

**Kingship and the transmission of power in
Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis***

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Abstract

This thesis examines the depiction of kingship in Geffrei Gaimar's twelfth-century Old French history, the *Estoire des Engleis*, exploring the poet's construction of positive and negative models for rulers, and examining the ways in which these models are reworked and recontextualised in successive reigns. The *Estoire* has not previously been the subject of a systematic study of this nature, which aims to reveal the parallels between its episodes that are developed by Gaimar into a work comprised of interlocking levels of meaning. Gaimar's history diverges from its main source, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, to incorporate a number of interpolations and expansions that draw upon Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and other, unknown sources. The first of these, an account of the career of the exiled heir to Denmark, Haveloc, is the starting point for my analysis. Along with the complex prophetic dream experienced by Haveloc's wife, the displaced British heiress Argentille, these images will form the basis for my study of the work as a whole. Gaimar constructs a history in which each episode is dense with allusions that point to other works and to previous sections of the *Estoire* itself. The relative freedom afforded the poet by the distance in time between his own era and the earliest episodes in his work allows him to offer direct criticism and commentary upon figures whose political significance has faded. By the later stages of the *Estoire*, the accumulated parallels and allusions at Gaimar's disposal permit him to covertly attack figures associated with sensitive political situations by deploying images that echo previous, similar models. The poet's treatment of William Rufus, the last king discussed in the *Estoire*, is the culmination of the techniques used by Gaimar, and my methodology allows me to revise previous interpretations of this episode.

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Introduction

The *Estoire des Engleis* is the sole surviving work of the poet and historian Geffrei Gaimar. At over 6500 lines, it is all that remains of a much larger history covering the deeds of the ancient British in addition to those of the English. In its current form, it begins with the arrival of Cerdic in 495, and concludes with the death of William Rufus in 1100. Gaimar tells us that he composed his *Estoire des Bretuns* – the section of his history dealing with the ancient British – at the behest of his patroness, Constance fitz Gilbert, and that he based it largely on Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae*.¹ For the English section of his history, he drew upon the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, from which he largely diverges after the entry for the year 966.² The *Estoire* remains under-researched in the critical scholarship; what interest there has been has focused on individual episodes rather than the work as a whole. This thesis aims to address this by close textual analysis of Gaimar’s history, in order to identify the recurring themes and imagery Gaimar employs in crafting the complex network of allusions necessary to understand the *Estoire*.

The minimal information we possess on Gaimar’s life relates to his Lincolnshire-based patroness and the circumstances in which his work was composed, rather than to the man himself.³ Constance fitz Gilbert’s origins as a member of the de Venoz family of Hampshire evidently brought her close to court life, and may have provided Gaimar with a source for some of the details he worked into his account of recent history.⁴ The Lincolnshire of

¹ See ‘Sources’, below.

² See the *Estoire des Engleis/History of the English*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ‘Introduction’, p. xxxix. This is the only complete translation of the *Estoire* into modern English. While Alexander Bell’s earlier edition, *L’Estoire des Engleis, by Geffrei Gaimar* (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1960) is problematic as an edition due to his decision to use MS D (see ‘Manuscripts’, below) as a base manuscript, it is still worth consulting for its thorough coverage of textual variants. Bell’s edition itself superseded *Lestorie des Engles solum la Translacion maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, ed. by Thomas Duffus Hardy and Charles Trice Martin, 2 vols (London: Rolls Series, 1888-9) and Thomas Wright’s *The English and the Norman Conquest of Geoffrey Gaimar*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Caxton Society, 1850).

³ Paul Dalton convincingly describes Gaimar as a ‘secular clerk acquainted with life in court circles’: see ‘The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*, the Connections of his Patrons, and the Politics of Stephen’s Reign’, *Chaucer Review*, 42 (2007), 23-47, p. 2.

⁴ See Jean Blacker, ‘“Dame Custance la Gentil”: Gaimar’s Portrait of a Lady and her Books’, in *The Court and Cultural Diversity: Selected Papers from the Eighth Triennial*

the twelfth century was a region still immersed in Scandinavian heritage, as an area heavily settled by Danes, and this distinctive perspective has been seen to inform Gaimar's work.⁵ Gaimar's own ethnic background remains unknown, though diligent attempts have been made to address this question.⁶

This introductory chapter will begin with an assessment of the surviving manuscripts of the *Estoire* and the light they can shed upon its reception. I will then move on to a discussion of what has been established regarding the nature of Gaimar's source material. The dating of the extant MSS informs our understanding of the textual variations between them, some of which offer us insight into the political subtext that, I will argue, is a key feature of Gaimar's poem, and to which I will return throughout the thesis. The two surviving epilogues to the *Estoire* provide further evidence for this subtext, and warrant careful examination. I will then survey the research on Gaimar that has been carried out to date in order to demonstrate the areas that still require scholarly attention, before setting him in context within the twelfth-century renaissance of which he was a part. This introduction will conclude with a section on the methodology I will use in studying the *Estoire*.

Congress of the ICLS, ed. by Evelyn Mullally and John Thompson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 109-20 and Emma Bérat, 'The Patron and her Clerk: Multilingualism and Cultural Transition', *New Medieval Literatures*, 12 (2010), 23-46. For details of the relationship between Constance's husband, Ralf fitz Gilbert, and the de Gant family, along with what is known of Constance's family background see Dorothy M. Williamson, 'Ralf son of Gilbert and Ralf son of Ralf', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: Reports and Papers*, 5:1 (1953), 19-27, and Alexander Bell, 'Gaimar's Patron, Raul le Fiz Gilebert', *Notes & Queries*, 12/8 (1921), 104-5. For the fitz Gilberts' connections as 'minor members of the widely disseminated and highly influential Clare family' (*Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xi), see Jennifer C. Ward, 'Royal Service and Reward: The Clare family and the Crown: 1066-1154', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 11 (1989), 261-78.

⁵ See Henry Bainton, 'Translating the 'English' Past: Cultural Identity in the *Estoire des Engleis*', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c.1100-1500*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Carolyn Collette, Maryanne Kowaleski etc. (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 179-87.

⁶ See Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xii.

Manuscripts

Four manuscripts of the *Estoire des Engleis* have survived to the present day.⁷ All are Anglo-Norman and medieval, and are compilations in which Gaimar's work has been copied alongside that of others. Wace's *Roman de Brut* precedes the *Estoire* in all four manuscripts, and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* follows it in two (D and L).⁸ D and L both contain a shorter version of Gaimar's epilogue, while R features the sole surviving instance of its longer form, and H omits the epilogue entirely.

1. Durham, Cathedral Library, C. iv 27 (MS D) is the oldest extant manuscript, dating from the late twelfth century. It was acquired by the library in 1727, though its provenance is unknown. It is set out in two columns of 36 lines each for fos. 1-138^v and single columns of 36 lines afterwards. Each folio measures 233 x 160 mm, and has a writing block of 190 x 125 mm. There is an illuminated letter on the first leaf; the planner had allowed for alternating red and green capitals to mark lesser structural units. Verse couplets are indicated by indents. Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Helias' *Prophecies of Merlin* are at fos. 1-94, the *Estoire* covers fos. 94-138, and Fantosme's *Chronicle* follows at fo. 139. The *Estoire* begins at the top of the second column on fo. 94, with space left for a capital letter that has not been inserted. There is a change in hands at fo. 60^v and fo. 97, while a third hand is responsible for the remainder of the *Estoire*, and a fourth hand adds its truncated epilogue (fo. 138^v) along with Fantosme's *Chronicle*. The manuscript has been carefully annotated by a reader apparently most interested in Wace's work, which is copied here with an interpolation of Helias's *Prophecies of Merlin*.

⁷ Information on the MSS is drawn from Short's edition of the *Estoire* ('Introduction', pp. xvii-xxxii). For MS R, see also the British Library's online catalogue record: *Detailed Record for Royal 13 A XXI* :<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=5535&CollID=16&NStart=130121>> [accessed 5th August 2015].

⁸ Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ed. and trans. by Judith Weiss (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1999) and Jordan Fantosme, *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by R. C. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). See below for analysis of the relationship between these works and the *Estoire*.

The *Estoire* and the *Chronicle*, interestingly, show almost no such commentary by comparison.⁹ Le Saux notes the attempt to count each of the kings in the *Brut* by means of a system of ink circles, which have been retraced again by a later reader in darker ink.¹⁰ In the absence of an opening capital letter, which the scribe has omitted to add despite the provision of space for one by that section's planner, one of MS D's owners has marked the end of the *Brut* with a black cross in the top and bottom margins, indicating recognition of the division between the history of the British and that of the English.¹¹ Like the *Brut*, the *Estoire* section is composite, with a change of hands on fo. 97 (it begins on fo. 94). The hand that copied the *Chronicle* is also responsible for the brief epilogue.

2. Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library 104 (MS L) dates from the late thirteenth century, and is written in a single book-hand throughout. It is laid out in two columns of 32 lines each over 24 eight-leaf gatherings, with each alternate verse beginning with a capital letter, and comprises 189 folios measuring 255 x 180 mm with a writing block of 195 x 220 mm. The *Estoire* is at fos. 108^v-157^v; it is preceded by Wace's *Roman de Brut* (fos. 1-108, with an interpolation of Willeme's *Prophecies of Merlin*) and followed by Fantosme's *Chronicle* (fos. 158-189^v). The initial at the beginning of the *Estoire* has been left unfinished, though there are red and blue initials elsewhere on fo. 1, fo. 48 (the *Prophecies of Merlin*), fo. 58 (the resumption of the *Brut* after the *Prophecies*) and fo. 158 (Fantosme's *Chronicle*). The presence of the Courtenay coat of arms

⁹ Françoise Le Saux, 'The Reception of the Matter of Britain', in *Thirteenth-Century England X: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 2003*, ed. by Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell and Robin Frame (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 131-46, p. 138.

¹⁰ Françoise Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), p.87.

¹¹ Given the use of capitals in signalling important passages in the *Brut* – especially the Arthurian section, where they are most abundant – it is possible that the absence of a capital at the *Estoire*'s outset may indicate its relative importance in the eyes of the manuscript's planner. There is a change of layout at the start of the *Estoire*, which suggests that a third planner was responsible, in addition to the two behind the *Brut*. See Françoise Le Saux, 'On Capitalization in Some Early Manuscripts of Wace's *Roman de Brut*', in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. H. C. Field*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 29-48.

on fos. 58^v and 182 indicate some connection with that family; the manuscript may possibly have belonged to Cerne in Dorset. Faces and grotesque figures in pen adorn some margins.

3. London College of Arms Arundel XIV (MS H) dates from the first quarter of the fourteenth century. It comprises 238 folios of 260 x 185 mm, set out in double columns of forty lines each. It is a composite manuscript in three parts. The first part gathers Wace's *Roman de Brut* (fos. 1-92^v, contrary to the preceding MSS, without interpolated *Prophecies of Merlin*), the *Estoire* (fos. 93-124^v – some passages are missing, including the epilogue and Gaimar's version of the Haveloc story), the later Old French *Lai d'Haveloc* (fos. 125^v-132), Piers Langtoft's *Règne d'Edouard I^{er}* (fos. 133-147^v), *La Lignée des Bretuns et des Engleis* (fos. 148-9) and Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval (Le Conte du Graal)* on fos. 150-221. The *Roman de Brut* and the *Estoire* are in the same hand, one of at least four in the manuscript. The second part of the manuscript contains Walter of Henley's *Housbondrie*, in what seems to be an earlier hand on fos. 222-9^v, while the third part, in a later hand, contains a poem on the art of love on fos. 230-8. A genealogy on fo. 149 allows Short to date the first part of the manuscript, containing the *Estoire*, to between 1307 and 1320.¹²
4. London, British Library, Royal 13 A xxi (MS R) is a composite MS, like H. There are between 42 and 48 lines per column over 194 folios measuring 255 x 190 mm.
 1. Part one is a single twelve-leaf quire without its first and last leaf and with a mutilated fo. 5. It is written by a thirteenth-century hand in 47-line triple columns, and includes an incomplete version of *Li Romanz de Dieu et de sa mere*, an Anglo-Norman poem covering Biblical history, by Herman de Valenciennes. There is a cosmological diagram on fo. 13^f.

¹² Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

2. The booklet containing the *Estoire* dates from the early fourteenth century and is written in a gothic hand.¹³ It begins with the Latin *Imago Mundi*, attributed to Henry of Huntingdon (fos. 13^v-39^v), a map of the Heptarchy (fo. 40) and Wace's *Roman de Brut* (fos. 40^v-113). The *Royal Brut* interrupts Wace's work from fos. 41 and 77^v. The work is set out in double columns of between 42 and 48 lines. Only a blank line separates the *Brut* and the *Estoire*, which runs from fos. 113-50, and includes the longer version of Gaimar's epilogue. The text is damaged at fos. 115, 116 and 117, with parts torn away. Verse-line initials are in red, and section initials alternate between blue and red. Punctuation is limited to points at the end of each verse-line. The scribe has highlighted certain passages with marginal index signs, and also often uses the margins to repeat names and dates (outlined in red). There is no indentation, with a separate column being used for line initials. Short notes the presentation of signatures and catchwords, suggesting that this second part of the manuscript was in fact originally a separate booklet of eighteen quires.¹⁴ All three texts in this part are in the same hand and share the same layout. Short highlights the fifteenth-century *ex libris* from Hagneby Abbey on fo. 14, and takes this to suggest some link to Lincolnshire for the second part of the manuscript, noting its close proximity to Ralf fitz Gilbert's abbey at Markby.¹⁵
3. Part three (fos. 151-192) dates from the thirteenth century, and consists of six Latin religious texts and two letters. Bell

¹³ Short describes this hand in his Introduction to the *Estoire*, p. xxi, noting that the scribe was 'clearly much more at home' in the Latin section of the work, to judge by the preponderance of contractions and abbreviations.

¹⁴ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xx.

¹⁵ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xxi. Short also highlights the likelihood that the second part of MS R once belonged in the same manuscript as the *Hagneby Chronicle* (Cotton Vespasian B. xi, fos. 1-61) which is in the same hand and can be safely dated to 1307 or soon afterwards by the date at which it ends.

suggests that it was once at Durham.¹⁶ It concludes with an index of fifteenth-century statutes in French.

No independent manuscript of the *Estoire* has therefore survived to the present day; all four extant copies appear in compilations alongside other material. As we have seen, the one constant factor is the presence of Wace's *Roman de Brut*, a history of the British dated to 1155 that precedes the *Estoire* in all cases. Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, an account in Old French of the Anglo-Scottish wars of 1173-4, follows the *Estoire* only in the two earliest manuscripts (D and L), which also include the *Description of Britain*. Each surviving manuscript, then, preserves the *Estoire* in a different context, though always as a sequel to the history of Celtic Britain.

The textual tradition of the *Estoire* is well established; Gaimar's (no longer extant) autograph copy was, on the evidence of the remaining manuscripts, followed by two distinct groups. R, with its longer epilogue and additional passages, is the sole representative of one, while D, L and H all appear to fall into another.¹⁷ Despite its status as the most recent of the MSS, R is – if lacking in linguistic authenticity as a fourteenth-century copy – the closest in content to the *Estoire* as it first appeared, and is hence the base manuscript used for Short's recent edition and translation.¹⁸

The absence of any surviving independent manuscripts of the *Estoire* should not lead us to assume that none ever existed. In his analysis of the far more numerous copies of Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*, an eleventh-century history of the Normans that enjoyed a long life on both sides of the Channel, Pohl highlights the relative vulnerability of independent manuscripts.¹⁹ They were far more likely to fall out of favour as newer volumes, with agendas more relevant to their times, gained in popularity. By contrast, out-of-date works were far more likely to survive in

¹⁶ Bell, *Le Lai d'Haveloc and Gaimar's Haveloc Episode* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1925), pp. 84-5.

¹⁷ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xxiv.

¹⁸ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xxiv. Short considers that a manuscript's abbreviation (in the form of the shorter epilogue) is as likely as its expansion with the passage of time, and views R as 'more artistically fluent and coherent than its abbreviated redaction.'

¹⁹ Benjamin Pohl, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum: Tradition, Innovation and Memory* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), p. 59.

compilations, within which they could be recontextualised among newer works and hence rendered resistant to changing preferences and interests. Pohl also notes the difficulty in accurately assessing the intentions behind some composite manuscripts, drawing a distinction between compilations (manuscripts which collate several texts, all copied at the same time) and composites (manuscripts put together over a period of years or even centuries).²⁰ MSS H and R fall into the latter category, reflecting as they do changing approaches to manuscript construction during the later medieval period. R's reference to the first volume of the *Estoire* might be drawn from its exemplar; given that this source manuscript was apparently very close to Gaimar's original, and may have predated MS D, it is possible that this lost manuscript was an independent copy.

