in a Latin *oratio* in the *Book of Cerne*. This *oratio* provides the first extant instance of the motif.[54] It is probably an excerpt of a no longer extant Latin homily, X, which contained part of *De Pascha*. The *oratio* ends in a speech by Eve. It does not contain a reference to Mary, but because the manuscript is missing at least a page the appeal probably continued beyond its current endpoint. The reference to Mary might therefore have existed.[55] Blickling homily VII contains material that resembles both the Cerne *oratio* and Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 160. The speeches by

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[52] Glaeske, 'Harrowing of Hell', pp. 100-1.
[53] Bedingfield, *Dramatic Liturgy*, pp. 149-50.
[54] J. J. Campbell, 'To Hell and back: Latin tradition and literary use of the *descensus ad inferos*', *Viator* 13 (1982): 132-3.
[55] D. Dumville, 'Liturgical drama and panagyric responsary from the eighth century: A re-examination of the origin and contents of the ninth-century section of the Book of Cerne', *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (1972): 380; Campbell, 'To Hell and back', pp. 132-3, 142-3; Clayton, *Cult*, p. 256.

Adam and Eve are more developed in the Blickling homily than in any earlier material. It is possible that the Old English homilist of Blickling VII translated and modified X, or a similar Latin homily; it is also possible that he drew together various Latin sources on the descent into a new vernacular homily.[56] The unknown homily X also probably lies behind another Easter homily in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121, in which Eve also bases her appeal on her shared flesh with Mary and Mary's motherhood of Christ.[57] Eve's appeal in this homily is very similar to the Blickling version, but the homily as a whole contains enough different readings to indicate that it did not draw on the Blickling version. It is instead an independent translation of similar Latin material.[58] In the *Old English Martyrology* Eve appeals to Christ on the basis of her shared flesh with Mary, though not on Mary's pregnancy specifically.[59] This passage was not based on X but on a similar Latin source.[60] Eve's appeal to Christ is also found in *Christ and Satan*, in which Eve pleads not only for her own release from hell but also for her children, the righteous souls in Hell. She pleads on the basis that Christ was born from her daughter, Mary.[61] The manuscripts containing these works can be provenanced from South England, Exeter specifically, Worcester and Mercia, and date from the tenth and eleventh centuries.[62] Eve's appeal to Christ, specifically grounded in her shared flesh

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[56] Campbell, 'To Hell and back', pp. 137-8.

[57] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 256; A. M. L. Fadda, '"*De descensu Christi ad inferos*": un inedita omelia anglo-sasson', *Studi medievali* 13 (1972): 1006, *Geara me, min Drihten, for þinre modor lufan of ðære þu wære geeadmet þæt ðu menniscne lichaman underfenge. Heo onfeng flæsc of minum flæsce and ban of minum bane*. 'Pardon me, my Lord, for love of your mother, through whom you were humbled when you took a human body. She took flesh from my flesh and bone from my bone'.

[58] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 256; M. Swan, 'Old English made new: One Catholic Homily and its reuses', *Leeds Studies in English* ns28 (1997): 6.

[59] G. Heltzfeld (ed.), *An Old English Martyrology*, E. E. T. S. os 116 (1900), p. 50, *þær Eua hine halsode for Sancta Marian mægsibbe ðæt he hire miltsade. Heo cweð to him "Gemyne, min Drihten, þæt seo wæs ban of minum banum, and flæsc of flæsce. Help min forþon."*', 'Then Eve called upon him, for kinship with Saint Mary, that he have mercy on her. She said to him, "Remember, my Lord, that she was bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh. Help me, therefore."'

[60] Clayton, *Cult*, p. 256.

[61] K. Glaeske, 'Eve in the Anglo-Saxon retellings of the harrowing of Hell', *Traditio* 54 (1999): 93-6; G. P. Krapp (ed.), *The Junius Manuscript* (New York, 1931), pp. 148-9, ll 405-50.

[62] The *Blickling* Book: Princeton, Princeton University Library, W. H. Scheide Collection 71: s. x/xi. Exact provenance unknown but probably Mercian, see above; *Christ and Satan*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11: xi¹, South England; *Junius 121* homily: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121: s. xi² and s. xi ex, Worcester; *Old English Martyrology*: London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius A.x: s. x/xi, no provenance; *Old English Martyrology*: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 196: s. xi², Exeter.

with Mary and Mary's motherhood of Christ, was evidently geographically widespread in Anglo-Saxon England, with a long history of transmission.

The idea that Mary could use her motherhood of Christ to intercede for sinners is also attested to in Vercelli homily XV. This homily talks about the Last Days and the Day of Judgement. In it, Mary pleads for the salvation of the damned:

> *"Min drihten hælenda Crist, ðu þe gemedomadest þæt ðu wære on minum innoðe eardiende. Ne forlæt ðu næfre þa deofla geweald agan ðus myclan heapes þines handgeweorces."*[63]

She precedes her appeal with a reference to her maternity in a reminder that Christ had dwelt in her womb. Mary's appeal for the damned in Vercelli XV attests to the belief, unique in Anglo-Saxon England that Mary, Peter and Michael could intercede for the damned at the Last Judgement. It is also found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MSS 41 and 301, though in this version Mary's appeal is not based on her maternity.[64] Clayton argues convincingly that the idea derives ultimately from Mary's plea to gain respite for souls in purgatory in the *Apocalypse of Mary*, a plea which through faulty transmission was shifted to the Last Judgement.[65] It should also be added that, while Ælfric condemns the idea that Mary could rescue the damned,[66] and while he is careful to make her maternal intercession dependent on her virginity, he does not completely disassociate maternity from intercession.

Evidently, intercession was not only a maternal attribute. Mary's pleas can be seen in the context of a more general pattern of saintly intercession. In Vercelli XV, just

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Details taken from H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, 2001).

[63] *Vercelli*, XV, ll 145-8, '"My lord saviour Christ, you humbled yourself when you were dwelling in my womb. Do not ever relinquish so great a company of your handiwork to pass to the Devil's dominion."'

[64] M. Clayton, 'Delivering the damned: A motif in Old English homiletic prose', *Medium Ævum* 55 (1986): 93; W. H. Hulme, 'The Old English *Gospel of Nicodemus*', *Modern Philology* 1 (1903/4): 610-4.

[65] Clayton, 'Delivering the damned', pp. 97-101.

[66] M. R. Godden (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, E. E. T. S. ss 5 (1979), XXXIX, ll 184-94; Clayton, *Cult*, p. 262.

as Mary appeals on the grounds of her maternity, similarly St. Michael bases his intercession on Christ's grant to him of the authority to be the defender of souls, while St. Peter pleads on the grounds that he was given the keys to heaven and hell and the power of binding and unbinding.[67] The saints justify their rights to appeal with reference to their particular relationship with Christ; for Mary this is her corporeal motherhood. St. Mary, St. Peter and St. Michael were all often associated with scenes of the Last Judgement in tenth- and eleventh-century art. This art was associated with Reform centres such as New Minster. The presence of these saints in eschatological scenes attests to the hopes the reformed religious had that their patrons would protect them at the hour of judgement.[68] Mary's attributes in this artwork further substantiate the maternal nature of her intercession. In the illumination of the New Minster refoundation charter she carries a palm of victory and a cross; the cross clearly points to her role in Christ's incarnation as it stands for his suffering humanity. In the presentation miniature of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* Mary carries a gospel book, which also shows her connection to Christ's humanity. While intercession was not exclusively associated with maternity, the number of contexts in which Mary's and Eve's intercession was based on their maternity indicates that the association between maternity and intercession was widespread in Anglo-Saxon England, although maternity was not necessarily expressed through pregnancy and childbirth.

Furthermore, the themes of intercession, salvation and maternity are also linked to speech in both the Blickling and Vercelli homilies. Unsurprisingly, this connection can be seen in Blickling homily I, *De Annunciatio*:

> *Hwæt cwæþ [Gabriel] to hire, oþþe hwæt gehyrde heo, þær he cwæþ. "Wes þu hal, Maria, geofena full, Drihten is mid þe", ond from þisse halettunge heo wæs*

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[67] *Vercelli*, XV, ll. 150-71.

[68] Clayton, *Cult*, pp. 158-9; D. F. Callahan, 'The cult of St. Michael the archangel and the "Terrors of the Year 1000"', in R. Landes, A. Gow and D. C. Van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950 – 1050* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 192-3.

> *geacnod, forþon þe he hire þa ecean hælo on his tungon brohte; deofol þonne þurh þa attor berendan næddran, mid hire þære yfelan sceonesse ond facne beswac þone ærestan wifmon... Seo geofu wæs broht for þære synne þæs ærestan wifes... Hwæt we nu gehyrdon þæt se heofenlica cyning ineode on þone medmycclan innoþ þære a clænan fæmnan.*[69]

Mary's conception of Christ through the speech of Gabriel is contrasted to Eve's deception through the serpent's suggestions. Thus their maternity is not just a vehicle for fall and salvation but is also linked to speech. The connection between maternity and speech is made in the context of a homily in which speech is a powerful tool that initiates events and links the human to the divine. For example, Gabriel's speech is *mycel* and, as discussed above, Mary's spoken consent is necessary for salvation. The holiness of Mary's speech can also be seen in this homily in her declaration of the Magnificat, which in the Blickling book is integrated into the Annunciation.[70] The Magnificat offered a biblical example of women's words that were divinely inspired.[71] Eve's and Mary's appeals to Christ in Blickling VII and Vercelli XV were also made in direct speech. Their speech must have offered a particularly powerful model to mothers in the context of a society in which the spoken word was used for government, for the disposition of land and property, and of course for preaching. The range and nature of literacy in Anglo-Saxon society is still debated, but no scholar disagrees that the spoken pronouncement still carried authority.[72]

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[69] *Blickling*, I, pp. 3-5, 'What did [Gabriel] say to her, or what did she hear, when he said, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you", and from this greeting she was made pregnant, because he brought her eternal salvation on his tongue, just as the devil, through the poison-bearing snake, deceived the first woman with evil suggestions and treachery... Grace was brought for the sin of the first woman... What, we have now heard, that the heavenly king dwelt within the humble womb of the ever-pure virgin'.

[70] In the Bible the Magnificat is found at Luke 1:46-55, and is spoken during Mary's visit to Elizabeth.

[71] J. L. Nelson, 'Women and the word in the earlier Middle Ages', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (ed.), *Women in the Church*, Studies in Church History 27 (1990), p. 60.

[72] S. Keynes 'Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 226-57, esp. at pp. 251-7; S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word', in McKitterick, *Uses of Literacy*, pp. 32-62; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990); K. A. Lowe, 'Lay literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and the development of the chirograph', in P. Pulsiano and E. M. Treharne (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 161-217, esp. at pp. 161-8.

The themes of corporeal maternity, salvation and intercession in Blickling homily VII also encompass the maternal creation of a family genealogy. Eve's motherhood of Mary is figured in physical terms rather than through a social and spiritual relationship. The homilist uses Adam's recognition of God's creation of Eve out of his rib and his naming of her as woman, but shifts the relationship to one between mother and daughter. Mary's motherhood of Jesus is based even more explicitly in her pregnancy and childbirth. Kinship ties here find their ultimate expression in a mother–son relationship, which is unsurprising in a Christocentric context, but they are nevertheless mediated through a mother–daughter tie. The allusion to Adam's naming of Eve might also have suggested ideas of authority, as in naming woman he exercised authority over her. In this homily it is Eve who creates a genealogy out of her shared flesh and bone with Mary. She invokes Mary's status as her daughter and as Jesus's mother, and she thus makes Mary's womb central to Eve's relationship with and release by Christ. Eve does not have Mary's sinless womb, but she can share in it and use it to create a genealogy in which maternity is both a source of honour and a powerful vehicle for intercession and salvation. A paradigm of soteriological maternity is presented to the audience in which mothers can use their motherhood as a basis for choice and control of their kin-group. There are no other examples in Blickling and Vercelli of mothers using their status as childbearers to create genealogies, but the theme is also found in the analogues to this passage discussed above.

To sum up this chapter so far, I argue that the homiletic material, accessed through the Blickling and Vercelli homilies, suggests that a theologically positive view of motherhood was widespread in Anglo-Saxon England. Although it is only found in four manuscripts, the manuscript evidence does indicate that the idea that Mary's maternity made her a partner in the salvation of humanity can be traced to Mercia and to

southern England, and can be dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries. The versions found in the Blickling and Vercelli books predate their manuscript context, indicating a longer history of transmission than can be demonstrated through the extant versions of the homilies. The more specific model of Eve's appeal through Mary's maternity, and of her creation of a maternal genealogy, is found in the vernacular in five manuscripts which can also be provenanced from southern England and Mercia, and more specifically from Exeter and Worcester. They also date from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The idea that pain in childbirth is an indication of the fallen state of man is less well attested. Outside the Ælfrician corpus it is only found in Vercelli homily XVII, and is extant only in the Vercelli manuscript. The differently nuanced association of maternal pain with the post-lapsarian suffering of humanity and with the final judgement is found in three manuscripts. These manuscripts can be provenanced from Mercia and southern England and date from the late-tenth to mid-eleventh centuries; however, the vocabulary of Vercelli homily IV suggests a longer transmission history than is indicated by the manuscript evidence alone. On balance, then, the positive view of maternity found in the Blickling and Vercelli books was more widespread than its negative connotations.

<u>The Blickling and Vercelli homilies in their social context.</u>

It is now necessary to turn to the impact this view of maternity might have had on the lived experiences of Anglo-Saxon mothers. Obviously, this issue requires a consideration of the audience reception of the homilies contained in both books.

The Blickling book follows the *temporale* and *sanctorale* of the church year. Although it is not complete as it stands, its missing quires could have made up a full

year.[73] It was therefore presumably compiled to be read aloud to a congregation. The precise composition of this congregation cannot be determined with absolute certainty. The use of the vernacular means that access to the homilies was not restricted to an educated elite. Gatch argues against assuming a lay or a clerical audience, as the homiliary contains instructions for both. For example, Blickling homily IV adapts a sermon on tithing by Caesarius of Arles, *De reddendis decimus*, and adds material from the apocalyptic *Visio Pauli*. The Blickling homily warns against giving the worst goods in tithes and promises a hundred-fold reward for alms, but it also instructs the teachers of Christianity to be diligent in teaching their flocks.[74] However, the Blickling homilies as a whole show extreme concern for the virtues of tithing, fasting, almsgiving and penance, all of which were important expressions of lay piety in Anglo-Saxon England. It is possible that the congregation of the Blickling homilies was at least partly lay.

The Vercelli book, in contrast, was not designed to be read out to a congregation. It has been attributed to a monastic setting, and its editor suggests that it might derive from St. Augustine's, Canterbury, in the time of St. Dunstan.[75] However, although they do not form a cyclical and annual preaching programme, their potential audiences cannot be narrowed down to the monastic community that compiled them. First, the distinction between ecclesiastical and lay culture in this period was not impermeable. The aristocratic elite, represented by men such as Æthelweard were interested in and commissioned monastic works such as Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.[76] Occasions such as feasts, church dedications and funerals provided events at which religious and lay people met, talked and ate together. Contact might also have occurred

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[73] J. E. Jeffrey, *Blickling Spirituality and the Old English Vernacular Homily: A Textual Analysis* (Lampeter, 1989), pp. 18-9.
[74] M. McC Gatch, 'The unknowable audience of the Blickling homilies', *Anglo-Saxon England* 18 (1989): 99-116; *Blickling*, IV, pp. 38-53.
[75] *Vercelli*, pp. xl-xlii and above.
[76] J. Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham, 1994), pp. 9, 29-30.

in less formal settings. For example the B version of the *Life of Dunstan* describes how Dunstan asked a noble matron to design and embroider a stole for him, in return for which he took his harp to her house to entertain her and her women while they worked.[77] Second, literary and oral cultures were not clearly separate, as books could be read aloud in a group.[78] Finally, the multiple textualities of the homiletic corpus means that individual homilies from the *Vercelli* book could have been incorporated within other homiliaries which were preached to monastic and lay audiences. As discussed above, Vercelli homily X contains a passage that is almost identical to Blickling IX. Consequently, although there is no direct evidence of a lay audience for the homilies in the Vercelli book, the possibility cannot be ruled out.

The portrayal of maternity in the Blickling and Vercelli homilies could have acted as an example from which Anglo-Saxon mothers learnt. This should not be reduced to a simplistic argument, that Anglo-Saxon mothers merely internalised and copied the ideas about maternity conveyed by the homilies. First, it is obvious that, as the homilists use maternal imagery to discuss doctrinal issues, this maternal imagery cannot be considered to clearly reflect lived Anglo-Saxon maternities. Great care must be taken in any attempt to use these images in an examination of Anglo-Saxon motherhood. As Bynum argues, one cannot assume that literary images directly correlated to their ostensible content.[79] However, even if mothers were used to think with, rather than thought about, the language of thought is governed by a society's shared concepts of meaning and truth. Thought cannot, therefore, transcend its social origins.[80] The way the homilists used maternity must have made sense within the world-

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[77] J. Campbell, 'England, c. 991', in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993), pp. 1-18.
[78] R. McKitterick, 'Introduction', in *Uses of Literacy*, p. 4; See also chapter four below.
[79] C. Walker Bynum, 'Review of Jean Leclerq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France: Psycho-Historical Essays*'. *Speculum* 55 (1980): 595-7.
[80] S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London, 1990), pp. 15-6.

view held by the audiences of the homilies. Furthermore, Bynum's argument that in the Middle Ages people were defined and society structured by roles and models rather than by institutions is relevant here.[81] By behaving in accordance with a role people acquired authority, as the role was not just a form of behaviour, it legitimised its own performance. Eve, Mary and Elizabeth could have provided Anglo-Saxon mothers with patterns of action that they could invoke, and which were validated by their shared experience as childbearers. This argument is strengthened by the didactic form of the homilies. As discussed in the introduction, homilies were explicitly intended not just to teach doctrine but also to use it to shape inner and outer behaviour, so that salvation could be won. Doctrine was thus intended to change the lives of the audiences of the homilies; the concepts of doctrine and lived experience were not separate concepts but directly linked.

Internal evidence from the Blickling and Vercelli homilies also suggests that the maternal roles they describe could, in theory, relate to the lived maternities of Anglo-Saxon mothers. My argument in favour of this centres around the motherhood of Mary. This argument is of particular importance because, as discussed in the previous chapter, Ælfric deliberately removed her maternity from the experience of ordinary human mothers. He did this because he considered normal motherhood to be irrevocably tainted by its association with sexuality and the Fall. In the Blickling and Vercelli homilies Mary's virginal motherhood is of course unique and unachievable by all other women. Christ is incarnated in a specifically virginal womb for the salvation of

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[81] C. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 82-109. For an example of the use of this methodology to analyse older women as prophets see A. B. Mulder-Bakker, 'The prime of their lives: Women and age, wisdom and religious careers in northern Europe', in J. Dor, L. Johnson and J. Wogan-Browne (eds.), *The Holy Women of Liège and their Impact* (Turnhout, 1999), pp. 215-36.

humanity.[82] However, although Anglo-Saxon women could not share in Mary's virginal maternity, the homilists of the Blickling and Vercelli manuscripts do not completely distance Mary's motherhood from that of other mothers. Instead, Eve's invocation of Mary's motherhood in her appeal to Christ provides an example of a mother who appealed on the basis of her shared motherhood with Mary, and thus provides a space for textual and lived maternities to meet.

The homilies of the Blickling and Vercelli manuscripts do not provide direct evidence of the way Anglo-Saxon mothers thought about themselves, or of the way they acted. Nor do they provide straightforward role models intended for mothers to imitate. However, the homilies do not represent Mary's motherhood as distant and unattainable; they do not prevent Anglo-Saxon mothers from drawing on the prestige associated with Mary's motherhood.

Conclusions.

To conclude, the Blickling and Vercelli homilies attest to a model of motherhood in which mothers are defined but not limited by their bodies. The maternal womb acts as a matrix which is used by the homilists to understand and explain theological ideas about Fall, incarnation and redemption, but it could also act as a source of authority for Anglo-Saxon women. The characterisation of motherhood as childbearing was not a way of confining Anglo-Saxon mothers but a means by which women could find a voice, act as intercessors and define their kin-groups, and in so doing invoke the authority of Mary as mother of God.

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[82] *Vercelli*, VI, ll 1-4; *Vercelli*, X, ll 16-25; *Vercelli*, XVII, ll35-43; *Blickling*, I; *Blickling*, IX; *Blickling*, XIII, esp pp. 149, 155-9.

Chapter Three. *Hio becwið Æðelflæde hyre dehter... þæt land æt Ebbelesburnan 7 þa boc on ece yrfe*: Maternity within the Anglo-Saxon kin-group.

Introduction and methodology.

In this chapter I will examine the position of mothers within the kin-group. Kinship in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England was bilaterally reckoned and ego-focused. That is to say, kinship was reckoned from a single living person: his or her ancestors, descendants and collaterals, and took account of each individual's paternal and maternal kin. In this type of kinship system, kinship relationships do not really take the form of separate, corporate descent lineages that persist over generations. This is in contrast to other types of kinship. For example, in a patrilineage an individual will be a descendant of his father and his father's father, but not in the same way of his other grandparents. His kin will be his father's brothers' sons, but not the children of his father's sister or his mother's siblings. In ego-focused kinship, however, while each individual is part of a kinship network that links individuals, each individual's kin-group is different. Only full siblings share the same kin grouping, and then only before marriage.[1] Marriage can be used as a form of alliance and recruitment, and the claims to kinship and potential inheritance held by each spouse are passed onto their children. Kinship does not provide any individual with a stable social framework that stands independently of its members. This type of kinship system can be very flexible, as it permits a wide range of family strategies. While potential kin-groups were created by birth and marriage, they functioned according to choices and actions of their individual

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[1] P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), pp. 163-5; A. C. Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1983), pp. xii-xv, 4-5.

members.[2] This allows for an analysis of kinship roles as dynamic forces which can structure personal relationships but which are also affected by other social factors.

Kin-groups that are bilaterally reckoned can contain a strong agnatic bias for certain purposes, for example inheritance, but this bias can exist alongside a wider cognatic structure recognised and used for support in political and legal manoeuvring.[3] Anglo-Saxon kinship is no longer seen in terms of the *Sippe*. Instead, scholars argue that although a wide circle of kin was recognised as such, for most purposes the kin-group was limited to three generations, and that the married couple and their children were central to it.[4] Furthermore, although women could inherit and bequeath land, and were important in the transference of status, kin-groups functioned as primarily agnatic groups in terms of inheritance, wergild, and status. For example, two thirds of wergild payments went to paternal kin in contrast to one third to maternal kin, and the same ratio applied to payments made by kin who had stood surety for a member.[5] On the whole, royal and aristocratic kin-groups preferred to bequeath property in the male line in order to preserve the integrity of their landed assets.[6]

In this chapter I will examine the role that mothers played in the kin-group. My examination of the homilies showed that in the Christian ideology preached in late Anglo-Saxon England maternity could function within the conjugal unit, but could also be viewed as independent from paternity. In examining the roles played by mothers in

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[2] J. Crick, 'Posthumous obligation and family identity', in W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (eds.), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 206-8; R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective* (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 167.

[3] Murray, *Germanic Kinship*, pp. 6-7; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), pp. xv-xvi, 89-90.

[4] P. Stafford, 'Kinship and women in the world of *Maldon*: Byrhtnoth and his family', in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993), pp. 228-9; H. Loyn, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 197-209.

[5] II Æthelstan 11; Loyn, 'Kinship', pp. 197-209; R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 7; Stafford, 'Byrhtnoth', pp. 228-9.

[6] P. Wormald, '*On þa wæpnedhealfe*: Kingship and royal property from Æthelwulf to Edward the Elder', in N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (eds.), *Edward the Elder, 896 – 924* (London, 2001), pp. 270-1.

the kin-group, attention has to be paid to the multiple identities a woman could hold within the kin-group throughout her life-cycle: a mother was also a daughter, sister and wife or widow. While she acted as a mother in transmitting property, she could also be acting simultaneously as a daughter or as a wife. The role of a woman as wife and mother could be transformed by the death of her husband. The Old English word for widow, *laf*, derived from the verb *læfan*, which means 'to bequeath' or 'to remain'. To a certain extent a widow was seen as continuing her husband's identity after his death.[7] Was she then acting as a type of substitute father in her relationships with her children? Her relationship with her children could however be complicated by various factors centring round inheritance. Women's interests and identities were not necessarily limited to or in harmony with those of their children. Women also acted as heads of households, the membership of which was for many inhabitants based upon kinship. Women could also act as mothers to children who were not biologically their own: as stepmothers, godmothers and foster-mothers. My examination of maternity within the kin-group will examine these overlapping roles and the conflicts to which they could lead.

I will examine maternal action within the kin-group primarily through the vernacular corpus of tenth- and eleventh-century women's *cwide*, or wills, which I will supplement where necessary with the joint wills and the men's wills from the same period, and with charters that contain details of dispute settlements and kinship relationships.[8] The reasons for my choice can be detailed as follows. The *cwide* seem an

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[7] R. H. Bremmer, Jr., 'Widows in Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Bremner and L. van den Bosch (eds.), *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood* (London, 1995), p. 59; J. Crick, 'Men, women and widows: Widowhood in pre-conquest England', in S. Cavallo and L. Warner (eds.), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 24-33.

[8] D. Whitelock (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930); A. J. Robertson (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1939); F. E. Harmer (ed.), *Select Historical Documents from the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914) S. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters 5 (1996); P. Sawyer (ed.), *Charters of Burton Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters, 2 (1979); P. Sawyer and S. Kelly (ed.),

obvious place to look for the transfer of property within the kin-group, and provide a different viewpoint on the operation of kin-based relationships than that gained from more normative sources like the laws. So far, no-one has examined the women's wills looking specifically for relationships as focused through maternity rather than through the marital couple. The wills and charters are a less obvious means by which to analyse the household, but no text comparable to works like *De ordine palatii* has survived from Anglo-Saxon England. As aristocratic and thegnly households were to a certain extent dependent on the estates bequeathed, and as the wills do bequeath household goods and servants, they can be used to gain important information about kinship relationships in the household.

The methodological problems inherent in using the wills need to be examined before my consideration of maternity, because they can affect any interpretation of the wills that can be offered. These problems arise out of three main issues: the function of the wills, the type of arrangement that they record, and the social status of the people who made them. I will outline each issue in turn before explaining how they will affect my analysis.

First, it should be stated that the extant women's wills do not focus around maternity, either in their purposes or in the bequests they make. The wills were made in part to secure salvation.[9] There is some evidence that the religious reforms of the early- to mid-tenth centuries permeated to the laity, as can be seen in the increasing numbers of estate churches from the early tenth century and the gild statutes of the mid-tenth

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The Electronic Sawyer. http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww; P. Wormald, 'A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits', *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988): 247-81.

[9] For the ideological aspects of the charters see P. Stafford, 'Political ideas in late tenth-century England: charters as evidence', in P. Stafford, J. L. Nelson and J. Martindale (eds.), *Law, laity and solidarities: Essays in honour of Susan Reynolds* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 68-82; C. Insley, 'Where did all the charters go? Anglo-Saxon charters and the new politics of the eleventh century'. *Anglo-Norman Studies* 24 (2004): 109-27; C. Insley, 'Assemblies and charters in late Anglo-Saxon England', in P. S. Barnwell and M. Mostert (eds.), *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 47-59.

century. Hall argues that the written wills were also influenced by the reforms of this period and that they demonstrate an increased sense of responsibility for the dead.[10] The link between maternal speech and salvation has been discussed in the preceding chapters. The *cwide* provide an example of how Anglo-Saxons tried to ameliorate the transitory, fallen nature of their earthly existence, as taught to them in the homilies, and seek salvation through freeing slaves, making gifts, and entailing the provision of commemorative activity on their bequests. They did this for the good of their souls and for the souls of their kin. The wills were also sometimes made in order to provide security for the bequests. They were written down to provide a permanent record and as such it is probable that at least some of the wills were made because they dealt with bequests of land that were likely to be contested. By providing evidence of intent and by asking for advocacy the will-makers, and female will-makers in particular, attempted to ensure that the bequests were not diverted away from their chosen heirs.[11] It should also be noted that the extant women's wills are not primarily mothers' wills. Women acted as testatrices in restricted circumstances, mostly as wives and widows.[12] Out of the extant vernacular corpus, thirteen women leave land independently of their husbands.[13] Of those women, six were definitely widowed,[14] and only two cannot be proven to have been married.[15] The majority of wills can be seen as widows' wills.[16] In only four of the

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[10] L. Tollerton Hall, *Wills and Will-Making in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (PhD thesis, York University, 2005), pp. 103-9.
[11] Crick, 'Posthumous obligation', p. 203; Hall, *Wills*, pp. 122-6; Eg S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*. For will-making as a form of security in Carolingian Europe see J. L. Nelson, 'The wary widow', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *Property and Power in the Early Middle* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82-115.
[12] J. Crick, 'Women, posthumous benefaction, and family strategy in pre-conquest England', *Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999): 403; P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1988), pp. 174-6.
[13] S 1539/Will 3; S 1484/Will 8; S 1494/Will 14; S 1486/Will 15; S 1538/Will 21; S 1495/Will 22; S 1521/Will 29; S 1535/Will 32; 1525/Will 37; S 1525a/Will 38; S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*; S 1513/R 17; S 1064/Writs 2.
[14] S 1484/Will 8; S 1494/Will 14; S 1486/Will 15; S 1513/R 13; S 1064?Writ 2; S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*.
[15] S 1495/Will 22; S 1525 and 1525a/Wills 37 and 38.
[16] Crick, 'Posthumous benefaction', p. 403.

thirteen vernacular women's wills do women make bequests to their children.[17] The majority of wills are not maternal in nature.

The second methodological issue to affect this chapter is that each will does not necessarily represent the totality of the property bequeathed by the testatrix. The wills straddle the boundary between oral and written testimony, they were known as *cwide* but survive as written evidence of oral acts.[18] Their dual nature encompasses two linked matters that touch on the question of their survival. First, all the extant wills were written and preserved in ecclesiastical archives because of the involvement of the church as ultimate inheritor of at least some of the bequests they made. Wills that did not specify a religious foundation as one of the heirs could have been made, but they have not survived, even if they were written down.[19] Second, as noted above, at least some of the wills were written down in order to provide a permanent record of disputed land. Wills that were not considered to be contentious might have remained as an oral declaration before witnesses. The type of land bequeathed by wills also has an impact on how far wills represent normal inheritance practice. There is very little evidence in the wills of father–son inheritance, which is assumed to be the usual form of land transmission. Wormald therefore argues that most land was transmitted according to customary practice, and that the wills deal with lands that were alienable outside these norms, generally known as bookland.[20] This land was held by charter and, assuming that the terms of the charter did not stipulate that it should be entailed within the kindred, could in theory be bequeathed freely.[21] Reynolds has argued that towards the last half of the tenth century the distinction between bookland and other hereditary

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[17] Wynflæd: S 1539/Will 3; Wulfwaru: S 1538;Will 21; Leofgifu: S 1521/Will 29; Wulfgyth: S 1535/Will 32.
[18] M. M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England* (Toronto, 1963), pp. 44-6.
[19] Crick, 'Posthumous benefaction', pp. 400-2.
[20] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*', pp. 267-8.
[20] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*', pp. 267-8.
[21] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*', pp. 270-1; S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), p. 331.

property was becoming blurred. She points out that King Eadred's will is the last to stipulate that the land he bequeaths is bookland, and that King Edgar is the last recorded king to turn land into bookland. After Edgar's reign, she argues, holding bookland was a mark of the owner's status rather than of the type of land held.[22] This is not the place to discuss her arguments in detail. However, it should be noted that the wills of the late tenth and eleventh centuries do not differ substantially in their disposition of land from earlier wills. If Wormald is correct in his argument that wills dispose of bookland this would suggest that some sort of distinction between different types of land continued. Furthermore, charters continued to be important in demonstrating the right to possession of land.[23] Kings continued to issue charters granting land in perpetual inheritance, and even if they did not specify that the land they left was bookland, the charters themselves can be regarded as the land books. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that to a certain extent the dividing line between bookland and land that was inalienable outside the kin was blurred before the mid-tenth century, because although bookland was not always bequeathed within the kindred by obligation it frequently was left to family members by choice.[24] Indeed, sometimes charters did stipulate that land should be left within a certain ambit of kinship, and Alfred's laws stipulate that a man who holds bookland left to him by his kin cannot alienate it if this was forbidden by the person who acquired the land or by the person who left it to him.[25] The type of land left by will is a further caution against treating their disposition as evidence of ordinary testamentary practices.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the wills can be used to assess kinship only within the landholding elite of late Anglo-Saxon society. Recent research indicates that

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[22] Reynolds, *Fiefs*, p. 333; S 1515; S 1715; S 727.
[23] Eg S 1456 which records the dispute over Snodland.
[24] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*', p. 265.
[25] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*', pp. 270-1; Alfred 41; F. Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, I (Halle, 1903), 74-5.

the size of heriot payments made in the wills correlates roughly with the tariffs stipulated in II Cnut 71-71.5 for different social classes, and thus suggests that will-makers came from the aristocratic and thegnly classes. Some female will-makers also pay what appears to be a form of heriot, even though this payment was not laid down in law.[26] The testatrices who can be identified elsewhere in the documentary record confirm the hypothesis that they came from the wealthy elite. The sisters Æthelflæd and Ælfflæd married King Edmund and Ealdorman Byrhtnoth respectively.[27] Ælfgifu was probably the divorced wife of King Eadwig and had some connection with the family of the powerful ealdorman of Mercia, Æthelstan 'Half-King'.[28] Women of the thegnly class, such as Wulfgyth, could also be very wealthy.[29] In 1066 the widow of the thegn Thurstan held land in three counties that was valued at about one hundred and twenty pounds.[30] None of the will-makers come from outside this wealthy social elite. Therefore, the picture of kinship provided by the wills cannot be assumed to be representative of kinship further down the Anglo-Saxon social hierarchy.