Parkes describes the changes in medieval reading habits between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, with the glossator's gradual replacement by the compiler having been largely accomplished by the end of the twelfth century.²¹ The commentator of earlier decades had added his own material, incorporating his commentary into the gloss; later compilers organised material using now familiar scholarly apparatus such as chapter headings, tables of contents and indices.²² The intention of this was to build upon the work of the original authors for the benefit of a manuscript's readers: 'to impose a new *ordinatio* on the materials he extracted from others'.²³ The second part of MS R was, to judge by the catchwords and signatures present, a booklet of its own before its recontextualisation within the compilation; that is to say, following Robinson's definition, it was an item that 'could circulate independently and at the same time provide a complete copy of a text'.²⁴ It is not possible to determine how long this booklet

²⁰ Pohl, pp. 52-3.

²¹ Malcolm B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 115-41.

²² For more on the compiler's task, see A. J. Minnis, 'Late Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the Compiler', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 101 (1979), 385-421.

²³ Parkes, 'Influence', p. 128.

²⁴ Pamela R. Robinson, 'The Booklet: A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', in *Codicologica 3: Essais typologiques*, ed. by Albert Gruys and Johan Peter Gumbert (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 46-69, p. 46. Note also Hanna's caution that it is, in his view,

remained independent before it was rebound with R's other two parts. However, it is notable that, as in MS H, Fantosme's *Chronicle* has been superseded by the more up-to-date Langtoft in MS R, in which the *Estoire* itself marks the end of its booklet.

Sources

Gaimar's work is a close rendering of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* into Old French, interrupted only by two major interpolations on the subjects of Haveloc the Dane and Buern Bucecarle until Gaimar reaches the reign of the Saxon king, Edgar, at which point he moves away from the *Chronicle* in favour of sources that are lost to us.²⁵ In addition to the (unnamed) English, French and Latin books he made use of, his lady sent to Helmsley for 'le livre Walter Espac' ('Walter Espec's book', v. 6448), a history of the kings of Britain based on works kept by the Welsh, and translated at the behest of Robert, earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I and half-brother of the Empress Matilda (vv. 6449-6452). Walter borrowed this book from the earl, and then lent it to Ralf fitz Gilbert, who in turn passed it on to his lady (vv. 6453-6456). Gaimar made a copy of the book and added to it 'transsa[n]dances' ('supplementary material', v. 6460) omitted by the Welsh, thanks to his previous consultation of 'le bon livre de Oxford/ki fust Walter l'arcedaien' ('the good book of Oxford that belonged to archdeacon Walter', vv. 6464-6465). He also made use of an English book from Washingborough which he describes as the 'l'estorie de Wincestre' ('the Winchester History', v. 6467), in which he found details of the British kings and the Roman emperors to whom they paid tribute, along with accounts of their lives and deeds (vv. 6470-6478). Those who doubt

important to determine whether or not a compilation is merely a reflection of its owner's disparate tastes and acquisitions, or a planned item: see Ralph Hanna, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 23.

²⁵ For Gaimar's possible sources, see Ian Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue', and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Liber vetustissimus*, *Speculum*, vol 69, 2 (1994), 323-43, pp. 327-44. See also Alexander Bell, 'The Epilogue to Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', *Modern Language Review*, 25 (1930), 52-59.

this authorising claim of his should, Gaimar recommends, ask Nicholas de Trilly for confirmation (v. 6482).

It was ‘Archdeacon Walter’ of Oxford who, according to Geoffrey, gave him ‘a certain very ancient book of the British’, upon which he based his own history (‘*Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum*’).²⁶ The *Historia Regum Britanniae* begins with the arrival of Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas, in the lands that will become Britain, and ends with the return of the Saxons after the death of Arthur. It seems that Gaimar had access to two different versions, using the Oxford book to supplement perceived gaps in Walter Espec’s.²⁷

The book at Washingborough is less easy to identify, but was probably a copy of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. An annalistic history of England and the English written in Old English, the Chronicle survives in seven manuscripts and two fragments. The copy used by Gaimar appears to have been closely related to the manuscripts of the so-called Northern Recension, a group of manuscripts apparently originating in York, D (MS BL Cott. Tibert, B. iv, also known as the Peterborough Chronicle), E (MS Laud Misc. 636) and F (MS BL Cott. Domit. viii). Whitelock is of the opinion that Gaimar ‘had access to a better text of the northern Recension than that in E or F, for he avoids the errors common to these two manuscripts’.²⁸ This, however, is to ignore the likelihood that Gaimar compensated for any issues with his copy of the Chronicle by supplementing it with accounts from the other, unidentified sources he describes having used. The identity of these other sources is difficult to

²⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britannie, I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 568*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), §2.

²⁷ Hans-Erich Keller suggests that the ‘Oxford book’ was in fact the First Variant Version of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, as used by Wace for his *Roman de Brut* (‘Wace et Geoffrey de Monmouth: Problème de la Chronologie des Sources’, *Romania*, 98 (1977), pp. 1-14, p. 7). This, however, assumes that the Variant version antedates the vulgate text of the *Historia*, a position Neil Wright’s in-depth comparison of the two works has confirmed to be incorrect. See Neil Wright, ed., *Historia Regum Britannie, II: First Variant Version* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), ‘Introduction’, p. xvi.

²⁸ Dorothy Whitelock, ed, *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 119. It would be easy, then, to assume that D was the source for the *Estoire*; however, several passages present in D (and apparently added to it at a later date) but absent from E and F are also missing from Gaimar’s Anglo-Saxon material. Whitelock postulates a lost, earlier exemplar of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which did not feature the later interpolations.

verify. It seems likely that much of Gaimar's additional material came from oral traditions, but these, by their very nature, are lost to us.

Dating

The date of composition of the *Estoire* is usually placed between the late 1130s–mid 1140s. Short argues for a very specific date: between March 1136 and April 1137.²⁹ Gaimar informs us that he took ‘March and April and a whole twelve months’ (‘marz e avril e [après] tuz les dusze mais’, vv. 6438-6439) to complete his history. Short states that the *Estoire* must have been written after 1135, as Henry I is stated to have died; his initial view was that the reference to Adeliza as queen (v. 6489) must mean that the epilogue was composed no later than 1139, the year in which she remarried to William d’Aubigny, but he has modified this view on the basis of evidence that she in fact continued to use her royal title until her death in 1151.³⁰ Gaimar’s reference to services in memory of the Anglo-Saxon queen Ælfthryth being held at Wherwell Abbey suggests that his history predates that foundation’s burning in 1141.³¹ Given that Robert of Gloucester and Walter Espec would have been on opposite sides in the civil war following Robert’s defection from Stephen to the Empress Matilda in 1138, Short does not consider it likely that they would have been lending or borrowing books from one another after this time.³²

Dalton argues, however, that the Buern Bucecarle episode is intended to reflect Robert of Gloucester’s renunciation of his allegiance to Stephen in 1138; moreover, he suggests that Nicholas de Trailly, cited by Gaimar as an authenticating source for his *Estoire*, would not have achieved sufficient status by that date to have been considered an authority. Dalton also considers that the destruction of the abbey at Wherwell did not necessarily preclude the survival of its religious community and its relatively rapid recovery, and that the exchange of books between those on

²⁹ Short, ‘Gaimar’s Epilogue’, p. 337.

³⁰ Short, ‘Gaimar’s Epilogue’, p. 337, and see also the discussion on p. xxxi of his translation of the *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’.

³¹ Short, ‘Gaimar’s Epilogue’, p. 337.

³² Short, ‘Gaimar’s Epilogue’, p. 338.

different sides of the conflict between Stephen and the Empress could well have continued, given the distinct lack of enthusiasm for the war amongst many in the aristocracy.³³ He puts forward a later timeframe of 1141-50.³⁴

In common with both Short and Dalton, I will assume a date of no earlier than 1135 for the *Estoire*'s composition, as the references in the past tense to Henry I in the longer epilogue indicate that Gaimar must have been working after that king's death.³⁵ This issue is complicated somewhat by Short's convincing argument that MS R's epilogue may have been added by Gaimar to justify a post-1141 redaction of his work, in which case we might question whether the reference to Henry's death was only included at this later date. However, Gaimar's reference to the prior commissioning of David's life of the king, which would appear to have been written after the monarch's death, makes this much less likely.

Assigning an end date for the composition of the *Estoire* is more difficult; however, like Dalton, I suggest that Gaimar composed the first version of his history during the 1140s. I would argue that Gaimar's distinctly negative depiction of the Flemings as an ethnic group during his account of the Conquest and its aftermath, in which they are described as being heavily involved in the bloodshed committed by both Tostig Godwineson and William I, can best be understood within the context of his own time.³⁶ The protracted civil war between Henry I's nephew, king Stephen and Henry's only surviving child, the Empress Matilda, began in earnest with the Empress's invasion of England in 1139 and ended with the accession of her son, Henry II, in 1154 after a peace treaty negotiated between him and Stephen in the previous year at Winchester. During this period, Stephen often used Flemish mercenaries to wage his war;³⁷ one such individual, William of Ypres, was responsible for the destruction of

³³ See Dalton, 'The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', p. 38.

³⁴ He does not, however, give a detailed explanation of what these dating techniques actually entail.

³⁵ This is based, however, on the assumption that MS R represents the earliest version of the *Estoire*, which is not necessarily the case.

³⁶ The following material on the depiction of the Flemings in Gaimar forms the basis of an article I am preparing for publication, titled 'Dubious Allies: Flemish Troops in Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*'.

³⁷ Matthew Bennett, 'The Impact of 'Foreign' Troops in the Civil Wars of King Stephen's Reign', in *War and Society in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Diana Dunn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 96-113, p. 102.

Wherwell in 1141, an event which attracted considerable opprobrium from Latinate chroniclers, both at the time and afterwards. William of Malmesbury, whose patron was the Empress's right-hand man, Robert of Gloucester, unsurprisingly decried William of Ypres as a 'wicked man', while Gervase of Canterbury cited him as exactly the kind of predatory, avaricious Fleming destined to arouse nationalist fervour in England.³⁸ Oksanen disputes the traditionally negative perception of William of Ypres, noting that our modern understanding of mercenaries does not match the concept of paid military service as practised in the twelfth century, while pointing out that Robert of Gloucester's own Fleming hireling, Robert fitz Hubert – executed by hanging after a failed 'land grab' of Devizes castle – was just as controversial.³⁹ William had himself been a comital candidate twice over, but had entered Stephen's employ after his second failure to win the title. After long and successful service under that king, he held lands in England until 1157, at which point he retired to Flanders, dying there in 1164.

None of the anti-Fleming commentary in Gaimar is to be found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. In his scathing criticism of Flemish 'plunder', Gaimar is very close to the attitude of his successors; anti-Fleming polemic was evidently developing into a historiographical trope during the course of the twelfth century. Gaimar seems to be projecting that pronounced distaste for Flemings back from his own time into the Conquest era, and grafting it onto source material apparently free of such prejudices. In this respect, he is noticeably ahead of his time; it is in the final decades of the twelfth century that a genuine distaste for the Flemings becomes manifest, with the stereotype of the 'weaver-bandit' brought to vivid life by Jordan Fantosme in his *Chronicle* of 1173-74 never having been deployed in mid-century chronicle writing.⁴⁰ Gaimar's charges against the Flemings are rooted not

³⁸ Bennett, 'The Impact of "Foreign" Troops', p. 104.

³⁹ Eljas Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World, 1066-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 223-24.

⁴⁰ Fantosme, *Chronicle*. See also Penny Eley and Philip E. Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings according to Gaimar, Wace and Benoît: Rhetoric and Politics', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 43 (1999), pp. 47-78 and Penny Eley, 'Speech and Writing in Wace's *Roman de Rou* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*', in *Maistre Wace: A Celebration*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess and Judith Weiss (St Helier: Société Jersiaise, 2006), pp. 121-37.

only in their association with violence, but in their pursuit of booty. He refers to their ‘pelfre’ (‘spoils’, v. 5188) of goods from the English acquired when fighting for Tostig. Even without the presence of Flemish mercenaries in England, this raises the question of whether this image had been formed as the result of older financial grudges. Not only had Flemings profited from the presence of count Baldwin of Flanders’ daughter, Matilda, as duchess of Normandy and later queen of England, but Kathleen Thompson’s archaeological research has shown that Henry I’s queen, Adeliza of Louvain, brought with her a sizeable Flemish contingent who put down lasting roots in the English countryside.⁴¹ While Adeliza’s entourage appears eventually to have been successfully integrated, they formed a relatively large and apparently distinct ethnic minority. The ‘raïne de Luvain’ evidently did not merely fade from the scene after her remarriage, if we are to judge by the biography she commissioned from the unidentified David.⁴² The evidence from these various dating techniques suggests a text composed during the 1140s.

Epilogues

Of the four extant manuscripts of the *Estoire*, only one, MS R, contains the longer of the two surviving epilogues, which starts immediately after the death of William Rufus (vv. 6435-6532). Gaimar begins by describing his process of composition, which was initiated by a commission from his patroness, ‘Dame Custance la gentil’ (v. 6437). After this, he gives details of the sources he has used in composing his work, a process which, he says, would never have been possible without the trouble taken by his patroness. If he can find a suitable patron, he will extend his work to cover the reign of Henry I, for he feels that this king’s biographer, David, did not include all he could have told of the late monarch’s life. Gaimar praises David’s work, and notes that Constance fitz Gilbert has paid a mark of silver for a copy of it, which she often reads in her chamber. This reflects its

⁴¹ Kathleen Thompson, ‘Queen Adeliza and the Lotharingian Connection’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol 140 (2002), 57-64.

⁴² See the discussion of Gaimar’s epilogues for the *Estoire* in the following section.

popularity, according to Gaimar: ‘En plusurs lius est espandu/del livre ço ke fait en fu’ (‘The material of which this book was composed has achieved some circulation and reached several places’, vv. 6499-6500). Gaimar describes the king as ‘li reis meillur/ki unkes fust ne jamés seit’ (‘the best king that ever was’, vv. 6504-6505) and ‘crestien fust ben[ë]eit’ (‘that Christian of blessed memory’, v. 6506). However, the entertainments at Henry’s court were scarcely touched upon by David. These were, according to Gaimar, impressive in their scope and magnificence:

ço est d’amur e de dosnaier,
del gaber e de boscheier
e dé festes e de noblesces,
des largetez e des richescs
e del barnage k’il mena,
des larges dons k[e] il dona

namely, the love affairs and the courting, the drinking and the hunting, the festivities and the pomp and ceremony, the acts of generosity and the displays of wealth, the entourage of noble and valiant knights that the king maintained, and the generous presents that he distributed. (vv. 6511-6518)

Gaimar advises David to amend his work accordingly, and threatens to hold him captive until he has done just that (vv. 6519-6526). With the matter thus resolved to his satisfaction, Gaimar states that ‘we are now reconciled and can rejoice’ (‘Ore avom pes e menu joie’, v. 6527). It is at this juncture that Gaimar reminds us of the starting point of his full work; that is to say, ‘la u Jason/ala conquere la tuisun’ (at the point where Jason left in pursuit of the Golden Fleece’, vv. 6529-6530). He takes his leave by requesting God’s blessing on himself and his audience (‘De Deu seium nus ben[ë]eit! Amen.’, v. 6532).

Manuscripts D and L contain a much shorter epilogue, which is sufficiently brief to cite here in full:

Ici falt l’Estoire des Engleis

Ci vuil ore finir m’estoire.
Del rei Henri ne frai memoire,
kar Äeliz la bone reïne—

a qui Deu doinst grace divine!—
 en ad traitié un livre grant,
 pur ço si fin le mien atant:
 l'Estoire des Engleis ci finist.
 Beneïe tuz Jesu Crist
 qui lur ententë i mettrunt
 e qui as autres la dirrunt
 qui ne la sevent n'en unt oïe—
 Deu de ciel tuz les beneïe,
 kar a tel chose deit l'um entendre
 u il n'i ad rien que reprendre
 ne villain[i]e ne mençonge.
 N'est pas [cist livre] fable ne sunge,
 ainz est de veire estoire estrait
 des anciens reis e d'els fait
 qui guvernöent Engleterre,
 alguns em pes, alguns en guere.
 Issi cuvint: ne pot al estre.
 Beneïe vus Deu celestre! (A1-22)⁴³

Here ends the history of the English.

I wish now to bring my history to a close. I shall not commemorate king Henry [I], since good queen Adeliza—may God grant her his divine grace—was responsible for a long volume about him, and this is why I am finishing mine now in the way I do: here is where the History of the English comes to an end. May Jesus Christ bless all those to turn their attention to it and those who inform others of its existence, people who do not know about it or have not heard about it—may God in heaven bless all such people, since something that cannot be criticised for being boorish or inaccurate rightly deserves to be listened to. This book is not fiction or fantasy, but is taken from an authentic historical source concerning the kings of the past, and tells of those who ruled over England, some peacefully, others by waging war. This is how it has to be: it cannot possibly be otherwise. May God in heaven bless you!

The longer of the *Estoire's* two epilogues is distinguished by the pains Gaimar takes to justify his work, the detail in which he describes his sources, and the personal nature of his comments on David, the mysterious author favoured by Adeliza of Louvain. All this is absent from the shorter epilogue, which ignores Gaimar's patroness, briefly alludes to David's life of Henry I without naming him or referencing its quality, and comments

⁴³ Short has treated this shorter epilogue as an appendix to his edition (*Estoire*, pp. 354-55). I have used the same line numbers here for ease of reference.

only vaguely on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as its source. It seems certain that this truncated version postdates the longer epilogue, as the content of the latter must, as Short puts it, ‘in some way reflect the original edition of the *Estoire*’.⁴⁴ Short’s argument on this point is convincing. The longer epilogue’s detail on Gaimar’s patroness, on the sources he employed, and on his reasons for undertaking the work addresses issues that would have been of significance on the first appearance of Gaimar’s work, as he set out his credentials and established a claim to authority. It is difficult to see why the author would have wished to ignore such concerns in the first iteration of his history, only to go into great detail on these subjects in subsequent versions.

However, this does not mean it was present in its current form in Gaimar’s first version. Short suggests a second edition of the *Estoire*, revised by Gaimar himself, to which this longer epilogue belongs. His grounds for this centre on the compelling evidence that there was a political element in the removal of all reference to Alan I of Richmond, count of Brittany, who is granted a potted biography praising his achievements at Hastings in manuscript R (vv. 5315-5330) but is nowhere to be found in the remaining three manuscripts.⁴⁵ After the battle of Lincoln in 1141, earl Ranulf II (de Guernons) of Chester, a relative of the Clare family and, by extension, of Gaimar’s patrons, aroused much ire with his tactic of expropriating lands around him. The count of Brittany was one of the victims of this process, and was embarrassingly forced to pay homage to Ranulf after being imprisoned by him.⁴⁶ Alan’s fall from favour may, Short speculates, have precipitated his disappearance from the *Estoire*, necessitating the issue of a second, amended edition at some point after 1141.⁴⁷ Short believes that Gaimar’s original version of the *Estoire*, which he dates to 1137, was amended almost immediately by an *alpha* redaction that same year which incorporated the passage in Alan of Richmond’s praise. MSS D, L and H all derive, in his view, from a *beta* redaction created at some point in the 1150s as Gaimar’s history began to be copied alongside Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, a version to which Gaimar appended his

⁴⁴ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxx.

⁴⁵ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxvi.

⁴⁶ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxviii.

⁴⁷ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxviii.

shorter epilogue. All three retain the passage on the count of Brittany, unlike MS R. Short postulates that this can be explained by R's source having been a post-1141 redaction from which Alan of Richmond is excised (*R).⁴⁸ It is at this stage that, Short considers, the longer epilogue was created. I would date the original version of the *Estoire* to 1140-41, and would expect Short's suggested *R to have appeared soon afterwards. The likelihood of a *beta* redaction's having been composed in the 1150s seems very strong, for reasons to which I will return in the Conclusion.

Critical studies

'Gaimar, dull though he sometimes may be, is a writer whose achievement in both form and content is magnificent.'⁴⁹ This is the verdict of Dominica Legge in her 1963 overview of significant contributions to the literature of Anglo-Norman England. She notes the mistake of assuming that Gaimar's main, or even sole, value lies in his linguistic characteristics, and highlights the fact that he is the first writer, as far as we are aware, to have created a vernacular *Brut*. 'In so doing, Gaimar set the pattern of popular history for something like three centuries. This is a fact for which he has never been given sufficient credit.'⁵⁰ Legge had earlier described Gaimar as a writer whose aims are shaped by his patroness's 'courtly' tastes, and expresses the view that the *Estoire* 'is not animated, like Langtoft's chronicle, by having any particular end in view, national or political.'⁵¹ She contrasts this with her view of Piers Langtoft's work as 'an epic whose hero was Edward I, just as the hero of Geoffrey of Monmouth's prose epic was Henry I'.⁵²

⁴⁸ In this, Short accepts the stemma proposed by Johan Vising, *Etude sur le dialecte anglo-normand du XII^e siècle* (Uppsala: 1882), pp. 25-34. Bell had initially accepted this in his *Lai d'Haveloc*, pp. 87-9, but presented a contradictory argument against the existence of an *alpha* redaction. See Bell, *L'Estoire*, p. xxii.

⁴⁹ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 36.

⁵⁰ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 29.

⁵¹ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters: The Influence of the Orders upon Anglo-Norman Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1950), p. 105.

⁵² Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, p. 71.

Antonia Gransden's statement in the first volume (1974) of her survey of medieval English chronicle writing that Gaimar is 'an inaccurate writer'⁵³ or J. S. P. Tatlock's 1950 characterisation of him as 'a simple-minded man' responsible for 'a second-rate poem' go some way towards explaining the fact that, as we have seen, much of the relatively scant secondary literature on the *Estoire* analyses the poem from a linguistic standpoint.⁵⁴ Tatlock's views on Gaimar are outdated, and are contradicted by detailed analysis of the poem and its complex structure, as I will demonstrate here. The *Estoire*'s relative inaccessibility prior to Short's 2009 edition has undoubtedly impeded scholarship. However, the second half of the twentieth century saw growing interest in Gaimar's work, although much of the research on the *Estoire* has taken the form of close analyses of specific episodes or themes rather than examination of the work as a whole.

Bell, Gaimar's first modern editor, published numerous articles on the *Estoire* over a period of several decades which highlighted Gaimar's unique position in Old French literature.⁵⁵ His work on Gaimar's interpolations and the many points of linguistic interest in the *Estoire* established that Gaimar was pioneering in several respects: as a user of octosyllabic verse couplets, in employing direct speech in those sections of his work not derived from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,⁵⁶ in his use of

⁵³ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550-1307* (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 212. Gransden approaches twelfth-century historiography from a positivist standpoint, dismissing Gaimar on the grounds that he is too often 'led astray by his love of legends and eulogy'.

⁵⁴ J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), p. 452. Tatlock concedes that 'this careless and muddling poet' succeeds in making 'a not unskilful transition' between the brief references to British history at the beginning of the *Estoire des Engleis* and the Haveloc interpolation (p. 455).

⁵⁵ Bell examined various episodes in the *Estoire* individually: see 'Buern Bucecarle in Gaimar', *Modern Language Review*, 27 (1932), 168-74, 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard in Gaimar', *Modern Language Review*, 10 (1915), 42-6, 'The Epilogue to Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', *Modern Language Review*, 25 (1930), 52-9, 'Gaimar and the Edgar-Ælfthryth Story', *Modern Language Review*, 21 (1926), 278-87, and 'Gaimar's Early "Danish" Kings', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 65 (1950), 601-40. His studies of the linguistic significance of the *Estoire* include: 'Notes on Gaimar's Military Vocabulary', *Medium Ævum*, 40 (1971), 93-103, 'Notes on Negation in Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', *Medium Ævum*, 50 (1981), 293-301, 'Glossarial and Textual Notes on Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', *Modern Language Review*, 43 (1948), 39-46, and 'Further Glossarial Notes on Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', *Modern Language Review*, 49 (1954), 308-21.

⁵⁶ Sophie Marnette, in her *Narrateurs et points de vue dans la littérature française médiévale: Une approche linguistique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998) has analysed a corpus of

technical terms glossed for his readership (notably ‘comete’, vv. 5144-5149) and in his treatment of his material, for example earl Godwine’s trial, which Bell cites as a possible influence on Marie de France’s *Lanval*.⁵⁷ The *Estoire*’s vocabulary, especially its nautical lexis, has also been studied by William Sayers, who notes the Scandinavian origin of some such terms used in the work.⁵⁸ Brigitte Burrichter compared Gaimar’s juxtaposition of styles – ‘Chronik, *historia* und *lai*’ (‘chronicle, *historia* and *lai*’) – with Wace’s later work, judging that the *Estoire* permits us to study this method of composition at an early stage in its development.⁵⁹

Gaimar’s apparent precocity within Old French literature was investigated from another angle by Alan Press in 1980.⁶⁰ He argues that Gaimar’s distinctiveness is more than merely linguistic or historical, and can also be found in the poet’s literary and cultural significance as the first real adopter of courtly ideals in Old French literature. Press draws this conclusion from two sections of the *Estoire* in particular, ascribing Gaimar’s unusually festive depiction of the daily life of Henry I’s court in the *Estoire*’s longer epilogue to an aspirational view of an idealised courtly life,

texts dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries – none of them Anglo-Norman – including, amongst others, samples from romance (*Erec* and *Yvain*, Béroul’s *Tristan*), epic (the *Chanson de Roland*), and the chronicles of Jean de Joinville, Villehardouin, and Robert de Clari. Her survey covers various aspects of discourse, including the issue of direct/indirect speech. She finds that, while narration predominates in chronicles, their writers make greater use of direct speech than do the authors of other texts in her corpus (‘la majorité du récit est consacrée à la narration, et non aux discours directs des personnages...le discours direct est davantage utilisé dans les chroniques que dans les autres textes du corpus’, p. 121) that saints’ lives feature more direct speech than epic, and that direct speech in epic takes the form of blocks of direct speech containing no authorial interruptions (‘qui ne contiennent aucune interférence de la part du narrateur’, p. 125). Based on this analysis, it appears that Gaimar’s brief accounts of his saints’ lives show no trace of hagiographical influence on direct speech. His use of direct speech resembles that of Marnette’s French chroniclers in its tendency to adopt a narrative mode in the sections of his work drawn directly from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but larger blocks of speech are present in passages such as the Haveloc episode and the conversations between Edgar and Æthelwald, or Rufus and Tirel (see chapters 2 and 4 respectively). This aspect of Gaimar’s work is outside the remit of the current study, but it is notable that his history, taken as a whole, does not appear to fit neatly into any of Marnette’s categories.

⁵⁷ Alexander Bell, ‘Gaimar as Pioneer’, *Romania*, 97 (1976), 462-80, p. 480.

⁵⁸ William Sayers, ‘Ships and Sailors in Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*’, *Modern Language Review*, 98 (2003), 299-310.

⁵⁹ Brigitte Burrichter, ‘Historisches Berichten und literarisches Erzählen in Geffrei Gaimars *Estoire des Engleis*’, in *The Medieval Chronicle II*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 41-55, p. 53.

⁶⁰ Alan Press, ‘The Precocious Courtesy of Geoffrey Gaimar’, in *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society (Liverpool 1980)*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool: Cairns, 1981), pp. 267-76.

perhaps playing to his patroness's own tastes.⁶¹ Press also compares Gaimar's superficially favourable account of the love between Edgar and Ælfthryth to that provided by Latin historian William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* of 1125, stating that, from the 'bare, dry, dusty bones' of William's highly negative version of the relationship, Gaimar had crafted 'our earliest known imaginative realisation of a courtly love story'.⁶² He does, however, acknowledge the presence of 'a certain number of rough edges' to the tale, which he considers the inevitable consequence of Gaimar's struggle to accommodate his difficult source material.⁶³ These 'rough edges' presumably include the murky circumstances of Ælfthryth's husband's death, and Gaimar's strong implication that she connives at her stepson Edward the Martyr's murder in order to secure the English throne for her own child by Edgar, the ill-fated Æthelred II. Press's decision not to examine the treatment of Edgar's romance with Ælfthryth in the broader context of her character's development gives a somewhat misleading impression of the episode, but his comparison with the account in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* is nonetheless extremely useful. His view that William of Malmesbury's 'dry' version of events required imaginative embellishment from Gaimar is informed by the suggestion that the poet's main consideration in adapting this episode was his patroness's entertainment. I will argue in the second chapter of the thesis that there is more to Gaimar's rewriting of Edgar's courtship of Ælfthryth than this, and that the *Estoire's* account of their relationship can only be fully understood by examining all the allusions made by Gaimar in the course of this complex narrative. Press was correct, in my view, to isolate this passage as one of extreme significance in the *Estoire*. His analysis suffers, however, from a reluctance to pursue the 'loose ends' of which he writes, a set of major textual lacunae which I will examine in detail in this thesis, and which I consider to be crucial to our understanding of Ælfthryth's character, as depicted by Gaimar.

⁶¹ Press, 'Precocious Courtesy', p. 270.

⁶² Press, 'Precocious Courtesy', p. 274.

⁶³ Press, 'Precocious Courtesy', p. 274.

The theme of Gaimar's 'courtliness' has preoccupied a number of scholars. John Gillingham considers the *Estoire* to offer 'an unparalleled insight into the thought-world of the secular aristocracy of the early twelfth century'.⁶⁴ Like Press, he sees the Edgar/Ælfhryth romance, along with the sympathetic treatment of Buern Bucecarle's wife and the growing love between Haveloc and Argentille, as symptomatic of Gaimar's 'keen interest in love and marriage', but is more intrigued by the possibility of Gaimar as a pioneer of chivalric values, most notably in his account of William Rufus's court with its codes of honour and knightly good humour.⁶⁵ This portrayal of Rufus as an exemplar of courtly behaviour is, however, open to question; I will argue against at length in chapter four. For Gillingham, Gaimar offers a new version of English identity drawing on Anglo-Saxon history while appropriating it in a fashion palatable to the tastes of the Anglo-Norman elite represented by Gaimar's patroness.

Jane Zatta, meanwhile, views Gaimar's work as 'remarkable for the way he anticipates and helps to shape the peculiarly English sense of legality that reconciles respect for hereditary right and precedent with a contractual model of the feudal bond based on mutual obligations and benefit'.⁶⁶ She identifies the accounts of Cynewulf, the uncle who dispossesses his nephew, Cyneheard (Kenewulf and Siebrit in the *Estoire*), Buern Bucecarle, and Hereward as examples of the chaos that ensues when reciprocal respect and harmony between the ruler and his subjects breaks down.⁶⁷ Zatta underlines the key point that, no matter how justified the vassal's anger, the repercussions of his actions in abandoning his feudal obligations are always disastrous for all involved in the *Estoire*. Crucially, Zatta demonstrates how Gaimar rewrites 'bare and cryptic' entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, such as its terse account of the Northumbrian king Osberht's replacement by another nobleman, Ælle. Gaimar's account of this

⁶⁴ John Gillingham, 'Kingship, Chivalry and Love: Political and Cultural Values in the Earliest History Written in French, Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*', in his *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 233-58, p. 233.

⁶⁵ Gillingham, 'Kingship, Chivalry and Love', p. 241.

⁶⁶ Jane Zatta, 'Gaimar's Rebels: Outlaw Heroes and the Creation of Authority in 12th-Century England', in *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association, 16: Out of Bounds* (Morgantown: Illinois Medieval Association, 1999), pp. 27-40, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Zatta, 'Gaimar's Rebels', p. 37.

event depicts Ælle as the victim of marauding Danes invited to England by Buern Bucecarle, whose righteous fury at Osberht's rape of his wife ensures the destruction of his feudal lord, but which causes havoc in the realm. Like Press, Zatta views Gaimar as an innovative translator of his source material, but she sees a deeper political and legal meaning to his choices in recasting these episodes. Nowhere is this more evident, in Zatta's view, than in the tale of the honourable Hereward, who is eventually slain after rebelling against a William I characterised as dishonourable for breaking his promises of peace and safety for the northern barons, should they promise him their allegiance. I am in agreement with Zatta that Hereward's status as a hero of the *Estoire*, while ambiguous in light of some of his more predatory behaviour, serves to identify William I as one of Gaimar's most notable malefactors, even as the poet minimises that king's role in his history.⁶⁸

Paul Dalton has also considered the political ramifications of the *Estoire*, but goes a step further than Zatta in questioning whether Gaimar had specific contemporary issues in mind when criticising breaches of feudal loyalty. In a 2007 article, he describes the *Estoire* as a work with deep political resonance for Gaimar's own time, in which individual episodes – Buern Bucecarle's renunciation of his allegiance to his king, Haveloc's bride Argentille's dispossession by her uncle, the wicked Edelsi – are charged with significance for those living through the tense political climate of the England of the 1130s.⁶⁹ Dalton also makes the crucial point that Gaimar's departure from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* on Edgar's accession to the throne in 959 – a choice made 'for no apparent textual reason'⁷⁰ – reflects the enormous significance of that king in the *Estoire*'s account of Anglo-Saxon history. He finds Zatta's stress on the feudal implications of the history 'problematic', along with her view that all participants are destroyed by their actions, but nonetheless considers her larger point about the negative consequences of such rebellions to be

⁶⁸ See chapter four for further discussion of Hereward's depiction in the *Estoire*.

⁶⁹ Paul Dalton, 'Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Peacemaking, and the "Twelfth-Century Revival of the English Nation"', *Studies in Philology*, 104:4 (2007), 427-54.

⁷⁰ Dalton, 'Peacemaking', p. 439.

sound.⁷¹ For Dalton, these episodes point forward to the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, and are intended to offer didactic material for the participants in that conflict.⁷² While I am in agreement with Dalton that the *Estoire* offers political lessons for Gaimar's contemporaries, this thesis will take a broader view of the historical figures to whom Gaimar appears to allude in the course of his work.