The wills, then, provide only a fragment of a picture of Anglo-Saxon kinship and inheritance practices. They cannot be used as a basis for the extrapolation of normal practice without considerable care being taken in their interpretation. The methodological issues discussed cannot be explained away or completely countered, but they can be worked within, and occasionally used as tools. Because women did not bequeath property solely as mothers, their wills can be used to examine how maternity interacted with other female roles. By concentrating on mothers' wills, and by treating individual wills as examples of strategies that could be used to deal with particular

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[26] Hall, *Wills*, pp. 111-2; S 1484/Will 8; S 1486/Will 15; S 1521/Will 29; S 1535/Will 32; S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*.
[27] Hall, *Wills*, p. 113; S 1494/Will 14; S 1486/Will 15.
[28] S 1484/Will 8; C. R. Hart, 'The Will of Ælfgifu', in C. R. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 462-3.
[29] S 1538/Will 32.
[30] Hall, *Wills*, p. 112; Thurstan's will is S 1531/Will 31; M. A. Meyer, 'Women's estates in later Anglo-Saxon England: the politics of possession'. *The Haskins Society Journal* 3 (1991): 118-9.

situations, I will focus on actions that women did take to secure their bequests. In doing so I hope to avoid the reification of social roles at the expense of the individuals who fulfilled them. Women's use of written documents as a form of intervention also correlates with the use made by Emma and Edith of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* respectively. This intervention provides a point of comparison between this chapter and chapter four. As discussed above, it is likely that some wills were made to try and protect bequests. The wills can be defined as an expression of the donors' wishes at the time of their composition, but their fulfilment depended on the goodwill of a variety of social groupings: the heirs, the wider kin-group, royal and local lords, and the shire courts. Extant groups of wills show that their provisions were not always carried out in their entirety, land left as a life interest was sometimes diverted by subsequent heirs, and when bequests reached their intended destination they were not always honoured in the name of their original donor.[31] However, Sheehan warns against assuming that the wishes of testators would necessarily cause opposition, as strong social pressures aided the fulfilment of wills.[32] As Crick argues, while non-fulfilment of the wills can be detected, contested property was more likely to leave a trace in the written record.[33] For the purposes of this study, wills can be used as evidence of the intentions of their testators, intentions that must have had some chance of fulfilment. It is important, too, not to assume that disputed cases of land transmission were somehow diametrically opposed to normal practice. Given the large numbers of Anglo-Saxon legal disputes that can be recovered from surviving documentary evidence, it is likely that such disputes formed part of the normal workings of society, and that such disputes can be used to nuance and amplify any understanding of legal processes that can be

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[31] S 1483/Will 2 cf S 1494/Will 14; S 1435/Will 32 cf S 1519/Will 34; Crick, 'Posthumous obligation', Crick, 'Posthumous benefaction', pp. 199-203.
[32] Sheehan, *The Will*, p. 36.
[33] Crick, 'Posthumous obligation', p. 203.

gained from the laws themselves.[34] This theory can be applied to the wills; at the very least, they must indicate the boundaries and grey areas of customary inheritance. If the wills do dispose of bookland, it is also possible that the heirs who are specified are also heirs to inalienable land. While the wills themselves might have been unusual, and have dealt with contestable land, the choice of heirs and the patterns of bequests were not necessarily out of line with customary practice. Therefore, the wills can be considered in groups if they seem to point to a common form of land transmission.

The maternal testatrices.

It is firstly necessary to provide a brief account of the mothers and their wills in order to place my discussion of their kinship roles in context.

Wynflæd's will dates from the tenth or eleventh century.[35] Whitelock suggested that Wynflæd could be identified with the religious lady of the same name who was connected to Shaftesbury Abbey and to whom King Edmund granted Cheselbourne in Dorset.[36] The suggestion was based on the bequests that the testatrix Wynflæd made to Shaftesbury Abbey, and the preservation in the extant eleventh-century manuscript of some letter forms characteristic of the early tenth century. If the manuscript was copied from a tenth-century original then the date of the will would be compatible with the date of S 485[37]. The Wynflæd of S 485 is probably to be identified with King Edgar's grandmother Wynflæd, whose grant to Shaftesbury of land at Piddletrenthide, situated just west of Cheselbourne, is confirmed by him in S 744. She was presumably the mother of Edmund's wife Ælfgifu, Edgar's mother, who retired to Shaftesbury before

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[34] Patrick Wormald, 'Handlist', pp. 247-81; W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1986).
[35] S 1539/Will 3.
[36] S 485.
[37] Whitelock, *Wills*, pp. 108-9.

his second marriage and who was venerated there as a saint. However, as Kelly points out, Wynflæd's will does not indicate that the testatrix has any connection with the royal family.[38] While the possibility that these Wynflæds were the same woman cannot be ruled out, it seems unnecessary to conflate them into one person without more positive evidence in favour of the idea. The identification of Wynflæd's children from among her heirs is a difficult process as, in common with most will-makers, she only specifies precise relationships in order to make a distinction between different people with the same name. Her daughter Æthelflæd is identified as such in the will, presumably in order to distinguish her from Æthelflæd daughter of Ealhelm and Æthelflæd the White. Whitelock convincingly identifies a further child and two grandchildren amongst Wynflæd's heirs. She argues that it is likely that Wynflæd's heir Eadmær was her son and that he had two children called Eadwold and Eadgifu. Wynflæd refers to her children, but only mentions one daughter. She mentions her son's daughter, Eadgifu, and also Eadmær's son Eadwold. She also makes a bequest to Eadwold and his sister.[39] There are no other obvious candidates in the will for Eadgifu's father, or Eadwold's sister, and the alliteration in their names suggests that they come from the same family unit. Wynflæd does not mention a spouse, alive or dead.

Wulfwaru's will dates from the reign of King Æthelred, probably from 984x1001.[40] She has two daughters and two sons, and is unidentifiable elsewhere in the documentary sources.[41] Like Wynflæd, she makes no reference to a husband.

Leofgifu's will dates to 1035x44.[42] She addresses her will to her lady, who can be identified as the Queen, Ælfgifu-Emma. Leofgifu appears to have been in the

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[38] S. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters 5 (1996), pp. 55-6.
[39] Whitelock, *Wills*, p. 110.
[40] S 1538/Will 21.
[41] Whitelock, *Wills*, p. 124.
[42] S 1521/Will 29.

queen's service. Her bequest to the Queen of Belchamp might represent the return of land she held as a royal servant, as it is situated close to the Thingoe hundreds which were part of the queens' lands.[43] Her relative Ælfric son of Wihtgar, to whom she left land in her will, was also in Emma's following and administered the Thingoe hundreds for her.[44] Only one of Leofgifu's heirs is identified as her child: her daughter Ælfflæd. She bequeaths lands to Bury St. Edmunds for the souls of her husband and herself.

Wulfgyth's will dates to 1042x53. Her heirs include two sons and three daughters. The wills of her son Ketel and her brother Edwin are still extant.[45] The family was of thegnly rather than aristocratic status.[46] She bequeaths land to Christchurch for the souls of her lord, herself and her children.

Maternity within marriage.

Women can be interpreted as having a potentially ambivalent role in Anglo-Saxon kinship networks, as they had connections with both their natal and affinal kin-groups.[47] The wills indicate that one consequence of this dual association was that the relationship between a mother, her husband and her children could be very complicated, and it is this interaction that I will examine first.

For some purposes, a woman's roles as wife and mother could be integrated together. In the royal kin-group mothers seem to have given their sons the lands on which they gave birth to them. Westminster preserved a tradition that Edward the

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[43] P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 182 n 95.
[44] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 321; S 1078/*Writs* 18.
[45] Ketel: S 1516/Will 35; Edwin: S 1519/Will 34.
[46] Hall, *Wills*, pp. 117-8.
[47] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, pp. 174-7.

Confessor was born at Islip and that his mother Ælfgifu-Emma gave it to him on the first day of his life.[48] Wantage was associated with queens in the ninth and tenth centuries.[49] Alfred was born there and left it to his wife Ealhswith in his will.[50] Alfred's grandson Eadred later left it to his mother Eadgifu in his will.[51] The estate was associated with royal mothers and their sons, and it remained within the royal kin-group. The custom of giving wives lands that they then gave to their sons suggests that bearing sons could tie a woman more closely to her husband's kin.

However, a study of the role of women in the commemoration of their husbands nuances this picture. The duties of commemoration laid down in the wills can be used to examine the position of women as mothers within the kin-group, and how this interacted with their duties as wives. Memory of the dead was a crucial obligation for the living, and could involve personal prayer, almsgiving, and donations to religious foundations in exchange for their prayer and requiem masses. Recent studies have argued that it acted as a 'guarantor of eternity' for the community of Christian believers, both the living and the dead.[52] This memorial tradition was frequently connected not just to salvation but also to inheritance rights. Dhuoda's manual, written in the mid-ninth century for her son William, instructs him to reciprocate his inheritance of family property with the counter-gift of prayer. Alongside her stress on his Christian duty of remembrance, she also shows concern that he can demonstrate his rightful possession of his property.[53] This link between prayers for the dead and legitimate inheritance can

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[48] S 1064 /*Writs* 104.
[49] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 129 and n161.
[50] Asser, *Life of Alfred*, chapter 1; S 1507/SEHD 11; Wormald, '*Weapnedhealfe*', p. 273.
[51] S 1515/SEHD 21; Wormald, '*Weapnedhealfe*', p. 271.
[52] E. Valdez del Alamo and C. Stamatis Pendergast, 'Introduction', in E. Valdez del Alamo and C. Stamatis Pendergast (eds.), *Memory and the Medieval Tomb* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 1-3; P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 54-5, 62-3.
[53] E. van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900 – 1200* (London, 1999), pp. 66-7; M. Innes, 'Keeping It in the Family: Women and Aristocratic Memory, 700 – 1200', in E. van Houts (ed.), *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700 – 1300* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 18-20.

also be seen in the Anglo-Saxon wills. Crick demonstrates that a concern for their own and for their kin's salvation led testators to impose duties of remembrance on their heirs, who were often but not always members of their kin-groups.[54]

The primarily kin-based nexus of memory and inheritance meant that medieval women, as family members and transmitters of kin identity, were actively involved in the propagation of family memory.[55] Geary pays special attention to the effect that a woman's incorporation into her husband's family, or lack of it, had on her role in preserving the memory of her husband and his kin. He argues that in areas where wives were seen as an integral part of their husbands' kin-groups they played a major commemorative role, whereas in those areas where they were seen as more of an outside influence within that group their commemorative duties were correspondingly less.[56] This points to the wider issue of family structure, and the balance between marriage as a new conjugal unit and as an alliance between kin-groups.

Although the commemorative duties laid down in the wills can be used to illuminate the way women created and transmitted the memory of their kin and the family roles they fulfilled in doing so, some caveats must be noted. First, the wills and the dispositions they make present only a snapshot view of kin-group relationships. While commemorative traditions were presented as permanent and changeless, the memory of the deceased was shaped and reshaped by contemporary circumstances.[57] Second, as Crick argues, the connection made between land and memorial requirements meant that whoever inherited the land also inherited a commitment to care for the souls

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[54] Crick, 'Posthumous Obligation', pp. 198-200. Eg. S 1483/Will 2, S 1538/Will 21.
[55] Innes, 'Women and Aristocratic Memory', pp. 17-24; van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 6-8, 66-79; Geary, *Phantoms*, pp. 49-69.
[56] Geary, *Phantoms*, pp. 68-9.
[57] van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 6-8.

of the people who had held the land before them.[58] Therefore, to a certain extent the memorial traditions a woman passed on to her children depended on from whom she herself received the land. This does not negate the usefulness of wills in exploring women's roles in family groups, as a knowledge of the particulars of land transmission expands our understanding of maternal bequests, but it also warns against over-simplistic interpretations.

Only two out of the four mothers in the wills show concern for the souls of their husbands. Leofgifu (S 1521/Will 29) makes her bequests to Bury St. Edmunds conditional on care for the redemption of her lord's soul and her own. Her will dates to 1035 x 44. The bequests that she makes to her kin include a grant to a daughter, Ælfflæd. While she does not tie a memorial to any individual bequest of land, she commands that all her men should be freed for the benefit of her soul and for the souls of those who begat her. With the exception of the king, queen and Bishop Ælfweard, her named individual heirs are a mixture of household members and kin. Of her kin, only her daughter, her brother-in-law (*aðum*) and her brother's son have their relationship to her directly specified. As her brother-in-law is left land to hold with her kinswoman (*meygan*) it is possible, though not certain, that the kin to whom she leaves land are from her natal kin-group, and that she inherited the land she leaves from the ancestors her manumissions are intended to protect. If this was the case then her will parallels that of Æthelgifu, S 1497. She bequeathed land in Herefordshire and Hertfordshire that her lord had acquired, and left to her without entailment, as alms for her soul and for her lord's. In contrast, she left personal possessions and lands in Northamptonshire to her kin with a requirement that they supply ale and food rents to St. Albans on behalf of her soul, and those of her father, mother, brother and lord.

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[58] Crick, 'Posthumous obligation', pp. 199-200.

Whitelock argues that she inherited this land from her natal kin and left it to them.[59] Leofgifu sets down a memorial obligation on her daughter, other kin, and household members on behalf of herself and her ancestors, but she leaves the care of her and her husband, her marital unit, in the hands of Bury. She obviously considers herself to be responsible for the care of various sections of her kin-group, but her role as wife is kept separate. If her role as mother connects to any other role it is her status as her parent's daughter.

The second woman's will which makes bequests to her children and which also contains provision for her husband's soul is that of Wulfgyth (S 1535/ Will 32). It dates to 1042 x 53. Like Leofgifu, Wulfgyth makes a grant to a religious foundation, Christ Church, for the souls of her and her lord, though she also adds provision for the souls of her children. However, she stipulates that her sons Ælfketel and Ketel should retain a lifetime interest in the estate. Apart from the reversionary factor, there is no specific memorial obligation entailed on her sons in respect of this estate, perhaps fortunately as her son Ketel's will leaves it to Christ Church without mentioning his mother's bequest or the needs of her soul.[60] The rest of the grants she makes to her five children who are her primary heirs, two sons and three daughters, are made without a memorial obligation entailed on the land. Although she instructs her children to give half a pound of money to St. Osyth's, she does not detail whose soul this is intended to benefit, and it is therefore presumably for her own redemption alone. Wulfgyth seems to envision a more integrated family unit than Leofgifu, but like Leofgifu she enjoins the major memorial duty onto a religious foundation, leaving her kin with a one-off obligation.

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[59] Whitelock, *Will of Æthelgifu*, pp. 1-16, 28-9.
[60] S 1519/Will 34.

The first woman's will which makes bequests to her children but does not mention a spouse, either alive or dead, is that of Wynflæd (S 1539/Will 3). It dates to the tenth or eleventh century. The heirs who are obliged to make gifts for her soul are various religious foundations, her daughter Æthelflæd, her son Eadmær and her son's daughter Eadgifu. These gifts seem to be unique payments rather than annual rents and her bequests do not entail reversion to religious houses. It is impossible to tell without doubt whether her lands came from her husband, her natal family, or had been independently acquired, but she uses them exclusively for her own soul. It is however possible that the group of lands in Wiltshire and Dorset that she leaves to her daughter came from her natal kin, while the group of lands in Hampshire and Berkshire left to Eadmær and his son Eadwold that included her morning-gift came from her husband's family.[61] If so, this makes her use of them for her own soul distinctly pointed. Wynflæd acts as a matriarchal figure in her imposition of commemorative duties, but she does so alone, with no reference to her husband.

The second is the will of Wulfwaru (S 1538/Will 21). It dates from the reign of King Æthelred, probably from 984 x 1001. She makes grants to Saint Peter's, Bath, for her soul and for the souls of her ancestors from whom her property and possessions came. Wulfwaru also instructs her heirs, two sons and two daughters, to provide twenty freedmen, and to furnish an annual and eternal food rent to Bath. This provision suggests that she envisions (or hopes?) that not just her immediate heirs but also their successors will commemorate her and her ancestors. Her family role is unlike Wynflæd's in that it encompasses both daughterly and maternal functions. However the wills of the two women are similar in that neither of them make any reference to a

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[61] A. Wareham, 'The transformation of kinship and the family in late Anglo-Saxon England'. *Early Medieval Europe* 10.3 (2001): 381-3.

husband. So far as their transmission of commemorative obligations are concerned, their maternity can be considered to be independent from their marital unit.

Any conclusions drawn from these wills should not be stretched too far, both because the sample size is so small and because of the problem that the wills do not necessarily represent the entirety of a person's bequeathed land and possessions. However, some valuable observations can be made.

The first bequests in each will are donations made to religious foundations and, occasionally, heriot payments. In this the maternal wills are no different from the rest of the extant corpus. It should be noted that the two wills that make provision for the souls of a married couple do so at the beginning of the will, that Wynflæd and Wulfwaru make similar donations on their own behalf, and that Wulfwaru includes her ancestors in this position. The provision made for the souls of married couples is of particular interest and will be discussed below.

Second, it can be argued that the commemorative duties laid down in the wills indicate that while widowhood may well have determined the likelihood that a woman would make a will, it did not necessarily affect the bequests she made in it. In three out of four wills the women's maternity was kept separate from and not integrated into their position as wife; memorial obligations for the souls of the married couple are entailed on religious foundations, while children are instructed to take care for the souls of their mother and her kin. Indeed, none of these wills show any concern for the redemption of their husbands' natal kin. Bequests made for the good of souls of those outside the marital couple and their children extend only to the mothers' kin, though within this no distinction is made between her maternal and paternal kin. The mother's wills indicate

that women do not, in their commemorative activity at least, channel down obligations connected to their husband's kin.

It is possible that this pattern of memorial obligations was determined by duties to the previous owner of the land left. If so, it suggests that women did keep the land they were left by their kin separate from the land their husbands brought to the marriage, at least in widowhood. It is of course also possible that the testatrices used lands received from their husbands for the good of their natal kin without acknowledgement. In the two groups of family wills still extant, neither Æthelflæd nor Ketel make explicit provision for the souls of their immediate parental benefactors Ælfgar and Wulfgyth,[62] though Æthelflæd did in fact make provision for the soul of her husband King Edmund and herself from the lands he had granted her.[63] These two groups of wills indicate the practice, for whatever reason, of not explicitly honouring the desires of a previous donor. So far as this study is concerned, however, perhaps it is more to the point that, whether they were going against their husbands' wishes or not, these women did not make their bequests conditional on remembering the souls of their husbands or of their husbands' kin. They did not therefore necessarily act in the interests of their husbands in their maternal bequests, and so their maternal actions did not overlap with their roles as wives. However, this picture needs to be compared with the memorial obligations laid down in those women's wills that do not mention children.

Nine of the thirteen vernacular wills made by individual women considered here do not mention children. Childlessness is not however a safe deduction, as it involves

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[62] Crick, 'Posthumous Benefaction', pp. 402-3; Ælfgar: S 1483/Will 2, Æthelflæd: S 1494/Will 14, Wulfgyth: S 1535/Will 32, Ketel: S 1519/Will 34.
[63] Compare S513 with S 1494/Will 14.

arguing from negative information.[64] Indeed, only two testatrices can be definitely identified from the historical record: the sisters Æthelflæd and Ælfflæd, daughters of Ælfgar and wives of King Edmund and Ealdorman Bryhtnoth respectively.[65] It is also possible, though not certain, that Ælfgifu can be identified as the divorced wife of King Eadwig and daughter of Æthelgifu.[66] It is true that none of these identifiable women are known to have borne children. However, the remaining five women are unknown outside their six wills, so the question must remain open.

So, if these women were not necessarily childless, why are no children mentioned in their wills? One possible answer lies in the memorial obligations laid down for the good of the marital couple mentioned above. Seven out of the eight women make donations to religious foundations for the souls of their husbands, bequests that generally go at the start of the wills.[67] These can be seen as comparable both to the donations for the same purpose to religious foundations made by Leofgifu and Wulfgyth (see above) and to the joint bequests to religious foundation discussed by Crick. She notes that these joint bequests have a distinctive profile as they tend to deal with modest grants, the Church features as the primary though not always the sole beneficiary, and children are 'conspicuous by their absence'. She argues against assuming childlessness in these cases, and poses the problem of what this says about the extant corpus.

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[64] Crick, 'Posthumous benefaction', p. 407.
[65] S 1494/Will 14 and S 1486/Will 15.
[66] S 1484/Will 8; Whitelock, *Wills*, pp. 118-9; Hart, 'The Will of Ælfgifu', pp. 464-5; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 129-31. Ælfgifu leaves a lot of lands to the crown that appear later in the possession of subsequent queens. Stafford argues that her will can be seen partly as a return of dower lands. She also leaves lands to a religious foundation for the soul of her royal lord, which could be seen as a form of heriot, but could instead be part of her provision for the soul of her deceased husband. The second interpretation is perhaps more likely as she makes separate payments to her royal lord as part of her payments to the royal family.
[67] S 1484/Will 8, S 1494/Will 14, S 1486/Will 15, S 1495/Will 22, S 1497/Will of Æthelgifu, S 1513/R 17, S 1064/Writ 2. Only Sifflæd, who makes two wills, acts for her soul alone: S 1525/Will 37, S 1525a/Will 38.

The issue of the absence of children from the wills of individual women and in the wills of couples can be elucidated by considering the form of the wills as a whole. Anglo-Saxon wills have an external unity in that they contain legacies presumably made at the same time, but they often lack internal cohesion, comprising as they do of as a series of distinct acts.[68] It is therefore quite likely that the provision for the souls of married couples in the wills of the women who make individual wills, both those who do and do not contain their children as their heirs, can be seen as the same type of act as the joint wills. Married couples seem to have had an obligation to care for each other's souls that sometimes overlapped with, but remained distinct from their other family roles. Furthermore, this duty seems to be one that they performed through grants to religious houses, rather than one that they transmitted to their children. This shows a conception of family roles similar to that seen in the mothers' wills, because in three out of four of these maternity is kept separate from the conjugal unit. The apparent childlessness of the couples in the joint wills and in the women's wills can be explained by the probability that any children were provided for at a different time, possibly without the involvement of the church. This is strengthened by the fact that in the wills made by mothers that contain a grant for the souls of the married couple, those of Leofgifu and Wulfgyth, their land grants to their children and other kin do not revert to the church. The survival of their wills therefore probably depended on the initial grants within them made for the souls of the marital unit, and points to the possibility of different grants made to children which did not survive. These grants should be interpreted as the grants made by both partners in the marriage and not by the wife alone on behalf of both. Crick lists seventeen joint bequests as well as the nine women whose wills make joint provision for themselves and their husband.[69] The two royal documents about this joint provision present them as unified grants: S 503, a grant made by

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[68] Sheehan, *The Will*, pp. 24-8, 39-46.
[69] Crick, 'Posthumous benefaction', p. 419.

Edmund to his wife Æthelflæd contains a reversion *pro nostrarum animarum*, and Edward's writ about Tole's will refers to the grant for her and her husband's soul as *heora cwide*.[70]

The ways in which maternity could potentially interact with marital obligations can also be analysed by examining the position of widows. As noted above, widowhood seems to have been an important stimulus to female will-making.[71] It seems likely that it was upon the death of her husband that a woman could take control of the land and property settled upon her in her marriage agreements, such as her morning-gift.[72] As a widow, a woman and her inheritance from her husband were vulnerable to the predation of her natal and affinal kin.[73] Cnut's legislation aimed to protect widows from the avarice of the lord to whom her husband's heriot was due and from other heirs to her husband's property. Her assumption of her morning-gift and any other inheritance she had from her husband was however made conditional on following canonical regulations and remaining unmarried for a year. This condition fitted in with Wulfstan's penitential preoccupations but also presumably acted as a safeguard against pressure to remarry.[74] It could also offer time that a woman could use to formulate strategies for future action and marshal any support she needed to protect her interests.[75] Assuming that a woman succeeded to her inheritance from her husband, how free was her disposition of that property? Was there an expectation that women would act as

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[70] S 503, 'for our souls'; S 1064, 'their will'.
[71] Crick, 'Posthumous obligation', pp. 203-5; Hall, *Wills*, pp. 122-3.
[72] Stafford, *Unification*, pp. 175-6.
[73] Crick, 'Men, women and widows', pp. 24-36; Nelson, 'The wary widow', pp. 82-113; For examples of challenges to widows' inheritances see eg S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*; S 877.
[74] II Cnut 70-74, *Gesetze*, I, 356-60; S. Hollis, '"The protection of God and the King": Wulfstan's legislation on widows', in M. Townend (ed.), *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 443-5; For the date of this legislation see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 362 and P. Stafford, 'The Laws of Cnut and the History of Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982): 173-90.
[75] Nelson, 'The wary widow', p. 93.

caretakers of family land before transmitting it to their children? What kind of relationships did widows have with their children?

This line of enquiry entails looking first at the disposition of such lands in the women's wills. Unfortunately a methodological problem impinges on this analysis. Wills do not always state from whom particular estates had been received. Only three women's wills explicitly detail estates they leave as those received from their husbands. Ælfflæd's will[76] leaves her morning-gift to Ely Abbey, as part of a group of estates promised by her and her husband to his burial place. As he left the abbey a ring as a burial fee and she also left the abbey its pair, it seems likely that she also intended to be buried there, and that she used her morning-gift as part of a gift to ensure this. The will of Æthelgifu[77] does not specifically mention her morning-gift, but it does state that the lands her lord had acquired and left to her for her free disposition were to go to religious foundations as alms for the performance of her memorial duties. However, neither of these two women, so far as their lives can be recovered from their lives and other historical documents, had children. Only one of the mother's wills, that of Wynflæd,[78] details the bequest of her morning-gift. Wynflæd does leave her morning-gift, the estate of Faccombe, in her direct family line. She grants it firstly to her son Eadmær, then to Æthelflæd her daughter, and then to Eadwold her grandson. This land is the only land in her will that can be unequivocally identified as coming from her husband, and she seems to intend it to descend eventually to the male line of her family. Faccombe is in Hampshire, and it is perhaps significant that she leaves the rest of her land in Hampshire and Berkshire to Eadmær and Eadwold. However, it is impossible to generalise from a single sample, and there is in any case no evidence as to whose wishes she was carrying out in her bequest.

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[76] S 1486/Will 15.
[77] S 1497.
[78] S 1539/Will 3.

The men's wills, however, provide another source which can be examined for evidence of women's family roles. By looking at the bequests they make to their wives, and whether or not they entail reversion to their children, it might be possible to tell whether or not men saw their wives as caretakers of land, either of the husband's natal family or of the marital unit, before it passed to the next generation. Fourteen of the tenth- and eleventh-century men's wills make grants to their wives.[79] One of these wills leaves his wife extensive lands with reversion to the church, for the sake of both their souls and for the souls of his ancestors.[80] Five of these wills make a grant of a single estate to a church, reserving a life interest for the wife, for the souls of both.[81] These grants fit into a pattern of grants discussed above in which married couples fulfil their responsibilities to care for each other's souls. In four of the wills this is the only grant made to the wife, so these can be discounted for the purposes of this discussion.[82] This leaves ten men's wills to examine.

In one of these wills Eadwine leaves two estates to his wife, but she is to hold them only as long as she remains a widow.[83] In four of the men's wills a husband leaves land to his wife with a stipulation that it should then descend to their children, or other of his kin.[84] In these wills, so far as these estates are concerned, women do seem to hold land as both wives and mothers. However, all of these bequests deal with small numbers of estates, a single estate in two of them,[85] two estates in one of them, and three estates in the fourth.[86] In one of these wills, Ealdorman Ælfheah makes a further bequest to his

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[79] S 1483/Will 2; S 1496/Will 6; S 1498/Will 10; S 1505/Will 12; S 1487/Will 13; S 1501/Will 16; S 1534/Will 19; S 1528/Will 25; S 1537/Will 27; S 1530/Will 30; S1531/Will 31; S 1517; S 1509; S 1533.
[80] S 1533.
[81] S 1498/Will 10; S 1505/Will 12; S 1501/Will 16; S 1537/Will 27; S 1509.
[82] S 1509; S 1501/Will 16; S 1505/Will 12; S 1537/Will 27.
[83] S 1517.
[84] S 1496/Will 6, S 1485/Will 9, S 1534/Will 19.
[85] S 1496/Will 6, S 1485/Will 9.
[86] S 1534/Will 19.

wife of everything else otherwise unbequeathed. He attaches a memorial obligation but does not make any further stipulations about her disposition of it.[87] In total six out of the ten wills leave extensive lands to the men's wives without explicit instructions about its subsequent destination.[88]

This pattern of bequests should not be directly interpreted as evidence that these women's landholdings as wives was unconnected to their position as mothers. In four out of these six wills bequests are also made to children,[89] so it is possible that bearing children made women more likely to inherit. However, five out of the six wills describe land left to women as morning-gifts, or as left by previous agreements,[90] and two of the three extant marriage agreements, made in the early eleventh century, do not contain any conditions about a woman's freedom to dispose of the property the husband gives her in this way.[91] In *Be Wifmannes Beweddung*, an account of a marriage agreement that dates to the time of Archbishop Wulfstan, the husband is to give a gift to his wife in exchange for her agreement to marry him, in addition to the lands she will receive if she is widowed, and in addition to her entitlement to inherit half his disposable land and possessions (*yrfe*) on widowhood, unless she remarries.[92] Should they have a child, she is to inherit not half but all his possessions. The condition attached to her possession of either half or all of his holdings suggests that the first two gifts are to be held freely. In the marriage agreement made at Kingston, the suitor offers his wife-to-be gold to accept his offer, and also lands and property. Her father makes an unspecified grant to the couple which is to be held by the surviving spouse. This agreement contains no

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[87] S 1485/Will 9.
[88] S 1485/ Will 9, S 1478/Will 10, S 1487/Will 13, S 1527/Will 24, S 1528/Will 25, S 1531/Will 31.
[89] S 1485/Will 9,S 1498/Will 10, S 1487/Will 13, S 1528/Will 25.
[90] S 1498/Will 10, S 1487/Will 13, S 1527/Will 24, S 1528/Will 25, S 1531/Will 31.
[91] *Be Wifmannes Beweddung*, in *Gesetze*, I, 442-4; S 1459/R 76; S1461/R 77.
[92] For the date and provenance of this text see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 386.

instructions about freedom of disposition.[93] The marriage agreement made between Archbishop Wulfstan and Wulfric, who was to marry Wulfstan's sister, grants to the woman two estates for her lifetime, a three-life lease on a third estate, and a fourth estate to hold and dispose of freely, as well as gold, men and horses.[94] It is possible therefore that the grants of unentailed estates left by men to their wives in their wills should be interpreted as confirmation of marriage gifts.

Examining the wills to see how women bequeathed, or were instructed to bequeath, property they were left by their husbands does not provide a clear answer to how female family roles as wives and mothers interacted. The mothers' wills do not tend to specify where the women making them had received the lands they bequeathed. Only a few estates in the men's wills are left to their children with a life interest for their wives. While men do leave estates and property to their wives without entailing reversion to their children this does not constitute evidence that their marital land-holding was kept completely separate from their maternity, as lands and property a woman received as a marriage gift may have been held separately from the those intended to support a couple and their children.

It is however probable that widows were expected to look after the interests of their children. Only one will contains instructions about a widow looking after the interests of her children. Eadwine of Caddington stipulates that if his wife takes another husband then a man named Æthelwine is to take their child and the estates provided for him, unless the child is by then old enough to take care of them himself.[95] This suggests that Eadwine's widow was otherwise expected to look after the child and his estates.

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[93] S 1459/R 76.
[94] S 1461/R 77.
[95] S 1517.

Maternal responsibility of a sort can be seen in an Old English account attached to S877, a charter from Æthelred to his mother Ælfthryth, an account that details the dispute that surrounded the lands granted.[96] They had been forfeited by Wulfbald, but this was not effected until after his death, despite the fact that he was condemned and his wergild assigned to the king on four separate occasions. This dispute contains many interesting elements and will be examined elsewhere in this chapter. One of the disputed estates, Bourne, had been seized by Wulfbald from his kinsman Brihtmær. After Wulfbald's death this estate was occupied by the king's thegn Eadmær, the son of Wulfbald's paternal uncle. This might have been an attempt to resolve the situation, by putting in a landholder who was one of Wulfbald's kin but who was also loyal to the king. Alternatively, Eadmær's actions could be further evidence of rivalry between family members. Wulfbald's widow obviously considered that she and her child should hold the land, as she and her child went to Bourne, and there she slew Eadmær and his fifteen companions. The king then seized all of Wulfbald's property. The case is a good example of the potential widowhood held for both power and for dispossession; evidently the king considered Wulfbald's widow to be an easier target than Wulfbald himself. This dispute started when Wulfbald stole all his stepmother's possessions, and more than anything else it indicates the intra-family violence that could arise when close kin were in competition for inheritance. The violence in the actions of Wulfbald's widow may be unusual but the detail in the account that she took her child with her indicates that she acted not just as a widow but primarily as a mother, that mothers were expected to guard and pass on the lands that underage children could expect to inherit from their fathers. The lack of evidence in the wills for this type of role is perhaps a feature of the nature of the source material rather than Anglo-Saxon inheritance practices. As noted above, wills quite frequently deal with bequests that might be

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[96] S. Keynes, 'Crime and punishment in the reign of King Æthelred the Unready', in I. Wood and N. Lund (eds.), *People and Places in Northern Europe* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 78-9.

contested or that were unregulated by normal custom. If land that passed ultimately from father to child (or father to son?) was normally looked after by the man's wife and child's mother during the child's minority, this guardianship would not have to be stipulated in the wills.