Penny Eley and Philip E. Bennett find similar political resonance in their examination of Gaimar's treatment of the Battle of Hastings alongside the accounts of Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, pointing out the difficulties this delicate situation posed for all three historians as they sought to handle Norman and English sensibilities around William of Normandy's conquest, even as the changing realities of contemporary politics distanced their audience from the events of the Conquest.⁷³ They consider Gaimar's treatment of the incidents of 1066 to be distinctly different from the accounts of Wace and Benoît, as the *Estoire's* version of Hastings is derived from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* rather than on eleventh-century Latin chronicles 'composed by Norman apologists intent on glorifying William of Normandy and justifying his invasion of England in 1066'.⁷⁴ Gaimar avoids referring directly to William of Normandy as the victor until after the battle, and, in Eley and Bennett's view, seems to hint at an Arthurian afterlife for Harold Godwineson, whose death is never actually described outright.⁷⁵ While the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* influence can, they consider, explain Gaimar's muted telling of the events of Hastings, they see Harold's apparent alignment with 'a certain French literary archetype' to be the principal message of this section of the *Estoire*, and note the difficulty in determining the appeal of such a perspective for Gaimar's patroness and her circle.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Dalton, 'Peacemaking', p. 438. As Dalton points out, neither Buern Bucecarle nor Hereward's killers (or, indeed, William I) are in fact destroyed (note 45). I will address these issues in chapters 3 and 4.

⁷² For discussion of the civil war's place in the historical imagination of later twelfth-century writers, see Rosalind Field, 'Children of Anarchy: Anglo-Norman Romance in the Twelfth Century', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 249-62.

⁷³ Penny Eley and Philip E. Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings According to Gaimar, Wace and Benoît: Rhetoric and Politics', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 43 (1999), 47-78.

⁷⁴ Eley and Bennett, 'Battle of Hastings', p. 47.

⁷⁵ Eley and Bennett, 'Battle of Hastings', p. 54.

⁷⁶ Eley and Bennett, 'Battle of Hastings', p. 54.

Gaimar's position as translator of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* into Old French has, inevitably, raised questions as to his work's relationship with Anglo-Saxon history and its continuing repercussions in the Anglo-Norman England within which Gaimar worked. Elizabeth Freeman identifies Gaimar as the first known writer 'able and willing' to use English sources in his Anglo-Norman history, thus rendering the Anglo-Saxon past accessible for reformulation and reinterpretation, a past that 'had to be consciously and meticulously conjured into existence'.⁷⁷ Gaimar's first interpolation – the story of Haveloc the Dane, rooted in the landscape familiar to his Lincolnshire-based patrons – reminds us that the ethnic make-up of twelfth-century England cannot be reduced to the binary distinction between 'Norman' and 'English'. Henry Bainton has studied the presence of the Danes in the *Estoire* and its implications for Gaimar's work,⁷⁸ arguing that the English past is not merely a 'static' entity but a complex network of identities, of which the Scandinavian substratum that must still have been evident in the Lincolnshire of the 1130s was a major component.⁷⁹ The act of translating the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* into French served to divorce that work's theme of unity from 'West Saxon political and linguistic hegemony', thereby leaving it free for Gaimar's contemporaries to appropriate, regardless of their ethnic origins.⁸⁰ Bainton's argument is compelling, but analysis of the Danish passages in the *Estoire* reveals negative implications, which I will discuss in chapter three. The complex subject of ethnic identity in twelfth-century England is outside my remit here, but I will argue that the portrayal of Cnut in particular serves to reinforce the claim of the Anglo-Saxon line of Cerdic, and is not, in fact, an argument in favour of Danish rights in England.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Freeman, 'Geffrei Gaimar, Vernacular Historiography and the Assertion of Authority', *Studies in Philology*, 93 (1996), 188-206, p. 206.

⁷⁸ Henry Bainton, 'Translating the "English" Past: Cultural Identity in the *Estoire des Engleis*', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100-c.1500*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 179-87.

⁷⁹ Bainton, 'Translating the "English" Past', p. 180.

⁸⁰ Bainton, 'Translating the "English" Past', p. 187.

Twelfth-century historiography and the art of rewriting

Gaimar's *Estoire* fits within the twelfth-century renaissance in historiography and literature that has attracted much scholarly attention.⁸¹ Prior to the Conquest, the languages used in England were Latin and Anglo-Saxon (Old English): both, as Clanchy notes, 'literary languages with centuries of development behind them'.⁸² Gaimar's identifiable written sources, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, represent each of these languages of record. Gaimar himself, writing in Old French, is a product of the trilingual society brought about by the arrival in England of William I and his followers. Gaimar's is the first extant work of its type, but he makes no claim to have invented the form, and it seems reasonable to assume, as does Damian-Grint, that 'Gaimar seems to have viewed his *Estoire* as fitting within an already-existing literary tradition'.⁸³ As the surviving manuscripts in which his work is present indicate, Gaimar's history appears to have been considered, by the late twelfth century, to constitute – along with Wace's *Brut* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* – 'a complete composite history of Britain'.⁸⁴

The fact that what remains of Gaimar's history is, in part, a translation of the *Chronicle* reflects the literary culture of his time. An understanding of the art of rewriting is essential to the study of writing in this period; the dense network of allusions and intertextual references present in twelfth-century writing can, at the first reading, render it as

⁸¹ The number of works on this subject is too large to cite in full here. See Marianne Ailes, 'Early French Chronicle – History or Literature?', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000), 301-12, Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Reto R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la Formation de la Littérature Courtoise en Occident*, vol 3: *La cour d'Angleterre comme centre littéraire sous les rois angevins* (Paris: Champion, 1960), Jean Blacker, *The Faces of Time: Portrayal of the Past in Old French and Latin Historical Narrative of the Anglo-Norman Regnum* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), and Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: the Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

⁸² Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 211.

⁸³ Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, p. 50.

⁸⁴ Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, p. 51.

opaque to those unfamiliar with its tropes as any work of modern popular culture. Kelly reminds us that the ability to engage with this material is necessary to recognise the abilities of writers whom ‘we may admire, but whose full achievement has sometimes escaped our grasp’.⁸⁵ The practice of *translatio studii* – translation of a work’s cultural context as well as its language, with a view to drawing useful matter from it for recomposition and reworking in a new text greater than the sum of its parts – informs Gaimar’s work as it does that of his peers. The appropriation and reuse of models from Biblical, literary and historical texts permitted writers of this era, following the principles set down by Macrobius and Jerome, to craft multi-layered narratives in which different levels of meaning could be encoded. Gaimar, who, as Damian-Grint has noted, would have ‘studied at one of the cathedral schools’, would have received an education that qualified him to apply such models to his own work.⁸⁶

The practice of reading in the Middle Ages reflected such an approach to composition. Readers were expected to revisit a work in reverse after they had come to its end, in order to uncover the patterns not apparent on a first reading, and which governed the writer’s decision to impose a particular structure on his narrative.⁸⁷ Sequential relations are ‘subordinated’ to other connections; as Lacy puts it, ‘parts of the work are related to earlier parts, but frequently *not* to those immediately preceding’.⁸⁸ Individual episodes are chosen because ‘some aspect of the form, theme, or imagery reflects that of other episodes and relates one scene to another.’⁸⁹

This disjunctive narrative would contain recurring imagery and *topoi* open to reworking and embellishment on subsequent appearances, an approach that highlights the importance of studying the work as a whole in order to analyse the parallels between its episodes. The accretion of such details gives us new perspective on particular figures or scenarios, knowledge unavailable when narrative units are studied in isolation.

⁸⁵ Douglas Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 11.

⁸⁶ Damian-Grint, *New Historians*, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Norris Lacy, ‘Spatial Form in Medieval Romance’, *Yale French Studies*, 51 (1974), 160-69.

⁸⁸ Lacy, ‘Spatial Form in Medieval Romance’, p. 161.

⁸⁹ Lacy, ‘Spatial Form in Medieval Romance’, p. 169.

Recognition of the importance of such a compositional technique can assist us in identifying patterns within the *Estoire* that have so far gone unnoticed. The analysis of episodes by their theme and by the use of recurring imagery found in earlier sections of the work allows us to trace the development of patterns which appear, when examined in isolation, to be incidental details or unresolved elements of the narrative. Medieval readers such as Gaimar's patroness and her circle would be expected to re-read a work such as the *Estoire* in search of such thematic resonances, the elaboration of which on successive appearances would add to the layers of meaning attached to a particular scenario or character. This method of reading is crucial to the analysis here, and informs the methodology I will employ in my study of Gaimar's history.

Methodology

The importance of individual kings in the *Estoire*, and the nature of the transition of power between them, has been noted in previous research. However, a systematic, comparative analysis of Gaimar's work has not so far been attempted. The aim of this thesis is to fill this gap in the current scholarship by studying the interpolations and expansions discussed above in order to answer my research question: how are positive and negative models of kingship in the *Estoire* constructed, both within individual episodes and throughout the work as a whole? I will do this through close reading of Gaimar's history, and through detailed analysis of parallels between successive episodes, in a bid to identify points of divergence as well as similarities in theme and structure.

The Haveloc episode is the most significant in the *Estoire* by virtue of its position and the space allotted to it; I will begin my analysis there. In the first part of the thesis, I will examine that reign, followed by the lengthy interpolation on Edgar and Ælfthryth, and the subsequent passage on the killing of Edgar's son, Edward. In these episodes, Gaimar establishes several models of kingship, along with a number of figures representing treachery and betrayal. The second part of the thesis will cover the events of 1016 onwards, incorporating the reigns of Cnut and William Rufus, as well

as Hastings and its aftermath, which is constructed as a sequel to the conflict and brief reconciliation of Cnut and Edmund Ironside, a situation brought to a close by the latter's murder as a result of Eadric Streona's treachery. The complex nexus of allusions built up by Gaimar in the course of the *Estoire* has at its centre William Rufus, the last of the *Estoire's* kings, and the culmination of the imagery that has come before. I will argue that the subject of kingship in the *Estoire* cannot fully be understood without the use of the opening Haveloc episode as an interpretive key to the history. A full analysis of this crucial theme in Gaimar's work offers fresh insight into its dating and potential audience, in addition to new perspectives on the depiction of a number of its key figures, with the events of the Anglo-Norman regnum standing out as an area of particular interest.

Structure of the *Estoire des Engleis*

The relative length of Gaimar's treatment of episodes in the *Estoire* tells us something of his priorities in constructing his narrative. His translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* retains that history's annalistic style, but is expanded with interludes of various kinds. Ian Short distinguishes between the longer interpolations – 'fast-moving narratives with dramatic incidents punctuated by dialogue' and 'anecdotal' episodes of no more than 150 lines with 'minimal narrative development and a more self-contained quality'.¹ The former group of episodes is also distinguished by its absence from the *Chronicle* tradition: Haveloc and his wife Argentille are not found there at all, while Buern is a character of unknown origin, deployed by Gaimar in order to justify a terse passage in the *Chronicle* on the subject of Osberht of Northumberland's deposition. The lengthy account of Edgar and Ælfthryth's romance is also new to the *Estoire*. From this point onwards (v. 3974), Gaimar's earlier tendency to insert occasional episodes into his translation of the *Chronicle* changes. After this, his annalistic, *Chronicle*-derived passages never exceed 200 lines and are, in fact, often much shorter. There are no further major interpolations, but the expanded episodes Short categorises as 'anecdotal' proliferate.

Of the major interpolations, the longest is the opening episode on Haveloc and Argentille, which goes on for 781 lines. The story of Edgar and Ælfthryth runs to 387 lines, and is followed by a 119-line episode recounting the murder of the king's son, Edward (506 lines in total). Gaimar allots 598 lines to his expanded material dealing with Cnut's career, including his conflict and later reconciliation with Edmund Ironside, the latter's brutal murder by the traitor Eadric Streona and the subsequent fate of Ironside's heirs. The tale of Buern Bucecarle and his rebellion against his king, Osberht, is 267 lines long, while Gaimar spends almost as much time – 253 lines – on the subject of the outlawed English nobleman, Hereward. His account of Hereward's deeds and death takes place during the reign of William I, the rest of which, by contrast, is dealt with in only 142 lines, and – with the notable exception of the 39-line interpolated passage on the

¹ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xl.

foolhardy Taillefer at Hastings – is drawn largely from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The most significant reigns after Haveloc in the *Estoire*, in terms of the space devoted to them and the number of related episodes, are those of Edgar, Cnut and Rufus, whose reign – described in a number of expanded episodes – is covered in 659 lines. William I’s reign is also notable for Hastings and Hereward, but the king’s own part in these episodes is minimal in the *Estoire*’s treatment. William’s opponent, Harold Godwineson, is similarly elusive in Gaimar’s account of the period, being overshadowed by the presence of his father, earl Godwine.

In this section, I will analyse the structure of the *Estoire* in order to establish the key figures and scenarios that emerge in the work as a whole, which I will then explore in detail in the following chapters. I will begin by analysing the Haveloc episode, which opens the *Estoire* and sets out all the recurring themes explored within Gaimar’s history. With these major topics of interest established, I will go on to highlight the material in subsequent episodes that echoes the imagery and models deployed by Gaimar within his telling of the Haveloc tale. Of particular interest are the points at which Gaimar chooses to reference earlier episodes within the *Estoire*, whether directly or indirectly. The table below sets out the space allotted to each episode within the *Estoire*, their form and the sources from which they were drawn (where this can be determined).²

RULER/EVENTS	LINE NUMBERS	FORM	SOURCES
Prelude	1-36	Translation	<i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i>
Haveloc	37-818	Interpolation	Local legend
Annals	819-896	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Wasing	897-920	Expansion	Unknown, possibly local
Annals	921-1807	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Cynewulf, Cyneheard, Sigeberht	1808-1918	Translation/expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>

² Details of the narratives under discussion will be provided in the relevant chapters.

Annals	1919-2064	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Danish raid and reference to Danr's claim	2065-2092	Interpolation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Annals	2093-2566	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Buern Bucecarle, Osberht, Ælle	2567-2834	Interpolation	Expansion of <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> + unknown source
Danish invasion	2835-2868	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Martyrdom of St Edmund	2869-2930	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Alfred the Great's activities	2931-3238	Translation/expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Gormund	3239-3283	Interpolation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> + unknown
Annals (incl. Alfred's death and qualities, vv. 3435-3456)	3284-3586	Translation/expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Edgar and Ælfthryth	3587-3974	Interpolation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , local, <i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i>
Edward's murder	3975-4094	Translation/expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , popular tradition
Æthelred II	4095-4156	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Swein, Æthelred's return, Cnut's battles with Edmund Ironside	4157-4256	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , unknown sources
Peace between Cnut and Edmund Ironside, Edmund Ironside's murder, and his sons' exile	4257-4670	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , unknown sources

Cnut's later years and challenge to the tide	4671-4755	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> and possibly Henry of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum</i> (tide sequence)
Annals	4756-4790	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Alfred's murder and Godwine's trial	4791-5034	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Prelude to Hastings	5035-5266	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Taillefer at Hastings	5267-5306	Interpolation	Popular tradition
Hastings and its aftermath	5307-5456	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Hereward	5457-5710	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , local tradition
William I, Waltheof, Robert of Normandy	5711-5774	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Rufus, Helias and Maine	5775-5974	Translation	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
Rufus's Easter court, 1099	5975-6110	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> + unknown source
Robert of Mowbray and Malcolm III's murder	6111-6178	Expansion	Unknown source
Rufus's power and character	6179-6248	Expansion	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> + unknown
Rufus's death	6249-6434	Expansion	Unknown source

Haveloc

Haveloc is the dispossessed son of a Danish king driven out of his lands by Arthur due to the machinations of the usurper, Edulf. He is living in Britain with no knowledge of his real parentage, works as a serving boy and believes himself to be named Cuaran. His adopted home undergoes

similar political developments. The Danish king, Adelbriht, had forged such a strong friendship with his British counterpart, Edelsi, that he married the latter's sister. However, after Adelbriht and his queen die in quick succession, the duplicitous Edelsi marries his niece Argentille to Cuaran after seizing the throne that should rightfully be hers. The young couple travel to Cuaran's hometown of Grimsby, where his true identity is revealed. On his return to Denmark accompanied by his bride, a faithful retainer of his father's recognises him, and puts him through a test – blowing a horn said only to be usable by the rightful king – that leads to his recognition as the real heir. Edulf is quickly overthrown after a fierce battle. Haveloc and Argentille return in triumph to Britain, where Edelsi abdicates on the advice of his counsellors. Haveloc rules for twenty years over territories which he expands greatly with the aid of his Danish associates. Gaimar tells us nothing more of his reign or the manner of his death.

The story of Haveloc and his bride sets the scene for the rest of Gaimar's *Estoire*, establishing as it does all the major themes that will recur in the work: treachery, dispossession, loyalty, inheritance, and the danger faced by an isolated young heir. The young couple, whose initial mismatched pairing soon becomes one of genuine love, are similar in one major respect; both have been dispossessed by treachery. Edulf is a scheming vassal of Haveloc's father, who foments discord between the king and his self-appointed overlord, Arthur. The latter's insistence on receiving more tribute from king Gunter is the source of the conflict that leads to Gunter's deposition and death. Any outright censure of Arthur here is avoided by the deflection of blame onto Edulf. Gaimar tells us that it was he who had 'treacherously summoned' Arthur ('par treïson mandé',³ v. 515), who had then made Edulf king of Denmark in Gunter's place. Gaimar then makes a connection between this interpolated episode and the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, by explaining that Edulf 'esteit frere al rei Aschis/ki par

³ All Modern English translations from Gaimar's original Old French are taken from Short's *Estoire* unless otherwise stated. Where I have supplied my own version, it is, in most cases, due to the need to isolate a few words or phrases for the purposes of close reading that have been obscured in Short's rendering, the main aim of which is to provide a readable translation. I will indicate at the appropriate points where I have found Short's translation to be inaccurate, or where I consider there to be the possibility of nuance to Gaimar's words that has not been conveyed by Short.

Artur suffrid la mort/la u Modret li fist tel tort' ('[he] was the brother of king Aschil who had lost his life when fighting for Arthur when Mordred had acted so wrongfully against him' (vv. 524-526).⁴ Aschil yields to Arthur in Geoffrey's account in order to avoid the outright conquest of Denmark. The reason for Gunter's accession in place of Edulf on Aschil's death is left unstated, meaning that it is unclear whether he was also a kinsman of the dead king or was simply chosen over Edulf by his people. Haveloc is later informed by Kelloc, an old friend of the family, that Gunter was 'a legitimate king who, like his father before him and his ancestors, had hereditary rights to Denmark' ('...un bon rei;/Danemarche out par heritage,/si out son pere e son lineage', vv. 400-402), which would suggest royal descent on Gunter's part. Gunter's defiant stance leads to his overthrow by Edulf, who seems to share his dead brother's inclinations towards appeasement where the all-powerful Arthur is concerned.

After his discussion of Edelsi's desire to lower Argentille's status, Gaimar gives us a lengthy description of Cuaran's good looks, temperament and background (vv. 105-166). His ignorance of women causes friction in the marriage at first, but the young couple finally consummate their relationship. This precipitates Argentille's prophetic dream (vv. 195-240), during which the princess imagines a host of swine and boars crossing the sea to attack a wild bear in its wood. The bear's guard of foxes are wiped out by the invaders, before a single boar pierces the bear's heart with its tusk. The bear cries out and dies. At this point, the remaining foxes rush to do homage to Cuaran, who has them tied up and returns to the shore. It is at this point that a great tide rises up, terrifying Cuaran as it brings down the wood around him. Two lions arrive and fall on their knees before him, but kill many of the forest's animals before doing so. Cuaran is attempting to make his escape by climbing a tall tree, but the lions continue their advance, even as they bow to him. Argentille wakes before they catch up with her fleeing husband. This is followed by an extended dialogue between the couple (vv. 251-318), during which they discuss the dream and attempt to interpret its meaning. Cuaran's reading is a rather comical account rooted in

⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, §6.

his work in the kitchens; it makes heavy reference to a dinner Edelsi is planning to hold the next day, and from which Cuaran hopes to profit by selling leftover meat to the squires. Gaimar tells us that Cuaran ‘was wrong in everything he said’ (‘kank[ĕ] il dist tut ert mençonge’, v. 266) but offers no alternative interpretation.

Another theme established in the Haveloc episode is that of the faithful retainer who saves the life of a dispossessed youth. Two such figures appear in Gaimar’s account. One is Kelloc, the son of a noble loyal to king Gunter who, along with his family, survived the attack on their ship by pirates, in which Haveloc’s mother Alvive and the rest of her retinue was killed. He and his wife, who the young ‘Cuaran’ had believed to be his sister, inform the couple of Haveloc’s true identity. The second protective figure is Sigar Estalre, a retainer of Haveloc’s father who hates Edulf and is lying low, awaiting his time to rebel. He encounters Haveloc when the latter is seeking sanctuary in a church after the attempted abduction of Argentille by youths in Sigar’s service; Haveloc has killed most of the young men by the time their employer arrives. Despite this inauspicious start, Sigar is deeply moved by Haveloc’s resemblance to the late king, and suspects the truth even before it is confirmed for him by his observation of the flame while Haveloc is sleeping, and by Haveloc’s successful blowing of a horn that can be sounded only by the rightful ruler of Denmark. Sigar encourages him to attempt this task by offering a ring to anyone at court who can make a sound on the instrument. This ring will prevent the wearer from drowning in the sea, from injury by fire, or from a wound inflicted by any weapon (vv. 692-694).

After disposing of Edulf in battle, Haveloc is able to secure the allegiance of his Danish subjects quickly. Gaimar’s description of their submission, especially that of two princes (‘lions’) who had formerly been Edulf’s men, appears to fulfil part of Argentille’s prophesy, but numerous elements – the bear struck through the heart, the destructive tide, the murder of the forest’s animals – remain unexplained. The new king then returns to Argentille’s homeland, where he challenges Edelsi. The fighting is fierce, but Haveloc wins the day, largely due to a scheme suggested by the queen in which the corpses of Haveloc’s dead soldiers are propped against staves to

make them look like a living army, terrifying Edelsi's army into capitulation. Gaimar emphasises the horror of the 'unshriven corpses' ('morz desconfés', v. 788). Edelsi's nobles refuse to fight, forcing the king, who has no legitimate heirs, to abdicate; he dies a fortnight later, apparently of natural causes. Edulf's exact fate is unclear. Gaimar tells us only that he was 'vencuz' ('defeated', v. 742) but does not go into further detail, though he does inform us that Haveloc 'single-handedly killed more than twenty of the enemy' ('il sul en oscist plus de vint', v. 744). Edulf was not, apparently, among their number.

Edgar

Arthur is introduced to us in the Haveloc episode as an empire-building king determined to obtain the tribute he feels is due to him from his subject territories. Three rulers in the *Estoire* hold similar political power; their importance is reflected by the amount of space accorded to them in Gaimar's narrative, as shown in the table above. The first of these rulers is the focus of Gaimar's final major interpolation. After recounting the brief reigns of Eadred and Eadwig, Gaimar chooses one particular English king upon whom to focus in much greater detail: Edgar, who accedes to the English throne in 959 (vv. 3587-3974). A powerful, just and pious ruler, Edgar 'tint terre com emperere' ('governed the country as if he were the ruler of an empire', v. 3566). He reigns over the entire British Isles, and war becomes a thing of the past. The inevitable comparison is too obvious to remain subtext: 'Unc puis ke Artur s'en fu alez/nen out un rei tel pöestez' ('Not since the disappearance of Arthur had a single king been so powerful', vv. 3571-3572). The apparent tension between Edgar's typical methods for winning his neighbours' allegiance through 'bel amur e par supplei' (v. 3579) and the fact that 'unc ne trovat kil guerreaist' ('No-one could be found who would have dared make war on him', v. 3581) – apart from the rebellious Thored, who invades Westmorland in 966 and is swiftly overcome – is an apparent contradiction Gaimar leaves unexplored. However, as Gaimar says, the king is fond of women ('de femmes ert jolifs li reis', v. 3596), a trait which will cause problems later.

The last king to resemble Arthur in the *Estoire* is William Rufus. Gaimar tells us of Rufus's fearsome reputation throughout France, and states that, had the king not died so soon, his fame could have been still greater; like Belinus and Brennius before him, he would have marched on Rome and claimed it for his own. This overt comparison to two figures from the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (§§42-3) is telling. Although Gaimar does not say so, Geoffrey's Arthur had also attempted the same feat, and failed. Gaimar has earlier identified Cnut as a ruler with similar imperial potential – at least when allied with Edmund Ironside – but who ends his reign by visiting Rome as a supplicant rather than as a conqueror, having wisely recognised his own limits in challenging the waves. Rufus's biographer, Frank Barlow, sees this as the ultimate statement of Gaimar's high opinion of the king: 'William was a second Arthur. No praise could have been higher.'⁵

Given the distinctly negative subtext underlying Gaimar's brief references to Arthur at the beginning of the *Estoire*, this statement warrants closer scrutiny. Neither Arthur nor Caesar is an uncomplicatedly positive point of comparison, and Gaimar's superficially positive characterisation of Rufus – markedly different, as we shall see, from those of his contemporaries, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon – immediately raises questions as to the possible layers of meaning present here. The Arthurian atmosphere is heightened by a lengthy passage (vv. 5975-6110) describing Rufus's Whitsun court of 1099 in his new palace at Westminster, at which the feasting, courtesy and rich garb are, Gaimar tells us, of unparalleled lavishness, much like the coronation feast of Arthur described by Geoffrey of Monmouth (*Historia Regum Britanniae* §§156-7) Gaimar's praise of the king's generous behaviour towards the powerful earl Hugh of Chester, whose splendid retinue Gaimar has earlier compared to that of the emperor of Lombardy (meaning the Holy Roman Emperor: vv. 5861-63) is lent a sinister undertone in MS R (vv. 6063-76) by a passage absent from the other extant MSS, in which he condemns usury and base practices employed by those who fixate on money.

⁵ Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 397.

Marital politics

Haveloc's happy marriage to Argentille and their joint political dominance is reflected in subsequent unions, although these later unions have troubling consequences. After the death of his queen, Edgar searches for another companion, and hears of the beauty of Ælfthryth, only daughter and heiress of ealdorman Orgar. He is determined to marry her, and despatches his friend, Æthelwald, to investigate the truth of the matter. Æthelwald wants her for himself, so he returns to Edgar and informs him that the lady is so unappealing that she would be an unfit queen; the king, who has been partaking freely of alcohol, is easily misled, and Æthelwald is free to marry her himself. Æthelwald is a man who has been raised from obscure origins by his lord, only to betray him later by coveting his desired bride; this is a character type we will encounter elsewhere in the *Estoire*.

When the king learns of his vassal's deceit, he visits the lady, falls in love, and despatches Æthelwald to dangerous northern territories, where he is swiftly killed by criminals. Gaimar reports that some believe the king connived at his death, but nobody is prepared to vouch for this publicly. The king is unable to punish the murderers, as 'ne trovast ki li deist/ki ço out feit, ni ke l'oscist' (he would have found no-one able to tell him who had done the deed and killed him', vv. 3861-3862). Edgar appropriates his former friend's property, followed by his widow, who arrives at court for the wedding and coronation in great state. The strongly expressed objections of archbishop Dunstan, who marches into the couple's bedchamber one morning to reproach them for 'avultrie' and warn them of the risk of 'martirie' (v. 3955 and v. 3956) only succeed in winning him the queen's hatred. Ælfthryth bears the king a son, Æthelred, and the couple remain together until Edgar's death in 975. Despite the characterisation of Æthelwald as a schemer who took a wife under false pretences, Edgar's actions in securing Ælfthryth for himself are nonetheless similar to those of Osberht's in his secret visit to Buern's unfortunate wife. The models available to Gaimar and his audience when interpreting Edgar's marriage include David and Bathsheba, Arthur's parents Uther and Ygerne, and the

disastrous pairing of the British king Vortigern and his Saxon bride, Ronwen.

Edgar is succeeded by his son from a previous marriage, Edward. The young king is, Gaimar tells us, an excellent ruler, but is undermined by the actions of foreigners ‘wrongly’ brought into the land by his father (‘mal aveit feit’, v. 3980). Ælfthryth’s status as queen dowager has brought her considerable power; Gaimar describes her as ‘la force del regne’ (‘the power in the land’, v. 3982). She has already behaved very badly towards her stepson in the past in order to further her own son’s claim to the throne, although Gaimar does not elaborate upon what this involved (‘fist fere al rei maint grant utrage’, v. 3984).

This difficult relationship culminates in a strange incident that proves fatal to the youthful king. After dinner one day, Edward asks his jester, a dwarf named Wulfstanet, to perform tricks for him, which the latter refuses to do. The atmosphere turns sour, and Wulfstanet leaves for Ælfthryth’s house, riding through a thick forest. As in the events that precede Ælle’s fall, a king is once again confronted by a distressing challenge to his authority while at dinner. Wulfstanet’s journey also takes him through a wood, the location of Argentille’s dream and, later, the site of Rufus’s death. The contrast between these two locations – the apparent safety of the king’s court at leisure, and the dangers of the forest – is present in all three of the major interpolations.

The king follows, and arrives at the queen’s dwelling. Nobody will confirm to him whether or not Wulfstanet has arrived until the queen comes to greet him, offering a warm welcome and lodgings for the night. The king is unwilling to rest there, but is persuaded to take a drink with her while remaining on horseback. It is at the point of proffering the welcome cup that ‘ne sai quel averser’ (‘some devilish fiend or other’, v. 4036) stabs Edward through the heart with a huge knife. The king utters a cry and dies instantly (v. 4039).

The dead king’s body is dragged by his horse towards Cirencester, where the queen has him buried in a remote part of the marsh. When his household arrive in search of him, she is already long gone, a flight they, and Gaimar, find deeply suspicious: ‘cele fuī, pur ço est dit/ke la raïne le

murdrif’ (‘The very fact that she fled explains why people say that it was the queen who had had him murdered’, vv. 4053-4054). This vagueness on the subject of her guilt is reminiscent of the implication that Edgar engineered the death of her first husband. Both king and queen appear to have employed others to remove an individual who stands in the way of a desirable goal. Gaimar’s method of conveying the suspiciousness of these deaths will appear again in his account of the killing of William Rufus.

That night, a mysterious ray of light is observed shining down upon the king’s concealed body. Following the advice of a vicar of Donhead that the light marks the site of a martyr’s grave, a fact imparted to him by the Holy Spirit, a search party sets out to uncover it. Healing miracles take place, and the corpse is translated to Shaftesbury. Ælfthryth, meanwhile, has made her own son king, as Æthelred II, at the age of just sixteen. Gaimar has been informed that Dunstan, himself a saint, absolved her of guilt just before his death and ordered her to do penance, which she carries out at the abbey of Wherwell until her own passing. The poet concludes with an ominous remark on the queen’s prospects of salvation: ‘Ore en face Deu son pleisir!/Il ad pöer de lui guarir’ (‘Now may God, who has the power to save her, do with her what he will!’ – vv. 4093-4094). Dunstan’s earlier warning of the potential doom she and Edgar could face as a result of their marriage takes on a prophetic quality here. With one son murdered and another destined to be overthrown by a Dane like so many English kings before him, Edgar’s imperial ambitions have ultimately ended in disaster.

Cnut’s new queen – Emma of Normandy, Æthelred’s widow, whom Cnut married in 1017 – displays similar tendencies towards interference in political matters, although her advice to her husband does not have the desired effect. The two infant sons of the murdered Edmund Ironside are entrusted to Walgar, a kindly Dane who returns to his homeland with the young prince and brings them up with great care (vv. 4503-4522). Walgar is an honourable retainer, like Haveloc’s two protectors, Kelloc and Sigar, who, as Gaimar tells us, cared for the two princes with the very best of intentions. Emma’s advice to Cnut heavily implies that this was not the outcome for which she had hoped: ‘s’il vivent, il ferunt guere’ (‘if they survive, they will certainly make war’, v. 4496). Gaimar relates Walgar’s

goodhearted misreading of his king's wishes, concluding simply with 'K'en dirraie?' ('What should I say?', v. 4513).

On reaching maturity, the English clamour for Edmund's sons to return to England, as 'pas n'amerent les Daneis' ('they have no love lost for the Danes', v. 4526). Ships are equipped to bring them back from Denmark, but queen Emma gets wind of the plan and is deeply unhappy. Gaimar describes her plans for her own sons by Æthelred, whose dispossession she greatly fears (vv. 4529-4556). It is this fear that leads her to a plan: 'purpensat sei de mal engin' ('she thought up a malicious scheme', v. 4547). Emma goes to Cnut and informs him of the English's intentions regarding Edmund's sons. Cnut is furious and sends writs to his two sons, governors of Denmark, with instructions to kill the princes. However, an unnamed well-wisher learns of this and makes Walgar aware of the orders. Their guardian immediately spirits them away to Hungary, where they take refuge at the royal court. After several years' residence there, the elder, Edward (Gaimar calls him 'Edgar', the name of his son) falls in love with the king's daughter, who quickly becomes pregnant. Her father takes the news well and has the young couple married. Their child is Margaret Atheling, 'la precïose gemme' ('that precious gem', vv. 4648) who is captured by Malcolm III of Scotland when the ship carrying her and her brother Edgar back to England is wrecked there. Malcolm marries her, and she bears him six sons, three of whom are still kings at Gaimar's time of writing (vv. 4666-4667). Gaimar does not mention their daughter, Edith, who will go on to marry Henry I of England on his accession in 1100. The image of their return from Denmark and the protection of their kindly retainer are reminiscent of the tale of Haveloc, while Emma's scheming and enmity as she fears for her own sons' inheritance is starkly reminiscent of Ælfthryth, a particularly appropriate point of comparison given Cnut's own similarities to Edgar in his power and conquests.