Women as widows were nevertheless potentially rival heirs to their children. It is likely that any conflict of interest centred around a woman's freedom of disposition. In an early eleventh-century lawsuit, an account of which was written into a Hereford gospel-book, an un-named woman disinherited her son Edwine in favour of her kinswoman Leofflæd.[97] The process of disinheritance started when Edwin came to the shire court and sued his mother for possession of land at Wellington and Cradley. The bishop asked who spoke for her, a responsibility claimed by Thurkil the White. Three thegns were chosen to go and ask Edwin's mother what claim she had to the land. At this, she became infuriated with her son, and stated that he had no right to any of her land. She then summoned her kinswoman Leofflæd, who was also Thurkil's wife, and announced that Leofflæd would succeed to everything that she owned, and that her son would inherit nothing from her. The messengers rode back to the shire court and declared her will as she had instructed them, and Thurkil asked the assembled thegns to honour it. Edwine lost all rights not just in the disputed estates but also to all of his mother's property. It is possible that the estates claimed by her son were estates that she had inherited from her husband, and that Edwin felt for this reason that he had a better right to them. As Stafford has pointed out, the beneficiary of this dispute was the wife of one of richest and most powerful men in Herefordshire. The case can be seen as an indication of the price paid by widows for male protection.[98] Despite this, it should be

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[97] S 1462/R 78.

[98] P. Stafford, 'Women and the Norman conquest'. *T. R. H. S.* 6th Series, 4 (1994): 241-2. For another example of a widow who needed strong male advocacy to retain usufruct in her land see the case of Æthelric of Bocking's widow, S 939/Will 16.2 and the discussion in Hall, *Will-Making*, p. 125.

noted that Edwin's mother was able to make some kind of choice amongst her kin. She was presumably on bad terms with her son before he went to the shire court and so Thurkil's advocacy should not be seen as the only factor in her decision.

The relationships widows had with their children could also be affected by remarriage to a new husband. According to II Cnut 73a a woman who took a husband within a year of the death of her husband forfeited her morning-gift and all the other property she received from her first husband, but V Æthelred 21 stated, and II Cnut 73 reiterated, that if a widow remained unmarried for a year, she might choose as she wished.[99] In theory, she could then alienate her morning-gift, though not other property from her husband, outside her husband's natal kin, which could lead to a great deal of resentment. It is possible that marriage agreements contained clauses about the reversion of such lands, though it should be noted that none of the three still extant do so.[100] The legislation on widows contained in II Cnut not only penalises a woman who remarries within a year, it also forbids hasty consecrations. This can be interpreted as an attempt to prevent a widow's heirs from pressuring her to take the veil and thus ensure that her inheritance remained within the kin-group.[101] One group of heirs with an obvious interest in preventing a woman's remarriage was formed by her children. Ælfgifu-Emma had problems reconciling the interests of the sons of her first husband King Æthelred with those of her son by her second husband Cnut, a subject that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Remarriage could also be associated with conflict between a widow and the kin of her first husband. Ælfthryth was the widow of Æthelwold, son of the ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half-King' and brother of the ealdorman Æthelwine '*amicus dei*'. She then married King Edgar. The kin of her first husband

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[99] *Gesetze* I, 242 and 360.
[100] *Be Wifmannes Beweddunge*, *Gesetze* I, 442-4; S 1459/R 76; S 1461/R 77.
[101] Hollis, 'Protection', p. 446; S. Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 120-5.

opposed the right of her children with Edgar to have a superior right over their older half-brother to inherit the throne.

However, remarriage by either partner has left very little trace in the documentary corpus of wills and charters. There are two definite references to a woman's remarriage in the wills. The will of Eadwine, discussed above, indicates that remarriage could be viewed as a threat to the child's interests.[102] However, the uniqueness of the stipulation means that this threat could be specific to particular family circumstances. Ketel's will contains a reference to an agreement he had made with his stepdaughter which stated that whoever of them lived longer would inherit the property they both held on a particular estate. This agreement should not be seen as evidence that his position as her stepfather held a potential threat to her parental inheritance, as he made similar agreements with his uncles and sisters. He and his stepdaughter seem to have been on relatively cordial terms as his will was made before they made a journey to Rome together.[103] The only other will that possibly refers to the remarriage of a woman is that of Ælfheah, ealdorman of Hampshire, who left all his otherwise unbequeathed property to his wife, *gif heo... it swa gehylt swa ic hiræ truwan*, a phrase that Whitelock suggests may mean 'if she does not marry again'.[104] If this is correct it would mean that two wills make a wife's inheritance conditional on remaining single. However, the phrase translates more literally as 'if she holds it just as I have faith in her', which could also mean that she should not alienate it but pass it onto their children.

My study of the interactions between mothers, their husbands and their children suggests that women's maternal actions were not always a consequence of the

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[102] S 1517.
[103] S 1519/Will 34.
[104] S 1485/Will 9;Whitelock, *Wills*, p. 124.

relationships they had with their husbands and their affinal kin. Furthermore, a mother and her children could be rivals for the inheritance of land and property from the woman's husband and possibly from her natal kin. A mother's positions in relationship to her children could be particularly tense if she remarried, as she could in doing so potentially divert her children's expected inheritance away from them.

Maternity within the natal kin-group.

It is now necessary to turn to the interaction between a woman's maternity and her membership of her natal kin-group. As discussed above, in the transmission of commemorative duties a woman's maternal relationship with her children functioned separately from her role in her conjugal unit. However, her motherhood was not entirely separated from her transmission of those duties to her children. Wulfwaru and Leofgifu both bequeathed an obligation to remember the souls of their ancestors to their heirs, including their children.[105] Their maternity thereby integrated their children within that kinship network.

Mothers could also act as a conduit for the transmission of land and property from their own parents to their children. Wynflæd's will contains two geographically distinct blocks of land; she leaves estates in Hampshire and Berkshire to her son Eadmær and his son, while her lands in Wiltshire and Dorset are left to her daughter Æthelflæd.[106] The only property whose provenance can be established without doubt is her morning-gift of Faccombe, which lay in Hampshire. She also leaves the *worþig* she received from her mother to her own daughter. It is therefore probable that the lands she left in the male line of her family came from her husband and that the lands she

[105] Wulfwaru: S 1538/Will 21; Leofgifu: S 1531/Will 29.
[106] S 1539/Will 3.

bequeathed to her daughter came from her parents.[107] It is possible that some of the lands bequeathed by Wulfwaru, Leofgifu and Wulfgyth descended to them from their natal kin-group, but because the geographical spread of lands left in their wills is less compartmentalised it is difficult to be sure. Leofgifu's bequests of land to her daughter, brother-in-law and brother's son suggests that some of the lands she held were associated with her birth family.

One of the male wills also points to the role of women in transmitting claims to land held by their natal kin-group to their children. Leofwine bequeaths property property to his paternal aunt Leofwaru, with reversion to her son Eadwold. If Eadwold dies before her, she is to leave it to whoever obeys her best amongst their mutual kin.[108] Leofwine's will does not mention a wife or a child and, although the wills do not represent the total sum of all lands left, it is possible that he left that particular estate to Leofwaru because he was childless and because he wanted it to remain within his particular branch of his kin-group. There were evidently other potential choices of heir within his kin and his choice of Leofwaru might therefore indicate that her close proximity to him was more important than her gender. However, her transmission of that near kinship to her son indicates that in some circumstances married women did not lose their claim to inherit lands held by members of their natal kin-group and that they could transmit that claim to their children.

As noted above, Wynflæd's will records her bequest to her daughter Æthelflæd of the *worþig*, if the king grants it to her on the same terms that King Edward granted it to Wynflæd's mother Brihtwyn. This is an interesting indication that property could descend in a line from mother to daughter without being conditional on their

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[107] Wareham, 'Transmission of kinship', pp. 381-3.
[108] S 1522.

relationships to their male kin, either natal or affinal. Although none of the other female wills make any such explicit bequests, Wynflæd's specification of her inheritance from her mother was made because of the condition that she attached to her bequest to Æthelflæd. If similar bequests were made unconditionally they would not necessarily show up in the record.

The practice of matrilineal inheritance from mothers to daughters, at least under certain circumstances, can be supported by two of the men's wills. Wulfgeat's will leaves an estate at Thornbury to his daughter, specifying that it had been bought with her mother's gold.[109] Wulfric's will leaves Tamworth to his daughter. In contrast to the land he left her at Elford and Oakley, which was to hold under the *mund* of Wulfric's brother Ælfhelm, she was to hold the *ealdordom* of Tamworth freely.[110] Tamworth had been an important royal vill for eighth- and ninth-century Mercian rulers, who spent Christmas and Easter there.[111] Wulfric's mother Wulfrun had some connection with Tamworth, as she was captured from there by the Viking leader Olaf Guthfrithson in 940.[112] Her presence there suggests that she was a descendant of the Mercian ruling house.[113] If S1380 is to be trusted, Wulfrun did have a daughter, Ælfthryth, but she died before her mother.[114] The evidence of matrilineal land transmission in Wynflæd's will indicates the possibility that the land at Tamworth was transmitted through and held by the female line, and that Wulfric only held the land in trust for his daughter.[115] It should be noted as a caveat to this that Sawyer suggests that Morcar's wife Ealdgyth was

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[109] S 1534/ Will 19.
[110] S 1536/Will 17.
[111] P. Sawyer, 'The royal *tun* in pre-conquest England', in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), p. 296.
[112] *ASC MS D, sa* 943 for 940.
[113] R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 30.
[114] P. H. Sawyer (ed.), *The Charters of Burton Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters, 2 (1979), p. xl. This charter is only known from seventeenth-century transcripts, and is not typical of charters of the time, but the information it provides on Wulfrun's kin may be accurate.
[115] It is also possible that Wulfric's god-daughter was Ælfthryth's grand-daughter and Wulfrun's great grand-daughter. She received land at Stratton, and the brooch that had belonged to her grandmother.

Ælfthryth's daughter, on the grounds that Wulfric's bequests to Morcar, Ealdgyth and their daughter suggests a close kinship.[116] If Sawyer is correct then under a strictly matrilineal system of inheritance this land would have gone to her rather than Wulfric's own daughter, because she would be Wulfrun's granddaughter in the female line. Rather than preserving an example of matrilineal land transmission, Wulfric's will perhaps suggests a preference for female heirs in some circumstances. Rights to power in the area do seem to have been conveyed, at least in part, through the women of this family. Wulfric himself was known by his matronymic,[117] and in 1015 Cnut married Wulfrun's grand-daughter Ælfgifu of Northampton in order to cement his position in the area. Ælfgifu was the daughter of Wulfrun's son Ælfhelm, the ealdorman of Northumbria who was murdered in the palace coup of 1006.[118] Wulfrun's capture in 940 could have been motivated by a similar concern. It is of course important not to conflate maternal transfer of land with less specific female claims to and transmission of kin identity and land, and the way that kings used marriage into aristocratic families to facilitate their own expansionism.[119] However, the wills of Wynflæd, Wulfgeat and Wulfric suggest that while men could and did claim rights to land and power through marriage, women did not hold these rights for the sole purpose of passing them onto their sons.

It has been argued that for inheritance purposes elite families tended to favour the male line.[120] My examination of women's maternal action within the context of their natal kin-groups nuances this understanding of inheritance strategies. Individually none of the incidences discussed would be sufficient grounds to make an argument, but taken

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[116] Sawyer, *Burton*, p. xliii.
[117] S 877, S 939.
[118] *ASC MSS CDE* sa 1006; C. Insley, 'Politics, conflict and kinship in eleventh-century Mercia', *Midland History* 28 (2000): 31-5.
[119] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 130-5.
[120] Wormald, '*Wæpnedhealfe*',

collectively they provide examples of maternal transferral of family identity and land from the south, south-west and midlands of England, from the mid-tenth to the early eleventh centuries. It should be noted that a common system of patrilineal inheritance, from father to son, is assumed to be normal but generally can only be identified in the sources when it is contested. So for example the royal lands set aside for the support of the æthelings, Bedwyn, Burbage and Hurstbourne, descend patrilineally at least from Alfred through to Æthelred and his sons. However, this descent can only be demonstrated because of two land disputes. Alfred made his will specifically because the lands he held were contested by his nephews, and Æthelred's claim to the estates is recorded in a charter in which he grants alternative estates to Abingdon. His charter details the grant of the three estates to Abingdon by his father Edgar, his brother Edward's confiscation of them and his own decision to keep them.[121] While female land transmission cannot be demonstrated over such a long period of time, the fact that evidence of it shows up in potentially contentious cases does not have to indicate that it was in itself unusual and therefore suspect.

Maternity within the household.

It is now necessary to examine the ways in which women's maternal activities overlapped with their positions as household heads. Before discussing the evidence provided by the wills on this subject, the term household needs to be defined. This is complicated by the fact that, while the household in late medieval England has been studied thoroughly, very little work has been done on the household in Anglo-Saxon England. The exceptions to this absence are the work done by Stafford on the queen's household and Keynes' work on domestic offices in his study of Æthelred's

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[121] S 1507; S 937.

diplomas.[122] Riddy points out that the word 'household' did not come into use until the late fourteenth century, an attention to language which problematises any discussion of the subject.[123] The Old English word for household, *hired*, can mean a household, a family, or a retinue.[124] It implies a group of people who live together, who are perhaps related, and it carries connotations of a hierarchical system. The Latin word *familia* has similar connotations, as it refers to both persons and property. It implies a hierarchical structure and order that is founded on marriage and parenthood but that also links into power over household property, including slaves.[125] Both *hired* and *familia* were also applied to religious communities who were linked by spiritual kinship. The connotations carried by the words *hired* and *familia* link into ideas contained in research on the household done both by anthropologists and by late medieval historians. Laslett and Rees Jones both define the household as a co-resident domestic group.[126] It can also be seen as a location through which social and economic relationships were formed and expressed.[127] For the purposes of this essay, I will concentrate primarily on familial households, though a couple of the women's wills suggest that members of these households could be both secular and religious.[128]

These definitions raise important issues for our consideration of the Anglo-Saxon household. First, as the mistress of a household, a woman would have authority

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[122] C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. Rees Jones (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c850 – 1150: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body* (Tournhout, 2003); C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 1999); Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 97-161; S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready', 978-1016: A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980).

[123] F. Riddy, 'Looking closely: Authority and intimacy in the late medieval urban home', in M. C. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.),*Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 2003), p. 213.

[124] J. M. Clark Hall (ed.), *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto, 1960, 4th Edition).

[125] D. Herlihy, 'Family', in S. K. Cohn, Jr and S. A. Epstein (eds.), *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy* (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 9-13.

[126] P. Laslett, 'Introduction: the history of the family', in P. Laslett and R. Wall (eds.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 1-2; S. Rees Jones, 'Preface', in *Medieval Household*, p. 11.

[127] H. J. Nast, *Concubines and Power: Five Hundred Years in a Northern Nigerian Palace* (London, 2005).

[128] For women living religious lives in households but not under regular orders see P. Halpin, 'Women religious in late Anglo-Saxon England'. *The Haskins Society Journal* 6 (1994): 97-111.

over servants and other household members as well as her own family. Stafford argues convincingly that the Old English word used to denote a woman in this hierarchical role is *hlæfdige*, or lady.[129] However, although the term *hlæfdige* does not semantically imply a maternal role, does this mean that there was no association between maternity and female authority in Anglo-Saxon England? Ælfric uses the term *hiredes modor*, followed by *hlæfdige*, to gloss *materfamilias*.[130] Here *hiredes modor* can be understood as the literal translation, with *hlæfdige* indicating what this term meant. This gloss indicates perhaps that motherhood by itself was not considered sufficient to explain the term *materfamilias*. However it also suggests that to some extent the position of a *hlæfdige* was seen as encompassing a maternal role. Could this mean that women in authority over households were seen as maternal, even if they were biologically childless?

Second, also relating to hierarchical relationships within the household, it can be noted that the role of a mother within a household was determined partly by the residence patterns of her children on marriage. A household in which young couples lived with their parents could grant great power to a mother, because as mistress of the household she would be responsible for and have authority over not just her own children but also their spouses. Conversely, if a young mother remained in the house of her own or her spouse's parents her authority would presumably be limited.[131] Of course, within any given society all couples would not necessarily set up a new household at the same point within the marital lifecycle, for example on marriage or at

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[129] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 57-9.
[130] J. Zupitza and H. Gneuss (eds.), *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar: Text und Varienten* (Berlin, 1966, 2nd Edition); Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 58.
[131] D. I. Kertzer and R. P. Saller, 'Historical and anthropological perspectives on Italian family life', *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven and London, 1991), pp. 14-6.

the birth of a child. This establishment could vary according to family tradition and economic capability.[132]

The possibility that each family household could contain only one matriarch is supported by the example of Ælfthryth, who overshadowed the first two wives of her son King Æthelred, and reared his children by them.[133] The term her grandson the ætheling Æthelstan uses for her is *ealdormoder*, which translates literally as grandmother, but it should be noted that the word *ealdor* was used by Ælfric to enforce Sara's maternal authority over believing women, and carried connotations of social and institutional authority as well as of age.[134] The grandmother of Ælfthryth's husband Edgar also dominated dynastic politics of the mid-tenth century. Eadgifu took a prominent place in the witness lists of charters issued during the reigns of her sons Edmund and Eadred, unlike Edmund's wives Ælfgifu and Æthelflaed of Damerham.[135] Interestingly, in the obituary lists of Christ Church, Canterbury, King Edmund is remembered as the son of Queen Eadgifu.[136] On the death of her second son Eadred in 955 she supported the accession of one of Edmund's sons Edgar in preference to Edgar's brother Eadwig. Eadwig ruled a united English kingdom for only two years before the kingdoms were split in 957, when the kingdom north of the Thames declared loyalty to Edgar. During Eadwig's reign Eadgifu was deprived of many of her estates, though she recovered her position on Eadwig's death and Edgar's succession to the reunited kingdom in 959.[137] Her deprivation could have been connected to her support for Edgar, but the two issues could also have been inter-related consequences of

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[132] Laslett, 'Introduction', pp. 6-11, 33.
[133] P. Stafford, 'The King's Wife in Wessex', *Past and Present* 91 (1981): 3-27; S 1503/ W 20.
[134] Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* I, p. 90; Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*; S 1503/ W 20.
[135] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 199-204, 232.
[136] MS G, 7 Kal. Jul, edited in R. Fleming, 'Christchurch's sisters and brothers', An edition and discussion of Canterbury's obituary lists', in M. A. Meyer (ed.), *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L. T. Bethell* (London, 1993), p. 126.
[137] P. Stafford, 'Sons and mothers: Family politics in the early Middle Ages, in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 92-3; B. Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the politics of the tenth century', in B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988). pp. 78-9; S 1211.

Eadwig's marriage to Ælfgifu. About a hundred years later Ælfgifu-Emma was despoiled of many of her estates when her son Edward the Confessor married Edith. The careers of these women were rooted in their royal status. However, in the tenth century royal and aristocratic families were closely linked together through blood and marriage,[138] and so it is possible that their careers point to patterns of maternal behaviour in aristocratic and thegnly households.

Households were not merely places of residence. They were the locations of various rites of passage such as birth, marriage and death. They socialised individuals into their expected roles in society. The nurturing of household members must in part have been partially fulfilled by mothers, although the form this nurturing took is not easily detectable in the wills. High-status mothers did not necessarily see their primary function as providing day-to-day care for young children.[139] As I will argue below, the care of young children was probably the responsibility of foster-mothers who were household servants. Elite mothers held authority over other household members. Wynflæd's will indicates that she headed a religious community of at least nine women, which might have overlapped with her family household. She also freed five women not attached to a specific estate, who were probably household servants.[140] Wulfwaru makes bequests to four servants and her household women, Leofgifu to two stewards, a household priest and a servant.[141] Like Anglo-Saxon queens and like aristocratic women in later medieval England,[142] the women of the Anglo-Saxon wills were responsible for the management of their households and estates. Apart from the fact that the wills name

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[138] R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 3-20.
[139] Royal mothers in the twelfth-century do not seem to have looked after their children when they were young. R. V. Turner, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine and her children: An inquiry into medieval family attachment', *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 316.
[140] S 1539/W 3.
[141] S 1538/W 21, S 1521/W 29.
[142] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 107-22; L. J. Wilkinson, 'The rules of Robert Grosseteste reconsidered: The lady as estate and household manager in thirteenth-century England', in *The Medieval Household*, pp. 294-5.

household officials, there is little direct evidence in them for this role. However, Crick notes that in women's wills, unlike in men's wills, the manumission of slaves is marked by a detailed knowledge of the slaves' names and jobs. She suggests that this might indicate the lack of a freedom to bequeath and thus the need to be selective,[143] but it might also a greater involvement in the day-to-day running of their estates.

It is also possible that the women's wills can in themselves be seen as fulfilling a responsibility of care held by household heads. Wynflæd, Wulfwaru, Wulfgifu and Æthelgifu all bequeathed household goods to their heirs. It is worth suggesting that, rather than marking a transfer of objects, the wills mark instead the transfer of rights over them, and that in their wills testatrices were ensuring that their dependents were provided for. Estates fulfilled a very tangible role by providing aristocratic households with supplies. By bequeathing estates to their children and household officials, as all mothers did, these women were fulfilling their obligation to provide nurture and support. The fulfilment of this role through the bequest was not exclusively maternal or even female, because men also bequeathed estates. It could perhaps be seen as pertaining to household heads who were at the top of a generational hierarchy.

Aristocratic and royal medieval households also served to express the status and honour of the family at their centres. *Geþyncðo*, drafted by Archbishop Wulfstan of York, stipulates that in order to be raised to thegnly status a ceorl needed five hides of land, a church, a kitchen, a *burhgeat* and a belltower, as well as to hold royal service.[144] Williams argues that the word *burhgeat* and the archaeological evidence of places like Goltho in Lincolnshire indicate that thegns lived in fortified enclosures of land. The

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[143] Crick, 'Women, wills and moveable wealth', pp. 23-5.

[144] A. Williams, 'A bell-house and a *burhgeat*: Lordly residences in England before the Norman conquest'. *Medieval Knighthood* 4 (1992 for 1990): 225-6; *Gesetze*, i.456. The stipulation of a church and a kitchen is found only in the *Textus Roffensis* version.

wills of Thurstan, Thurketl of Palgrave and Sifflæd[145] suggest that some estates had a *toft* or *heall*, a hall, attached to them. Excavations at Goltho revealed that by the eleventh century a hall and its subsidiary buildings occupied an area there of 325 by 270 feet, and were enclosed by a high wall and a deep ditch.[146] The royal court and the magnates who attended it were peripatetic.[147] It is possible that landowners who owned multiple estates also moved around rather than residing permanently in one place, though some might have had a principal place of residence. As administrative and economic units familial households organised and exploited the estates that maintained them.[148] A mother's authority over her household could therefore impinge on the outside world. This was especially true of the queen's household. The royal household was the location of the government of the kingdom, its officials held administrative, military and ecclesiastical posts. The queen, as mistress of the household, was supported by her own lands and servants, but she also acted within the royal court and the realm as patron and counsellor.[149] It is possible that the aristocratic and thegnly households headed by the women who left their wills functioned in a similar way, though on a smaller scale.

The documentary evidence available on motherhood within the household is very limited. There is little information available on residence patterns or daily life. However, the wills do suggest that mothers, as household heads, took responsibility for providing for their dependents. The information available about the careers of queens points to the possibility of matriarchal women who could retain a strong influence over their adult children.

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[145] S 1531/W 31, S1527/W 24, S 1525a/W 38.
[146] Williams, 'Bell-house', p. 320.
[147] J. Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon courts', in C. Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 157-9.
[148] Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp. 8-15; Rees Jones, 'Preface', pp. 11-12; Laslett, 'Introduction', p. 11.
[149] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 107-115.

Fictive maternity.

The type of mothering considered so far has assumed that maternal relationships are based on a biological tie. However, women could have maternal responsibilities towards those who were not their children. First, a woman who married a widower became stepmother to any children he had from his previous marriage. The remarriage of a man could also cause friction between his children and his new wife, as his new wife's endowment would come out of their prospective inheritance, as would provision for any children the new married couple had subsequently. Watson identifies fear of a stepmother's diversion of inheritance as a crucial element in the promulgation of the 'wicked stepmother' stereotype in classical literature.[150] There are two references to stepmothers in the extant wills and charters concerning land and property transactions. Æthelgifu's will grants part of the estate of Offley to her lord's daughter Ælfgifu. The land for this grant came from a larger group of lands she asserted that her lord had left her unconditionally, but her right to hold it had been challenged by her lord's sister's son. He deprived her of her estate at Standon before being compelled by the king to return it.[151] It is possible that this challenge was made at least in part on Ælfgifu's behalf, and in any case it shows the family tensions around inheritance that remarriage could cause, especially after the death of the remarried partner. The grant to Ælfgifu could be part of a dispute settlement. If so, it does not seem particularly generous as a proportion of the contested lands, though it is impossible to know what other lands and possessions Ælfgifu and her father's kin had already received from him in inheritance.

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[150] P. A. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny and Reality* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 58-60, 92-3.
[151] S 1497/*Will of Æthelgyfu*.

The problems remarriage caused can also be seen in the Old English account attached to S 877 discussed above. The dispute started when Wulfbald, after his father's death, went to his stepmother's land and seized all he found there. Like Æthelgifu, she appealed to the king, but in this case Æthelred was unable to compel the return of her property, as Wulfbald ignored both the command to return the stolen goods and the assignation of his wergild to the king on four separate occasions. This dispute should not be seen solely as evidence of the problems caused for a son by his stepmother's possession of family property, or as the vulnerability of women in particular to predation, as Wulfbald also illegally took the land of his kinsman, Brihtmær. However, it seems likely that Wulfbald's stepmother held at least a life interest in property to which he felt he should have succeeded directly after his father's death.

These cases are illuminating, but they comprise a very small proportion of the surviving documentation about land disputes. It is possible that in many cases relationships left no trace as they led to no particular dispute. It is also noteworthy that there is no mention of children born to any of the new marriages. If the second marriage remained childless this may have made any claim by the new spouse to land held by their partner less secure, conversely, if a remarriage resulted in children then this may have incorporated the step-parent more firmly into the family unit. It could at least have made their inheritance of property from their partner less problematic as they would hold the property in association with their children.

The second form of non-biological motherhood alluded to in the wills is godparenting. Æthelgifu bequeathed a slave to her godson Ætheric in her will.[152] In Ælfheah's will he refers to Ælfthryth as his *gefædere*, or co-parent.[153] This term denotes

[152] S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*.
[153] S 1485/Will 9.

the tie between the godparents and parents of a particular child, so either Ælfthryth was godmother to one of his children or Ælfheah had sponsored one of her children. In common with continental trends, godparenting in Anglo-Saxon England was not a relationship that was limited to the baptismal liturgy. It created social and religious responsibilities, the performance of which extended throughout life.[154] Lynch argues that Anglo-Saxons customarily practiced same-sex sponsorship, in other words godparents sponsored children of the same sex as themselves.[155] However, Æthelgifu refers to her godson in her will and Wulfric makes a bequest to his god-daughter.[156] As Lynch notes, Æthelgifu's godson has the same name as her deceased husband, who might therefore have been the child's sponsor.[157] If this is correct, it is possible that spouses shared godparenting relationships even though only one parent raised the child from the font.

The godparent's duties began in speaking for the child at baptism, promising in the child's name to believe in God and renounce the devil.[158] Godparents were also expected to teach their godchildren the basics of Christian belief: the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.[159] Godparents protected and advanced the interests of their godchildren, just as Æthelgifu did in her bequests to her godson. Their relationships with their godchildren, unlike relationships between biological kin, were not complicated by potential rivalry for inheritance.[160] It should be noted however that relationships between coparents could enhance a pre-existing biological kinship bond, and could be integrated into the political landscape. Ælfheah was kin to the royal house of Wessex

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[154] J. H. Lynch, *Christianising Kinship: Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1998), p. 169.
[155] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, pp. 122-3, 136.
[156] Æthelgifu: S 1497/*Will of Æthelgifu*; Wulfric: S 1536/Will 19.
[157] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, p. 192.
[158] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, pp. 182-3; D. Bethurum (ed). *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957), XIII, ll 24-31.
[159] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, pp. 182-3; A. Napier (ed.), *Wulfstan. Sammlung der ihm zugechreibenen Homilien nebst Untsuchungen uber ihre Echtheit* (Zurich, 1967), Homily 24, p. 121.
[160] Lynch, *Christianising Kinship*, p. 190.

and ealdorman of central Wessex under Eadwig and Edgar.[161] He and his brother Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, were members of a faction that favoured the superior right of Ælfthryth's sons to rule after Edgar, probably on the basis that they were born to two consecrated parents.[162] Ælfheah's will makes bequests to the older ætheling – the king's son and hers [Ælfthryths's]. The word ætheling indicates someone who is throneworthy, and so Ælfheah's will pointedly indicates that he did not regard Edgar's son Edward, born from Edgar's previous marriage to Æthelflæd Eneda, to be part of the royal succession.[163] Ælfthryth evidently used her spiritual kinship as a way of extending and signalling her political allies.

The wills also point to a third type of non-biological motherhood. Æthelstan the ætheling bequeathed the estate of Weston, worth two hundred and fifty gold mancuses, to his foster-mother Ælfswith, on account of her great worth.[164] Crawford distinguishes between two main types of foster care: the care provided in the child's family home by household servants such as wetnurses, and the care provided when a child was sent away at an older age to be reared in another household.[165] Any assessment of both types of care is necessarily speculative as the available evidence is limited.[166] The provision of the first type of care was not a high-status occupation. It seems to have been normal for this care to be provided by servants known as *cildfestran* (child-nurses) or foster mothers. For example, the eighth-century law of Ine states that one of the servants indispensable to a thegn's entourage was a *childfestran*.[167] In Wulfstan's *Life of*

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[161] A. Williams, '*Princeps Merciorum gentis*: the family, career and connections of Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia 956-83'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982): 145-48 and n4; S 546, S 585; S 586; S 702.
[162] Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 163-6; B. Yorke, 'Edward, King and Martyr: A Saxon murder mystery', in L. Keen (ed.), *Studies in the Early History of Shaftesbury Abbey* (Dorchester, 1999), pp. 102-7.
[163] Yorke, 'Æthelwold', p. 84.
[164] S 1503/Will 20.
[165] S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 122-3. She also points to a third type whereby children were not just temporary household residents but were effectively adopted as permanent kin-group members.
[166] Crawford, *Childhood*, pp. 122-38.
[167] Crawford, *Childhood*, pp. 123-4; Ine 63.

Æthelwold, the young Æthelwold was cared for by a nurse.[168] The Latin word used was *nutrix*, but in his treatment of Latin homilies and in his Glossary Ælfric translates both *nutrix* and *altrix* as foster-mother.[169] His translation suggests that the care provided by foster-mothers to young children was seen as maternal in nature.[170] It was not necessarily seen as a substitute for care given by the biological mothers. However, the precise division of responsibilities between different people who cared for young children is impossible to recover, and could have differed depending on individual family circumstances. It is probable that children were cared for in different ways by a variety of people, and that foster care was seen as a supplement to rather than a substitute for familial care. One can finally speculate that the hierarchical relationships between children and their foster-mothers evolved as they children grew up. If Ælfswith was Æthelstan's foster-mother when he was a young child, his will suggests that children who grew up as elite adults could in turn have responsibilities for their former nurses as dependent household members. It is also possible that this relationship was less complicated than relationships with biological mothers, because the difference in status and the absence of a kin connection meant that they were less likely to be in competition.

Aristocratic women who took in children from other aristocratic families probably acted towards them in a maternal capacity that was closer to that of their biological mothers. So far as can be told from the extant examples of the practice, fostering practices for older children did contain a gender bias. There was a school at the royal court during Alfred's reign, and it is possible that aristocratic boys continued

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[168] Wulfstan of Winchester, *Life of St. Æthelwold*. Ed. and trans. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), c. 5.

[169] *Grammatik und Glossar*, p. 300.

[170] It might seem counter-intuitive to a modern audience to suggest that the care of young children, and breastfeeding in particular, is not a maternal action. However, not all societies have considered the care provided by wetnurses as maternal, especially amongst elites. For example in late republican and imperial Rome breastfeeding was performed by servants and therefore not comparable in nature to the care provided by aristocratic mothers. See S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London, 1988), p. 143.

to be sent to court for fostering. King Æthelstan was fostered at the Mercian court of his aunt Æthelflæd and her husband Æthelred.[171] As a child, Edgar was sent to be raised by Ælfwynn, the wife of Æthelstan 'Half-King', who 'reared and educated [him] with a mother's assiduousness.'[172] In his will Æthelstan the ætheling makes an offering for the soul of his grandmother Ælfthryth, who raised him.[173] Towards the end of the reign of Edward the Confessor, children who could claim royal Anglo-Saxon descent were brought to be educated in court where, according to the anonymous author of the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*, Edward's queen Edith reared, educated, adorned and showered with motherly love those boys who were said to be of royal stock.[174] It is interesting that while the role taken by Ælfwynn and Edith is described as maternal, they are not called foster-mothers. This further substantiates the idea that the care given by foster-mothers was seen as low status. The maternal roles fulfilled by elite women probably interacted with that of their positions as household heads and created hierarchical ties of dependence and obligation between them and the children they cared for. The arrangement also presumably created bonds of mutual obligation between elite families.[175]

Girls might have been sent to other secular households but the only extant evidence on their fostering records their entry into monasteries to be educated. For example, throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries Wilton acted as a place where royal and aristocratic girls were brought up and educated. According to the *Vita Wulfhildi*, Wulfthryth and Wulfhild were educated there before Wulfthryth left to marry

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[171] Stafford, 'Political women', p. 47.
[172] C. R. Hart, 'Aethelstan 'Half-King' and his family'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973): 124; W. D. Macray (ed.), *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis*. Rolls Series 83 (1886), pp. 11-2, 53, *sedulitate materna nutravit et educavit.*
[173] S 1503/Will 20.
[174] F. Barlow (ed.), *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster* (Oxford, 1992, 2nd Edition), pp. 24-5. The section this information came from is only extant in the twelfth-century century version by Richard of Cirencester, but there are good reasons to think that it came from a no longer extant copy of the Anonymous' version. See discussion in next chapter.
[175] Crawford, *Children*, p. 123; Lynch, *Sponsorship*, p. 71.