Treachery and kingship

Each of the major interpolations deals with a breakdown in the reciprocal relationship between a king and his vassals or close allies. Haveloc and Argentille are displaced by Edulf and Edelsi, while the repercussions of Osberht's attack on Buern's wife bring his innocent successor, Ælle, low. Edgar, meanwhile, is duped by his friend, Æthelwald, only to send Ælfthryth's husband to his mysterious death. His widow later plays a part in the assassination of his older son, king Edward. Blame for these actions does not always fall where we might expect it. Edulf, not Arthur, is held responsible for the outcome of the latter's imperialism in Denmark. Gaimar hedges on the issue of Edgar's and Ælfthryth's involvement in the deaths of Æthelwald and Edward, which he attributes to criminals and an unidentified assassin respectively.

After the Haveloc episode, Gaimar reverts to the Chronicle's account of successive English kings, before beginning his telling of the coming (or return, within the context of the *Estoire*) of the Danes. Appropriately, they cross the Humber at Grimsby – home to Haveloc and Argentille, although Gaimar does not remind us of this – in 867, and are given luxurious accommodation by Buern Bucecarle, a local magnate who invited them there out of a desire for revenge. This provides Gaimar with an opportunity to insert the second of his three major interpolations.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s entry for 867 briefly describes the Northumbrians' deposition of their king, Osberht, for reasons left unexplained; he is replaced by a commoner, Ælle. Both are then killed while attempting to repel the Danish invaders at York. To this terse account, Gaimar adds a new justification from an unidentified source (vv. 2573-2831). The figure he introduces, Buern Bucecarle, is a 'gentilz hom' (v. 2595) whose unnamed wife has been the victim of a terrible crime. Seizing the opportunity afforded him by Buern's absence at sea patrolling for pirates, king Osberht visits his vassal's lovely wife in York and rapes her with the connivance of his companions. The brave and decent Buern notices his wife's misery on his return, and gently obtains the truth from her. Furious, he storms into the king's chambers in York and renounces his

allegiance to Osberht. He then calls his relatives together and recounts the wrong done to him, leading to Osberht's removal as king and the installation of the seemingly blameless Ælle. Buern is determined to wreak revenge on Osberht, and insists on bringing the Danes back to England with him, a slightly surprising action given the immediate assistance he receives from his kinsmen.

The marauding Danes despoil the area around York before attacking the city itself. Osberht, who is still in his former territory, is slain in the attempt to defend it. Gaimar makes a point of telling us that 'Osbreth li reis i fu oscis,/Buern fut vengé, sis enemis.' ('King Osberht lost his life there. Buern, his enemy, had got his revenge.' vv. 2721-2722). For all his nobility, Buern has allowed his desire for vengeance on his former lord to destroy the lands and people he was sworn to protect. While the image of a tyrannical ruler exploiting his power to appropriate a desirable 'possession'— in this case, a wife rather than territory – is reminiscent of the actions of Edelsi, Buern's behaviour is also questionable, though Gaimar makes no criticism of him. All the major interpolations feature a prominent female character, but Buern's unnamed wife makes the least impression of the three.

The unwitting Ælle, meanwhile, is out hunting during the attack. He is interrupted at dinner by a blind man who appears ringing a bell, and who proceeds to inform him of the disaster, adding that Ælle's nephew, Orron, will be the first struck down in the coming battle. The king, infuriated by the man's prophecy, has him brought with him on his journey back to the beleaguered city. He takes the precaution of having his nephew installed in a high tower, and sets out for York with many soldiers, only to find that all is as the seer had predicted. Orron, determined to assist his uncle if he can, attempts to fly from the tower clutching two shields as makeshift wings. This is predictably unsuccessful, though he survives his fall uninjured and is able to join his uncle's army. He lets fly two javelins, killing a Danish soldier with each one, but is struck down by an arrow. Ælle, crazed with grief, foolishly launches himself into the enemy ranks and is soon killed. The Danes continue their conquest of the land north of the Humber uninterrupted.

Buern is never mentioned again after his recruitment of the Danes to carry out his revenge. The consequences of his actions are visited solely upon Ælle and his family, here represented by his ill-fated nephew, Orron. Ælle's suicidal charge upon learning of Orron's death calls to mind the heirless Edelsi's abrupt capitulation to Haveloc. Osberht's replacement does not appear to be a bad king, yet both are swept away by the Danish onslaught; the former is, at least, granted an opportunity to redeem himself by dying in the defence of York. As in the Haveloc episode, an element of prophecy is incorporated by the visit of the blind man, who comes to impart his knowledge of the future before disappearing from the narrative. Also notable is the location of this incident, which takes place while Ælle is dining after a hunting trip. This image of a fateful conversation taking place at dinner is a recurring theme in the *Estoire*.

The amity between Cnut and Edmund Ironside is soon disrupted by the actions of Eadric Streona, a treacherous former vassal of Edmund's who has defected to Cnut's side (vv. 4399-4476). Eadric invites Edmund to stay with him, but has connived at the construction of a dreadful weapon, 'l'arc ki ne falt' ('the Bow-That-Never-Misses', v. 4410) which he has concealed under the newly constructed privy. The king is killed instantly when he sits on the booby-trapped device, and is carried away for burial by his lamenting men. The image of Edmund's terrible death makes reference to all such killings in the *Estoire*; he 'gave the shout of a dying man' ('li reis criad un cri mortel', v. 4427) before expiring. Gaimar calls for divine punishment of the murderer (vv. 4434-4436) and is soon satisfied by the next turn of events. Eadric takes custody of the dead king's sons and brings them to Cnut with news of his crime. The details of his treachery are not received in the way he had hoped, and Cnut personally executes him for treason. This leaves the Dane as the sole ruler of England. All responsibility for this is laid firmly at the door of the 'treître' Eadric, rather than on any acquisitive tendencies on Cnut's part (v. 4399).

After the death of Cnut and his two unpopular sons, the English send for Alfred, son of Æthelred and Emma, who comes from Normandy to take the crown. He has, however, reckoned without the machinations of earl Godwine, who is conspiring to put his own heirs on the throne. Godwine

waits for Alfred's arrival in Guildford, and leads the king-to-be to the top of Guildford Hill. He begins a pleasant conversation with the unwitting young man, who expresses his desire to promote 'bones custumes' ('good customs', v. 4821) and 'peis e dreit' ('peace and justice', v. 4822). On Godwine's signal, his troops slay most of Alfred's Norman followers and imprison the king, who is killed horribly by disembowelment at Ely. The nobles who supported Alfred are furious, and vow that Godwine will suffer a worse end than Eadric Streona should he be apprehended (vv. 4846-4848). Godwine flees to Denmark, and Alfred's brother Edward (the Confessor) arrives, becoming king in 1043.

Edward's reign is an excellent one, in Gaimar's view, but is disturbed by the reappearance of Godwine in England, seeking reconciliation with his king. Godwine is tried, and Edward angrily accuses him of his brother's murder. The earl denies the charge and, after much deliberation, his peers order him and his sons to pledge sureties to the king and make gifts of armour, gold and silver to him. They become 'si bon ami' ('such good friends', v. 5028) that the king weds Edith, Godwine's daughter, and makes his sons earls. Gaimar concludes his account of this rather cold-blooded alliance by telling us that 'Par grant honur Eadward regnat' (Edward's reign was a highly honourable one', v. 5034). Short points out that Gaimar's silence on the ethics of this outcome as being unusual; Gaimar is typically quick to condemn treachery.⁶ This is all the more notable in view of Gaimar's unequivocal condemnation of Godwine's behaviour, which he likens to that of the evil Eadric. The explicit parallel drawn between the two men here is clearly significant. Although Godwine appears to have avoided retribution, the deaths of all his sons during the battles of 1066 decisively remove his line from the political scene, just as earlier events had ended the two branches of Edgar's direct bloodline, in Edward and Æthelred II.

In 1071, the new king, William I, faces the most serious and protracted rebellion of his reign. Morcar, earl of Northumbria, bishop Æthelwine of Durham and the powerful Lincolnshire landowner Siward

⁶ *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 5026.

Bearn sail from Scotland to a meeting point on the Humber estuary and form an alliance, which comes to incorporate a group of English outlaws. The outlaws' leader is Hereward, a dispossessed English landowner of great local influence. After plundering some of the Normans' territories, the allies plan to winter at Ely, but are prevented from remaining there by the king, who sends all his forces to guard the fenlands. He threatens the rebels with death, leading to their capitulation. Hereward, his kinsman Geri and five of their associates take flight, assisted by the brave actions of a fisherman who brings them into a Norman camp in his small boat, whereupon they slay many men and steal their horses and provisions.

Hereward gathers more followers until he has a hundred men, and establishes a base in the Forest of Bourne. Gaimar excuses their subsequent pillage of Peterborough and Stamford by explaining that the citizens of that region had been responsible for Hereward's unjust exile. Hereward and his followers survive in this way for several years, fending off attack from many, including the brave Ogier. His downfall comes when a wealthy woman, Ælfthryth, having fallen in love with him by reputation, asks him to marry her with the promise of the proceeds of her father's lands to aid his cause. Hereward has, by this point, actually made a truce with William I, and is on the verge of travelling to Le Mans to help recapture some of the king's castles there. Because of this cessation of hostilities, Hereward assumes he is free to travel. Gaimar notes that he is travelling with a great deal of gold and silver ('d'or e d'argent aveit maint fes', v. 5614). This appears to be the primary motivation for the attack on him launched by Normans, who dishonourably attack him as he eats. Gaimar believes that Hereward would never have been defeated otherwise, and that the fatal mistake of his chaplain, Ailward, who fell asleep when he was meant to be acting as lookout, contributed to the defeat. Hereward, unable to don his armour, fights magnificently and kills many of his attackers; he is finally brought down by four spears, although not before breaking the neck of the Breton Raoul de Dol with his shield. Halsalin, who decapitates Hereward, is often heard to swear afterwards 'ke unc si hardi ne fu trové' ('that a braver man than he was never to be found', v. 5696). It is Gaimar's opinion that, had Hereward lived, he would have driven out all the invaders: 'e s'il ne fust

issi oscis,/tuz les chascat fors del país' (vv. 5699-5700). Hereward does at least die bravely, unlike his luckless co-conspirators Morcar and Æthelwine, who make the mistake of throwing themselves upon the king's mercy, and who are rewarded for this with a long and miserable captivity during which they both die. Gaimar darkly comments that their supporters, imprisoned alongside them, were not so fortunate (vv. 5701-5710). Hereward, with his justifiable outrage at a faithless king (here William I) and his fine qualities of courage and honour, is a similar figure to Buern, but where Buern's actions lead to disaster for England, Hereward's failed rebellion is the last stage in a process that enables the Conqueror's successor, Rufus, to pacify the kingdom of England. The hint at a potential love affair with another Ælfthryth calls to mind the earlier relationship between Edgar and his queen, although in this instance, it comes to nothing.

William Rufus and political commentary in the *Estoire*

Gaimar concludes his history with an account of the reign of William II (Rufus), second surviving son of the Conqueror and his successor as king of England and duke of Normandy in 1087 (vv. 5775-6435). Rufus is referred to as 'the king' after his first appearance in Gaimar's narrative, but here we are told that 'Willame out nun, sicum sis pere' ([he] was, like his father, called William', v. 5776). The first decade of Rufus's reign was dominated by his efforts to pacify his father's still fractious kingdom, though Gaimar displays little interest in this protracted process, pausing only to state that 'il la tint e bel regnat,/Normanz, Engleis fort justisat./Tote la tere mist en pes' ('He ruled the kingdom well and fittingly during his reign. He exercised strong government over the Normans and the English and established peace throughout the whole land', vv. 5781-5783). The two rebellions against the king in 1088 and 1095 go unmentioned by Gaimar. While the continuity between the reigns of William I and Rufus is emphasised by Gaimar's note on their shared name, the lack of focus on Rufus's own political troubles in England coupled with the effort made to stress Rufus's fair governance over Normans and English

alike serves to distinguish father and son. Gaimar's Rufus is, implicitly, a more successful king of England than his immediate predecessor.

Rather than focusing on domestic conflict, Gaimar swiftly identifies another source of strife for Rufus in Maine. The king made no fewer than four separate visits to the region in the 1090s, but Gaimar chooses to merge them into the final expedition in 1098, during which the king besieges and captures the city of Le Mans. Geoffrey Martel, count of Anjou and Maine, takes the opportunity afforded him by Rufus's return to England to lay siege to the city and harass its occupying force. A messenger is despatched to inform the king of the situation, and finds Rufus dining at Brockenhurst in the New Forest. Upon reading a letter from his knights detailing the Angevins' arrogance and aggression, Rufus becomes angry, and immediately sets forth for Southampton in order to cross the Channel and aid the city's occupiers. Despite the protestations of the helmsman, Rufus defies the stormy weather and makes the passage to Barfleur. This incident – apparently modelled on the Latin author Lucan's description in his *Pharsalia* of Caesar's nocturnal voyage back to Italy from Greece (*Pharsalia*, V, vv. 532-593) – is also recounted by William of Malmesbury in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (564-6), Henry of Huntingdon in the *Historia Anglorum* (446) and Wace, in his *Roman de Rou* (vv. 9835-9858). After describing the impressive fighting force upon which the king was able to call for support, Gaimar recounts Rufus's generosity to the imprisoned count of Le Mans, Helias, who, after some ill-advised bravado, sensibly makes over his castles to the king after being set free.

The remainder of Gaimar's account of Rufus's reign hinges on England's troubled northern border. When Malcolm III, king of Scotland, is killed in an ambush by Robert of Mowbray, earl of Northumberland, in 1093, Rufus sets out for the north to investigate the crime. Gaimar identifies the actual murderer as Morel of Bamburgh, as does the Chronicle's entry on the subject (MS E, 1093); however, he also blames the otherwise obscure Geoffrey Engulevent, and adds a figure of 3,000 dead on the Scots side at the Alnwick battle that preceded Malcolm's killing. His sources for this information cannot be identified. Gaimar's assertion that an unnamed 'mal felon' (v. 6133) in Robert of Mowbray's household had maliciously spread

lies about his lord's involvement in the murder, despite the kindness he had been shown by his patron, is similarly absent from any other account of the affair. Rufus besieges the earl in his castle at Bamburgh, and nearly loses his quarry when the latter escapes by boat, only to be caught and imprisoned for twenty years, during which time he repents and becomes a 'prodom' (v. 6177). The 'mal felon' is another of the upstart favourites who have earlier appeared as destabilising influences in the *Estoire*, while the entire episode reminds us of the treacherous deeds found earlier in Gaimar's history.

Gaimar then devotes some time to an account of Rufus's achievements, from his positive relationship with Malcolm of Scotland's son and successor, Edgar, to his legal innovations and harsh regulations on hunting (vv. 6227-6250). After a brief portrait of the king after the Suetonian model (vv. 6243-6248), Gaimar moves on to the final stages of Rufus's life (vv. 6252-6434) recounting his fateful hunting expedition from Brockenhurst, site of the earlier episode in which the king was informed of the siege of Le Mans. During a pleasant conversation with a favoured companion, the Picard Walter Tirel, Rufus reveals ('par gab', in Gaimar's view: v. 6305) that he plans to advance as far as Poitiers and spend the next Christmas there. Tirel secretly plans to prevent this. On the hunting trip, he shoots the king, who cries out repeatedly and then dies, pierced through the heart, after receiving a lay communion of grass and flowers.⁷ He is borne to Winchester on a makeshift bier constructed by his lamenting vassals, and is interred there. Rufus's death marks the end of the *Estoire des Engleis*.

⁷ This detail is unique to Gaimar and is, in my view, very significant to his depiction of Rufus. For discussion of the imagery used here, see pp. 195-96.

Part One - Establishing the Paradigm

1. Haveloc

The *Estoire des Engleis*, in its current form, begins in earnest with Gaimar's account of the challenges faced by the exiled Danish prince, Haveloc,⁸ and his wife, the British princess Argentille (vv. 37-818). It hinges on misidentification: the scullion Cuaran receives the hand in marriage of the dispossessed Argentille, niece of the treacherous British king, Edelsi, only because the latter is unaware of the young man's real identity as Haveloc. When the young couple learn the truth, they overthrow the usurper Edulf in Denmark and regain Haveloc's throne, a triumph followed in short order by the abdication of Argentille's defeated uncle.⁹

The Haveloc episode is crucial to the *Estoire*. Its length and position in the work mark its significance, along with the fact that it was interpolated at a relatively late stage in Gaimar's drafting of his work. All the character models found in the *Estoire* are present in this early tale, enabling the episode to serve as a tool for interpretation of everything that comes after it. Gaimar's account of Haveloc and Argentille has received very little scholarly attention; where it has been analysed, it has either – as with the other major passages in the *Estoire* – been examined in isolation, or certain elements of its story have been taken out of the broader context of the *Estoire* as part of surveys of particular themes.¹⁰ I will argue that Gaimar's history as a whole cannot be understood fully without reference to this opening interpolation, and that an examination of its key players and themes sheds light on later episodes work.

⁸ I will refer to Haveloc by his adopted British name of 'Cuaran' in my discussion of the earlier part of the episode before his identity is revealed, and use his real Danish name after that point, for ease of reference.

⁹ For a detailed summary of this episode's narrative, see pp. 33-37.

¹⁰ Bell's *Le Lai d'Haveloc* is an edition of and commentary upon the story itself; see Dalton, 'Peacemaking', Gillingham, 'Kingship, Chivalry and Love', Freeman, 'Geffrei Gaimar and Vernacular Historiography', and Bainton, 'Translating the "English" Past' for discussion of themes within the narrative.

I will begin by examining previous attempts to find historical references within the episode, none of which have been completely satisfactory. While Gaimar deploys the names of real people and places throughout the episode, exact parallels between them and the events of his narrative are not to be found. I will then examine the key figures of Gaimar's account in order to determine the nature of the models he has created. The two kings in opposition to Haveloc's right to rule in Britain and Denmark, Edelsi and Edulf, are effective prototypes for two fundamentally negative models of kingship: the powerful ruler whose hubris causes him to exceed his capabilities in attempting to acquire territories to which he lacks any claim, and the usurper who violently seizes a kingdom and drives out a king to fulfil his own ambitions or to satisfy some private grievance, whether justifiable or not. These models allow us to compare such rulers with Gaimar's lengthy description of Haveloc and his qualities, which, along with the elements of the *merveilleux* that mark him as a true heir to Denmark, distinguish one worthy to govern from those who merely appropriate the trappings of kingship. This detailed account of a king whose fitness to rule is undisputed will serve as a benchmark in my examination of the *Estoire's* later rulers, none of whom quite meet the standard set by Haveloc.

Haveloc and history

Gaimar's version of the Haveloc story is the earliest to have survived; his sources for the episode are unknown. Numerous attempts to uncover a historical frame of reference for the Haveloc story have been made. Much of the scholarly attention paid to it has, unsurprisingly, focused on the better-known Middle English poem, *Havelok the Dane*, written in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and, to a lesser extent, on the Old French *Lai d'Haveloc*, written between 1190 and 1220.¹¹ The tale of the dispossessed Danish prince undergoes a number of changes both to its structure and to its cast of characters as it develops. By the thirteenth-

¹¹ I will differentiate between the Old French and Middle English characters of the same name by using the spellings *Haveloc* and *Havelok* respectively.

century English version, character names and some significant plot details have changed; Argentille, for example, has become the more Anglo-Saxon-sounding princess, Goldeburgh. Such changes could be the result of corruption as names and places blur with the passage of time, or the outcome of ‘deliberate changes based on conscious reflection on the story’s place in the historical past’.¹²

All attempts to identify Haveloc, Argentille and their royal opponents with real historical figures have proved unsuccessful. The only real indication of the central figure in this episode’s existence is the link found in Haveloc’s other name, Cuaran, which is also a nickname for the Norse king, Ólafr Sigtryggson – a ruler known to the Welsh as the phonologically similar ‘Abloyc’. This curious resemblance has led Kleinman to speculate that Haveloc’s tale may have originated in an area in which a Celtic language was spoken, such as Cumbria.¹³ Sisam and Dunn, however, both warn against the dangers of seeking historical veracity in Haveloc’s story. Sisam notes the apparent confusion between Sigtryggson and the later Swain in different versions of the story, and concludes that ‘if these divergent views point to any result, it is that the Havelok story corresponds to no history at all’.¹⁴ Dunn, meanwhile, feels that ‘Havelok owes Anlaf Cuaran (Sigtryggson) nothing except perhaps the temporary loan of a nickname’.¹⁵ The mystery surrounding the real origins of the tale, if any, seems to have been in place from an early date. Robert Mannyng claimed in the 1330s, with reference to Piers Langtoft’s version, that its sources could not be traced.¹⁶

Could it be that this lack of an easily traceable real-life counterpart rendered Haveloc, and the cast of characters depicted alongside him, all the

¹² Scott Kleinman, ‘The legend of Havelok the Dane and the Historiography of East Anglia’, *Studies in Philology*, 100:3 (2003), 245-77, p. 245.

¹³ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 246. For more on Haveloc’s possible Scandinavian origins, see also John Hines, ‘From *Anleifr to Haveloc: The English and the Irish Sea’, in *Celtic-Norse Relationships in the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages 800-1200*, ed. by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Timothy Bolton (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 187-214.

¹⁴ Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, 2nd edn, revised by Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. xxvi.

¹⁵ Charles W. Dunn, ‘Havelok and Anlaf Cuaran’, in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honour of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.* (London: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 244-49, p. 248.

¹⁶ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 248.

more tempting as candidates for identification with different contemporary figures? There are convincing arguments in favour of this view. Kleinman suggests that the variation in names between the different versions of the Haveloc story implies ‘if not an historical origin, then an historiographical one’.¹⁷ He sees the narrative as an attempt to reflect the events of East Anglian history, albeit in such a way that the characters do not directly mirror the historical figures with whom they share names, but so ‘that the names were generally related...by their close proximity in those sources or by their resemblance to a few well-remembered patterns that occurred in East Anglian or Anglo-Scandinavian traditions.’¹⁸ This would help to explain the more surprising aspects of Gaimar’s take on Haveloc, which appears to unite the story of the kings Adelbriht and Edelsi, taken from a written source, with that of Argentille, whom Kleinman views as a figure developed from oral narratives. The relatively fluid nature of Anglo-Scandinavian society in Lincolnshire could lie behind Gaimar’s casting of ‘Adelbriht’ – a name clearly derived from the very English Æthelbert – as a Dane, a possibility open to the poet as a result of the ambiguous cultural landscape in which he worked.¹⁹

In Kleinman’s interpretation, Gaimar dissociated resonant names from real-life historical figures, before attaching them to the characters he had carefully crafted for his own history, their traits borrowed – or possibly lifted wholesale – from those found in oral narratives already familiar to him and his audience. The effect was to create a tale rooted in local history, while skirting over real events by taking frequent detours into the realm of fiction. His references to the great figures of East Anglia’s past can be understood on a merely cosmetic level, as a thin veneer of historical gloss intended to help his audience find their footing within the confusing no-man’s-land in the transitional period between the end of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of British history and the coming of the Saxons, as told by Gaimar’s new source, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

¹⁷ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 249.

¹⁸ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 260.

¹⁹ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 253.

However, it can also be viewed in another light. Kleinman dismisses as ‘coincidental’ Deutschbein’s attempt to relate the story of Edelsi to Edward the Elder’s disinheritance of his niece, Ælfwynn, daughter of Æthelstan and Æthelflæd of the Mercians, in order to avoid a dangerous political alliance between the Saxon kingdom of Mercia and Scandinavian York as a result of Ragnall I’s bid to marry the girl.²⁰ The situation is not identical; Deutschbein’s suggestion that the characters of Edelsi, his sister Orwain and Argentille can be identified as Edward, Æthelflæd and Ælfwynn respectively founders, as Kleinman points out, on the fact that, far from opposing the match, Edelsi compels his luckless niece to marry her Dane.²¹ Turville-Petre is equally unimpressed by attempts to historicise the Middle English Havelok; in his view, the presence of ‘familiar institutions’ in the shape of particular names and titles is nothing more than a stab at greater authenticity, locating Havelok and his world within a recognisable version of England.²² The lack of exact correspondences between the episodes, however, does not preclude some attempt by Gaimar to relate his version of the romance to real events. In fact, it could be argued that the presence of such allusions in the text helped to foster a mental environment in which the audience, primed with indirect references to one set of familiar people and places, was all the readier to make the imaginative leap required to connect these fictional happenings with the contemporary events to which Gaimar wished to allude. Once this atmosphere of historicity had been suggested by the inclusion of intriguing local detail, the stage was set for the introduction of new references to more recent, and potentially thornier, matters. This is

²⁰ Kleinman, ‘The legend of Haveloc’, p. 261.

²¹ See Max Deutschbein, *Studien zur Sagengeschichte Englands: 1. Teil: Die Wikingersagen – Hornsage, Haveloksage, Tristansage, Boevesage, Guy of Warwicksage* (Cöthen: Schulze, 1906), pp. 107-09. Deutschbein makes a detailed case for the identification of Argentille’s family with these historical figures, citing a number of parallels. He notes, for example, that Edward and Edelsi ‘both have to pay for their crimes; Edward must face a dangerous Danish incursion at Chester, just as Edelsi later has war waged upon him by Haveloc the Dane’ (‘Edelsi und Eadweard müssen aber auch beide ihr Unrecht büßen: Eadweard hat einen gefährlichen Einfall der Dänen bei Chester zu bestehen, ebenso wird Edelsi später von dem Dänen Havelok bekriegt’, p. 108 – the English translation is mine). Despite Deutschbein’s apparent confidence in these links, it is difficult to see why such implicit comparisons would have been of contemporary relevance at Gaimar’s time of writing, and I am inclined to share Kleinman’s view that this particular set of apparent correspondences is no more than coincidental.

²² Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 149.

the view taken by Eckhardt in her analysis of the Havelok story; she considers that ‘some type of political project seems inherently defensible for this legend because, unlike many other expulsion-and-return tales, it makes emphatic and repeated use of a familiar and localised geography’, with the emphasis on place encouraging ‘the construction of analogies between episodes within the narrative, on the one hand, and contemporary events, on the other.’²³ The question, then, is whether Gaimar in fact intended his audience to discern controversial figures from their own time, or very near to it, within the shadowy events of the pre-Saxon past.

Dalton’s view of Gaimar as a writer whose work functions on a number of different levels leads him to the conclusion that the *Estoire* as a whole can be read as a didactic work, in which each episode acts as an improving lesson for those whose political responsibilities demanded – or so chroniclers doubtless hoped – a certain amount of thoughtful perusal of thorny historical issues. Written as it was in the heat of the conflict between Stephen and the Empress, the *Estoire* could have served a vital purpose, at least in Dalton’s analysis: that of a mirror reflecting the internecine strife that had marred most of Stephen’s reign. ‘This intention was manifest in Gaimar’s blending of past and present: his projection of current affairs into the past and his recounting of historical events that either resembled contemporary political troubles or could be read as exemplars of ways to bring these troubles to an end.’²⁴

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²³ Caroline D. Eckhardt, ‘Havelok the Dane in Castleford’s Chronicle’, *Studies in Philology*, 98:1 (2001), 1-17, p. 7.

²⁴ Paul Dalton, ‘Geffrei Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*, Peacemaking, and the “Twelfth-Century Revival of the English Nation”’, *Studies in Philology*, 104 (2007), 427-54, p. 431.

blending of past and present: his projection of current affairs into the past and his recounting of historical events that either resembled contemporary political troubles or could be read as exemplars of ways to bring these troubles to an end.²⁵

For Dalton, the Haveloc episode is a fine example of this tendency in the *Estoire*. He sees the story – an interpolation, likely added at some stage after the *Estoire* had been started – as one intended to offer meaningful parallels with Stephen's own reign. Like Freeman, he views the land tenure dispute at the heart of the episode as a reflection of the disputed claim to the English throne in Gaimar's own day, with Stephen cast firmly in the role of perjurer after breaking the vow he swore to Henry I in 1127 to safeguard the Empress's rights to the crown. Within the brief characterisations of the story's key players, Dalton discerns broad-brush portraits of the antagonists in the civil war of the 1140s. Even the name of Edelsi's ousted niece, Argentille, closely resembles that of Matilda's stronghold across the Channel, Argentan, the base bestowed upon her by her father and which appears to have been her residence until her attempt to take the English throne in 1139. Argentille's marriage to her scullion also perhaps serves, as Dalton suggests, as a wry commentary on the Empress's notoriously unhappy marriage to Geoffrey, count of Anjou, a match lower on the social scale than her first union as a teenager with the elderly German emperor, Henry V. The Empress's lifelong use of her former title indicates the level of resistance she seems to have felt to this second marriage and its accompanying loss of rank. If the Empress is Argentille in this reading, we might assume that Gaimar is guiding us towards a reading in which the young count fits the image of Haveloc, though the notion of Geoffrey of Anjou as a heroic figure destined to inherit the English throne would likely have proved jarring to Norman sensibilities. Instead, Dalton looks elsewhere for a figure to identify with Haveloc, whom he likens to Matilda's half-brother and close ally, Robert of Gloucester. Like Haveloc, he was the son of a king (although not his legitimate heir), a landholder in Grimsby, and the deliverer of a notorious rebuff to Stephen, the claimant he had originally

²⁵ Dalton, 'Peacemaking', p. 431.

supported, when, like Haveloc, he defended a female heir's right to the crown.²⁶

The idea of the Haveloc story as a convenient site for Gaimar's covert political commentary is a compelling one, and Dalton's attempt to link this subtext to the events of Gaimar's own time is plausible. Given its important position within the *Estoire* as the first interpolation Gaimar chooses to include, inserted at some point after his first draft was begun, and bearing in mind the hypothesis that Gaimar's work is freighted with historicising material, we might reasonably expect it to carry some political weight. However, the layers of interlocking detail encoded within Gaimar's depiction of different rulers and scenarios are sufficiently complex to bear the weight of several messages. His multi-faceted portraits of historical figures permit his audience to access a deeper level of understanding. Each episode illuminates the stories Gaimar has already told, or which he is yet to tell, leaving us with a chain of concatenating allusions that point towards a unified message and lead us to an identification with a particular character model or set of circumstances that Gaimar wishes to highlight.

Le Saux notes that, in Wace's *Roman de Rou*, the landless prince Henry is in a position 'not unlike that of a young Haveloc the Dane; admittedly, he is not reduced to being a kitchen scullion, but like Haveloc he has to make the most of what he has – in his case, money – in order to survive and eventually regain his rightful place in society.'²⁷ Given that Robert, the eldest of the conqueror's three sons, was the one with, on the face of it, the greater grievance against his father and middle brother, Rufus, due to their apparent collusion in his dispossession, the identification of Henry with the wronged Haveloc at first seems to be missing a link; Henry was not the rightful heir, according to the usual dictates of primogeniture. However, Le Saux notes that the justification for Henry's eventual succession – emphasised by his supporters during his reign – hinged on his having been, in Byzantine parlance, 'born in the purple': that is to say, to a reigning king. Viewed in this light, neither Robert nor Rufus was as suited

²⁶ Dalton, 'Peacemaking', pp. 433-4.

²⁷ Françoise H.M. Le Saux, "'La geste des trois fils Guillaume?'" Henry I in Wace's *Roman de Rou*, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 34 (2008), 191-207.

to rule as their younger brother, being themselves only the sons of a duke. More specifically, as Le Saux points out, Henry had been left nothing by his father except a large sum of cash. Again, the comparison is tempting, but never quite coheres into a reference we can identify as a pointed allusion to a particular historical figure.

None of the attempts that have been made to locate Gaimar's Haveloc and his associates within a verifiable historical reality have been entirely successful. The flexibility and perceived political resonance of the episode in thirteenth-century versions perhaps reflect the *topoi* open to reinterpretation in a narrative that was sufficiently multi-layered to permit significant reworking. While it is possible to discern some glancing allusions to more recent historical events in the *Estoire*, one-to-one correspondences do not fit the approach taken by Gaimar in his work. The interplay between the models employed by Gaimar in the Haveloc episode serves, instead, as a key to interpreting the poet's depiction of various later kings, traitors and loyal vassals, just as these later passages add further depth and resonance to the material that has come before. As such, it is the internal connections between rulers and kings that enable Gaimar to explore the realities of kingship, rather than direct or covert allusions to actual rulers of the time.

Edelsi and Edulf

Haveloc is the central figure in Gaimar's narrative, but he can only be understood fully with reference to the kings against whom he is contrasted, Edulf in Denmark and Edelsi in Britain. In Gaimar's account, the two rulers who oppose Haveloc in his bid to win back his and his wife's kingdoms at first appear to be very similar in character. Both have gained territories through duplicity, and displaced the rightful rulers in the process; neither has an heir of his own, while each is destined to be swept aside by the young couple and their armies. Even their names are similar, with their shared first syllable. However, they differ in important respects. Each presents us with a different kind of threat to the established order of inheritance, and poses a very specific challenge to the displaced couple.

These differences are significant in an analysis of the Haveloc episode, as they present us with models of unsuccessful kingship that will prove crucial both to our understanding of the depiction of the individual rulers who appear later in the *Estoire*, and to Gaimar's critique of kingship as a whole. Haveloc's opponent, Edulf, is a usurper who drove the former's father from the Danish throne. Argentille's uncle, Edelsi, is a king in his own right with ambitions to expand his territories – while consolidating his own vulnerable position – by appropriating his niece's lands.

As is typical of Gaimar's tyrants, Edelsi's true colours are still to be revealed at the beginning of Haveloc's story. Gaimar begins by telling us of the great friendship that develops between the British king and his Danish counterpart, Adelbriht, one that appears to have been rendered even more durable by Adelbriht's marriage to Edelsi's sister, Orwain:

Tant s'acointerent cil dui rei
 k'il furent compaignon par fei,
 e k'entre els dous unt tel amur
 Edelsi dona sa sorur
 a Adelbrit, cel riche reis
 ki ert del linage as Daneis.
 Li altre rei estait Breton
 ki Edelsi aveit a nun.
 Sa sorur out [a] nun Orwain,
 mult ert franche e de bone main. (vv. 55-64)

These two kings became such close acquaintances that they swore to be bosom companions, and so intimate was the friendship between them that Edelsi gave his sister in marriage to Adelbriht, that powerful king of Danish extraction. As far as king Edelsi was concerned, he was a Briton, and his sister, who was called Orwain, was of great nobility and excellent lineage.