King Edgar and Wulfhild became abbess of Barking. Wulfthryth later returned to Wilton as abbess with her daughter Edith, whose namesake Edith was also raised there before leaving to marry Edward the Confessor. These young women were clearly able to leave and marry, and so cannot be considered to be oblates. Indeed, it seems unlikely that a distinction was made between them on the basis of their intended future careers, or that decisions about their eventual destinations were habitually made upon entry to the convent.[176] Instead, they seem to have been educated together. S 582, a grant by Eadwig to the nuns of Wilton, is witnessed by Ælfgyth *magistra*.[177] The older nuns are referred to as mothers in the *Life of St. Edith*, a term which conveys seniority but also perhaps a duty of care for the younger inmates of the convent.[178] Wulfthryth went there with Edith when Edith was still a very young child, and so her maternal role as abbess overlapped with her position as Edith's biological mother.[179]

The different forms of mothering performed by women to children who were not their own indicates that motherhood was not intrinsically dependent upon a biological tie. However, varying maternal functions were to a certain extent restricted to those women considered appropriate to fulfil them. Maternity was not therefore an all-encompassing role accessible to all women purely by virtue of their gender.

Conclusions.

To conclude, my study of maternity illuminates the intersections between lineal kinship and the conjugal unit. While for some purposes a wife could be integrated into

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[176] B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 83-6; B. Yorke, 'The legitimacy of St. Edith. *The Haskins Society Journal* 11 (2003 for 1998), pp. 97-113; A Wilmarte, *La Legende de Ste Édith, en prose et vers par le moine Goscelin*. Analecta Bollandiana 56 (1938), pp. 5-101, 265-307.

[177] S. Hollis, 'Wilton as a centre of learning', in S. Hollis *et al* (eds.), *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber Confortarius* (Turnhout, 2004), p. 313.

[178] *Legend*, Prologue, and chapter 6.

[179] See eg *Legend*, chapters 4-5.

her husband's kin, the memorial duties entailed in both male and female wills suggest that while female roles of wife, mother and daughter could overlap, these different functions tended to be kept separate. While women did have a responsibility for the souls of their husbands this did not extend to a concern for the rest of his kin. In contrast to the awareness they showed of the souls of their own ancestors, it was not a duty they passed on to their children. So far as it is possible to tell, when women made bequests to their children they rarely acted as wives as well as mothers. The property that women transmitted as mothers was not, so far as can be deduced from the evidence of the wills, marked by entailment, even though their possession of it as women could be vulnerable. Where women hold only an usufruct in land they tend to hold that land as the surviving member of marital couple. However, this separation between the roles of wives and mothers could be a function of the type of land they tended to transmit rather than a reflection of a conceptual division of these family positions. It could relate to aristocratic marriage practices, as in a marriage made as an alliance the claims to inheritance of both parties are recognised but not melded. Because women were associated with more than one kin-group, their identities and interests were not necessarily limited to or compatible with one family above another. Their position could be a source of both empowerment and vulnerability. They had a wider choice of potential heirs and supporters, whose behaviour could be manipulated with the promise of inheritance. However, kin who felt that they might lose out, a woman's children included, could try to ensure an uncertain inheritance by claiming it during the lifetime of the woman concerned.

Chapter Four. *Hic fides habetur regni sotii, hic inuiolabile uiget faedus materni fraternique amoris*: The maternal careers of Emma and Edith.

Introduction and methodology.

The previous chapters have examined Christian ideals of motherhood and the different ways in which maternity could function within Anglo-Saxon kinship networks. This chapter will examine the ways in which two successive queens of England deployed maternal roles as a form of political action. I will do so by focusing on two written works: the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*.[1] The *Encomium* was written for Ælfgifu-Emma in 1041-2 and the *Vita Ædwardi* was written for Emma's daughter-in-law Edith at some point 1065-8.[2] Both works display a strong interest in motherhood, fertility and the creation of dynasties through legitimate succession. The specific circumstances that led to the creation of these books and the ways in which the texts were intended to intervene in court politics will be discussed in the main body of the chapter. It can however be noted here that Emma's problems in the late 1030s and early 1040s were caused in part by her motherhood of three sons by two different royal fathers: Æthelred and Cnut. Her second husband Cnut also had sons by

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[1] A. Campbell (ed.). *Encomium Emmae Reginae, with a supplementary introduction by Simon Keynes* (Cambridge, 1998), references to Campbell's introduction cited as Campbell and Keyne's introduction cited as Keynes, numbering following the 1998 edition throughout. Campbell's translations throughout; F. Barlow (ed.), *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster* (Oxford, 1992, 2nd Edition). Barlow's translations throughout unless stated otherwise. There are four extant manuscripts of the *Encomium*: London, British Library, Add 33241 (L); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Hengwrt 158 (=Peniarth 281) (V); London, British Library, Add 6920 (B); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Lat. 6235 (P). Of these manuscripts L is the only medieval copy, it was written in the middle of the eleventh century and appears to be a copy of a copy of the author's autograph. V and B are transcripts made in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and add little to the original text apart from a passage from the missing leaf of L. However P, which was made in the sixteenth century, provides evidence that book 3 chapters 7 and 14 were revised in Edward's court after Harthacnut's death. Campbell demonstrated that these revised passages derived from another eleventh-century manuscript which was itself copied and revised from the same copy of the autograph as L. More recently, Orchard showed that the style of the language of the revised passages strongly argues for their authorship by the Encomiast himself. Campbell, *Encomium*, pp. [xcvi]-[xcix]; A. Orchard, 'The literary background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 11 (2000): 167-8. The *Vita Ædwardi* is extant in a single mutilated manuscript of c. 1100, London, British Library, Harley MS 526, the text of which has been supplemented by its most recent editor from later works based on the author's text.

[2] The dating and context of these works will be discussed in more detail below.

another wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton. Emma had to manoeuvre between multiple rival heirs.[3] Edith, in contrast, had no children. The succession crises that she had to deal with in 1066 were precipitated by the death of her husband Edward the Confessor and their lack of sons and therefore of obvious heirs. She had to negotiate her survival throughout the successions of her brother Harold and of William the Conqueror.[4]

The use of maternity by Emma and by Edith within the two books should not be seen as functioning only within the confines of each individual text. It has been argued that books carry relationships,[5] the *Encomium* and the *Vita* also create them. Spiegel's concept of texts as socially situated provides a useful methodology with which to analyse maternal performance within and by means of the *Encomium* and the *Vita*. She argues that a written work represents a moment of choice and of action that was designed to function within a specific political and social network.[6] The *Encomium* and the *Vita* can be examined not just for examples of how maternity functioned within individual texts but also as literary spaces that provide a point of access for examining how maternity could be deployed, through the medium of the written text, as a political tool. Like the wills, they should not be analysed as providing access to customary patterns of maternal action; they are unusual texts and they were written for queens. However they do show how maternity could be represented and used in particular situations.[7]

Before turning to an examination of maternity within the *Encomium* and the *Vita* it will first be necessary to contextualise that discussion within a consideration of the

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[3] P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 244-7.
[4] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 274-9.
[5] L. A. Finke, *Women's Writing in English: Medieval England* (London and New York, 1999), pp. 76-80.
[6] G. Spiegel, 'History, historicism, and the social logic of the text in the Middle Ages'. *Speculum* 65 (1990): 83-5.
[7] My treatment throughout this chapter of the reception of the *Encomium* and the *Vita* is deeply indebted to the conversations I have had with my supervisors and in particular with Dr. Elizabeth Tyler.

different ways in which maternity functioned within the types of kinship, inheritance and marital systems current in England in the first half of the eleventh century. Not only English but also Norman and Danish practices could have influenced the royal succession. Emma was Norman by birth and her son Edward the Confessor spent the first half of his adult life in Normandy, and England was conquered and ruled by Danish kings for the majority of 1013 – 1042. Because the chapter concentrates on textual deployments of maternal action, it will also be necessary to situate my discussion of maternity within the context of the two books. An examination of author-patron relationships will illuminate the ownership of the different perspectives that the two texts provide. A discussion of the probable audiences of the *Encomium* and the *Vita* will give some indication of whom the textual models of motherhood were intended to affect, and of the purpose behind the use of the written word and textual maternity to further political agendas. I will then examine the use of maternity within the *Encomium* and the *Vita* in turn. I will treat the two works as separate case-studies in order to allow for a nuanced treatment of maternity within the specific situations they were written to address.

Inheritance and marital patterns in the ruling kin-groups of England, Normandy and Denmark.

English kinship structures and inheritance patterns were discussed in the previous chapter. The roles of women as wives and mothers sometimes overlapped but do not appear to have been fully integrated. However, customary inheritance and marriage patterns in the royal kin-group need particular discussion. All kings' sons were æthelings, that is to say that they were throne-worthy. As Stafford rightly stresses this indicates a claim rather than a title. In general Æthelred seems to have ranked his sons'

inheritance rights by age, but retained the right to designate any one of them as his primary successor. Unlike in Normandy, kings' sons were not sent off to distant lands nor consecrated to the church, and both Æthelred and his father Edgar succeeded after fraternal disputes. Fraternal as well as filial succession was common. The ability of a king to ensure the succession of his preferred heir seems to have depended on the political ability of that successor and the support they could mobilise. There does not appear to have been an institutional mechanism to ensure designated succession as West Saxon kings, unlike those of Francia, did not crown or consecrate a primary heir as co-king during the father's lifetime.[8] English succession practices therefore made it difficult for minors to succeed to the throne if there was an adult candidate available. For example, in 946 Edmund was succeeded by his brother Eadred rather than by either of his young sons Eadwig or Edgar. The only minor kings in tenth- and eleventh-century England were Edward the Martyr and his half-brother Æthelred the Unready, who both succeeded as the oldest surviving ætheling.

Women also inherited and transmitted claims to both lands and loyalties, though not it seems to the throne itself. Throughout the tenth century kings' marriages had been crucial in expanding the West Saxon kingdom to become England. The distribution of lands held by queens north of the Thames and in the south-west indicate one mechanism by which the royal kin-group could satisfy aristocratic feeling and bring land under its power. Aristocratic kin-groups seem to have assigned large tracts of lands as dowries to the female members who married kings, smoothing its integration into the royal estates and thus the expansion of royal geo-political power. Estates in disputed areas could also be assigned to and held by queens as dower, thus satisfying local feeling and royal

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[8] D. Dumville, 'The ætheling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 2-4; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 83-4.

expansionism.[9] Cnut's conquest of England does not seem to have made any significant difference to kin-group inheritance patterns. Like Æthelred he seems to have seen all his sons as throne-worthy.[10]

Tenth-century English kings took multiple wives but, probably because of influence by the Church, their marriages tended to be made in succession rather than concurrently. Second and third marriages could be made after the repudiation and dismissal of a previous wife. Edward the Elder had three wives, Edmund had two, Edgar had three. This pattern made wives vulnerable, and meant that mothers had to work for the right of their sons to inherit the throne.[11] The rights of sons to inherit were not necessarily downgraded by their father's remarriages. For example Ælfthryth, Edgar's third wife, was the first of his wives to be crowned. Ælfthryth used her status as crowned queen and association with Winchester and its bishop Æthelwold to downgrade the legitimacy of Edgar's previous marriage and the legitimacy of his oldest son Edward. As discussed in the previous chapter she also used relationships such as spiritual co-parenthood to build and reinforce ties with aristocratic families, and to build a faction that promoted the superior right of her sons to inherit the throne. Her elder son Edmund was at least at Winchester recognised in the New Minster refoundation charter as *clito legitimus prefati Regis filius*, in parallel to his mother's recognition as *legitimus prefati Regis coniunx*, while his elder half-brother Edward was merely designated *eadam Rege clito procreatus*.[12] However this view did not gain widespread acceptance in Edgar's reign. A royal genealogy compiled in 970 contained all the sons of Edgar in

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[9] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 84-7, 128-39.
[10] M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (Harlow, 1993) p. 115.
[11] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 66-72.
[12] B. Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the politics of the tenth century', in B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 82-3; S 745.

birth order: Edward, Edmund and Æthelred.[13] After Edgar's death a struggle for the succession resulted in Edward's coronation, supported by Archbishop Dunstan. Not all reforming churchmen recognised the claims of queens' sons to be more legitimate. The support of leading reforming churchmen for the rival candidates Edward and Æthelred seems to have been based as much on factional alignment as religious principle. Dunstan and the family of Æthelstan 'Half-King', including Æthelstan's son and successor Æthelwine of East Anglia, had longstanding and mutually beneficial contacts through the abbey of Glastonbury.[14] Dunstan could draw on the idea that in canon law remarriage was always illicit, even if one partner had entered a monastery, and therefore that the children of Edgar's third and Ælfthryth's second marriages were illegitimate.[15] Æthelwold, by contrast, seems to have had some kind of alliance with Ælfthryth even before she remarried to become Edgar's third wife, and his bishopric of Winchester was crucial to the underpinning of her status as a crowned and consecrated queen.[16] Oswald's position in the succession dispute is not entirely clear but it seems probable that he, like Dunstan, supported his patron Æthelwine.[17] Edgar's second wife Wulfthryth and her daughter Edith also seem to have favoured Edward's succession.[18] It was not until Edward was murdered in 978, on a visit to see his half-brother Æthelred at his stepmother Ælfthryth's hall in Corfe, that Æthelred succeeded to the throne.[19] The earliest source to blame Ælfthryth for the murder is the *Passio Eadwardi* which has a

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[13] Yorke, 'Æthelwold', p. 83; D. Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976): 43; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B v., vol. 1, 23r.

[14] B. Yorke, 'Introduction', *Æthelwold*, pp. 2-3; N. Brooks, 'The career of St. Dunstan', in N. Ramsay *et al* (eds.), *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 11-3; C. Cubitt, 'Review article: The tenth-century Benedictine reform in England', *Early Medieval Europe* 6.1 (1997): 83-5.

[15] B. Yorke, 'The legitimacy of St. Edith', *The Haskins Society Journal* 11 (2003): 108-9.

[16] Yorke, 'Æthelwold', pp. 81-5.

[17] C. Hart, 'Æthelstan 'half-king' and his family', *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973): 132, 136-8; Cubitt, 'Benedictine reform', p. 84.

[18] Yorke, 'Legitimacy', pp. 107-13.

[19] Yorke, 'Æthelwold', p. 85. The earliest sources for the murder, Byhrtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*, date from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. They do not blame Ælfthryth for the murder, though the *Vita S. Oswaldi* does state that Edward was murdered in her house. Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, in J. Raine (ed.), *Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, Volume 1 (1879), pp. 399-475 at pp. 449-52; D. Whitelock (ed.), *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos* (London, 1963, 3rd Edition), pp. 56-7; C. Plummer (ed.), *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford, 1892), pp. 122-3; C. Fell (ed.), *Edward King and Martyr* (Leeds, 1971), p. xvi.

manuscript context of around 1070. It was however arguably based on earlier material connected to the centre of Edward's cult at Shaftesbury, and it is probable that rumours of Ælfthryth's involvement circulated long before they were written down.[20] In this work Ælfthryth is portrayed as a violent mother and a murderous stepmother.[21] Æthelred himself was married at least once before he married Emma who, unlike his previous wives, was probably consecrated as queen. Despite Emma's consecration the claims of her sons to succeed Æthelred were not successful during his reign. The inheritance claims Emma could call on in England were flexible.[22] She could potentially invoke reform ideals to push forward the special claims of her sons, because she was a mother who was consecrated queen. As a royal mother she could attempt to deny to other wives the right to mother heirs. However, this exclusion was not automatic, and by accessing reform ideals about consecrated queenship she risked also recalling reform ideas that condemned remarriages as illegitimate.

Legitimate Norman succession in the tenth and eleventh centuries seems to have been based on a balance between designation by the current ruler and acceptance by the wider ruling kin-group. The inheritance of younger sons was probably based on paternal stipulation and its postmortem ratification by the heir. Generally speaking, they were expected to enter the church like Robert, the brother of Richard II and Emma. Alternatively, like their brother Mauger, they could marry a far-away heiress. As in England daughters as well as sons could claim and transmit the inheritances and loyalties of their kin-group. Leading members of the ducal kin-group manipulated its resources and membership by dispossessing some and endowing others through control of inheritances and marriage alliances, but their ability to do so successfully depended

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[20] Fell, *Edward*, pp. xix-xx; P. Stafford, 'The portrayal of royal women in England, mid-tenth to mid-twelfth centuries', in J. Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1993), p. 151.
[21] Fell, *Edward*, pp. 3-7.
[22] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 85-9.

on their ability to build a consensus amongst their kin about their right to do so and their ability to enforce their decisions. Emma's own mother, Gunnor, had herself manipulated succession within the kin-group so that her own relatives inherited the right to exploit vast estates and so that her son Richard inherited the rulership of Rouen. Dudo's *De Moribus et actis primoris Normanniae ducum*, which she was instrumental in producing, links effective rulership of Rouen to her and to her relations as well as to her husband Richard.[23]

Norman rulers such as William Longsword and Richard I seem to have taken multiple wives. Unlike English kings, they probably had more than one wife at the same time, as it seems that their marriages to aristocratic Frankish women ran concurrently with marriages made in the Danish fashion. However, the children of these wives were not all equally acknowledged. In Dudo's *De moribus* Frankish wives were made to appear artificially sterile despite charter evidence that William's wife had at least one daughter. Marriages to women of Danish origin, in contrast, produced sons who were considered acceptable to inherit rights in Normandy, assuming paternal designation and aristocratic acceptance. These marriages seem to have been a useful tool which allowed the rulers of Normandy to postpone designation of a primary heir until a time of their choice.[24] The rulers of Normandy also used their maternal kin to expand and consolidate their power-base outward from Rouen, as the Danish wives of dukes frequently remarried in widowhood and produced children who supported their half-brothers. This type of maternal kin tended to be loyal and had no claims to leadership. For example, Richard I acknowledged his maternal half-brother Rodulf, who conquered and held Ivry

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[23] E. Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 64-73, 109,14, 144-5, 152-6.

[24] Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, pp. 94-5; G. Garnett, 'Ducal succession in early Normandy', in G. Garnett and J. Hudson (eds.), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 100-8; E. Albu, *The Normans and their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 9-11.

and Pacy in the Évrecin as Richard's deputy.[25] While multiple marriages and the subordinate status of maternal kin suggest the pre-eminent importance of paternal designation in kin-group status and inheritance rights, this importance was qualified by the practicalities of tenth- and eleventh-century power-building. Dudo's *De moribus* suppresses Frankish wives and their descendants in the interests of Gunnor and her sons to ensure that rival branches of their kin-group could not challenge their monopoly on power. Gunnor could ensure the pre-eminence of her sons amongst her husband's children because her natal kin were crucial to Richard's control of the Cotentin. Her aristocratic status seems to have assured her primary position amongst Richard's wives, her marriage may have initially been made according to secular custom, but it was later recognised by the Church and her children succeeded to their kin-group's most important inheritances.[26] Richard's degree of choice in acknowledgement of children and their designation as heirs was not one of unfettered paternal power because, like Gunnor, he not only directed but was dependent upon his kin-group.

In Denmark kinship was bilaterally reckoned for inheritance purposes, though a woman's right to inherit was more limited than that of a man and tended to be deferred if male heirs were available. The rune-stone evidence suggests that in the tenth and eleventh centuries inheritance followed both the gradual principle, which favoured those closest in kinship, and the parentelic principle, which favoured direct descendants over collateral relatives. All children had some rights of inheritance if they were acknowledged by their father.[27]

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[25] Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, pp. 108-10.
[26] Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, pp. 84-9, 94-7, 132-40.
[27] B. and P. Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800 – 1500* (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 167-8; B. Sawyer, *The Viking Age Rune Stones: Custom and Commemoration in Early Medieval Scandinavia* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 71-80.

Danish kings also took multiple wives and, as in Normandy, their marriages frequently overlapped. Their marriages might not have been equal in status but this does not seem to have affected the comparative status of the children from these marriages. Unlike in Normandy and England the status and legitimacy of these marriages does not seem to have been defined by the involvement of the Church. All children automatically inherited from their mothers and maternal kin and from their fathers if acknowledged. Although paternal recognition was important in determining inheritance rights it must also be stressed that a mother's status was important and that women transmitted rights of access to the throne.[28] Cnut does not seem to have distinguished between his sons so far as their inheritance rights were concerned as they were all named after previous Danish kings.

The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*: Authorship and Audiences.

It is now necessary to provide a discussion of the authorship and audiences of the *Encomium* and the *Vita*. The Encomiast does give some biographical information about himself. He was probably a Flemish religious connected to Saint Omer and Saint Bertin and was present in Saint Omer when Cnut visited on route to Rome, presumably in 1027.[29] It is possible that the manuscript was written in Flanders and sent to England but Keynes convincingly argues that the Encomiast's familiarity with Asser's *Life of Alfred*, and his ability to draw information from English witnesses, makes it likely that he was resident in England when he wrote the *Encomium*, presumably having joined

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[28] M. Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England: Changes to the perception of legitimacy in medieval Denmark', *Past and Present* 108 (1985): 15-6; T. Nors, 'Illegitimate children and their high-born mothers', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 21.1 (1996): 17-23.
[29] *Encomium*, pp. 36-7; Keynes, *Encomium*, p. [xxxix].

Emma's retinue during her stay in Flanders.[30] In the Prologue to the work, the Encomiast clearly states that Emma commissioned him to write a record of her deeds, which clearly establishes her influence over the text.[31] This is one of the many *topoi* commonly employed in medieval prologues. Medieval authors commonly used prologues to dedicate their work to a patron, and often claimed that their patron ordered them to write. They often also discuss the difficulty of writing history and insist on the importance of truth. These traditions were rooted in Greek and Latin rhetoric.[32] Emma's Encomiast uses all these *topoi*, which means that the truth behind them is uncertain. Did Emma actually commission the work? And if so, how much control did she have over its content?

The author of the *Vita*, like that of the *Encomium*, was an anonymous Fleming in religious orders associated with the foundations of St. Bertin and St. Omer. Barlow suggests that the Anonymous may also have been associated with Christ Church, Canterbury, because of the unique notice of Æthelric's election to the see in 1051, and because the one extant manuscript of the work seems on palaeographical grounds to have been written there.[33] The author of the work does not identify himself and, although Goscelin and Folcard have been suggested as potential candidates, the authorship of neither can be proven beyond doubt.[34] Edith however is clearly described as the author's patron in both prologues. The Anonymous also mentions conversations he has had with her about her family. It seems likely that she was his informant on the events he details.[35]

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[30] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xxix-xl].
[31] *Encomium*, pp. 4-5; Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [lxviii-lxix].
[32] E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (London, 1953), p. 85; A. Gransden, 'Prologues in the historiography of twelfth-century England', in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 55-6.
[33] Barlow, *Life*, pp. xlvi.
[34] R. W. Southern, 'The first life of Edward the Confessor', *English Historical Review* 58 (1943): 385-400; Barlow, *Life*, pp. xlv-lix; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 41 n38.
[35] Barlow, *Life*, pp. xliv-xlv, lxi, 4-5, 88-90; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 41.

It is important to remember that the idea of an independent author derives from Romantic ideals of artistic freedom and was not a medieval concept.[36] The relationship between author and text was problematised by Foucault, who suggested that the questions that ought to be asked should concentrate on how a text appears and on what was necessary for its appearance.[37] The production of medieval books involved many craftsmen, and was an expensive business and it seems unlikely that they would be produced on speculation. The patron–client relationship was not fixed and patrons did not have to take an active role. However, the patron–client relationship was deeply hierarchical and patronage can be taken as evidence of the concerns of the patron. Very probably the direction of the book was a matter for the patron especially if, as seems likely in the cases of the Encomiast and the Anonymous, the author was a household member from abroad.[38] Therefore, even though the establishment of Emma's and Edith's influence over the works was a *topos* this should not discount the truth of their patronage. Writers did not use irrelevant *topoi*, there would be no point in doing so, and Gransden argues that an author's claim to write at the request of a named patron should normally be believed unless strong evidence to discount it exists.[39] In her mother Gunnor, Emma had a strong role-model for patronage of a family historian. Emma probably acted as the Encomiast's source of information as well as his patron, just as Gunnor did for Dudo.[40] Emma's use of her *Encomium* in turn could have provided a model for her daughter-in-law Edith for the use of a written text to intervene in court

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[36] M. H. Caviness, 'Anchoress, Abbess and Queen: Donors and patrons or intercessors and matrons?', in J. Hall McCash (ed.), *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (London, 1996), pp. 105-6.
[37] M. Foucault, 'What is an author?', in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Foucault; Language, Countermemory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, 1977), pp. 15-8.
[38] L. A. Finke, *Women's Writing in English: Medieval England* (London and New York, 1999), pp. 71-6; S. G. Nichols, 'Foreward', *Cultural Patronage*, pp. xii-iii; J. Hall McCash, 'The cultural patronage of medieval women: An overview', *Cultural Patronage*, pp. 1-10.
[39] J. M. Ferrante, *'To the Glory of her Sex': Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington and Indianopolis, 1997), p. 40; Gransden, 'Prologues', p. 59; W. Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages*, trans. J. M. Carthy (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 11-2.
[40] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 28 n2.

debate. Edith's coronation in 1044 means that she must have been in court within three years at the most of the *Encomium's* promulgation. The *Vita* contains verbal parallels to the *Encomium*, which strongly indicates that the Anonymous had seen a copy of it.[41] While they were mediated to some extent through her Encomiast, the *Encomium* can be taken to present Emma's perspective on kinship roles and the succession. The viewpoint on events provided by the *Vita*, although mediated to some extent through the Anonymous, was probably that of Edith herself.

The reception of the *Encomium* cannot be securely located as no manuscripts' whereabouts are known before the appearance of L in a library catalogue of Saint Augustine's, Canterbury, in the later Middle Ages. Its place of origin and intended destination cannot be identified on palaeographical grounds due to the mobility of both scribes and manuscripts.[42] Theoretically the *Encomium* could have been intended for consumption in Normandy, England or Flanders. However its strong interest in the Anglo-Danish dynasty to the exclusion of, for example, Emma's Norman relations, makes it most likely that the reception of the *Encomium* should be placed within the Anglo-Danish court of 1040-2.[43] The *Encomium* assumes an *auditor* as well as a *lector*, indicating that it was intended to be read aloud as well as privately.[44] The *Encomium* points to the fluidity of and interaction between oral and literary cultures, as a written text which assumes an oral performance.[45] However, the issue of who could understand a Latin performance in the Anglo-Danish court remains. Recent scholarship has warned against assuming an impermeable distinction between Latin and vernacular cultures and

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[41] E. M. Tyler, '"When wings incarnadine with gold are spread": The *Vita Ædwardi Regis* at the court of Edward the Confessor', in E. M. Tyler (ed.), *Treasure in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 44-6.
[42] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xliv]-[xlv].
[43] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xxxix]-[xli]; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 28-31.
[44] *Encomium*, pp. 4-5; E. M. Tyler, 'Talking about history in eleventh-century England: The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the court of Harthacnut'. *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005) 364-7.
[45] M. Innes, 'Memory, orality and literacy in an early medieval society', *Past and Present* 158 (1998): 9-13, 35-6; E. M. Tyler, '"The eyes of the beholders were dazzled": treasure and artifice in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *Early Medieval Europe* 8.2 (1999): 268-70.

has emphasised the orality of Latin.[46] First, the *Encomium* was influenced by Latin authors such as Vergil, Sallust and Lucan, as well as the Vulgate Bible, but also by Old English and Old Norse compositions.[47] Second, in the early eleventh century secular aristocrats probably understood more than one language. For example Emma must have spoken English, Norse, French and possibly Flemish, while Harthacnut spoke English and Norse, and Edward spoke English, French and probably Norse. It is probable that some aristocrats could understand Latin as Ealdorman Æthelweard the Chronicler had done at the end of the previous century.[48] Also, the Flemish Encomiast's use of imagery from Old Norse sources demonstrates that there must have been discussion about vernacular stories and provides evidence of the fluid boundaries between Latin and the vernacular and between literary and oral traditions. It suggests a culture in which stories were not just written down but discussed. It seems likely therefore that the *Encomium* could be heard, understood and discussed by members of the Anglo-Danish court, although different levels of understanding should perhaps be allowed for.[49] Whether or not the *Encomium* was aimed at particular members of this court is a question that must be born in mind in the following discussion.

The *Vita Aedwardi Regis* survives in a single mutilated manuscript of c. 1100,[50] the text of which has been supplemented by its most recent editor from later works based on the author's text.[51] The dating of the *Vita* has proved controversial. Its editor Barlow, following the Anonymous' statement in the prologue to the second part of the

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[46] H. J. Westra, 'Literacy, orality and medieval patronage: a phenomenonological outline', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991): 52-3; Innes, 'Memory', pp. 9-13.
[47] A. Orchard, 'The literary background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 11 (2000): 158-73.
[48] Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 365-73.
[49] Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 364-74; Orchard, 'Literary background', pp. 164-6; D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800 – 1300* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 169-71; J. Campbell, 'England c. 991', in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993), pp. 1-18, esp. p. 14 for a reference to the charter attestation of Ælfwine, *minister* and *scriptor*.
[50] London, British Library, Harley MS 526.
[51] F. Barlow (ed.), *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster* (Oxford, 1992, 2nd Edition).

work, argues that the first part of the work was begun late in 1065, but that it was reworked and added to by the second part in 1066/7 after the deaths of Edward, Tostig and Harold changed the political landscape.[52] Henningham argues for a date of 1068-70 after the arrival of William I's wife Matilda in England, and Stafford argues for a date of 1066-7 while succession to the throne and kingdom of England was still an issue.[53] Their arguments partly centre round questions of thematic unity within the book, and assume that a work written in a relatively short period of time will be more unified than one rewritten in changing circumstances. The work does seem disjointed, especially in its treatment of England's Golden Age and its collapse,[54] but can still be seen to unite around the themes of the praise of Edith and of the fate of England.[55] Perhaps the prose sections of book one were written in 1065/6, and added to by the poetic sections and by the religious life of Edward. Given the rapidly changing political context of 1065-7 it is necessary to be aware of these issues, but their definitive resolution seems unlikely. The work was roughly contemporary to the events it describes, and is very closely dated for a medieval text.

The primary audience of the *Vita* depends on when the work was initially written. If, as Barlow argues, the majority of the first part and perhaps sections of the second were written in late 1065 and early 1066,[56] then a court audience seems likely for the early draft of the work. In the *Encomium*, Emma had provided Edith with a model of how a text could be used to intervene in court debate, not just to push forward her particular perspective on events but hopefully to make this perspective widely accepted and permanent. However, the English court of 1065-6 is not the only possible

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[52] Barlow, *Life*, pp. xxix-xxxiii, 84-8.
[53] E. K. Henningham, 'The literary unity, the date and the purpose of the Lady Edith's book "The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster"', *Albion* 7 (1975): 33-4; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 41 n37.
[54] Tyler, 'Wings incarnadine', pp. 85-6.
[55] Heningham, 'Literary unity', pp. 24-40; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 41 n35.
[56] Barlow, *Life*, pp. xxv, xxx-i. He notes that Edward's deathbed scene and his vision of the Green Tree in part two are very similar in narrative style to part one. If the text was substantially reworked after the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings, as he argues, perhaps these sections were part of an earlier draft.

audience for the *Vita*. After the deaths of her brothers at Stamford Bridge and Hastings in September and October 1066 Edith made some sort of agreement with William of Normandy. She handed him the keys to Winchester at the end of the year and seems to have spent the rest of her life both in Winchester and at Wilton, with occasional visits to court.[57] Edith's part time residence at Wilton from 1066 to her death in 1075 suggests that its inhabitants can also be seen as a target audience, an idea supported by the interest in the place displayed in the *Vita*. The Anonymous identifies it as the place of Edith's education, as the venue of her exile from court in 1051/2, and as the recipient of her religious patronage. In the late 1060s Wilton was also the residence of other Anglo-Saxon royal and aristocratic women, including Harold II's daughter Gunnhild.[58] One potential audience for the *Vita*, then, either after it was reworked or as it was written, was composed of educated aristocratic women, both lay and religious, some of whom might have expected to make marriage alliances as the political situation was renegotiated after the battle of Hastings.[59]

The idea that the *Vita* was intended for multiple audiences is supported by the form of the work. Unlike the *Encomium*, the *Vita* is composed of alternating prose and poetic sections. The poetry between each prose section comments on the narrative of the prose through the use of classical and biblical parallels and imagery. The poetic sections in the *Vita Ædwardi* complicate the prose chapters as they are frequently critical of figures such as Godwine who are presented more favourably in the prose.[60] The distinction between the content of the prose and verse sections of the *Vita* can be placed within the tradition of the *opus geminatum* form, transmitted from the classical period

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[57] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 275-8; C. Morton and H. Muntz (eds.), *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 40-1.
[58] E. Searle, 'Women and the legitimisation of succession at the Norman conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 3 (1981): 66-9; B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), pp. 158-9.
[59] E. M. Tyler, *History and Poetry: The Politics of Literature in Eleventh-Century England* (forthcoming).
[60] Tyler, 'Wings incarnadine', p. 91.

primarily by Caelius Sedulius and taken up by English authors such as Aldhelm and Alcuin, in which the metrical sections take over and amplify themes present in the prose.[61] The critical nature of the poetic sections can also be placed within a tenth- and eleventh-century tradition of satirical poetry, as represented by the Anglo-Latin flytings from the school of Winchester and Norman-Latin poems such as *Jezebel* and *Semiramis*.[62] In his *Vita S. Willibrordi*, Alcuin stresses the unity of the work, but the prose life was intended for recitation in the church while the metrical life was intended for private study.[63] It is possible that the prose sections of the *Vita Ædwardi*, which provided a mostly straightforward viewpoint on events, were intended for a more public audience, either at court or at Wilton, while the more critical poetic sections were intended for Edith and a small circle of her followers. They could have provided a means by which the traumatic events of 1066 could be discussed, and a space in which some kind of understanding of those events could be attempted.[64]

It is finally necessary to consider the audiences of the two works in the context of the light they shed on Emma's and Edith's decision to use a written text in order to influence public opinion. Both texts provide a particular presentation and interpretation of events that would not necessarily be considered accurate or truthful according to modern standards of reporting. For example, in the *Encomium*, all Emma's sons are portrayed as Cnut's sons, Ælfgifu of Northampton is referred to only as an un-named concubine and Harold is presented as interloper who was not the son of Cnut and his concubine but of his concubine's maid. The prose sections of the *Vita* do not mention information that could be damaging to Edith, for example the murder at court on her

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[61] P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *opus geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin'. *Medium Ævum* 50 (1981): pp. 220-5.
[62] J. M. Ziolkowski, *Jezebel: A Norman Latin Poem of the Early Eleventh Century* (New York, 1989), pp. 41-8.
[63] Godman, '*Opus geminatum*', pp. 224-5.
[64] Tyler, *History and Poetry*, forthcoming.

orders of a northern thegn which sparked rebellion in the north and the quarrel between her brothers Harold and Tostig.

Medieval concepts of truth, however, were not empirical or absolute. Truth was considered to be ethical, in the sense that the overall truth of a work and its moral message was considered to be more important than the accuracy of individual details. Standards of evidence were based on probability and moral necessity. Truth was what might or, perhaps more importantly, what should have happened. Nevertheless, the Encomiast appears to have been concerned about the relationship between truth and fiction in his historical work, and in his Prologue and Argument he uses Vergilian allusions to signal that his work was partly fictional.[65] When discussing issues of truth and history he uses the phrase *facta uelut infecta* to refer to the possibility that a hearer might take fact as falsehood, if he had been predisposed to treat a work as untrue by the introduction of one lie into an otherwise truthful account. This phrase is taken from Vergil's Aeneid IV:190, where Fama *pariter facta atque infecta cenebat.*[66] This allusion is interesting for more than one reason, but the issue to discuss here is the allusion to *fama*. *Fama* carried many connotations: rumour, glory, memory, reputation, what people know, and infamy. It interacted with ideas about honour, status and shame. Perhaps most importantly, it denoted a process rather than a fixed entity, a process in which a person's true worth was created by public talk.[67] The Encomiast also refers to accounts which would be more restrained but less truthful than the one presented in the *Encomium*. This probably refers to specific debates about Emma's role in Cnut's reign and the following succession crisis, specifically perhaps about her role in Alfred's

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[65] Gransden, 'Prologues', pp. 58-60; R. Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 2-6, 89-93, 130-9; E. M. Tyler, 'Fictions of family: The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and Virgil's *Aeneid*'. *Viator* 36 (2005): 149-79.

[66] Tyler, 'Fictions of family', pp. 168-71; *Encomium*, pp. 4-5, 'sang alike of fact and falsehood'.

[67] T. Fenster and D. Lord Smail, 'Introduction', in T. Fenster and D. Lord Smail (eds.), *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe* (London, 2003), pp. 2-4; C. Wickham, 'Fama and the law in twelfth-century Tuscany', *Fama*, pp. 19-22; Tyler, 'Fictions of family', p. 169.

death.[68] The *Encomium* was written at a time when this dynasty had gone through five years of struggle between rival branches of the kin for succession to the English throne, a time when these years of turmoil were being argued about and when recriminations were flying about what had happened and who was responsible.[69] In this situation Emma's production of a text which stresses the successes and legitimacy of the Anglo-Danish dynasty and her role in this can be seen as an attempt to create a consensus for her version of her kin-group and to vindicate herself of involvement in her son's murder. Obviously the *Encomium* was not aimed at an ignorant audience. Members of the Anglo-Danish court had their own memories and were therefore very aware of what Emma implied about the last forty years through her text.[70] However the reference to *fama* and to other accounts of these years suggests that her Encomiast hoped that her version of events, the *Encomium*, would replace the other versions to which he alludes.[71] The *Vita*, unlike the *Encomium*, does not refer to *fama* or to opposing accounts of events. It does, however, offer very different readings of the same events through its alternating use of prose and poetry, which indicates that the topics it discusses were contentious and were open to more than one interpretation.

The question remains as to why Emma and Edith chose a text to intervene in court intrigue and create their own version of their kin-group and their own slants on events. This question is not easily answered. As noted above, Emma's mother Gunnor was associated with the production of *De moribus*. In the late tenth century Ealdorman Æthelweard had translated and sent a version of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle to his kinswoman Matilda, Abbess of Essen. In the early eleventh century the nuns at the royal

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[68] *Encomium*, pp. 4-5; Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 361-2.
[69] Although it is possible that accusations of complicity in Alfred's death, as they were later in 1051, were used in support of a wider political agenda. It is interesting that the Archbishop of York accused the bishop of Worcester, Worcester was traditionally either held by or was subservient to York.
[70] E. John, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: A riddle and a solution', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 63 (1980): 63-9.
[71] Tyler, 'Fictions', pp. 164-71.

foundation of Shaftesbury Abbey probably had an early version of the *Passio* and *Miraculae* of the royal saint Edward the Martyr, whose cult Æthelred, Emma and Cnut had all promoted, and whose *Passio* contained motifs which influenced or drew from the same stock as those that influenced the account of Alfred's martyrdom in the *Encomium*: treachery and the murder of an innocent.[72] By broadening out the provision of textual history to textile history it is possible perhaps also to include the tapestries celebrating his life that the late tenth-century ealdorman Byrhtnoth's widow Ælfflæd gave to Ely.[73] Royal and aristocratic women seem to have been associated with the propagation of their family name and status through historical writing and other permanent records, and Emma and Edith must have drawn on this. Perhaps the most important reason for choosing a text was that a written work was both authoritative and permanent, hopefully substituting a final version for the transience of *fama*.

Emma's maternity and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*.

It is now necessary to turn to Emma's career and her use of maternity within the *Encomium*. She was born to Richard I, Count of Rouen, and his second wife Gunnor at some point in the 980s. This marriage alliance linked a new wave of Danish raiders and settlers, which included Gunnor's kin, with the descendants of earlier Scandinavian groups.[74] Emma's education and upbringing is obscure, but it is possible to make some observations about the Norman court of her family. Her parents, brothers and uncle were patrons of learning and commissioned from Dudo of Saint-Quentin a history of the family's line. This work, *De moribus*, glorifies the successes of an unconquered Danish

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[72] E. van Houts, 'Women and the writing of history in the early Middle Ages: the case of Abbess Matilda and Æthelweard', *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992): 53-68; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 51-80; C. E. Fell (ed.), *Edward King and Martyr* (Leeds, 1971), p. xxv.

[73] M. A. L. Locherbie-Cameron, 'Byrhtnoth and his family', in D. G. Scragg (ed.),*The Battle of Maldon, AD 991* (Oxford, 1991), p. 254.

[74] E. van Houts 'Countess Gunnor of Normandy (c. 950-1031)', *Collegium Medievale* 12 (1999): 18-9; Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, pp. 66-7, 122-5.

dynasty whose heir and later ruler Richard II was born *patre et matreque Dacigena*. *De moribus* suggests that the kin-group image Richard I and Gunnor wanted to project was one of a legitimate and successful Scandinavian ruling class that had imposed itself as a force to be recognised amongst the aristocracy of France. The Normans were civilised but they could still call on their ancestral allies.[75] *De moribus* was written in Latin and the surviving copy is dedicated in a prefatory letter to Adalbero, Bishop of Laon. Unlike the *Encomium* and the *Vita*, it has a highly complex structure and scholars agree that it seems unlikely that a lay audience would have been able to understand the text. Despite this, the role played by the ducal kin-group as patrons and as sources of information for the work suggests that they influenced their representation within it as civilised, Christian leaders.[76] The rulers of Rouen maintained contacts both with the aristocracy of northern and western France and with Scandinavia. For example throughout the 990s Norman ports were open for the sale of plunder taken in raids on England and, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in 1000 the fleets attacking England wintered in Richard's realm.[77] The Norman court was also a place where lay, ecclesiastical, literary and oral cultures interacted. For example, Richard II's and Emma's brother Robert was both the Archbishop of Rouen and the married count of Évreux. The ducal family acted as patrons not just to Dudo but to poets and scholars from France, Scandinavia and the British Isles.[78] It seems likely that Emma spoke both Norse and French, and was deeply imbued with the ethos of the Norman court.[79]

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[75] Dudo of Saint Quentin, *History of the Normans*, ed. and trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998); Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, pp. 66-7, 122-5.
[76] Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 374-5; E. Albu Hanawalt, 'Dudo of Saint-Quentin: The heroic past imagined', *The Haskins Society Journal* 6 (1994): 114-7; L. Shopkow, 'The Carolingian world of Dudo of Saint-Quentin', *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989): 19-37; E. Searle, 'Fact and fiction in heroic history: Dudo of Saint-Quentin', *Viator* 15 (1984): 119-38.
[77] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C* sa 1000; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 211-7; L. Wood Brees, 'The persistence of Scandinavian connections on Normandy in the tenth and early eleventh centuries', *Viator* 8 (1977): 47-52.
[78] Ziolkowski, *Jezebel*, pp. 41-3; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 211-7
[79] Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 374-6.

In 1002, shortly after the death of Æthelred's mother Ælfthryth, Emma went to England and married him, taking the English name Ælfgifu. She bore Æthelred two sons and one daughter: Edward, Alfred and Godgifu. The extent of her involvement in their upbringing is unclear. She gave Edward the estate on which she gave birth to him on the day he was born. He had a foster mother, Leofrun, who might or might not have been part of Emma's household.[80] It seems likely that Emma was consecrated queen, unlike Æthelred's first wife, but in Æthelred's reign her sons were not considered to be more throneworthy than their older half-brothers, at least to judge from the witness lists.[81] Danish raids on England continued throughout the years of their marriage. Through the course of 1013 Northumbria, Lindsey, the Five Boroughs, Oxford, Winchester, the West Country and finally London submitted to Swein King of Denmark and his army. He was recognised as king by the autumn. Emma fled to Normandy with Ælfsige abbot of Peterborough and the æthelings Edward and Alfred were sent there with Ælfhun bishop of London by Æthelred. Æthelred himself spent Christmas on the Isle of Wight before joining Emma and their sons. His older sons, however, remained in England. Following Swein's death on 2nd February 1014 the witan made overtures to Æthelred, who sent Edward to England to negotiate their return. Æthelred's reinstatement as king did not however lead to peace in England. He appears to have taken revenge on some of those who had submitted to Swein by ordering the deaths of the brothers Morcar and Sigeferth, and the imprisonment of Sigeferth's widow Ealdgyth. Possibly motivated by worries that his position in the succession would be taken over by Emma's son Edward, Æthelred's eldest remaining son Edmund Ironside rebelled against his father by marrying Ealdgyth and taking over the lands in the Five Boroughs which Sigeferth and Morcar had controlled. Edmund and Æthelred seem to have reconciled following Swein's son Cnut's return to England with an army in 1015.

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[80] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 221-3; Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* nos 104 and 93.
[81] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 86, 220-3.

Æthelred died in 1016, closely followed by Edmund Ironside, and Emma's children returned to Normandy.[82]

Emma herself married Cnut, whether willingly or unwillingly is uncertain.[83] The *Chronicle* states '*Ond þa... het se cynigc fetian him þæs cyninges lafe him to wife Ricardes dohtor*'.[84] It seems to have been normal practice in some areas of Europe for a successor who was not the son of the previous king or lord to marry his predecessor's widow. Edmund Ironside, as noted above, married Sigeferth's widow, tenth-century Irish kings married the widows of previous kings, the marriage of Otto I to Adelaide widow of a king of Italy had greatly facilitated Ottonian control of Italian lands, and Cnut himself was the son of Swein's marriage to the widow of his conquered enemy Erik, king of the Svear.[85] Within many cultures, but especially in those in which societal roles are structured round some type of marital unit, widows are frequently associated with their husbands' identities after their husbands die, and as such they form a liminal category in society, being both alive and associated with death. The Old English word used to denote widow, *laf*, means 'that which is left behind', and is derived from the verb *læfan*, meaning 'to bequeath', or 'to remain'. This association could apparently be used to legitimate the take-over of a predecessor's position, either as a form of domination or conciliation. As Æthelred's widow and queen Emma embodied the continued identity of her husband and line, her marriage to Cnut embodied a connection between the Danish conquerors and the older English royal line.[86] However, as

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[82] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MSS CDE *sa* 1002-16.
[83] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xx]-[xxiv].
[84] *MS C sa* 1017, 'And then... the king ordered them to fetch for him as a wife the king's widow, Richard's daughter'.
[85] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 230; N. Lund, 'Cnut's Danish kingdom,' in A. R. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut, King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994), pp. 27-8; A. Woolf, 'View from the west: An Irish perspective on West Saxon dynastic practices', in N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (eds.), *Edward the Elder, 899-924* (London, 2001), pp. 91-6.
[86] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 230; F. Pellaton, 'La veuve et ses droits de la Basse-Antiquité au Moyen-Age', in M. Parisse (ed.),*Veuves et Veuvages dans le Haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1993), p. 65; M. Buitelar, 'Widows' worlds: representations and realities', in J. Bremner and L. van den Bosch (eds.), *Between*

discussed in the previous chapter, the remarriage of widows could place them at odds with their children from their first marriage over the issue of inheritance from their first husband. Emma's remarriage left no room for the claims of her sons Edward and Alfred.

Emma bore Cnut two children, Harthacnut and Gunnhild. In 1023 Harthacnut accompanied her to receive the relics of the martyred Archbishop Ælfheah at Rochester from where they accompanied them to Canterbury.[87] Harthacnut was sent to Denmark at some point in 1026-8 and Gunnhild presumably remained in England until she left to marry Henry, Conrad II's heir.[88] Emma was not Cnut's only wife. At some point before 1016 he married Ælfgifu of Northampton, daughter of Ealdorman Ælfhelm of Northumbria. In the *Encomium* this lady is referred to only as a nameless concubine. However she was, as noted in the previous chapter, Wulfrun's grand-daughter. She was thus part of an aristocratic kinship network that was highly influential in the Midlands throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries. It seems likely that her lands lay in the midlands and it is possible Cnut married her to gain support against Edmund Ironside and his wife Ealdgyth. Ælfgifu of Northampton was never crowned and she witnesses no charters.[89] However Cnut seems to have followed Danish rather than English marriage patterns and did not put away his first wife before marrying his second. Ælfgifu of Northampton's sons were regarded as throneworthy, as they were named Swein and Harold after Cnut's father and grandfather, placing them firmly within the Danish royal kin-group. During Cnut's reign Swein and his mother went to rule

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Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood (London, 1995), pp. 2-4, 10-11; J. Crick, 'Men, women, widows and widowhood in pre-conquest England', in S. Cavallo and L. Warner (eds.), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 224, 33.

[87] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 232-3; S. Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', *The Reign of Cnut*, pp. 56-7; G. P. Gubbin (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition: MS D* (Cambridge, 1996), sa 1023.

[88] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 234-5.

[89] A. Williams, '"Cockles amongst wheat": Danes and English in the West Midlands in the first half of the eleventh century', *Midland History* 11 (1986): 3-7; Lawson, *Cnut*, pp. 31-2; S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready', 978-1016: A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 197.

Norway, unsuccessfully as it turned out.[90] Throughout Cnut's reign he and Emma seem to have acted as a partnership in secular and ecclesiastical patronage, giving gifts of relics, crosses and treasures to monasteries such as Abingdon, Evesham, Christ Church and Saint Augustine's in Canterbury, Wilton and New Minster, Winchester.[91] They also supported cults of royal saints of the West-Saxon line, such as Edith and Edward the Martyr. Emma's first husband Æthelred and his mother Ælfthryth had both been implicated in Edward's murder. Cnut's support for the cults of royal martyrs has been seen both as a way of criticising the former king and as a way of appropriating the prestige of a dynasty to which he did not belong. Emma was given the name of another dynastic saint, Æthelred's grandmother Ælfgifu, in 1002. Her reverence for Edith may have pre-dated her marriage to Cnut.[92] Perhaps she introduced Cnut to a way of claiming close association with a line of saints. Nonetheless, despite this partnership, when he died in 1035 her position as queen was far from secure and in order to retain it she needed a son on the throne of England.

In 1035 Cnut was taken from Shaftesbury where he died and was buried at Winchester. Emma stayed at Winchester after his funeral, probably not only because this connected her with him and his kin-group's claims to the succession but also because Winchester was the site of the royal treasury and also her dower borough. However she was unable to keep hold of the riches Cnut left as Harold Harefoot deprived her of the greater part of them.[93] After Cnut's death two factions emerged in the struggle to control the throne. Emma, Earl Godwine of Wessex and Archbishop

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[90] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 73-4; M. W. Campbell, 'Queen Emma and Ælfgifu of Northampton: Cnut the Great's women', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 4 (1971): 76-7.
[91] T. A. Heslop, 'The production of *de luxe* manuscripts and the patronage of King Cnut and Queen Emma', *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990): 156-62; Keynes, 'Introduction', pp. [xxiv]-[xxvi].
[92] D. Rollason, 'The cults of murdered saints in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983): 14-8; S. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 168-70.
[93] K. O'Brien O'Keefe (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition 5: MS C* (Cambridge, 2001), sa 1035.

Æthelnoth of Canterbury favoured Harthacnut's succession while Ælfgifu of Northampton, Earl Leofric of Mercia, most of the northern thegns and the London fleet favoured the succession of Harold Harefoot. Harold's party had the advantage that he was in the country and not abroad in Denmark like Harthacnut. At this point no-one seems to have pressed the claims of Edward or Alfred. A council was held at Oxford and the outcome was that the kingdom should be divided between Harthacnut, who would hold the south, and Harold, who would hold the north and who would also act as regent for his brother. Meanwhile Emma was to hold Wessex from Winchester with the housecarls of her son Harthacnut.[94] Whatever Cnut and Emma's policies on claiming kinship with the West Saxon royal house had been, in 1035 the claims of Cnut's sons to kingship were paramount. While royal blood was important in claiming succession, the crucial factor in gaining the crown was the ability to make that claim stick, militarily if necessary.[95] Although Edward and Alfred were technically æthelings, the only person in England in 1035 who had any possible interest in their succession was their mother Emma. They had been out of the country and had no other relationships with the new Anglo-Danish elite. However Emma had another son who could count on the support of some of the new Anglo-Danish elite. Unfortunately for her, Harthacnut's absence due to his ongoing war with Magnus of Norway made it hard for his supporters to maintain their position. A letter written from the court of Conrad II indicates that messengers reached Emma's daughter Gunnhild informing her that *noverca*, her stepmother Ælfgifu of Northampton, was trying to seize all of England for her son Harold by throwing feasts, offering presents and making promises to all the leading men in England.[96]

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[94] S. Irvine (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition 7: MS E* (Cambridge, 2004), sa 1035; Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xxix]-[xxx]; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 236-8.
[95] Dumville, 'The ætheling', p. 33.
[96] *MS C* sa 1036; Keynes, *Encomium*, p. [xxxii], supplies the relevant section of the letter.

In 1036 the æthelings Edward and Alfred tried to return to England.[97] The Encomiast supplies a letter purporting to be forged by Harold in Emma's name, requesting their immediate return to discuss how the succession to the English throne could best be resolved.[98] Although there is disagreement over whether or not the letter was ever sent, and if so by whom, it is still at least possible that Emma did invite her two sons by Æthelred back to England in 1036. With Harthacnut's absence alienating his supporters Emma needed another claimant if she were to retain her position as queen.[99] She might have hoped that she could transfer support from Harthacnut and Harold with the same tactics Ælfgifu of Northampton had used. Alternatively she could have seen their arrival as an unfortunate distraction that could further divide support for Harthacnut, and therefore have viewed them as rivals to be disposed of. Alfred never reached Emma but was either intercepted by Godwine and then blinded and killed by Harold's men, according to the *Encomium*, or intercepted and killed on Godwine's orders, according to manuscript C of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[100] This issue will be discussed below in greater depth but the *Encomium* suggests that both Emma and Godwine were considered to be implicated to a greater or lesser extent in Alfred's death. Edward's expedition from Normandy is more problematic. It is not mentioned in any of the *Chronicle* recensions or in the *Encomium*, which are the closest sources in date to the event. According to William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers, writing in Normandy in the 1050s and 1070s respectively, Edward set out for England separately from his brother but was repulsed at Southampton and returned to Normandy.[101] John of Worcester however, writing in the 1130s, states that Edward and Alfred set out together and went to Emma at Winchester, from where Alfred set out to meet with Harold on the

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[97] *MS C* sa 1036; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 239.
[98] *Encomium*, pp. 40-2.
[99] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xxxi-xxxiv]; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 241-2.
[100] *Encomium*, pp. 42-7; *MS C* sa 1036.
[101] E. M. C. van Houts (ed. and trans.), *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, II (Oxford, 1995), vii. 5 (8), pp. 104-6; R. H. C. Davies and M. Chibnall (ed. and trans.), *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers* (Oxford, 1998), i. 2, pp. 2-4.

instructions of Earl Godwine who then betrayed him.[102] Generally speaking John can be considered an accurate source, especially where the events he recounts have a connection to Worcester.[103] However in this instance his account contradicts previous Norman and English sources on both Edward's and Alfred's movements, and he also reverses Edward's and Alfred's birth order. It is probable though not certain that his account of Edward's visit to Winchester arises from a twelfth-century attempt to harmonise several sources and that in 1036 Edward did not get further than Southampton.[104] Therefore, although the possibility that he did reach Winchester must be born in mind, it seems more likely that he did not meet with Emma in 1036. It is difficult to tell whether Emma's summons of Edward and Alfred, if she was in fact responsible for their return, prompted or was prompted by Godwine's change of allegiance to Harold. However, following the death of Alfred and the loss of Godwine's support for Harthacnut, Harold was crowned king of all England in 1037 and Emma was forced to flee to Flanders.[105]

In 1039 Harthacnut met Emma in Bruges, accompanied by the Danish fleet, and in 1040 Harold died and Emma and Harthacnut returned to England.[106] Harthacnut's rule proved unpopular. MSS C and E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* criticise him for high taxes, MS C also calls him *wedloga*, an oathbreaker or a traitor, because of his complicity in the murder of Earl Eadulf, and states that those who had wanted his rule were disloyal to him.[107] John of Worcester follows MS C of the *Chronicle* in recounting Harthacnut's suppression of an uprising against high taxes in Worcester and adds that in

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[102] R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (ed.), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* II, trans. J. Bray and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995), sa 1036.
[103] Keynes, *Encomium*, p. [xxxviii].
[104] F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970), p. 45 n2; *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, pp. xix-xx promises further discussion of John's use of his sources in the forthcoming edition of volume 1 of his chronicle, which may better illuminate the issue.
[105] *MS C* sa 1037.
[106] *MS E* sa 1039 for 1040; *Encomium*, pp. 48-51; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 246-7.
[107] *MS C* sa 1040 and 1041; *MS E* sa 1039 for 1040.

1040 Ælfric Puttoc the archbishop of York and others accused Earl Godwine and Lyfing bishop of Worcester of responsibility for Alfred's blinding and subsequent death. Earl Godwine gave Harthacnut a fully manned ship in compensation and claimed that he had only been following orders. The Encomiast's provision of a letter forged in Emma's name to lure Edward and Alfred back to England suggests that Emma herself was also implicated in her son's death.[108] In 1041 Edward was invited back to share rule, possibly on account of Harthacnut's illness and unpopularity.[109] In these circumstances of suspicion and recrimination Emma commissioned her *Encomium*.

The *Encomium*'s overarching story is the praise of Emma and the establishment of the Anglo-Danish royal dynasty in power over England. It tells this story through an account of Swein's conquest of England and his death, Cnut's return to Denmark, journey back to conquer England, the resolution of the conflict through his marriage to Emma and their establishment of an Anglo-Danish dynasty, Cnut's death and the succession struggle following, Alfred's martyrdom, Emma's exile, and her triumphant return with Harthacnut to rule England with her two sons. The Edwardian recension in manuscript P adds an account of Harthacnut's death and Edward's succession. As noted above, the *Encomium* does not mention her first marriage to Æthelred, it implies that Edward and Alfred were Cnut's sons and were sent to Normandy for their education, it refers to Ælfgifu of Northampton as an un-named concubine and it states that Harold was not the son of Cnut and his concubine but was actually the son of the concubine's maid. As might be expected in a work about the foundation of a dynasty, maternity is an important thread running through the text. The representation of motherhood in the *Encomium* is also an area where fact and fiction interact. The *Encomium* focuses on two main maternal themes: the establishment of maternity as the mothering of heirs and

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[108] *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, sa 1040 and 1041; Keynes, *Encomium*, p, [xxxviii].
[109] *MS C* sa 1041; *MS E* sa 1040 for 1041; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 247.

Emma's mothering of Alfred. Both these issues were politically charged in the early 1040s and so Emma's motherhood in the *Encomium* can be seen as a political strategy for survival.

The first main maternal theme in the *Encomium* is the establishment of Emma as the head of her dynasty and of motherhood as the mothering of heirs. As discussed above, the years 1035-41 had been troubled for Emma and her problems had derived from the large number of potential heirs to the English throne and her need to install one of her sons as king of England. The treatment of maternity in the *Encomium* can be analysed as fulfilling the linked functions of justifying her behaviour in those years and of bolstering her position as queen in 1041-2. It should be noted here that one obvious model for Emma is Octavian in the *Aeneid*, as it is explicitly flagged up by the Encomiast in the Argument of the work. Octavian is presented the fulfilment of centuries of dynastic succession and divine intervention in human affairs, and was emperor of Rome when the work was written. He is therefore present both in the work and outside it, and by implication Emma too is not only worthy of praise, but also functions outside the *Encomium* as an active force in the Anglo-Danish court.[110] She both constructs and uses political power as the pre-eminent figure at the head of her dynasty. It is interesting that while both models are based in a dynastic concept of power, as Emma is praised through her *gens*, the Vergilian paradigm is not primarily maternal but patriarchal. In this context it is noteworthy that, unlike in Dudo's treatment of the marriage of Gunnor and Richard I, the Encomiast does not use Lavinia as a model for Emma.[111] Did Emma have to be paralleled to a patriarch to be figured as a powerful head of her dynasty? In itself this is too simplistic a suggestion as the Encomiast complicated the situation by using many other models in his construction of Emma's

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[110] Tyler, 'Talking', pp. 378-83.
[111] Albu Hanawalt, 'Dudo of Saint-Quentin', p. 117; Tyler, 'Fictions of Family', pp. 52-3.

authoritative maternity. However it was still one possible interpretation that was open to the audience of the *Encomium* and indicates that positioning a mother as the head of a dynasty was problematic for the Encomiast.

Emma's identity in the *Encomium* carries Marian undertones. The frontispiece to the work is similar to near-contemporary representations of the enthroned Mary of the Adoration, where Mary sits enthroned with her child on her lap.[112] It can perhaps also be connected to the depiction of the Annunciation in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, where Mary is enthroned on an altar/temple-like throne and carries a book.[113] In the *Encomium* Emma holds the book rather than her child, while her children look on from the sidelines. This correlation between child and book suggests a maternal aspect to Emma's role in the creation of the *Encomium* and also perhaps the dynastic nature of the work. The Marian imagery in the *Encomium* drew on the programme of church reformers in the late tenth and eleventh centuries which stressed the status of Mary as Queen of Heaven. This emphasis connected her to earthly queens, a development which was particularly prominent in Emma's dower borough of Winchester.[114] The Encomiast also drew on a Marian model in his treatment of Emma's grief at the murder of her son, an issue that will be discussed in detail below.

The *Encomium* represents Emma's marriage to Cnut as the foundation of the ruling Anglo-Danish dynasty. When the Encomiast deals with Cnut's wooing of Emma she refuses to marry him *nisi illi iusiurando affirmeret, quod numquam alterius coniugis*

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[112] J. Hawkes, Sermons in stone: Iconographic readings of the Iona crosses', CMS Seminar, York, 3.3.2003; C. E. Karkov, 'The Anglo-Saxon Genesis: Text, illustration and audience', in R. Barnhouse and B. C. Withers (eds.), *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches* (Kalamazoo, 2000), p. 235; C. Neuman de Veygvar, 'A paean for a Queen: The frontispiece to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*'. *Old English Newsletter* 26 (1992): 56-8.

[113] R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 9-17 and plate 8.

[114] M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 50-1, 159-65; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 162-81; Deshman, *Benedictional*, pp. 204-6.

filium post se regnare faceret nisi eius si forte illi Deus ex eo filium dedisset.[115] This is of course a retrospective comment on the events of 1016-17, and indicates the interpretation she wanted to build a consensus for in 1041-2. Her marriage to Cnut is furthermore inspired by *spes gratulabunda... futurae prolis.*[116] The word the Encomiast uses is *proles* which denotes a child but also carries implications of 'descendents', or even of 'race', suggesting that Emma's childbearing should be seen as the creation of a dynasty.

Emma's position as the founder of the Anglo-Danish dynasty is also manifested in the *Encomium* through its treatment of her emotional bonds with her children. These are mostly expressed in connection to their succession to the kingdom. A strong emotional bond does exist between Emma and her sons. Her marriage to Cnut is inspired by the hope of future offspring, when Harthacnut is born both parents are happy in their unparalleled love for the child,[117] and later when he joins Emma in Flanders she rejoiced greatly at his arrival.[118] Emma's emotional bond with her sons is also clearly indicated by the Encomiast's comment on Alfred's murder, *est quippe nullus dolor maior matri quam videre vel audire mortem dilectissimi filii.*[119] She implies through her Encomiast that mothering will be the most important bond in her life, if losing a son is the worst thing that could happen to her.

However, it is necessary to be very careful when analysing medieval accounts of emotion. 'Emotion' can denote a range of meanings concerned with both its internal and external facets, both physiological and cognitive reactions to a situation and also their

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[115] *Encomium*, pp. 32-3, 'unless he would affirm to her by oath that he would never set up a son by any wife other than her to rule after him, if it so happened that God should give her a son by him'.
[116] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5.
[117] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5.
[118] *Encomium*, pp. 50-1.
[119] *Encomium*, p. 49, 'there is no greater sorrow for a mother than to see or hear about the death of a most beloved son'.

outward expressions. Furthermore, emotions are felt and expressed within a particular historical situation. Emotions, then, are historically dependent and can be used as a form of communication.[120] Any study of emotional bonds with her sons has to take into account that they function within an early eleventh-century context, and thus might not appear as we would expect, and that they may be used as a form of communication rather than as an unaltered reflection of Emma's inner feelings.

Emma's relationships with her sons in the *Encomium* are not based on their childhood upbringing or any form of long-term contact with them. Instead they are normally connected with succession to the kingdom. As noted above Emma's marriage to Cnut is inspired by the hope of offspring. Cnut's and Emma's joy at the birth of Harthacnut is due to his status as heir to the kingdom and the Encomiast displays no interest in his upbringing beyond his baptism but instead concentrates on Cnut's designation of him as heir.[121] These are ritual events that qualify him to rule as a legitimate Christian king. Emma's joy upon meeting Harthacnut in Flanders is partly due to his resemblance to her murdered son Alfred. However the passage describing their meeting (iii.10) begins with Harthacnut waking from a dream in which God promises him succession to the kingdom and is ended by the arrival of messengers to invite him and Emma back to rule England.[122] Only Emma's sorrow at Alfred's death as it is represented in the *Encomium*, is untouched by any concern, either direct of implicit, for succession to the English throne. Emma's emotion in the text seems to function not just as a means of expressing her concern for them but her concern for their place in the ruling dynasty. As discussed above, it was very rare in England for minors to ascend the

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[120] B. H. Rosenwein, 'Writing without fear about early medieval emotions', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 230-1; C. Larrington, 'The psychology of emotion and the study of the medieval period', *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 251-2.
[121] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5.
[122] *Encomium*, pp. 50-1.

throne. Emma's relationships with her sons are significant when they are adults and therefore potential heirs.

Furthermore, Emma's maternity in the *Encomium* is strongly authoritative. In its Argument, which details the subject matter of the work and how the Encomiast intends to treat it, Harthacnut receives the kingdom and invites his brother to share in ruling it *maternis per omnia parens consiliis.*[123] Emma refuses to marry Cnut *nisi illi iusiurando affirmeret, quod numquam alterius coniugis filium post se regnare faceret nisi eius si forte illi Deus ex eo filium dedisset.*[124] Edward and Alfred decide, when they receive a letter purporting to be from her, that one of them would obey her instructions and return to England to claim the throne. Finally, Edward and Harthacnut both obey her summons to meet her in Flanders.[125] Emma is the dominant figure in her relationships with her sons.

Emma's authoritative maternity is also represented as legitimising rule of England. Just as Emma's emotional bond with her sons is connected to the succession so too her maternal authority is always linked not only to her sons but to their succession to the English kingdom. This is most obvious in her extraction of Cnut's promise, and also in the firm link made between the succession and Harthacnut's obedience to his mother's summons, as he only receives a vision from God promising a successful reign after he sets out to meet her.[126] It can also be argued that Emma's maternal authority extends outward from her sons to encompass the English nation. Conflict and unfair rulership in England only exist when the English choose a man who is not Emma's son to rule over them, which they do by choosing the *impius* and

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[123] *Encomium*, pp. 6-7, 'obedient in all things to the advice of his mother'.
[124] *Encomium*, pp. 32-3, 'unless he would affirm to her by oath that he would never set up a son by any wife other than her to rule after him, if it so happened that God should give her a son by him'.
[125] *Encomium*, pp. 42-3, 48-9.
[126] *Encomium*, pp. 48-52.

desperans Harold despite Archbishop Æthelnoth of Canterbury's refusal to consecrate him while the sons of Emma still live.[127] This conflict is only resolved by the return and harmonious rule of Emma and her sons.[128] Thus the text creates a nexus between Emma's authority, her sons' obedience to her and their rule of a united England. There is a hint here perhaps that a relationship to Emma is crucial in establishing legitimate rule of the kingdom. Cnut and subsequently his sons may rule, but it is their relationship to Emma that creates the right to rule.

The connection between Emma's authoritative maternity and the legitimate rule of England is made even clearer by the structure of the *Encomium*. The author divided it into a Prologue, an Argument, and three books.[129] The Argument states that the purpose of the work is the praise of Queen Emma through her *gens*, her kin, just as Vergil praised Octavian in the *Aeneid*. He then sets down a summary of his thesis: that Swein conquered the English then died, having appointed his son Cnut as his successor. Cnut was opposed by the English and, the Encomiast states, perhaps there may never have been an end to fighting if Cnut had not secured a marriage with Emma, the most noble queen. They had a son, Harthacnut, and Cnut gave him all his dominions while he was still alive. However Harthacnut's absence in Denmark gave an intruder a chance to enter into the kingdom, secure it, and kill the king's brother. Divine vengeance then struck down the invader and restored the kingdom to its rightful ruler. Harthacnut recovered the kingdom and, obedient to his mother's advice in all things, increased it and shared it with his brother.[130] Marriage to Emma creates peace and her sons possess the right to rule. This account prefigures the rest of the work and creates an opinion in the minds of

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[127] *Encomium*, pp. 40-1.
[128] *Encomium* pp. 6-9, 52-3.
[129] Keynes, *Encomium*, p. [li]. The Encomiast divided his work into a prologue, and argument and three books. This division is represented in the earliest extant manuscript by provision for decorated initials at the beginning of each section.
[130] *Encomium*, pp. 6-9.

the audience that the legitimacy of various rulers is conditional on their relationship to Emma. All three books of the text start with a contested succession. Book one starts with the succession of Swein to his father's kingdom which he can only enforce in open battle with his father.[131] The book ends with Swein's death and bestowal of his dominions, symbolised by his sceptre, to his son Cnut.[132] However at the beginning of book two Cnut proves unable to retain the sceptre of the English kingdom and returns to his brother, the king of the Danes, to consult with him. When he asks his brother to share the throne with him he is refused.[133] Cnut has to reconquer the English kingdom in a series of battles. Book two ends with the death of Cnut who had designated Harthacnut as his heir. However, book three also begins with a problematic succession as the English desert the sons of Queen Emma and choose one Harold who is falsely assumed to be the son of Cnut. His unchristian behaviour quickly alienates his supporters who are nevertheless ashamed to reject him, and it climaxes in his entrapment and murder of the innocent Alfred.[134] It is perhaps significant that in the manuscript the description of the martyrdom is followed by a gap in the text, and is thus treated in the same way as the break between Cnut's death and Harold's succession.[135] This would make four books rather than three, with book three ending in Alfred's succession to the heavenly kingdom. Eventually Harold perishes and Harthacnut succeeds peacefully to the rule of the kingdom with his mother and brother, approved by God.[136]

The *Encomium* is structured by succession crises between father and son and it is only heirs related to Emma who succeed peacefully and rule harmoniously. Indeed,

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[131] *Encomium*, pp. 8-9.
[132] *Encomium*, pp. 14-5.
[133] *Encomium*, pp. 16-9.
[134] *Encomium*, pp. 38-47.
[135] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 36 n22.
[136] *Encomium*, pp. 50-3.

the harmonious relationship between Emma and her sons in the *Encomium* is strengthened by its opposition to the problematic relationships between fathers, sons and brothers. Swein literally fights his father. The relationship between Swein and Cnut is also portrayed as troubled as Cnut fears to be accused of wily sloth if he opposes his father's plans to invade England, and he later fails to take his father's corpse back to Denmark as requested.[137] Succession to the Danish kingdom is contested between Swein and his brother.[138] On Cnut's death the Encomiast represents Harold as a usurper who, contrary to popular opinion as the Encomiast reports it, is not the son of Cnut and a concubine but the son of maidservant. The legitimate and harmonious succession of mother and sons to the kingdom of England, introduced in the Argument, is consistently deferred by problematic patrilineal succession throughout the work until its resolution at the end.

The connection established in the *Encomium* between Emma's maternity and the legitimate rule of England can be seen further in her claims to the right to control membership of the ruling dynasty. Her authoritative maternity assumes her control over inheritance as it is only her sons who, in the consensus she tries to build through the *Encomium*, are entitled to succeed to the English kingdom. However her maternal designation of heirs involves not just inclusion in but exclusion from the succession which can be seen in the *Encomium* both in her hierarchical structuring of her sons and in her denial of throneworthy status to Harold. It is these exclusions that indicate the pressure placed on the models of maternity Emma constructs in the *Encomium*.

Emma's sons in the *Encomium* are all included in the Anglo-Danish dynasty through their relationship to her. The Encomiast never mentions her marriage to

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[137] *Encomium*, pp. 10-1, 14-9.
[138] *Encomium*, pp. 16-9.

Æthelred but, after detailing the birth of Harthacnut, he mentions that Cnut and Emma sent their other true-born sons to Normandy to be brought up.[139] These other true-born sons could only be Edward and Alfred, and the Encomiast thereby avoids mentioning that their father was Æthelred and not Cnut. Within the *Encomium* they are thus figured as Cnut's sons. The audience of the *Encomium* would have been well aware who Edward and Alfred's father was, and would therefore have been especially aware of the implications of what the Encomiast was doing. Emma was not concerned so much with denying Æthelred's paternity as with justifying and foregrounding her own maternity. Her position as mother and significant parent to all three of her sons, and the exclusion of her first marriage from the narrative, allows her to provide for all her sons and work them into the legitimate and victorious royal line she creates in the *Encomium*.

However, although Emma's motherhood incorporates all three of her sons into her Anglo-Danish dynasty, their status and roles within it are neither identical nor equivalent to one another. Harthacnut is described as *heres regni*, his succession to the throne has divine approval, and his eventual reunion with his mother is described at length and in glowing terms:

> *Dolor haud modicus habebetur, dum in uultu eius faciem perempti mater quadam imaginatione contemplaretur; item gaudio magno gaudebat, dum superstitem saluum adesse sibi uidebat. Unde uiscera diuinae misericordiae se sciebat respicere, cum nondum tali frustraretur solamine.*[140]

In contrast Edward and Alfred, while described as true born, are not portrayed as heirs equally with Harthacnut.[141] Alfred forms a crucial part of Emma's kin-group but he offers her divine support as a saint in heaven rather than as a potential heir. Edward is

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[139] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5.

[140] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5, 48-51, 'What grief and what joy sprang up at his arrival, no page shall ever unfold to you. There was no little pain when his mother beheld with some stretch of her imagination the face of her lost one in his countenance; likewise she rejoiced with a great joy at seeing the survivor safe in her presence. And so she knew that the great mercy of God had regard to her, since she was still undeprived of such a consolation.'

[141] F. Lifshitz, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: A 'political pamphlet' of the eleventh century?' *The Haskins Society Journal* 1 (1989): 47; John, '*Encomium*', p. 78.

sent like Alfred to be raised in Normandy, but his reunion with his mother after Alfred's death is briefly described. Emma's meeting with him is in contrast to her meeting with Harthacnut in three ways: it is untouched by any emotional reaction, he does not resemble or remind her of Alfred and he declines to offer her any assistance. His eventual share in the rule of England is moreover dependent on Harthacnut's invitation.[142] He is not excluded from the succession but he is subordinated in it and also distanced from his mother.

Emma's hierarchical reworking of her kin-group indicates the issues faced by royal women who married more than once and had two sets of sons by different husbands, and also more broadly the problems inherent in making adequate provision for multiple heirs. Emma operated in a context where inheritance claims were transmitted by blood and by the ability to build and enforce a consensus for them. In this sense her treatment of Edward and Alfred can be seen as unavoidable. Harthacnut had the Danish fleet and consequently the ability to enforce his claim, Edward and Alfred had been out of England since 1016 and had nothing in 1036 or 1040 to offer the English aristocracy when a better qualified alternative claimant was available. Emma's situation was unusual because she had two sets of sons by two royal husbands who had both been king of England. This was unprecedented in English and Norman history. Ælfthryth, Æthelred's mother and Edgar's third wife, had two husbands and two sets of sons, but her first husband Æthelwold II was not royal but aristocratic, and although her brother-in-law Æthelwine of East Anglia opposed the succession of her son he did so in favour of her stepson Edward the Martyr, not her son from her first marriage Leofric.[143]

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[142] *Encomium*, pp. 34-5, 48-9, 52-3.
[143] C. R. Hart, 'Æthelstan 'Half-King' and his family', *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973): 117.

Emma had no model she could use to explain or even describe her choice of the sons of one husband over the sons of another. Her lack of support for Edward and Alfred during Cnut's reign and in the negotiations following his death could be seen as a lack of care for the maintenance of their claims to inheritance. In her *Encomium* Edward and Alfred could be depicted as the sons of Cnut and Emma, but this representation was not possible in 1035-6. Emma could not, in the succession crisis following Cnut's death, represent them as throneworthy sons of Cnut. Her position in these years indicates how successful Cnut had been at reworking the aristocracy so that no faction remained who had any interest in supporting the old West Saxon royal dynasty.[144] Conquest had complicated the models of maternity that Emma could deploy. Although, as the previous chapter showed, it was possible for mothers to disinherit their sons, the only example of this was the consequence rather than the cause of a dispute between a mother and her son. Emma's actions towards Alfred and Edward fitted more closely into the stepmother model, in which a woman supported her own children as heirs in preference to those of another woman. In the *Encomium* Emma was able to justify her previous actions by portraying her sons as hierarchically ranked, but this representation was retrospective, and can be taken as an attempt to provide an acceptable explanation rather than as a description of public opinion on the matter.

The extent to which Emma's situation was problematic for her when she commissioned the *Encomium* is uncertain. Perhaps the lack of any explicit indication in the first recension of the text that her support for Harthacnut rather than Edward was problematic, in contrast to the evident problems indicated over her role in Alfred's death discussed below, suggests that she did not consider her primary support for her youngest son to be an issue in the context of Harthacnut's reign. However, Emma's

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[144] Keynes, 'Cnut's earls', pp. 43-88.

situation changed on Harthacnut's death in 1042. At some point shortly after this the Edwardian recension of the *Encomium* was written, which is now only evidenced in British Library, Fonds Lat. 6325.[145] A different ending is provided which figures Edward as Harthachut's rightful heir and also seems intended to liken him to Swein.[146] He succeeds as Harthacnut's brother and as one of Cnut's line. Orchard has demonstrated on stylistic grounds that this ending was written by the Encomiast.[147] Edward himself might well have felt resentment towards his mother. His residence in Normandy was not for his education, as it was represented in the *Encomium*, but a period of forced exile. He styled himself as king throughout.[148] The depiction of Edward in the *Encomium* as a successor to Swein is unsurprising as his assumption of full kingship did not institute a new political order.[149] It also implicitly underlines his reliance upon his mother whose position within the Anglo-Danish dynasty was strong enough to include him within it. Edward himself does not seem to have favoured the *Emcomium*'s perspective on his succession. Upon his coronation as king he deprived Emma of much of her land and treasure, though she was later able to claim some of it back. Edward's need to take the leading earls of England with him when he rode out to deprive his mother indicates exactly how powerful she had become.[150] The shifting political situation of Anglo-Danish dynastic politics was a source of both strength and weakness for Emma. While her situation might have been more complicated than that of Ælfgifu of Northampton in 1035-7 this seems to have been more because her sons were absent than because she had more than one to provide for. Indeed the fact that Emma had more than one son seems to have worked to her advantage, at least initially, as she could transfer support from one to the other. In 1041 she and Harthacnut could invite

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[145]Keynes, *Encomium*, p. [xlix]; Campbell, *Encomium*, pp. xl, 46, 52, Campbell attributes on linguistic grounds the abbreviation of Harthacnut's reunion with his mother to a post eleventh-century scribe.
[146] *Encomium*, p. 52; Orchard, 'Literary background', pp. 166-7.
[147] Orchard, 'Literary background', pp. 167-8.
[148] S. Keynes, 'The æthelings in Normandy', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1991): 189-93.
[149] Barlow, *Edward*, pp. 73-8.
[150] *MS D* sa 1043; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp.249-50.

Edward back to broaden the appeal of their regime. At this point Edward must have been dependent upon her both for her great experience in and knowledge of court politics, and for her relationship with Harthacnut. When Harthacnut died in 1042 the succession of another son meant Emma was still the king's mother. Ælfgifu of Northampton did not have further options when Harold died and she disappears from the historical record.

It should also be noted that Emma's mothering in the *Encomium* is only depicted in relation to her sons despite the fact that she had two daughters, Godgifu and Gunnhild. Apart from Emma herself, the dynasty she creates is entirely masculine. Given that the *Encomium* is centred around legitimate succession and the creation of an Anglo-Danish dynasty this is an interesting perspective on a royal woman's opinion about who was and who was not involved in dynastic succession. While royal women did not have a claim to the throne in tenth- and eleventh-century England they did transmit rights of inheritance. Edward the Elder's daughters were all married abroad, and the daughters of all subsequent kings until Æthelred were consecrated and placed in nunneries. These strategies both prevented royal daughters from transmitting their identity and widening membership of the kin-group with claims to the throne.[151] Æthelred's marriage to Emma coincided with a new stage in his domestic policy and in English resistance to the Viking threat. He chose Ulfcytel to control the defence of East Anglia, Uhtred of Bamburgh to rule north of the Humber in 1006, and Eadric Streona as ealdorman of Mercia in 1007. Each man was married to one of Æthelred's daughters, presumably at around the same time as their new appointments. The marriage of royal daughters to his newly promoted supporters met his need for loyalty in the face of

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[151] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 91-2.

increasing Danish attacks.[152] However, it is possible that this strategy was transmitted by Emma from Normandy to England. The absence of daughters from the *Encomium* should not be taken to mean that Emma never had any interest in them. Indeed, it was only after Emma's arrival in England from Normandy, where rulers' daughters generally were married out in an attempt to widen membership of the ruling kin-group, that English royal daughters started to marry again. Perhaps Emma thus exercised some maternal control over her stepdaughters. Emma's full daughters also both married. Godgifu married Drogo of Mantes in 1016 and Eustace of Boulogne in 1036. Gunnhild married Henry, Conrad II's heir, in the same year.[153] Despite this, Emma's daughters do not seem to have had much relevance to Emma's political aims in 1040-2 either as members of her Anglo-Danish dynasty or as links outside it. This can perhaps be attributed to Emma's apparent intention to limit the pool of potential legitimate heirs rather than expand it, she was interested in creating a dynasty whose male rulers were directly related to her rather than expanding it out to include others who were less closely related and who thus had other relations and were less firmly within her influence.

Emma's exclusion of the claims of sons of other women from inheritance rights to the throne proved as problematic as her hierarchical ranking of her own sons. In the *Encomium* she tries to predicate maternity on legitimate marriage. As discussed above, her marriage to Cnut in the *Encomium* is founded upon the succession of her sons to the English kingdom. She does this, the Encomiast says, because *dicebatur enim ab alia quadam rex filios habuisse, unde illa suis prudentur prouidens sciuit ipsis sagaci animo*

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[152] P. Stafford, 'The reign of Æthelred II, a study in the limitations on royal policy and action', in D. Hill (ed.), *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, B.A.R. 59 (1978), pp. 33-4.
[153] Barlow, *Edward*, pp. 307-8; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 242-3.

profitura praeordinare.[154] The use of the word *dicebatur* casts doubt on Cnut's paternity of these sons, but Emma has to acknowledge their claims even as she sidelines them. Cnut's son by another woman is later referred to when the Encomiast details the unjust seizure of the throne by Harold, who was falsely asserted to be the son of Cnut by a concubine, but who according to a greater majority was actually assumed to be the son of a maid, taken from her childbed and placed in the chamber of the concubine. This, the Encomiast insists, can be taken as the more truthful account.[155] The un-named concubine in the *Encomium* was Cnut's first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton, daughter of an ealdorman and member of a strategically important midlands kin-group. Emma's concern in the *Encomium* is not just to exclude Ælfgifu's sons from the succession but also to deny her legitimate association with Cnut and her maternity of her sons. The link Emma creates between illegitimate sexual relations and denial of maternity is interesting, and is a further indication that motherhood can in some sense be seen as dependent on marriage. All mothers are not equal, as maternity is represented as the mothering of heirs. However, the aspersions Emma casts upon Harold's parentage suggests that if Harold had been Cnut's son he did have a right to rule and that she would find it hard to deny him this even in her own *Encomium*. Despite her care to associate legitimate kingship with her own sons there is a hint here that paternal rather than maternal bonds were most important in conveying rights to the throne.

In 1035 Emma presumably pressed the claims of her son Harthacnut by stressing his status as the son of a royal and consecrated wife. She tried to make motherhood of heirs dependent upon royal status and legitimate, full marriage. Ælfgifu of Northampton's relationship with Cnut does seem to have been inferior to the one which existed between Emma and Cnut. In the *Encomium* she is described as a concubine.

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[154] *Encomium*, p. 32, 'It was said that the king had sons by some other woman so she, wisely providing for her own, knew in her wisdom to make arrangements in advance which were to be to their advantage'.
[155] *Encomium*, p. 38-42.

This is Emma's designation, but in any case as discussed above the distinction between concubine and wife was not a clear one in eleventh-century England, especially after the Danish conquest. In the succession dispute of 1035-7 the exclusive legitimacy of Emma and her sons was not assured, as demonstrated by Harold's succession to the throne.[156] Whatever the precise status of Ælfgifu's relationship with Cnut it did not exclude her from being considered as a mother of his heirs, however much Emma and her supporters tried to make maternity contingent upon queenship and legitimate marriage. Emma's negation of Ælfgifu's name, legitimacy and motherhood in the *Encomium* was retrospective and depended upon her return with Harthacnut, even if it was a consensus she tried to build in 1035-7 it did not then gain widespread acceptance. She might have been inspired by her mother Gunnor's actions. However while Gunnor had been able to assert her own prerogative to mother heirs she was able to do so because of her natal kin-group's continuing importance to her husband throughout his reign. This advantage was one Emma did not share, and the ability to define kinship bonds to her own advantage and gain consensus about her arrangement of them was one she acquired through her return with her son in 1040.

The *Encomium* was not the only means by which Emma tried to deny that Harold was the son of Cnut and Ælfgifu. Manuscripts C, D and E of the *Chronicle* also attest to rumours that Harold was not of royal birth. Manuscripts C and D state that Harold said that he was the son of Cnut and the other Ælfgifu, but that this was definitely not true.[157] Manuscript E states that although some men said that Harold was the son of Cnut and Ælfgifu, it seemed extremely unbelievable to many men.[158] The

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[156] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, p. 74; Lawson, *Cnut*, pp. 31-2.
[157] *MS C* sa 1035, '*Harold – þe sæde þæt he Cnutes sunu wære 7 þære oðre Ælfgifu, þe hit na soð nære*', 'Harold – who said that he was the son of Cnut and of the other Ælfgifu, though it was not true'.
[158] *MS E* sa 1036, '*Sume man sædon be Harolde þæt he wære Cnutes sunu cynces 7 Ælfgiue Ælfhelmes dohtor ealdormanes, ac hit þuhte swiðe ungeleaflic manegum mannum*', 'Some men said about Harold

language of E in particular recalls the Encomiast's description of conflicting versions of the truth. The accounts in the Chronicle recensions were probably written in Harthacnut's reign,[159] and provide further examples both of Emma's retrospective attempts to derogate the inheritance rights of Ælfgifu of Northampton's sons, and of her need to attack Harold's status as Cnut's son in order to do so. It is also interesting that when Emma and Harthacnut returned in 1040 Harold's corpse was removed from its tomb and thrown in a fen, and afterward into the Thames.[160] The desecration of a corpse is used by the chronicler to indicate an unjust king but it was presumably intended as a signal that Harold and his kin-group were no longer considered to be throne-worthy. John of Worcester states that Harthacnut sent the leading men of the kingdom including Godwine and Ælfric Puttoc to perform the act[161] but it must be possible that Emma was also involved in its initiation, as Harold and Ælfgifu had so successfully challenged her maternal rights to transmit inheritance and her position and status as queen. Emma uses her text for self assertion, but while the *Encomium* projects an image of Emma as taking maternal charge of her kin-group she needed the help of her son and his navy to make this image a reality.

The second subject in the *Encomium* in which maternity plays a prominent role is the Encomiast's treatment of Alfred's murder. It seems clear that Alfred's death caused outrage in England and that the attribution of blame was a highly contested matter. MS C of the *Chronicle* describes Alfred's death, in a mixture of rhyme, alliteration and paronomasia, as that of a murdered innocent killed by Godwine's men.[162] MS D retains the poem but omits all references to Godwine, while MS E

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that he was the son of King Cnut and of Ælfgifu the daughter of ealdorman Ælfhelm, but it seemed unbelievable to many men'.

[159] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 8-9 n10.

[160] *MS C* sa 1040.

[161] *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, sa 1040.

[162] *MS C* sa 1036; Orchard, 'Literary tradition', pp. 180-1.

contains no reference to Alfred's death.[163] The different treatments of Godwine's involvement in Alfred's murder reflects a wider pro- or anti-Godwine slant that was present in the separate *Chronicle* versions. MS C of the *Chronicle* is written in a series of seven mid eleventh-century hands, and the manuscript can be regarded as preserving a roughly contemporary account of the events it describes.[164] Its editor suggests that its exemplar for the years 1022 – 66 was of Kentish origin, and that it was possibly located specifically at Christ Church, Canterbury. This would explain its anti-Godwine bias, as Christ Church suffered from the depredations of the Godwine family.[165] Although manuscripts D and E are in their extant form post-conquest narratives it seems likely that they preserve, like MS C, near contemporary accounts of events in 1036.[166] Entries in MS E up to 1067 preserve a roughly contemporary account of events written at St. Augustine's, Canterbury.[167] Its account appears to be a Kentish ecclesiastical version of events rather than a strictly pro-Godwine slant, but this version of the *Chronicle* does show some Godwinist sympathies.[168] John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury are the only authors who preserve an account of specific accusations made in 1040 against Earl Godwine and Bishop Lyfing of Worcester.[169] Both were writing in the early twelfth century, but given the Worcester connection and the contradictions in the *Chronicle* recensions over the extent of Godwine's involvement it is not unreasonable to assume that these specific accusations were made in 1040.

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[163] *MSS D* and *E*, sa 1036.
[164] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 8-9 n. 10.
[165] *MS C*, pp. xc-xci.
[166] *MS C*, pp. xc-xci; Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 8-9 n10.
[167] P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), p. 17.
[168] Stafford, *Unification*, p. 84; C. Clark, 'The narrative mode of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the conquest', in P. Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 16.
[169] *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, sa 1040; R. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (ed. and trans.), *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum*, I (Oxford, 1998), ii.188.

Emma's *Encomium*, however, provides two hints that Emma herself was blamed for the death of her son. First, the Encomiast provides the text of a letter he alleges was forged by Harold in Emma's name to lure Edward and Alfred back to England.[170] The letter in the *Encomium* has attracted a certain amount of debate which centres round the issues of whether or not it was sent in 1036 and, if so, by whom. Stafford accepts the letter as genuine on the grounds that an invented letter in her own name would be a curious way for Emma to deflect attention from her involvement in Alfred's return. She assumes therefore that the letter is presented as a forgery sent by Harold so Emma could explain away a letter that she did send and which was common knowledge.[171] Keynes by contrast argues that, while it is probable Emma did summon her sons back to England in 1036, the letter should be seen as having a functional purpose in the work. It fulfils Emma's intention to ensure that Harold was blamed not just for murdering Alfred but for enticing him back to England in the first place, and it should therefore be seen as a fabrication by the Encomiast.[172] A definitive resolution of this issue seems unlikely. If Emma did summon her sons by Æthelred back to England in 1036, she could conceivably have sent a letter as well as messengers, but even if she did so the letter in the *Encomium* does seem as if it were written to explain Alfred's return in 1040-2, rather than incite it in 1036. This theory is supported by the Encomiast's explicit blurring of the lines between fact and fiction within the context of his use of Virgil's *Aeneid*.[173] Either way, it is also possible that the original letter was written by Harold. He could conceivably have written it to provide Emma and Godwine with the problem of dealing with a rival heir to Harthacnut, especially if he felt that his own support

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[170] *Encomium*, pp. 42-3.
[171] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 242-4 and n136.
[172] Keynes, *Encomium*, pp. [xxxiii-xxxiv], [lxiii].
[173] The Encomiast's discussion of the nature of truth and falsehood within history alludes to the episode of the Trojan horse within the *Aeneid*. The horse was explained to the Trojans by the Greek spy Sinon as an offering from the Greeks. Sinon gained the Trojan's trust by falsely identifying himself as a kinsman of Palamades, a man who was unjustly executed by the Greeks on the charge of treason. Within the Servilian commentary tradition on this episode, Palamades was framed by Ulysses through the use of a forged letter allegedly from Priam, the Trojan king. Tyler, 'Fictions', pp. 166-7.

would not be divided by the appearance of the æthelings. This supposition would support the possibility that Emma was connected with Alfred's murder. Perhaps the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the letter is that Emma was blamed in 1040-2 for the return of her son Alfred and possibly for his actual death, and that she felt the need to vindicate herself. Mothers were supposed to support their sons, not abandon them.

The second indication in the *Encomium* that Emma was under attack for her treatment of Alfred can be found in its explicit justification of Emma's decision to flee rather than face death like her son. Someone, the Encomiast states, spiteful and odious in his ill-will toward Emma, might ask why she refused to die the same death as her son if she had no doubt that he enjoyed eternal rest. The Encomiast rarely uses authorial asides in the narrative text of the *Encomium* so his use of this device here indicates how important it was for him to respond to this reproach. He does so by stating that if the persecutor of the Christian religion and faith had been present Emma would have been happy to die for her faith, but that it would be unchristian of her to die for desire for worldly dominion, and quotes Christ's injunction that if the elect are persecuted in one city they should flee to another.[174] Emma obviously feels the need to justify and explain away her role in Alfred's return but also her survival after his death.

Emma used the *Encomium* to counter these accusations in a number of ways. First, she associates herself with the tradition of martyr-mothers. Alfred's death is explicitly presented as the martyrdom of an innocent.[175] This account obviously draws in part on hagiographical accounts of royal martyrs that were current in late tenth- and eleventh century England, for example those of Edward the Martyr and Kenelm.

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[174] *Encomium*, pp. 46-7.
[175] *Encomium*, pp. 42-7.

Features of this type of account include the murder of a young man or boy as a result of conspiracy and betrayal, carried out by his social inferiors.[176] The implications and potentially problematic nature of Emma's involvement in this type of cult will be examined below, but the hagiography of this model does not display much interest in the role of the mothers of martyrs. The maternal model with which Emma was trying to associate herself can actually be found in the figures of Mary and other martyr mothers in the Ælfrician corpus.

The first aspect of martyr mothers Emma is associated with is their sharing in their children's suffering and therefore in their children's martyrdom. This theme was discussed above in chapter one. For example, in his homily *Natale Innocentium Infantum*, Ælfric describes the babies killed by Herod as *martyra blostman* who witnessed to Christ. He states about their mothers:

> *Eadige sind þa innoðas þe hi gebæron ond þa breost þe swilce gesicton; Witodlice þa moddru on heora cildra martyrdome þrowodon; þæt swurd þe ðæra cildra lima ðurharn becom to þæra moddra heortan. Ond neod is þæt hi beon efenhlyttan þæs ecan edleanes, þonne hi wæron geferan þære ðrowunge.*[177]

This parallels Simeon's prophecy to Mary about Christ's crucifixion, "*His swurd sceal þurhgan þine sawle*", which Ælfric explains as denoting a spiritual martyrdom in which her child's suffering dwells in Mary's heart.[178] The Encomiast states *Est quippe nullus dolor maior matri quam uidere uel audire mortem dilectissimi filii*, and that she *quippe quae perempti filii inconsolabiliter confundebatur merore.*[179] Emma, like the mothers of martyrs, suffers as her son did. This is not necessarily to be taken as meaning that

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[176] C. Cubitt, 'Sites and sanctity: Revisiting the cults of murdered and martyred Anglo-Saxon royal Saints', *Early Medieval Europe* 9.1 (2000): 72-3, 77-9.

[177] P. Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: 1st Series*, E.E.T.S. ss 17 (1997), V, ll 107-12, 'Blessed are the wombs that bore them and the breasts that they likewise sucked. Truly the mothers suffered through the martyrdom of their children; the sword that ran through the limbs of their children entered into the mothers' hearts. And it is needful that they are sharers of the eternal reward, when they were companions in their suffering'.

[178] *Homilies 1*, IX, ll 169-80.

[179] *Encomium*, pp. 44-7, 'there is no sorrow greater for a mother than to see or hear about the death of a most beloved son', 'she was dazed beyond consolation with sorrow for her murdered son'.

Emma was trying to present herself in 1041-2 as a martyr herself. However, as she was acting in a context where the royal line had a tradition of producing and associating itself with dynastic saints, it seems likely that the Encomiast used his representation of her grief to display her maternity as sharing in the sanctified vicarious suffering of the martyr-mothers, as an innocent victim like her son rather than a heartless mother who displayed insufficient concern for her son and bore responsibility for his death.

The second aspect of martyr-mothers that the Encomiast tries to associate with is the sense that a martyr's mother is entitled to rejoice at her child's entry into heaven. In his homily on the *Maccabees* Ælfric tells the story of seven brothers and their mother who were martyred on the orders of a foreign invader for their refusal to deny their faith. When all but one has been killed, their mother is asked by Antiochus, *se arleasa cynincg*, to persuade her remaining child to submit to him in return for *mycele woruld-æhte*. Their mother, however, exhorts the boy: *Gemiltse me min sunu, ic ðe to man gebær... Underfoh þone deað swa swa ðine gebroðra dydon, þæt ic ðe eft underfo on eadignysse mid heom.*[180] There are some interesting similarities between Ælfric's account in *Maccabees* and the Encomiast's treatment of Alfred's martyrdom. Antiochus is described as *arleasa*, which denotes someone who is without honour or faith. Harold is called *impius* in the Argument of the *Encomium*, a Latin word which has similar connotations, and he is described rejecting the Christian religion when Archbishop Æthelnoth refuses to allow anyone to crown or consecrate him.[181] The martyr's mother bears her children on earth but rejoices to sacrifice their life on earth to eternal life with God, this theme is also found in the *Encomium* where the Encomiast states: *Gaudeat igitur Emma regina de tanto intercessore, quia quondam in terris habeat filium nunc*

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[180] W. W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 2, E. E. T. S. os 94, 114 (1890-1900), XXV, ll 175-6, 181-2, 'Have mercy on me, my son, I bore you to be a man... Receive death as your brothers did, that I may then receive you in blessedness with them'.
[181] *Encomium*, pp. 6-7, 40-1.

habet in caelis patronum.[182] Emma and Alfred are also associated here with Mary and Christ.[183] It is perhaps this sense that women who bear children on earth have to be prepared to give them back to God that the Encomiast tries to use to justify Emma's position as mother to a murdered son. However the analogy does break down to a certain extent even as it is deployed in the *Encomium*, both over the fact that Emma was not also physically martyred with her son and also over the issue of worldly reward. These issues will be discussed below but it is necessary to note now that the Encomiast's positioning of Emma within the martyr-mother tradition was not entirely successful even on its own terms.

Emma's association with Alfred in the *Encomium* also indicates her support for his cult. There was a strong association in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries between cults of martyred royal saints and royal patronage. These cults seem to have become a particular focus for the devotion of a wide range of society following the murder of Edward at Corfe Castle in 978 and his replacement on the throne by his half-brother Æthelred II. This murder followed a period of factional fighting between their supporters following the death of their father Edgar. The response to his death seems to have been one of almost immediate sanctification as his remains were translated to Wareham and then to Shaftesbury by Ealdorman Ælfhere in a very lavish and public ceremony. Edward's death also seems to have been marked by interest in other murdered royal saints, especially at the foundations of Archbishop Oswald.[184] Scholarly opinion is divided over the reasons behind royal and aristocratic support for these cults: did Æthelred use them to strengthen his kingship through familial association with sanctity or did his opponents promote them to shame him through his association with

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[182] *Encomium*, pp. 46-7, 'So let Queen Emma rejoice in such an intercessor, for he who she had on earth as a son she now has as a patron in heaven'.
[183] C. E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 151.
[184] A. Thacker, 'Saint-making and relic-collecting by Oswald and his communities', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt (eds.), *Saint Oswald, Life and Influence* (London, 1996), pp. 248-50.

his half-brother's murder?[185] The cults might also have roots in lay and non-elite devotion.[186] Although they spring from the same type of event, perhaps the cults of murdered royal saints are best understood as potential vehicles for many different political and religious agendas. In the *Encomium* Alfred was murdered on the instructions of a man who was supposed, if falsely, to be his half brother. Emma disassociates herself from Alfred's return and martyrdom but links herself very strongly with his cult. As discussed above, Emma tried to associate herself with the sanctity of martyr mothers in the *Encomium*'s treatment of her son's death. The *Encomium* version of Alfred's martyrdom clears her of any and all participation in his death and effectively makes her the beloved mother of a saint. Her placement of herself under her sanctified son's protection reverses the initial hierarchy of their relationship, gives her sanctity by association and attempts to protect her against accusations of neglect.

Emma also appears to have used the *Encomium* and Alfred's cult to focus blame for Alfred's death on Harold and Godwine. Harold was safely dead and a legitimate target, he is explicitly blamed for Alfred's return and death. Godwine was still alive and powerful, a former ally, and definitely dangerous to her. He is implicitly rather than explicitly blamed in the *Encomium*, he fails to protect Alfred after swearing allegiance to him rather than playing an active part in his martyrdom. While this is not a direct condemnation the implications are obvious.[187] Emma does not appear to have been able to move directly against Godwine in 1040-2 but she does seem to have held him responsible for the death of her son and also, presumably, for his abandonment of her in 1036-7. It is interesting that John of Worcester specifies Ælfric Puttoc as Godwine's accuser. He had been archbishop of York from 1023 but before that he was the prior of

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[185]Rollason, 'Cults of murdered saints', pp. 16-22; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, pp. 161-71; Cubitt, 'Sites and sanctity', p. 55;
[186] Cubitt, 'Sites and sanctity', pp. 53-84.
[187] *Encomium*, pp. 42-4; John, '*Encomium Emmae Reginae*', pp. 85-8.

Old Minster, Winchester, a foundation which was geographically and politically close to the palace and to Emma in particular.[188] Although there is no specific evidence to link Ælfric Puttoc and Emma it is not impossible that he was partly motivated by loyalty to her. Maybe Emma's support for Alfred's cult can partly be seen as part of a continuing factional dispute with Godwine.

Emma's identification with the martyr-mother tradition and her support for Alfred's cult were both however potentially hazardous. First, as noted above, the Encomiast directly addresses the criticism that Emma did not die with her son. The idea that Emma should have died with her son and the use of the theme of worldly dominion links back to the themes of martyr mothers as expressed in Ælfric's *Maccabees* as discussed above. In *Maccabees* the mother-martyr declines the pagan king's offer of great worldly wealth and power in exchange for her persuasion of her one remaining son to submit to pagan practices. She, like her sons, is martyred for her refusal to do so.[189] It is interesting that the Encomiast attempts to justify Emma's actions within this model by inverting it, through his statement that as the persecutor was not present and his implication that her death would thus be a death for, rather than in rejection of, worldly dominion. The Encomiast does not directly explain or even address the issue of why, if Alfred's death on Harold's instructions was a martyrdom, Emma's death would not also be for her faith. He was of course making a retrospective case and had to deal with actions that had already been performed and were widely known and debated. It is also important not to assume that maternal martyrdom as expressed in Ælfric's homily on the Maccabees would have been a specific model for the Encomiast or for the audience of the *Encomium*. As noted above, Emma's reaction to her son's death can also be placed within a broader tradition of vicarious maternal martyrdom exemplified

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[188] Stafford, *Queen Emma*, pp. 95-9, 105, 114.
[189] Ælfric, *Lives 2*, pp. 76-9.

by Mary. However, the Encomiast's treatment of Alfred's martyrdom suggests another possible interpretation of his insistence that a son's death was the worst possible grief a mother could endure. It could be seen not just as the exposition of a powerful emotional bond but also links to the purposes behind Emma's production of the *Encomium*, her attempts to justify herself against suggestions that she had higher priorities than his survival. The target of this justification was the Anglo-Danish court, but possibly more specifically her son and Alfred's full brother Edward. That his brother's murder was and remained a point of some contention with him is illustrated by the fact that ten years later in 1051 he still bore a grudge against Godwine, whom he held responsible.[190]

Second, many *vitae*, for example the *Vita Kenelmi*, the *Passio Eadwardi* and the *Vita Wigstani*, implicate royal women in the murder of saints who were part of their kin-group.[191] The female villain in the *Passio Eadwardi*, extant now only in its late eleventh-century recension but based on an earlier eleventh-century version,[192] is Emma's own mother-in-law Ælfthryth. The account of Alfred's martyrdom in the *Encomium* cannot be fitted exactly into this pattern as in *Vita Kenelmi* and the *Passio Eadwardi* the female villains were a wicked sister and a wicked stepmother respectively, rather than the martyrs' mothers. The Encomiast's attempts to associate Emma into a tradition of mother-martyrs have been discussed above. However, even this attempt was not without its problems. These problems were not just within the model, that is to say problems with her justification within the tradition of martyrs' mothers, nor were they just with her attachment as his mother to his cult. The use of this model was also problematic as in general Alfred's cult seems to have had more in common with the hagiographical tradition of murdered princes and kings than it does with Ælfric's treatment of Jewish martyrs, murdered innocents and Christ's crucifixion.

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[190] F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1970), p. 114.
[191] Cubitt, 'Sites and sanctity', pp. 66-74.
[192] Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, pp. xx-xxv.

He was a man of royal blood whose claim to the throne of England led to his murder in circumstances of treachery.[193] In her discussion of the *Passio Eadwardi*, Fell suggests that when a pattern exists the easiest way of writing a new story is to fit it into that pattern, and that whatever Ælfthryth's role in Edward's death her hagiographical role was almost inevitably that of a scapegoat.[194] The same, perhaps, can be suggested of Emma's position in reference to Alfred's death. She had not supported his claims to the throne in Cnut's reign and had campaigned for Harthacnut's succession in 1035-6. Her role towards Alfred was more like that of a wicked stepmother who campaigned for the succession rights of another and who, in the hagiographical model of murdered princes, was responsible for the death of a rival to her favoured son. Emma might not have had many options when she attached herself to Alfred's cult, and although she tried to use it to justify her maternity this attempt was always going to be hugely problematic.

Emma used her mothering of Alfred as a defence against suspicion of her complicity in his murder, as a means of associating herself with divine power, and possibly as a political tool against Godwine. The Encomiast's use of the tradition of Mary and other martyr-mothers, despite its problems, is an interesting indication of how the maternal models available to Emma and her Encomiast could be refigured to make a different type of maternity. As discussed in chapter one, Ælfric used martyr-mothers within a construction of family relationships in which motherhood was subordinated to a fatherhood that mirrored the sacred patriarchy of Father and Son, both in terms of patrilineal succession and authority within the kin-group. In contrast, the Encomiast uses the tradition of martyr-mothers to create a form of motherhood in which mothers were powerful authority figures and an important source of dynastic legitimisation. However, it is also significant to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon attitudes about

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[193] Cubitt, 'Sites and sanctity', pp. 66-74.
[194] C. E. Fell, 'Edward King and Martyr in the Anglo-Saxon hagiographical tradition', *Ethelred the Unready*, pp. 8-11.

maternity that Emma was both accused and exonerated herself as a mother. The use that she and others made of maternity as a tool for political purposes indicates both the problematic nature of her maternal bonds with her sons but also their centrality to her identity. Her maternity might be contested but it was of crucial importance.

The *Encomium* illuminates the mutable nature of maternity in the Anglo-Danish court. It suggests that mid eleventh-century concepts of motherhood were shifting and contested and it provides evidence of a dialogue over the ways in which maternity could legitimately be claimed and used. The *Encomium* was a tool to recount and explain Emma's use of her maternity in a contested succession, and so the discourses of maternity it provides access to centre around the status of mothers as mothers of heirs. In a struggle over the inheritance rights, the construction of maternity can be the key to the control of a dynasty, through the inclusion in and exclusion from a kin-group of mothers and therefore their sons. Throughout the years 1035-42 Emma, Ælfgifu of Northampton and their supporters disputed how narrow or how wide the inclusion of mothers in a kin-group could be. Emma pushed for a narrow definition of motherhood in which only a legitimate wife and consecrated queen could be the mother of heirs. She did this to try and deny maternal status to Ælfgifu, who presumably argued for a wider definition of motherhood which gave the status of mother to all the wives of kings. Emma focused on the importance and impact of the mother's status on the right to mother heirs, Ælfgifu made maternity more dependent on paternity but, in so doing, she also argued for a wider definition of motherhood than Emma did. This should warn against too simplistic an interpretation of models of motherhood found in Ælfric's works and Æthelweard's *Chronicon* that stress the importance of patrilineal succession. Women could evidently use this type of kin-group construction and inheritance pattern as a source of power. The successions of Harold and Harthacnut also indicate how

motherhood could be used as a tool in factional disputes. Emma used her maternity to try and control the succession but her attempts to do so were not initially successful and her version of motherhood was denied. Maternity still remained central to Emma's identity. This is perhaps best displayed in Alfred's murder, as Emma was accused and justified herself as a mother. The *Encomium* shows the huge pressure that different models came under when they were used to describe complicated relationships, and especially when they were used as weapons by court factions. Maternity in the *Encomium* is a source of power, but the evident strain upon the models used demonstrates their limitations in this. The frontispiece of the *Encomium*, with its depiction of Emma as the crowned and enthroned mother of both her sons, displays how she tried to build a consensus for a version of kin-group in which maternal bonds eclipsed all other dynastic ties and smoothed over complications caused by multiple marriages and foreign conquests. The eventual peaceful succession of two of her sons suggests that at least for a while she succeeded.

Edith's maternity and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis.*

The years 1065-70 were eventful ones in England, seeing the deaths of two kings, Edward and Harold, and the seizure of the throne though conquest by a third, William. The *Vita Aedwardi Regis* was commissioned during this time by Edith, who was Edward's Queen and Harold's sister.[195] The childlessness of Edward's and Edith's marriage meant that there was no obvious claimant for the English throne on Edward's death and thus contributed towards the succession struggle that followed it. Edith and Harold were both members of the Godwine kin-group. This family had its origins in

[195] F. Barlow (ed.), *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster* (Oxford, 1992, 2nd Edition).

Sussex, in the south-east of England,[196] but rose to prominent position under Cnut, who rewarded Godwine's loyalty and assistance with the earldom of Wessex and his sister-in-law as wife. Throughout the course of Cnut's reign Godwine became the pre-eminent earl in England, and as such he played an important role in the succession following the deaths of Cnut in 1035, Harold Harefoot in 1040, and Harthacnut in 1042.[197] His prominence in English politics continued in the reign of Edward, and in 1045 his daughter Edith married the king. Apart from the period 1051-52, in which a quarrel with the king led to the family's exile, the Godwine kin-group held important offices in the kingdom, with earldoms going to Godwine's sons Swegn, Harold, Tostig, Gyrth and Leofric. Harold took over the earldom of Wessex on his father's death in 1053.[198] The kin-group's landed estates matched or maybe exceeded those of the king.[199] However, the family was not always united. Harold and Tostig quarrelled before Tostig's exile in Autumn 1065,[200] and Tostig joined forces with Harold Hardrada king of Norway to challenge Harold in September 1066. Tostig was killed fighting against his brother Harold, who had claimed the throne of England following Edward's death. Although Harold defeated Harold Hardrada and Tostig, he was himself defeated and killed at the battle of Hastings, and William was crowned king of England on Christmas Day 1066.[201] After the deaths of her brothers at Stamford Bridge and Hastings in September and October 1066 Edith made some sort of agreement with William of Normandy. She handed him the keys to Winchester at the end of the year and seems to have spent the

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[196] A. Williams, 'Land and power in the eleventh century: the estates of Harold Godwineson', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 3 (1981): 176-7; D. Raraty, 'Earl Godwine of Wessex: The origins of his power and political loyalties', *History* 74 (1989): 5-9; F. Barlow, *The Godwines* (London, 2002), pp. 17-20.
[197] Keynes, 'Cnut's earls', pp. 72-80; *Chronicles, MSS CDE sa* 1036-42; *Encomium*, pp. 42-5.
[198] F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London, 1979, 2nd Edition), pp. 188-213; *Chronicles, MSS CDE sa* 1051-3.
[199] R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 65-103; P. A. Clarke, *The English Nobility Under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994), p. 24.
[200] *Life*, pp. 78-81.
[201] *Chronicles, MSS CDE sa* 1066.

rest of her life both in Winchester and at Wilton, with occasional visits to court.[202] Although in retrospect William's reign is popularly seen as marking a decisive turning point in English history, it was not necessarily seen as such at the time. England had been ruled by Danish kings for much of the first part of the eleventh century, and Godwine's career shows how advantageous a foreign conquest could prove to aristocratic English kin-groups. Indeed to begin with it does seem that William attempted an Anglo-Norman rule, keeping many important English lay and ecclesiastical magnates in position. It should also be noted that although he was crowned king other claimants to the throne were considered even after his coronation, including Edmund Ironside's grandson, and Edith's nephew, Edgar.[203] It was in this shifting political situation that Edith commissioned the *Vita*.

Themes of fertility, succession and the importance of keeping pacts are of central importance in the *Vita* and Edith, like Emma in the *Encomium*, is firmly linked to both the peace of and succession to the kingdom. Her advice, when listened to, keeps the court and the kingdom at peace, and she prophesies chaos if Harold and Tostig do not keep peace between them.[204] In the extended version of Edward's death-bed scene in part two he passes both Edith and the kingdom together into Harold's protection.[205] These themes of peace and the succession would have been pressing on Edith's mind throughout 1065-8. Edith, as noted above, had no children and therefore was not a biological mother. However, the *Vita* does use maternal imagery and rhetoric to describe her role as queen at court and in the kingdom. Her role raising royal boys is

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[202] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 275-8; C. Morton and H. Muntz (eds.), *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 40-1.
[203] A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 7-11; Monika Otter, '1066: The moment of transition in two narratives of the Norman Conquest', *Speculum* 74 (1999): 565-6; *MS E sa* 1066.
[204] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 26-9, 80-1; M. Otter, 'Closed doors: An epithalamium for Queen Edith, Widow and Virgin', in C. L. Carsons and A. J. Weisl (eds.), *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1999). Pp. 64-6.
[205] *Life*, pp. 122-3.

described as maternal,[206] she is associated with Concord as mother,[207] and with the Marian and ecclesial imagery in the epithalamium[208] and in her relationships with her husband[209] and her brothers.[210] She is also possibly associated with maternal control of dynastic composition in the river-tree poem between books two and three of part one.[211]

Edith's use of the *Vita* to appropriate maternal roles can be seen as a way to assert her continuing role as Queen, and possibly to transmit the right to govern the kingdom as power passed from one dynasty to another.[212] Stafford has argued that to maintain secular power royal women needed to bear and control sons.[213] It was highly unusual in medieval Europe for a queen without sons to maintain her status following the death of her husband. In Carolingian Europe one royal widow in this position was able to play a highly influential role in the succession struggle following the death of her husband. In the late ninth century, Engelberga, the widow of Louis II, conducted negotiations to decide between Charles the Bald and Karlmann of Bavaria as successor to her husband. She was only able to do so because of her status as empress, because of her control of the most important royal abbeys in the Italian kingdom, and because her natal family was crucial to Carolingian power in the region.[214] Edith had no sons through whom she could stake a claim to power and position as Queen, whether in an expected power struggle following Edward's death or in the fluid political situation that followed the battle of Hastings. Harold took a new wife, Ealdgyth, in 1065/6, a woman who could potentially rival or supplant Edith's landholdings and position at court.[215]

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[206] *Life*, pp. 24-5.
[207] *Life*, pp. 36-9, 60-1, 80-1.
[208] *Life*, pp. 72-5.
[209] *Life*, pp. 24-5.
[210] *Life*, pp. 60-1.
[211] *Life*, pp. 26-7.
[212] Barlow, *Life*, pp. xxiii-iv; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 47.
[213] P. Stafford, 'The King's Wife in Wessex', *Past and Present* 91 (1981): 10-12.
[214] S. MacLean, 'Queenship, nunneries and royal widowhood in Carolingian Europe', *Past and Present* 178 (2003): 26-32.
[215] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 274-5.

Unlike Engelberga, Edith could not depend on unqualified support from her natal kin. In the *Vita* Edith's assumption of a maternal role is explored in many different ways: through her position at court, through the deployment of classical models, through her association with the virgin mother Mary. I intend to argue that Edith's maternity and the establishment and control of descent lines are sites of considerable tension within the *Vita*. Her maternal action is associated with peace and peaceful succession to the kingdom, yet her lack of biological children and thus an obvious heir to the kingdom contributed to a succession struggle after Edward's death, a problematic issue which the *Vita* attempts to explore but cannot ultimately resolve. The contradictory and multiple models of maternity associated with Edith show both the strength of the traditions of motherhood in eleventh-century England, but also the pressure placed upon them in their application to the actions of a woman who was not a mother. A childless woman has to be portrayed as a mother as there are no alternative discourses within which her actions could be sufficiently explained. The lack of non-maternal models for female involvement in dynastic inheritance was an impediment to her political action that Edith attempted to overcome with the *Vita*.

Edith's actions and identity in the *Vita* centre primarily round her position as queen at court.[216] The queen's role in early medieval Europe had a tradition of being based at court. In 881 Hincmar of Rheims, who had a strong interest in the articulation of rulership, wrote in his revision of *De Ordine Palatii* that the queen had a responsibility for the good order of the palace, the royal regalia, and the annual gifts to the *milites*.[217] The political importance of the court in personal monarchies meant that

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[216] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 47-9.
[217] J. Nelson, 'Early medieval rites of Queen-Making and the shaping of early medieval Queenship', in A. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 303-4.

the queen's functions at court could be a valuable source of power to her.[218] The court-based nature of Edith's queenship in Edward's reign, and her association through it with Edward, can perhaps be seen in her designation in many his charters as *conlaterana regis*, she who stands by and aids the king.[219] However, in the *Vita*, Edith's court function is figured partly in terms of maternity, as she is described as raising boys who were said to be of royal stock:

> *[Edith] studio pueros, qui ex regis genere dicebantur, enutrierit, docuuerit, ornauerit et omnem maternum affectum in eis effuderit.*[220]

The education, clothing and feeding of royal boys at court is presented as a maternal role which Edith fulfils as Queen. Interestingly, it seems that clothing and thus controlling the image of a royal man was seen as an appropriate task for a mother or daughter to perform than a wife. It is stated that in Edith's provision of Edward's finery:

> *In quo non tam uxor esse quam filia, non tam coniux quam mater pia.*[221]

The role of Queen as royal wife in this text does not seem by itself to have included such functions, and Edith, in her *Vita*, presents her court activities as maternal. Her treatment of the royal boys can perhaps be seen as a form of patronage that built valuable ties of affection and obligation that she would want to be able to call upon for support, but it is presented as appropriate to a specific family role. Her role at court can be paralleled with the maternal role performed by female household heads in their relationships with the children they fostered. The practice of fostering, discussed in

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[218] P. Stafford, 'The portrayal of royal women in England, mid-tenth to mid-eleventh centuries', in J. Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1993), pp. 143-5.
[219] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 59-60; S1007, S1008, S1009, S1012, S1013, S1028, S1031, S1033.
[220] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 24-5, '[Edith] zealously reared, educated, adorned and showered with maternal love those boys who were said to be of royal stock'. It should be noted that this section of the *Vita* is taken by its editor from the later fourteenth-century *Speculum Historale* by Richard of Cirencester. Richard was in general a 'cut and paste' author and where his work can be tested against his sources he appears to reproduce them quite closely. As there is no obvious other source extant for the passage, it probably did come from the now missing section of the Anonymous' *Vita*, though of course any conclusions drawn from it must be regarded as provisional. Barlow, *Life*, pp. xxxix-xl; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 42 n43; Tyler, 'Treasure', pp. 100-1.
[221] *Life*, pp. 24-5, 'She seemed more like a daughter than a wife, not so much a spouse as a good mother'.

chapter three, provided a pattern of maternal action through which Edith could mother despite her childlessness.

Edith's position as queen at court can also be seen as that of a peacemaker and advisor. The *Vita* states:

> *At regina, quae hinc dissidio confundebatur fratrum, illinc regis mariti impotentia destituebatur, cum consilio, quo potissimum ex dei gratia eminebat si audiretur, non proficeret, lacrimis suis presagia futurorum malorum plenius edocebat, quibus inconsolabiliter fusis totum palatium in luctum deciderat. Irruentibus enim ante id aliquibus aduersis, ipsa presidio adesse solebat, quae et aduersa cuncta efficaci consilio depelleret, et regem eiusque frequentelam serenaret. Nunc uero peccatis exigentibus re in contrarium lapsa ex uisis presentibus quique futura colligebant mala.*[222]

Her advice is ignored, so evil will come to the realm. Edith claims the right, possibly the maternal right if her peacekeeping attempts here are seen as a facet of her identification with Concord, to advise through divine inspiration the best possible resolution for the court. Her advice is not itself at fault, rather guilt lay with those who refused to take it. Edith portrays herself as powerless because of the argument of her brothers and the impotence of her husband.

This section suggests that women's power, even the power of queens, grew out of family roles. The complex ideology of queenship in eleventh-century England can be analysed through an examination of coronation *ordines*. The various recensions of the second coronation *ordo*, used in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, derive the queen's *ordo* from that of an abbess, which points toward an ideology of queenship as

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[222] *Life*, pp. 80-1, 'The queen was, on the one hand, confounded by the quarrel of her brothers and, on the other, bereft of all support by the powerlessness of her husband, the king. And when her counsels came to naught – and by God's grace she shone above all in counsel if she were heard – she plainly showed her foreboding of future evils by her tears. And when she wept inconsolably, the whole palace went into mourning. For when misfortune had attacked them in the past, she had always stood as a defence, and had both repelled all the hostile forces with her powerful counsels and also cheered the king and his retinue. Now, however, when, owing to sin, things had turned against them, all men deduced future disasters from the signs of the present'.

an office.[223] In these rites the queen, like the king, was associated in sacral power through her anointment with holy oil. Like the king, she is called upon to shun heresy and bring barbarian peoples to God.[224] The queen's association with the sacral royal power of the king is intensified in the so-called third recension of the second *ordo*, where she is associated in imperial rule and instituted as queen over the Anglo-Saxons.[225] Stafford convincingly argues that this recension of the *ordo* was most likely used for the specific circumstances of the coronation of Cnut and Emma in 1017, and that Edith may not have been associated in imperial power as Emma had been.[226] However, she certainly inherited the language of queenly association in imperial power, as is indicated by the Muse's description of Edith in the prologue as Edward's *altera pars hominis*, thriving at his imperial side.[227] Although queens shared in the imperial rule of their kings, this association can be seen as dependent upon their family roles. The titles accorded to English queens included not just *regina* but also *coniux regis*, *conlaterana regis*, *mater regis*.[228] The basis of queenly powers in family roles meant that they fluctuated as each queen passed through the stages of the female family life-cycle.[229] Edith, however, did not fulfil all the expected stages of a queen's life-cycle, as she bore no children. Her powerlessness in the section of the *Vita* that deals explicitly with Harold and Tostig's quarrel in 1065, and in the situation it evokes, suggests that not only did queens' powers derive primarily from family roles, they were also dependent upon family support. This statement in the *Vita* points perhaps to the fundamental tension between the ideal of herself that Edith was trying to create and her situation in 1065-8; she had no sons to support her and through whom she could

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[223] P. Stafford, 'Emma: the powers of the Queen', *Queens and Queenship*, pp. 12-13; D. H. Turner (ed.), *The Claudius Pontificals*. Henry Bradshaw Society 97 (1971): 95-7; J. Wickham Legg (ed.), *Three Coronation Orders*. Henry Bradshaw Society 19 (1900): 61-3.
[224] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 165-7.
[225] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 175 and n69; *Three Orders*, pp. 62-3.
[226] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 176 n71.
[227] *Life*, pp. 6-7.
[228] Stafford, 'Emma', pp. 6-10.
[229] Stafford, 'Portrayal', pp. 144-6; J. Carmi Parsons, 'Family, sex and power: The rhythms of medieval Queenship'. *Medieval Queenship*. Pp. 6-7.

manoeuvre. Edith, through the *Vita*, claimed a maternal role and its authority, but she had no power to enforce her advice. Emma claimed the right to construct and control her dynasty through the *Encomium*, but she needed her son and the Danish fleet to make her claims stick. Edith had no such option open to her 1065-8.

The prose sections show that the roles Edith fulfilled as queen arose out of and were, at least in part, dependent upon her fulfilment of specific family positions. In these parts of the *Vita*, which were perhaps intended for a public audience, Edith remains without fault. Her problems in these queenly and family roles derive from a lack of support from her kin rather than any personal failings. The poetic sections of the *Vita* however, which were perhaps intended for a private study by Edith and a few others, display a greater unease with her use of these roles.[230] She tries to adopt a maternal role, but the appropriateness of this adoption is not just discussed but also contested within the poems. Her association with a maternal identity is a locus for fault lines in the *Vita*'s portrayal of her different roles and identities.

Edith can arguably be seen as appropriating a maternal role by her association with Concord. Concord is appealed to in the poem which separates prose sections five and six of part one:

> *Sedans pace tua, mater, concordia sancta,*
> *ne de pignore regali seu stripe fideli*
> *ignis perpetuam stipulam sibi rideat hostis*
> *collegisse suis incendia longa fauillis.*[231]

The association with Edith seems clear as she is very clearly linked in the *Vita* with keeping peace in the court and kingdom through her divinely inspired advice.[232] The

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[230] As noted above, the poetry of the *Vita* frequently complicates accounts provided by the prose, an intention that the Anonymous makes explicit at the end of the first poetic prologue. *Vita*, pp. 8-9. I am grateful to Dr. Tyler for pointing out this reference to me.

[231] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 60-1, 'Oh mother, holy Concord, soothe with peace, lest from the royal kin and loyal stock the hostile fire should laugh to have procured an endless stubble – fuel for its sparks'.

poem is concerned to warn against fraternal discord, and Concord as mother is appealed to as someone who can keep peace in the royal kindred. However, Edith's association with the maternal figure of Concord and with the peace of the court and kingdom is not unproblematic, in keeping with their placement within a poem. Concord is ambiguously presented in the poem itself, and when the *Vita* is placed in its historical context the disparities between an idealised peace-making mother and Edith's actual power become further apparent.

Concord is initially introduced in the work as a form of Ceres in a poem that denounces fraternal strife as a crime against God. The Anonymous conflates two myths. In the first Tantalus, the grandfather of Thyestes, murdered his son Pelops and served him up at a banquet of the gods. Ceres ate an arm without realising it was human. The gods punished Tantalus and reassembled Pelops, and Ceres replaced the arm she had eaten with an arm of ivory. In the second myth, Atreus became jealous of the sons of his brother Thyestes, and so he murdered them and served them up to him.[233] The Anonymous seems to confuse and conflate the two myths. He makes Thyestes not Atreus the murderer, he takes the element of fraternal discord from the second myth and transposes it to the first, and he substitutes Concord for Ceres. In his version, Thyestes becomes jealous of his brother's sons and so serves one of them up as a meal to the gods. Concord ate a shoulder. The gods however revived the boy and Concord gave him an ivory arm to replace the shoulder she had eaten:

...brachium Concordia reddit
tegmine non carnis sed eburnei fortius ossis,
quod pie seruauit dum non mandenda notauit.[234]

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[232] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 26-7, *Cuius consilio pax continet undique regnum, atque cauet populis, violent ne federa pacis*, 'By whose advice peace wraps the kingdom round, and keeps mankind from breaking pacts of peace'. See also pp. 36-9 and 80-1.
[233] Barlow, *Life*, p. 59 n146.
[234] *Life*, p. 60, 'Concord gave an arm, the covering not of flesh but of strong bony ivory, so that she served piously while she branded that which was not for eating'. My translation.

It is impossible to tell whether the Anonymous conflated the myths through ignorance or through deliberate intent. However, the resulting poem contained the themes that he wanted to treat: a quarrel between brothers, and a maternal Concord.

The Anonymous' use of the reference to Concord is interesting. Concord's contribution of an arm marks her part in the recreation of Pelops, and therefore perhaps her maternity, but the fact that it is made of ivory explicitly signals the artifice of her maternity. It both witnesses to and warns against the mistake she made. Concord, who as argued above is in this poem probably to be identified with Edith, is not to blame for the initial crime, but she unintentionally collaborates in it. So what does this image of Concord do for Edith? Concord's artificial motherhood is signalled as both necessary and regrettable, she serves piously while warning others against making the same mistake, which could be intended to justify or argue for Edith's involvement in the succession. It is interesting that the Anonymous uses a maternal model here. A mother-figure rather than a sister or a queen was considered to be the most appropriate choice of role for an active peace-maker. Maternal imagery is obviously the most fitting, perhaps the only language with which Edith can claim an authoritative female role. She has to figure herself as a mother to promote herself as a female governor of the royal stock, who may perhaps bring back a golden age, in which pacts are kept, which is invoked in the other poem that refers to Edith's peace-making abilities.[235] The ideology of queenship discussed above does not seem to provide a sufficient language to talk about female power, instead a specific kinship role is needed. The specific and sharply delineated female roles within the kin-group is in marked contrast to the models that did exist to talk about brothers who transgressed the expected norms of behaviour between family members. Harold and Tostig's quarrel is denounced, but it is denounced

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[235] *Life*, pp. 26-7.

specifically because it is fraternal, and it is denounced with reference to biblical and classical precedents.[236] Their argument may be *detestatio caeli*, but it is not unthinkable. The Anonymous has to refigure Edith as mother to her two brothers, but there was no need for Harold and Tostig's kinship bond to be altered.

Edith's identification with Concord can possibly also be seen as a form of special pleading. Concord bears no responsibility for a brothers' quarrel and the course it takes, and is appealed to as a mother to mediate and stop it. The quarrel between Tostig and Harold is presented in the *Vita* as a result of the rebellion in the North against Tostig's fair but severe rule, and Tostig publicly accuses Harold of inciting the rebellion.[237] However, according to John of Worcester, though not according to the *Vita*, the rebellion of the north was sparked by the treacherous murder at court of a northern thegn, Cospatric, on Edith's orders. Edith's actions could be seen as precipitating the events that led to the quarrel, however unintentionally.[238] Harold and Tostig's quarrel was not the first split within the Godwine kin-group. In 1046 Swein Godwineson, their brother, was exiled from England for his abduction of Eadgifu, abbess of Leominster. In 1049 he returned to England and attempted to regain his position, and he was opposed in this not by King Edward but by his brother Harold and his cousin Beorn. His subsequent murder of Beorn led to his outlawry.[239] However, this quarrel can be seen as internal to the Godwine kin. MSS C of the *Chronicle* explicitly states that Harold and Beorn opposed Swein's return because they did not want to return to him anything that the king had given them.[240] Edith might also have benefited from Swein's actions, as her direct control of half of Leominster's endowment can most

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[236] For example, the Concord poem refers to the *Thebeid*.
[237] *Life*, pp. 76-9.
[238] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 270-2; Barlow, *Edward*, pp. 234-5; R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk (eds.), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* II, trans. J. Bray and P. McGurk, (Oxford, 1995), *sa* 1065.
[239] *Chronicles MSS CDE sa* 1046, 1049; Baldwin, *The Godwines*, pp. 38-9.
[240] *MS C sa* 1049, '*Ac Harold his broðor wiðcwæð, and Beorn eorl, þæt hig noldon him agyfan nan þingc þæs þe se cing heom gegyfen hæfde*', 'But Harold his brother and Earl Beorn spoke against [him], because they did not want to restore to him anything that the king had given them'.

probably be dated to 1046.[241] This earlier quarrel was about the distribution of resources within the Godwine kin-group. Tostig's banishment and his quarrel with Harold were different. His earldom was taken out of family hands and given to Morcar, a member of a rival aristocratic Mercian kin-group. Harold might or might not have encouraged the northern rebellion, as Tostig alleged, but at around the same time he married Morcar's sister Ealdgyth.[242] The quarrel between Harold and Tostig was not kept within the limits of their kin-group but instead tore it apart. There is a marked disparity between Edith's portrayal in the *Vita* as a peacemaker and her actions at court in 1065. Like the inclusion of an account about the Conspatric's nephew Cospatric's adventures in Italy, the Anonymous' treatment of Concord could have been intended to refute any allegations that Edith was involved in murder at court and her brothers' quarrel, and thus bore some responsibility for its outcome.

Edith's involvement in making peace in the court and the kingdom is also highly problematic when placed in its wider historical context, as her brothers ended up in open warfare at Stamford Bridge. To a certain extent, of course, the interpretation of this tension between the work and its context depends on its precise dating. If modern interpolations based on later works are removed from the text then the only part of the work necessarily written after the battle of Stamford Bridge is the poet's dialogue with his muse in the middle of the work. If the *Vita* was initially written before Autumn 1066, then perhaps Edith initially intended the work to cast her as an arbitrator between her two brothers, using her connection to the divine through Concord as a source of maternal authority. When the work was read after 1066, however, its focus shifted. Her role as Concord and association with peace, when connected to the deaths of her brothers, could perhaps have been seen as a warning of the dire consequences that fell

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[241] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 137-9.
[242] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 77-80 and n190.

upon those who ignored her advice, and perhaps also as a claim to a continued royal role within the Norman rule of England.

It is now necessary to turn to the most negative image of motherhood in the *Vita*. As discussed above, Concord is not an entirely positive figure, and Edith's lack of sons, while not directly commented upon, contributed to her powerlessness in the quarrel between her brothers. Her claim to maternal dynastic authority was not uncomplicated, as her childlessness is possibly referred to in the poem which links prose sections two and three. The poem starts by praising Godwine, who fathered four guarantors of England's peace. Edith, *probitatis amatrix*, is specifically praised for keeping the peace by her good advice. The poem then continues to describe the earl's family by means of a double metaphor. Four streams flow from a font in paradise to nourish the earth, an allusion to Genesis 2:10, in which four streams flow from a single font out to the four corners of the earth. They can be linked to four of Godwine's children, as the prologue draws a similar and more explicit analogy.[243] It is not made explicit anywhere in the *Vita* which of Godwine's many children are signified. One part 'mounts to the skies… and tends its races hope in treetop nest'. However:

> *Illa profunda petit tranans inimica uoratrix,*
> *dampna suae stirpis faciens truncumque parentem*
> *pendit ab ore tenens, dum certo tempore uitae*
> *flatus uiuicans animal de non animata*
> *matre creat; studet inde suis resolute rapinis.*[244]

It is difficult to know exactly what to make of this passage. Should the lifeless mother be interpreted as the hostile devourer or the parent trunk? Or is the poem deliberately ambiguous on this matter? Beare suggests that it should be interpreted as a barnacle

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[243] *Life*, pp. 6-7.

[244] Barlow, *Life*, p. 26, 'The other, the hostile devourer, sought the depths, suffering losses of her lineage she ponders on the parent trunk, holding on by the mouth, until at a certain time the breath of life creates a living creature from a lifeless mother. Then, having been released, she seeks again her prey', my translation.

goose, which in the eleventh century was seen as a creature born out of wood.[245] This is an interesting suggestion, but as the language of the poem is figural the issue of whom the hostile devourer was intended to represent remains open. Even allowing for the issue of natural and grammatical gender, it has to be noted that this section contains a lot of feminine language, and it is hard to escape the fact that the *inimica uoratrix* is definitely female.[246] Although the poem is initially complimentary about Edith she is the only female member of Godwine's kin who is prominent in the *Vita*. Concord, implicitly identified with Edith, is also an ambiguous figure. The division between the higher and lower part is generally taken to represent different members of Godwine's kin-group,[247] but perhaps it is rather intended to explore the positive and negative aspects of Edith's identities, as *probitatis amatrix* and as *inimica uoratrix*. The image needs to be examined within the broader context of the *Vita* and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England.

It seems fairly clear that the parent trunk of the tree represents a descent line. The idea of representing kinship as a tree was established in the *arbores iuris* in the *Institutiones* of Justinian, and was transmitted through the illustrations to Isidore's definitions of kinship in the manuscripts of his *Etymologiarum*.[248] In connection with theories of the higher and lower parts it has been interpreted as the Godwine kin-group.[249] However, in this poem Edith very clearly unites the Godwine kin with the royal line, she is *tanto duce filia patre... regi condigno marito*.[250] The tree can perhaps be associated with the joint English royal dynasty and Godwine family, united as it was in Edith. The image of the descent line as a tree was probably intended to complement

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[245] R. Beare, 'Earl Godwine's son as a barnacle goose', *Notes and Queries* ns 44 (1997): 4-6; R. Beare, 'Swallows and Barnacle Geese', *Notes and Queries* ns 45 (1998): 5.
[246] Otter, 'Closed doors', pp. 63-91, points out that the epithalamium poem can be read as a criticism of Edith.
[247] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 26-7 n57; Beare, 'Earl Godwine's son', p. 5.
[248] C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Le corps de la parenté', *Micrologus* 1 (1993): 43.
[249] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 26-7 n57.
[250] *Life*, pp. 26-7, 'fit daughter for her father the earl... and for her spouse the king'.

Edward's vision of the Green Tree in the final section of the *Vita*. The Green Tree is invoked when Edward, in his vision, asks when God will have mercy on the English for their sins, after he has delivered them into the hands of their enemies within a year and a day of Edward's death. The response is that God will have mercy on the English race when a green tree, cut down the middle of its trunk and separated, is joined again without human intervention and bears fruit.[251] If the green tree is to be seen as the English royal line then in one sense this can perhaps be seen as linking the English royal line with the fate of England. Interestingly, in the *Vita Kenelmi*, a work which is also possibly by Goscelin and which also cites Edith as a source of information,[252] there is another vision of a tree linked to a kingdom. Kenelm relates to his nurse, who he calls his mother, that he had seen himself standing on the top of an enormous tree, from which he could see three parts of the kingdom bowing down to him. However, some men cut the tree down, he turned into a white bird and flew to heaven. His nurse interprets this as a sign that the felled tree indicated his forthcoming murder, as along with the three faithful parts of his kingdom, there was a fourth hostile part of his kingdom which was his sister's.[253] Cwoenthryth's eventual punishment was that her eyes fell out onto a psalter and she died shortly afterwards.[254] This divine retribution is perhaps intended to stand as a fitting return for faithlessness and treachery. In the Old Testament Nebuchadnezzer punishes a faithless vassal by blinding him, and blinding was used as a punishment for rebellion in both Carolingian Europe and Anglo-Saxon England.[255] Cwoenthryth is a sister figure rather than a mother figure like Edith in the

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[251] *Life*, pp. 116-9.
[252] R. Love (ed.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives* (Oxford, 1996), *Vita Kenelmi*, chapter 1, pp. 50-3.
[253] *Vita Kenelmi*, chapters 3 and 4, pp. 56-9.
[254] *Vita Kenelmi*, chapter 16, pp. 70-3.
[255] D. Berstein, 'The blinding of Harold and the meaning of the Bayeux tapestry', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 5 (1982): 49-60; G. Bührer-Thierry, '"Just anger" or "vengeful anger"? The punishment of blinding in the early medieval West', in B. H. Rosenwein (ed.), *Angers Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1998), pp. 75-91. The connection of this punishment with rebellion suggests also that it could be used to denote unfitness to rule. For example it was used against the ætheling Alfred in 1036 as discussed above, and John's nephew Arthur was also treated in such a manner.

poem, but perhaps a connection can be established if we see both as women who attack the dynastic line, as they attempt to exercise power independently rather than through sons. Moving back to the rivers-tree metaphor, we can perhaps see its concern with Edith and the royal line as also connected to the fate of England. The reference in the poem to a lifeless mother is perhaps a commentary on Edith's childlessness, and indicates a deep anxiety over female control over dynastic lineages, at least control by women who are not 'normally' fertile.

Female transmission of dynastic membership was not necessarily seen as problematic in late Anglo-Saxon England. The connection between Mary and *stirps Jesse* of Isaiah was well established in western Europe by this point. Mary's identification as the trunk from which the promised child Jesus sprang symbolised her contribution to Christ's human nature.[256] This theme can also be seen in a group of Canterbury manuscripts dating from the first part of the eleventh century, which portray Mary with a flowering sceptre, symbolising both her identification with the *stirps Jesse* and her royal power.[257] Mary was linked to the cross as well as the *stirps Jesse* in religious works of the tenth and eleventh centuries. She was thus figured, through her motherhood of Christ, as an agent in the salvation of humanity.[258] It is possible that the *Vita's* combined metaphor of streams and a tree links into Easter themes of resurrection

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[256] M. Fessler, 'Mary's Nativity, Fulbert of Chartres, and the *Stirps Jesse*: Liturgical innovation circa 1000 and its afterlife', *Speculum* 75 (2000): 395-423.

[257] Clayton, *Cult*, pp. 169-73. Interestingly the extant *Vita* manuscript may also come from Canterbury. It is interesting to speculate whether English queens carried such a sceptre in the eleventh century. They were not invested with one in any of the extant coronation *ordines*. However, one of the benedictions spoken over them was adapted from that said over the king when he received his sceptre, and the seals of English queens depicted them with sceptres from 1118 at the latest despite the fact that the earliest coronation ordo to mention that the queen was invested with a sceptre dates from the 1380s. Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 167-8; J. Carmi Parsons, 'Ritual and symbol in the medieval English Queenship to 1500', in L. O. Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 62-3. If English queens carried similar sceptres to those with which Mary is traditionally depicted, it would be a striking public demonstration of the maternal nature of their royalty.

[258] A. Breeze, 'The Virgin Mary and the *Dream of the Rood*'. *Florilegium* 12 (1993): 55-6; M. J. Swanton (ed.), *The Dream of the Rood* (Manchester, 1970), ll 90-4.

and redemption. A similar metaphor can be found in Ephrem of Syria's *De Resurrectione*, which described Christ thus:

> 'From on high he descended as a stream, and from Mary he came as a root, from a tree he came down as fruit, and as a first offering he rose again to heaven'.[259]

The Anonymous' use of the stream-tree metaphor could be intended as a commentary on Edith's failure to become a 'normal' mother. Mary, while a virgin, was physically fertile, and her motherhood was associated with the redemption of humanity. Edith was not a mother, despite her attempts to appropriate a maternal role, and her failure affected and afflicted her family line.

The failure of Edith's maternity, treated by the river-tree metaphor, can be seen as impacting upon both her marital and natal kin. The poem of the metaphor uses Edith to link her father and her husband, and thus more widely the two kin-groups. A woman can be seen to fail her birth family as well as her husband if she does not bear children.[260] Although in the *Vita* Edith's identity is bound up with that of her husband, the previous chapter showed that wives maintained a kin identity different to that of their husbands. Children born to a marriage took on claims to inheritance and kin-group associations from both their paternal and maternal kin. Thus the poem's commentary on the problems inherent in Edith's childlessness can be seen as applying to both families. By bearing sons English royal wives not only guaranteed the legitimate descent of the royal line, they also guaranteed the continued closeness of their natal kin to the throne

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[259] Breeze, 'Mary', p. 57. Breeze cites an English translation of the Syrian version given in E. Beck (ed.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers, Paschahymnen (De Azymis, De Crucifixione, De Resurrectione* (Louvain, 1964). The Latin version of the text has never been edited. Evidence for direct knowledge of Ephrem's works in Anglo-Saxon England is limited, and there are only two extant manuscripts containing his works (Gneuss nos 2.8 and 510). However there are some indications that his work was at least known indirectly. Archbishop Theodore seems to have brought copies of Ephrem's writings over with him, and his Canterbury school seems to have made use of these works, [J. Stevenson, 'Ephrem the Syrian in Anglo-Saxon England'. *Hugoye: Journal of Syraic Studies* 1.2 (1998), pars. 1-37.] and prayer 45 of the *Book of Cerne* is directly based on Ephrem's *Sermo Asceticus*. [P. Sims Williams, 'Thoughts on Ephrem the Syrian in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 224-6.] The Anonymous' knowledge of the work could alternatively have come from Flanders, there is a copy of a *de resurrectione* in a Saint-Omer manuscript copied before the end of the tenth century. [D. Ganz, 'Knowledge of Ephraim's Writings in the Merovingian and Carolingian Age'. *Hugoye* 2.1 (1999), pars. 1-16.]

[260] I owe this suggestion to Dr. Katy Cubitt.

and its power. Edward was unable to permanently repudiate Edith because of her family's power in the kingdom.[261] Her childlessness was equally problematic for the Godwine kin. They had seen how an aristocratic family could benefit from the placement of a related royal son on the throne. In 1035 Leofric earl of Mercia backed the succession of the son of his kinswoman Ælfgifu and Cnut, Harold Harefoot, to the throne.[262] Harold was not the son of Cnut's queen, Emma, yet with the support of his mother and her kin he first negotiated a division of the kingdom and shortly after took complete control. Unfortunately little documentary evidence survives from his reign, so it is difficult to provide concrete evidence of how it benefited Leofric and his kin. However it may be significant that Godwine, who under Cnut had been the pre-eminent earl in the kingdom and who had backed Emma's son Harthacnut, found his position untenable and had to switch allegiances. In factional court politics closeness to the king and his patronage was crucial as a source of power.[263] Edith's marriage to Edward had initiated that closeness, their children would have maintained and strengthened it.

It is therefore probable that the attempts in the *Vita* to compensate for Edith's childlessness are as much due to her position in her natal kin-group as to her position as queen. She and the kingdom are entrusted together by Edward into Harold's regency, this is in a passage that describes her as Edward's daughter and therefore, perhaps, as his heir.[264] However, Edward's commendation of Edith to Harold can also be paralleled to Christ's commendation of Mary to John,[265] and to Edith's appropriation of a maternal role as Concord with reference to peace-making between Harold and Tostig. It is possible that Harold's accession to the throne was justified within a model of fraternal

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[261] Parsons, 'Rhythms', pp. 5-6.
[262] Williams, '"Cockles amongst wheat"', pp. 1-22.
[263] This pattern can perhaps also be seen in the late tenth century, Ordulf rises to prominence in the reign of his sister Ælfthryth's son, Æthelred.
[264] *Life*, pp. 122-3; Barlow, *Edward*, pp. 299-300.
[265] Otter, 'Closed doors', p. 77; John 20:26-7.

succession. Fraternal succession to the throne was common practice in England. Edward had followed his half-brother Harthacnut, who had himself succeeded to his half-brother Harold. Edward's father Æthelred had taken the throne after the death of his half-brother Edward the Martyr. However, all previous kings of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries were either sons of kings, or took the throne by conquest. Harold was Edward's brother-in-law, and would not ordinarily have had a claim to inheritance from him. The deployment of maternal and daughterly roles to construct Edith's identity in the *Vita* suggests that her position as Edward's wife and Harold's sister were not sufficient to explain the installation of her natal kin-group as the ruling family of England, or to produce an image of continuing female power. Edith compensates for her childlessness by figuring Harold as her son and perhaps therefore as Edward's heir, in an attempt to salvage not just her family's power in the kingdom but also her own position as queen. Maybe Harold's succession to the throne in 1066 indicates that this strategy was temporarily successful. Possibly the poetic sections that display anxiety over Edith's artificial maternity were written after Harold's death.

By considering the Concord poem and the river-tree metaphor together it is possible to draw out a sense of how Edith's options for manoeuvre as a childless queen would have been severely limited by traditions of female power drawn from particular family ties. Women were supposed to act through and on behalf of their sons, not their brothers. Both poems display a deep unease about Edith's simulated maternity. Edith has to be figured as a mother in order to claim power, yet her maternity is undercut even as it is posited.

Edith also perhaps claims a maternal identity through her association with Wilton. Her education there and her patronage of the *coenobia* identify her very

strongly with the royal line and its dynastic saints.[266] That this identification could include a maternal role is signalled by the epithalamium that forms the poem between prose sections six and seven. It is probable that this bridal song, that was nominally addressed to the new chapel and that linked themes of sanctity, fecundity and virginity, was primarily aimed at Edith, who built and dedicated the chapel.[267] Otter suggests that the inspiration behind the poem is possibly Augustine's *De Sancta Uirginitate* or Ælfric's Old English adaptation *Natiuitas Sanctae Mariae Virginis*.[268] Both these works stress the spiritual motherhood of the Church and parallel the Church with Mary,[269] Augustine also stresses the superiority of spiritual over biological motherhood.[270]

It is interesting to examine how the Anonymous describes motherhood in this poem:

Inclita mater, aue, prolem paritura beatam,
quam dum concipies, nulla maculabere culpa,
in cuius partu nullum patiere dolorem,
nec numero rara merebis de genitura,
intereatue tuo quisquam de uentre creatus;
sed iungere tuo per federa casta marito,
eterno sociata deo complexibus almis;
cuius fusa tua sata celica germen in aluo
uiuicante suo reddunt de flamine sancto;
nec partu maris letabere siue puellae,
sed centum prolis cunis circumdata mille,
non quorum fletu tribulentur uiscera matris,
sed quibus angelicas clare modulantibus odas
uel pulsu citharae toto resonabis in orbe.
Tum pro defectu non sollicitabere lactis,
nempe dator uitae diues genitor deus ipse
de caelis escas pluet, hos ut in aethere pascas.
Nec te de numero tedet, uexantue labores,
sed magis exoptas tot iugiter his super addi.
Tempore nec tardo tardam profers genituram,
decursis longo tot mensibus ordine pigris.

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[266] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 71-5; Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 257-9.
[267] Otter, 'Closed doors', pp. 67-70; V. B. Jordan, 'Chronology and discourse in the *Vita Aedwardi Regis*', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 8 (1998): 151-2.
[268] Augustine, *De sancta uirginitate*, *PL* 40:395-428; B. Assman (ed.), *Angelsachsische Homilien und Heiligenleben* (Wigand, 1889), III, pp. 24-48; Otter, 'Closed doors', p. 70.
[269] M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 245-8.
[270] Augustine, *De sancta uirginitate*, pp. 395-402; Otter, 'Closed Doors', p. 71.

Cotidie potius celebras natalia multa,
certe cara tuo, quia sic fecunda, marito.
Sed nec tot natis habitacula tot uariabis,
ne<c> cogere pati caros a te segregari;
sed magis in lata fulchris renitentibus aula
te coram melius discumbetleta iuuentus,
quam speciosa tuae reseras haec claustra tabernae.[271]

Although this maternity is spiritual in nature, it is discussed in very physical terms. The maternal role in this epithalamium is not focused on education or child-rearing but rather on pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. This can partly be seen as a consequence of the tradition within which the Anonymous was working. As noted above, Augustine praised the superiority of spiritual motherhood, one way of proving which was to stress the pains of pregnancy and childbirth and the sinful nature of normal conception. The Anonymous does this. The virginal motherhood and chaste marriage vows depicted in the poem can also be read in conjunction with Bishop Brihtwold's vision of Edward as a chaste king as recounted in the first book of the *Vita*.[272] Initially, the vision of Edward as chaste underlined his suitability as king, a point also made in the vision by his designation as such by St. Peter. His chastity in the vision was part of his exile, and not necessarily intended to continue after his return. However, Edith's position in the mid 1060s was supported well by claims to a chaste marriage to a saintly king.[273] The epithalamium should be seen as a way of promoting Edith as both virginal and maternal within the Marian model.

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[271] Barlow, *Life*, pp. 73-5, 'Hail, peerless mother, blessed babes to bear, conceived immaculate from any sin, and at whose bringing-forth you'll feel no pangs. Nor will you grieve at scanty progeny, nor will one fashioned in your womb expire: but you will make chaste marriage vows, and lie in the sweet arms of everlasting God; whose heavenly seed, in your womb cast, returns a crop from his life-giving Holy Ghost. Nor will you joy in man child or in girl: but surrounded by a hundred thousand cots, with babes not rending mother's heart with tears, but singing clear angelic odes or with the harp, you will resound throughout the world. Nor will you fear for lack of milk, for life's rich giver, Father God himself, will rain manna from heaven, that you will feed them there. Nor do the numbers tire or labours vex: you long, indeed for ever-increasing brood. Nor in slow time do you produce slow birth by ordered lapse of those long, lazy months: loved by your spouse for your fecundity, each day you celebrate the many births. Nor will you take a new abode for each, nor need to endure your darlings' banishment: but rather let the happy children rest in the great shining pillared hall with you than ope the lovely doorways of your inn'.

[272] *Vita*, pp. 12-14.

[273] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, pp. 260-5; Barlow, *Edward*, pp. 81-5.

However, the poem perhaps also fits into an Anglo-Saxon tradition in which bearing babies was a source of power for mothers, as it could be used to emphasise their status as transmitters of kin-group identity and thus their stake in the composition of dynastic lines.[274] As discussed in the previous chapter, through godparenting lay people could take on spiritual and social responsibilities for children who were not biologically theirs. The epithalamium seems to be intended to provide Edith with access, through a spiritual source, to the power more normally accessed through mothering heirs. She perhaps intends to sideline the female life-cycle, claiming rights over dynastic legitimisation through her spiritual maternity, despite her childless state. This interpretation can be strengthened by the obviously Marian inflection of the poem. The connection between Mary and queenship was common in late Anglo-Saxon England,[275] and Edith's identification with Mary through the epithalamium stresses her continued royal status, whether in Harold's reign or William's.

The epithalamium can perhaps ultimately be seen as an attempt to solve the problems Edith's need for a maternal role posed in the Concord and river-tree poems, an attempt which pushed her into the position of virgin-mother. Her maternity is blessed by God, it is not of warring brothers but blessed babies. As discussed in the first two chapters, the ideology of virgin-motherhood in Anglo-Saxon England was open to more than one interpretation. However, in the context of the *Vita*, its use is a further indication of the dominance that the discourse of maternity held as the source for female authority. Despite the problems inherent in its adoption, the Anonymous still does not seems to have any other way of transmuting Edith's childlessness while still representing her as a powerful woman and queen. Edward's childlessness was easier for the Anonymous to explain. This, arguably, is in part because his death put an end to his

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[274] See work on Blickling and Vercelli homilies.
[275] Clayton, *Cult*, pp. 163-7.

personal claims for ongoing power and made the Anonymous's claims for his sanctity more feasible.[276] It is still however markedly obvious that Edward is portrayed as a father only in relation to Edith,[277] Godwine not Edward is the father of his country.[278] Edward's sanctity is based on his celibacy.[279] His celibacy is not stressed, indeed it is mentioned once and implied once, yet this still alludes sufficiently to an established ideology of male virginal sanctity to fit him into its model. Edward's childlessness is a precondition of sanctity, but it does not determine the pattern. The fact that Edward's childlessness does not have to be channelled into a spiritual paternity suggests that the pre-eminence of a particular family role as a legitimisation of power does not seem to have applied to men.

The question remains as to what Edith's association with Wilton as a virginal and maternal figure meant to its inhabitants, who formed part of the *Vita*'s audience. Perhaps tying into the idea of abbess as mother,[280] the maternal imagery, as well as the emphasis the work places on her patronage, presents Edith as a beneficent and authoritative figure. The Benedictine Reform of the late tenth century had, in the *Regularis Concordia,* placed the queen as guardian and defender of England's nuns. This was intended to safeguard the nuns from any hint of scandal. However, this association was not always perceived by the inhabitants of nunneries to be beneficial. English queens held land on which religious communities lived, they founded new communities, sometimes they retired onto them. The relationship between the queen and the communities could be problematic. Ælfthryth, for example, was remembered at Barking as a despoiler of their lands, probably because of conflicting ideas about

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[276] Stafford, 'Portrayal' argues that it was easier for authors to fit people into stereotypes once they were dead, she makes the point about queens but it applies equally to kings.
[277] *Life*, pp. 24-5, 90-1, 122-3.
[278] *Life*, pp. 10-11, 14-5, 40-3.
[279] *Life*, pp. 74-5, 124-5.
[280] Stafford, *Queen Edith*, p. 78; J. Wogan-Browne, 'Queens, Virgins and Mothers: Hagiographic representations of the Abbess and her powers in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Britain'. *Women and Sovereignty*, pp. 16-20.

legitimate land ownership. Did the land with which a community was endowed belong ultimately to the community or to the queen?[281] Edith's association with Wilton before 1066 had not been entirely free of acrimony, as the Godwine family had alienated some of the abbey's lands. Perhaps her emphasis on her patronage and on her identification with the convent was intended to smooth over old as well as current divisions, casting Edith as a Concord figure who would heal rifts.

The epithalamium also contains heavenly imagery, and allegorises Wilton as God's court.[282] Perhaps this focus on the holy was intended as a form of consolation and empowerment to the women at Wilton. Edith had lost almost all her male relatives, as had her niece Gunnhild whose father Harold had of course been killed at Hastings. Contemplation of the eternal rewards of heaven may have been a welcome alternative to focusing on the sorrows of the present. The vision of Wilton as a heavenly court may also have been intended to promote a united communal identity.

Finally, the epithalamium was presumably intended to enhance Wilton's prestige. It has been suggested that William's retention of English abbesses at Wilton may have been due to Edith's influence.[283] William presented himself as the legitimate successor to the West Saxon line, so figuring Wilton as the heavenly house of West Saxon dynastic saints may have been an effective means of arguing for continuity of personnel.

Edith's motherhood in the *Vita* can thus be seen as a striking indication of the importance of this particular family role to female power in late Anglo-Saxon England.

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[281] P. Stafford, 'Queens, nunneries and reforming churchmen: Religious status and reform in tenth- and eleventh-century England'. *Past and Present* 163 (1999): 4-5, 18-2.
[282] *Life*, pp. 72-5; Johnson, 'Chronology', pp. 152-3.
[283] A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 132.

The Anonymous seems to be obliged to use a maternal model to discuss Edith's presentation as a figure of authority within her family, the court and the kingdom. This use of maternal imagery to describe someone who was not a mother suggests that maternal roles were clearly defined, as maternity was obviously considered to be the most appropriate way of describing some forms of behaviour and types of relationships, even where biological motherhood as we would understand it was not applicable. The maternal imagery in the *Vita* also suggests that mothering was an important source of authority, as Edith claims a maternal role despite the problematic nature of this representation. Even when he moves to present her within a more spiritual context ideas about maternity still dominate her representation in a way that family roles do not determine his interpretation of the actions of the men in her kin-group. The *Vita* also shows how important maternity was to Edith, and perhaps more widely to other late Anglo-Saxon queens. Maternity is most problematic in the poetic sections of the work, which were probably intended for Edith's personal study. Even in this private space, a non-maternal identity does not seem to be a possible way of exploring both her power and her failures.

Conclusions.

The different uses in the *Encomium* and the *Vita* of Mary as a maternal model also highlight the various and complex ways in which religious ideals could be applied to lived experiences. In the *Encomium*, Emma's maternity draws on Mary's maternal suffering as a way of protecting her against accusations of complicity in the murder of her son. By contrast, Edith's portrayal in the *Vita* uses the implied virginity of a chaste marriage to associate her with Mary's motherhood and the authoritative nature of a maternal role. Mary as virgin mother of Christ was undoubtedly a source of inspiration

and identity to the male monasticism of the reform movement. As noted above, reformed monasticism, especially at Winchester, linked Marian ideology with earthly queens through Mary's position as queen of heaven. This connection established a relationship between the attributes and prestige of Mary with the office of earthly queens, if not with other women. The *Encomium* and the *Vita* demonstrate that the association of Mary with queens was not limited to a monastic context. Furthermore, they show that Mary's virginity was not always her most significant attribute. Emma is linked to Mary as mother, not as virgin. Although Edith is associated with Mary's virginity, her maternity is equally important. Both works also warn against the assumption that the producers of a text or image have a monopoly on its interpretation. Texts and images associated with the monastic reform emphasised Mary's virginity, but their audiences could give equal or greater importance to her maternity or her queenship. Mary was a multi-faceted exemplar.

The use of maternal models in the *Encomium* and the *Vita* to construct Emma's and Edith's identities and to explain their actions is indicative of the complexity of maternity in late Anglo-Saxon England. As shown in chapters one and two, motherhood in the homilies is represented in terms of quite simple models. There is no suggestion of tensions between different kin-group roles. The evidence of the wills and dispute settlements discussed in chapter three showed that the position of women within kin-groups could be complicated by their attachment to different kin-groups, as their different roles sometimes overlapped but were not integrated. The *Encomium* and the *Vita* show that maternity was a strong source of authority for female action, and that it provided a model for behaviour that was inescapable. The need of Emma and Edith to justify themselves within maternal models, despite the inadequacies of these to fully

explain or justify their behaviour, shows both the strengths and the weaknesses of maternity as a foundation for action.

Conclusion.

Maternity in late Anglo-Saxon England was complex and multi-faceted. There was no single ideal of motherhood, no predominant script for maternal action, and no archetypal mother-figure. My interdisciplinary approach has enabled me to discern different voices in the Anglo-Saxon evidence: theological, didactic, legal and political. Close attention to these perspectives has illuminated different paradigms of maternity, paradigms which emerge from the sources but which were not confined to them. The sources are silent about many forms of maternity. These maternal absences perhaps result from a lack of interest by the texts' authors. In particular, the sources say nothing about non-elite mothers and their relationships with their children. Peasant women certainly were mothers, but we have no way of knowing how they mothered. Neither do Anglo-Saxon texts show any interest in the practicalities of caring for young children, an absence which could be caused by the low status of such tasks but also by the male and ecclesiastical slant of the sources.[1] More positively, motherhood emerges from the sources not simply as a biologically-defined category but also as encompassing wider concepts of authority and nurturing. Social relationships such as step-parenting, spiritual kinship and fostering provided a means by which women could mother children who were not their own. Edith's career as Queen in the royal court evidently included a maternal role which can be connected to her status as the Lady of the royal household and her fostering of the royal children who were educated there. Abbesses combined spiritual motherhood and fostering in their relationships with those who lived and were educated in their abbeys.[2] The abbatial role as *materfamilias* is one that would repay future research.

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[1] For the history of Anglo-Saxon childhood, see S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1999).

[2] For current research on abbesses in Anglo-Saxon England, see S. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1988); S. Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearence of Nuns from Anglo-*

Maternity in Anglo-Saxon England was, for religious thinkers, intimately connected to the theology of Fall and Redemption. Anglo-Saxon homilists saw each human life and death as vitally important, because the consequences of earthly existence were either salvation and eternal life, or damnation and everlasting death. Human history and experience, including motherhood, were viewed as part of salvation history. Furthermore, birth, because of the part played by sexuality in the transmission of original sin, was deeply bound up with death. The link between maternity, Fall and Redemption can be seen in part as a consequence of the inheritance by Anglo-Saxon homilists of earlier patristic and Carolingian works about the opposition between Mary and Eve and about Mary's contribution to Christ's human nature. Within this broad soteriological approach, however, maternity was viewed in very different ways. Ælfric presented ordinary mothers as inextricably linked to sexuality and the transmission of original sin. The connection he made between maternity, sexuality and the Fall meant that, in his ideal society, women should be subordinated to their husbands, that mothers could not share in or even emulate Mary's perfect virginal motherhood, and that even Mary's motherhood was based on submission to God's paternal power. Wulfstan's treatment of motherhood perhaps assumed male, paternal dominance, but this was not expressed explicitly in his works, because he treated parents only as a unit and not individually. However, in another homiletic tradition attested to by the Blickling and Vercelli homilies, motherhood was not considered to be more dishonourable or subjected than the fallen condition of all humanity. Motherhood was based in the womb, it could be a source of honour and authority, and ordinary mothers could share in Mary's maternity. The differences between the models perhaps derive in part from the different sources used by the homilists, though it should be remembered that Ælfric

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Saxon England (Aldershot, 2000); and B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003).

altered his sources to make Mary's motherhood inaccessible by human mothers. It should also be noted that, for religious thinkers, maternity could only be understood in terms of salvation history. However, since the homiletic traditions circulated simultaneously, it can be argued that there were separate paradigms of maternity that could be drawn on in late Anglo-Saxon England.

Maternity in late Anglo-Saxon England was complicated by its interaction with other familial roles. Ælfric and Wulfstan assumed that mothering was performed within the conjugal unit; the Blickling and Vercelli homilies concentrate on the mother-child relationship. However, the possibilities for maternal action displayed in the wills, the dispute settlements, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the *Vitae Ædwardi Regis* indicate that aristocratic Anglo-Saxon kin-groups did not operate according to simple models, and that the roles performed by women as mothers could be in tension with their other kin-group identities or with their own interests. Motherhood acted as a site where the demands of natal, affinal and fictive kinship intersected and, on occasion, clashed. Female family roles sometimes overlapped but were not fully integrated; for many purposes, they were kept separate. The division between the family roles performed by an individual can be seen in the maternal channelling of land and property. When women made bequests to their children they acted as mothers but rarely as wives.

Emma's career also shows how complicated ties of motherhood and kinship could be. Her multiple marriages, and those of her two husbands, produced a pool of kings' sons who were connected not just by blood but by their rivalry for the crown. Inheritance patterns appear to have been fluid, with no clear preference for primogeniture, and this had a critical effect on maternity. Attempts to define legitimate

motherhood and inheritance more clearly provide another indication of the contested and mutable nature of Anglo-Saxon maternity. Emma, like her mother-in-law Ælfthryth before her, tried to monopolise the right to mother heirs by making motherhood dependent on legitimate marriage and consecrated Queenship. Ælfgifu of Northampton pressed for the right of all royal wives to mother legitimate heirs. The actions of these women, played out in the highest echelons of society, cannot automatically be argued to provide evidence of normal patterns of behaviour. However, further down the social scale, disputes over inheritance could and did place women in rivalry with their husbands' kin and, occasionally, with their own children.

Maternity, despite its complicated interaction with other family roles, was of crucial importance to female agency and identity. Female claims to public power and authority within the kin-group were usually predicated on motherhood. Emma was challenged and justified herself as a mother. Edith claimed a maternal role despite her lack of children and the problematic nature of her claim. Throughout the extant corpus there is an association between maternity and intervention. Mary and Eve intercede as mothers. The maternal wills provide examples of mothers attempting to ensure that their chosen heirs receive their inheritance, and an eleventh-century dispute settlement shows a mother speaking out to disinherit her son.[3] The *Encomium* and the *Vita* also provide examples of women intervening as mothers. Motherhood did not, of course, provide a route to absolute and unchallenged authority. Mothers, like those who operated through other familial roles or through public office, were not always successful in obtaining their desired aims. Gytha, the mother of Edith and Harold, was one of the richest and most powerful women in eleventh-century England. Her family dominated English politics for fifty years. However, she lost four of her sons in 1066. Tostig was killed at

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[3] S 1462.

Stamford Bridge; Harold, Gyrth and Leofwine all died at Hastings. After the battle she sent messengers to William to plead for Harold's remains, in exchange for the weight of his body in pure gold. William refused her.[4] The incident encapsulated many of the themes discussed in the thesis: grief, intercession and *memoria*. In her successes and her failures, Gytha stands as a fitting example of elite Anglo-Saxon motherhood.

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[4] C. Morton and H. Muntz (eds.), *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens* (Oxford, 1972), ll 577-84.

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