Adelbriht is a powerful ruler, whose territories encompass no fewer than four 'riches contez' ('valuable earldoms', v.72) in his ancestral home of Denmark, in addition to his British lands reaching from Colchester to Holland in Lincolnshire. These were obtained by conquest, Gaimar tells us, unlike his inherited Danish possessions: 'en Bretaigne aveit conquis/Caïr Cöel od le païs' ('in Britain he had seized control of Colchester and the country round it', vv. 73-74). Gaimar's use of the British name for

Colchester here – although he uses ‘Colecestre’ in the following line (v. 75) - evokes that city’s purported foundation by king Coel, a notable figure in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in a detail that links the Haveloc episode to the events of Gaimar’s source for his lost *Estoire des Bretuns*.²⁸

In spite of the apparent friendship between Adelbriht and his neighbour, Edelsi, the fact remains that the Danish king has used force to appropriate a significant portion of British territory that presumably once belonged either to Edelsi or to some defeated neighbour. Gaimar does not linger on this, but Edelsi’s later dispossession of his half-Danish niece suggests that the marital alliance arranged by the two kings is as much the result of strategy on the British king’s part as it is the product of any genuine personal warmth. This impression is heightened by Gaimar’s statement that ‘Tant cum il (Adelbriht) fu si poëstis,/Edelsi fu bien sis amis’ (vv. 77-78 – ‘Edelsi’s close friendship with him lasted for as long as he enjoyed this position of power’).

Despite Adelbriht’s identification by Gaimar as a Dane with possessions in that country, his name is, in fact, distinctively English. It is an acceptable Old French spelling of the Anglo-Saxon royal name, ‘Æthelbert’. The name of Æthelbert I, king of Kent, is later given as ‘Edelbrit’ (v. 955, v. 977, v. 1108), ‘Edelbert’ (v. 1073) and ‘Edelbriht’ (v. 2304); the last of these spelling variants also appears as the name of Æthelbert, king of Wessex (v. 2532 and v. 2539). These orthographic variations could be attributed to scribal error or inconsistency, as the absence of an autograph manuscript makes it impossible to say for certain that they can be attributed to Gaimar himself. The two elements of the Anglo-Saxon compound name (‘Æthel’ and ‘bert’) are visible behind each of the variant forms. While the events of the Haveloc episode predate Anglo-Saxon dominance, Gaimar adds a strong English flavour with his use of anachronistic names for Danish characters that call to mind much later figures of unquestionable importance to England’s history. Although the British Edelsi’s name does not recur in the *Estoire*, it too evokes a

²⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, §78.

distinctive Anglo-Saxon phonology, creating an alliterative effect in the two kings' names (as is also the case with the name of the usurper, Edulf).

Later in the narrative (v. 405), Haveloc learns the truth of his parentage from Kelloc, who describes the kindness of his mother, the Danish queen Alvide. It is interesting to note that MS D refers to Cnut's queen, Emma of Normandy, by both her English and French names, 'Ælfgifu Emma' ('Elvive Emeline', MS D, v. 4524). Bell points out Gaimar's usage of the same name for both these characters. He notes that MS D calls Haveloc's mother 'Alvide', which he replaces with MS R's 'Alvide' on the grounds that the former is more likely to be a scribal error.²⁹ Like Æthelbert, Ælfgifu is a name typical of Anglo-Saxon royalty.³⁰ These details provide no traceable connection to any real king or queen with those names; any attempt to find such firm links founders when subjected to close factual scrutiny. Instead, they lend a plausible historicity to Gaimar's narrative. The poet is able to provide a familiar English context for the Haveloc episode, while maintaining a useful distance by highlighting the story's Danish setting. A link is created between Haveloc's story and later English history that will be of use to Gaimar in developing his subtext to subsequent events in the *Estoire*. The Danish and British ethnicities of the episode's protagonists are acknowledged by Gaimar and are appropriate to the period covered by his narrative, but the names of his characters evoke a political landscape yet to come, keeping the minds of his audience firmly focused on an Anglo-Saxon future.

The friendship between Edelsi and his Danish counterpart proves to be short-lived. When Adelbriht dies suddenly, his widow too falls ill, surviving him by a mere twenty days. Their daughter and sole heiress, Argentille, who until now has been raised in comfort, is left without familial support. It soon becomes clear that her maternal uncle is far from an ideal guardian:

²⁹ See Bell, *L'Estoire*, 'Notes', note to v. 403. There are a number of echoes of the Haveloc episode in Gaimar's account of Cnut's reign, which I will discuss in chapter 3. As in the case of Adelbriht, an initial letter 'a' differentiates the 'Danish' name from the Anglo-Saxon royal form found later in the *Estoire*.

³⁰ Short (*Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 405) sees in this name OE *Æthelgifu* 'by way of Latin *Ailveva*'.

Oiez ke fit cel felons reis:
 pur l'erité k'il coveitat
 sa nece [donc] mesmeriat;
 il la donat a un garçon
 ki Cuheran aveit a nun;
 pur ço k'abeisser la voleit
 se purpensa k'il li durreit. (vv. 98-104)

Just hear what this criminal king did! To keep for himself the inheritance which he coveted, he proceeded to marry his niece to someone of inferior rank; he gave her to a serving lad who was called Cuaran. His desire to degrade her explains his desire to give her to him.

The king's intentions in marrying Argentille off to someone of Cuaran's inferior status are made quite clear; such a husband could pose no threat to his own position. Gaimar tells us that he does not believe the king would ever have arranged such a match had he been aware of the youth's real heritage ('e si li reis s'aparceüst,/ne quid ke ja sa nece eüst', vv. 163-164). In theory, Argentille's diminished status as Cuaran's wife should ensure her removal from the political scene. The irony of the situation in Gaimar's account is that Edelsi has unwittingly brought about his own overthrow by binding his niece, as he did his sister, to a Dane who will present a threat to the Briton's kingdom. As Gaimar tells us, only God can act on Argentille's behalf now: 'ore est mesters de Deus aït' (v. 170). He duly does so, by putting into her mind the prophetic dream that serves as a prompt for the couple's journey to Grimsby in search of Cuaran's true identity.

Short describes Edelsi, 'cel felons reis' ('this criminal king', v. 98) as 'Gaimar's prototypic greedy and wicked monarch'.³¹ Edelsi is indeed a prototype for many of the rulers found later in the *Estoire*, but, despite Gaimar's distaste for his actions carried out 'pur la terre A[de]lbrict tolir' ('in order to alienate Adelbriht's land', v. 167), much of the British ruler's political strategy is otherwise uncontroversial. The king's ability to manipulate events to secure his own position and expand his territories could be said to display a shrewd awareness of statesmanship. Edelsi is faced with a dilemma as regards his niece's fate. As her sole surviving male

³¹ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 98.

relative, he is responsible for arranging a suitable marriage for her, but the risks of such a union are clear. A match with one of Edelsi's own nobles could breed dissent in raising one aristocratic family above others, leading to political instability, while a match abroad would raise the spectre of unwanted foreign dominance. This last possibility is exactly what will come to pass when Haveloc eventually takes possession of Edelsi's realm on his wife's behalf.

While Edelsi's behaviour appears treacherous, coming as it does after a professed friendship with Adelbriht, it can also be construed as an act of pragmatism intended to contain the growth of the neighbouring kingdom carved out by the Dane. Edelsi's fall could be attributed to circumstances rather than to any political mistake on his part; from first to last, he demonstrates an acute awareness of the actions necessary to avoid a descent into open warfare. His ultimate failure is due to factors entirely beyond his control and unknown even to Cuaran/Haveloc at the time of the marriage. Had Adelbriht's heir been male, Edelsi's strategy of promoting a friendly relationship with his brother-in-law would have continued to be prudent. Argentille's apparently hopeless position is due to her lack of a credible champion, according to Gaimar's unnamed sources: 'Sicom di[en]t l'antive gent,/ele n'out nul chevel parent/de par sun [pere] des Daneis' ('According to ancient testimony, she had no near relative on her father's side amongst the Danes', vv. 95-97). A nephew in such a position would have been dependent on his nearby uncle for advice and support; a marriageable niece, however, is quite a different proposition. Gaimar's account emphasises the irony in Edelsi's attempt to marginalise his niece, which only succeeds in providing her with exactly the powerful Danish connections of which she has been deprived at the beginning of the episode. The 'coveitise' ('greed', v. 172) and 'grant crüelté' ('great harshness', v. 171) Edelsi has displayed here have proved to be the downfall of an otherwise astute strategist.

Gaimar's lengthy description of Cuaran's position at Edelsi's court and the mixture of generosity and contempt with which he is treated also offer a picture of Edelsi that, at least superficially, contradicts the image of a cruel and harsh king. The British court is an apparently lavish and well-provisioned one, at which Edelsi and his knights are able to give away large

quantities of good food (vv. 127-138). The king also maintains a sizeable retinue, and entertains them in fine style. Cuaran's explanation of his wife's dream (vv. 267-290) centres on a 'feste' ('celebration', v. 270) that Edelsi is planning to hold the following day. Cuaran describes the high-quality food that will be served ('cerfs e chevrels e veneisons/e altres chars tant i avra' – 'there will be so much other meat – stag, roebuck, deer, and other game', vv. 272-273) in quantities sufficient to feed the many nobles in attendance ('mult i avra de ses barons', v. 271).

None of Edelsi's vassals is avoiding the court out of concern for Argentille's welfare; in fact, all appear happy to share in Edelsi's feasting and merrymaking. This highlights Argentille's isolation in her uncle's realm, but it also serves to underline the fact that the king has imposed a level of stability on his realm by attempting to remove a possible threat to its security. Edelsi is delighted to hear that Cuaran and Argentille are planning to leave for Grimsby, and readily gives his consent 'tut en riant' ('with a broad smile on his face', v. 323). He jokes with his men that they will be back at court as soon as they face any privations, 'quant ne purrunt mielz espleiter!' ('if they can't do any better for themselves', v. 328). This passage is notable for several reasons. One is the fact that Edelsi is given dialogue, a sign of his importance to the narrative. Another is the presence of foreshadowing in his final words on the subject; although the king is joking ('s'en gabad', v. 324), his words have a prophetic quality. We might also note the friendly, familiar relationship between the king and his men, which is sufficiently relaxed for the king to mock his niece and her husband in his vassals' presence.

One noteworthy feature of Edelsi's rule is the level of support he appears to receive from his own people. His British subjects – both in Adelbriht's conquered territories and Edelsi's own – seem content to accept the princess's disinheritance, only changing sides when they learn of the strength of the Danish army marching in Argentille's support. They are sufficiently loyal to Edelsi to confront Haveloc's huge army in battle on his return to Britain after winning the Danish crown, only retreating after a day's fierce fighting when Argentille devises a gruesome scheme to prop up the unshriven corpses of the dead against stakes, giving the false impression

of a much larger army (vv. 773-796). Edelsi's vassals, when made aware of this, counsel him to accept the couple's terms: 'rendë a la dame son dreit/e fasce peis, ainz ke pis seit!' ('let him restore the lady to her rightful inheritance and make peace before it is the worse for him', vv. 799-800).

In Short's opinion, the 'surprising' lack of punishment for Edelsi can be attributed to this willingness to heed the advice of his counsellors.³² However, Gaimar underlines the lack of options open to Edelsi at this point, telling us that 'Li reis ne pout par el aler,/donc li estut ço gra[ä]nter/car [si] baron li ont löé' ('The king cannot extricate himself in any other way, and he is obliged to follow his nobles' advice and to concede', vv. 801-803). Rather than fight to the death, Edelsi chooses to step aside and relinquish Argentille's territories voluntarily. This diplomatic response is entirely in keeping with his earlier pact of non-aggression and his forging of a marital alliance with Adelbriht.

Haveloc's victory is total, and is marked by an absolute absence of any resistance. Edelsi's spirit has been broken by his loss; much like his heartbroken sister, queen Orwain, who survived her husband by a mere twenty days (v. 90), he lives for no more than a fortnight after his abdication (v. 809). His death ensures that the young couple inherit his lands in addition to those that make up Argentille's birthright. The king's former vassals are quick to agree to the transition of power (vv. 814-816). Edelsi's failure is total; the situation he had tried so hard to prevent has come to pass. Danish control now extends over his lands as well as those that were once Adelbriht's, and no rival heir exists to challenge Haveloc's dominion. Edelsi is given no more dialogue, and no scenes of contrition or confrontation; instead, he fades from the narrative, with no heir to continue his claim and stripped of his only asset, the support of his subjects.

Edulf is a prototype for an altogether different variety of failed ruler. He is a scheming vassal of Haveloc's father, who foments discord between that king and his self-appointed overlord, Arthur. The latter's insistence on receiving more tribute from king Gunter is the source of the conflict that leads to Gunter's deposition and death. Any outright censure of Arthur here

³² Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note on vv. 809-10.

is avoided by the deflection of blame onto Edulf. Gaimar tells us that it was he who had ‘treacherously summoned’ Arthur (‘par treïson mandé’, v. 515), who had then made him king of Denmark in Gunter’s place. Gaimar then makes a connection between this interpolated episode and the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, by explaining that Edulf ‘esteit frere al rei Aschis/ki par Artur suffrid la mort/la u Modret li fist tel tort’ (‘[he] was the brother of king Aschil who had lost his life when fighting for Arthur when Mordred had acted so wrongfully against him’, vv. 524-526). Aschil yields to Arthur in Geoffrey’s account in order to avoid the outright conquest of Denmark. The reason for Gunter’s accession in place of Edulf on Aschil’s death is left unstated, meaning that it is unclear whether he was also a kinsman of the dead king or was simply chosen over Edulf by his people. Haveloc is later informed by Kelloc, an old friend of the family, that Gunter was ‘a legitimate king who, like his father before him and his ancestors, had hereditary rights to Denmark’ (‘...un bon rei;/Danemarche out par heritage,/si out son pere e son lineage’, vv. 400-402), which would suggest the former. Gunter’s defiant stance leads to his overthrow by Edulf, who seems to share his dead brother’s inclinations towards appeasement of the all-powerful Arthur.

This is the first instance in the *Estoire* of Gaimar focusing upon the treacherous behaviour of a subordinate figure in order to deflect blame from another powerful individual. As in those later episodes, there is a point at which that approach suddenly ceases to be employed, allowing the true culprit – however briefly – to be discerned. When Haveloc finally learns the truth of his parentage and exile from Denmark on visiting his ‘relatives’ in Grimsby, Kelloc never refers directly to Edulf in her explanation of king Gunter’s deposition and death. Instead, she tells Haveloc that ‘li reis Arthur la vint conquere’ (‘king Arthur came to conquer it (Denmark)’, v. 410) in order to claim a tribute that Gunter has refused to pay. When Gunter is slain in battle against Arthur, ‘ki Artur volt dona la terre’ (‘Arthur gave away the land to whomsoever he wanted’, v. 417). Given his actions in bringing Arthur to Denmark, Edulf may have planned for this scenario, especially given that his position as the brother of king Aschil, who had rendered assistance to Arthur against Mordred, would make him a likely candidate to

be chosen as king. However, the dismissive manner in which Kelloc describes his accession reduces him to the status of a schemer and manipulator: an Eadric Streona or a Godwine rather than a Cnut or a Rufus.

By the time Haveloc arrives to claim his throne, Arthur is long gone, and popular resentment against the usurper has mounted. Gaimar introduces Gunter's loyal retainer, Sigar Estalre, by describing at some length his personal distaste for Edulf and his secret hopes for a new ruler (vv. 505-528). This hatred is not due to any oppression or acts of cruelty by Edulf towards his people, but 'pur ço k'il ert traître e fel' ('because he was a criminal and a traitor', v. 517). Unlike Edelsi's court, his is actively avoided by a number of nobles who refuse to hold land from him until they have determined Haveloc's true fate (vv. 517-522). Gaimar concludes this description of Edulf by telling us that 'mult f[ud] haiz de ses Daneis' ('he was much hated by his Danish subjects', v. 528). There is no account of feasting or of celebrations; the Danish kingdom is a fractured one, unlike Edelsi's. Edulf's lack of suitability for the throne is further emphasised by his effective absence from the story. He is given no dialogue, and appears once in the episode, only to be quickly defeated in battle against Haveloc (vv. 735-744).

From this analysis of the *Estoire*, it is possible to discern a distinct pattern to the behaviour of the various figures presented to us as traitors during the course of the *Estoire*. Edulf is one such, a vassal with designs on the throne who harbours a duplicitous plan to depose his lord. He achieves this by appealing to Arthur's imperialist tendencies, presumably with the intention of establishing himself as a sort of client ruler under Arthur's ultimate control, until the latter's untimely death. In view of Arthur's military prowess and the likelihood of his taking punitive action against the recalcitrant Gunter that could have devastating consequences for the Danish people, Edulf's actions are not beyond justification. The Briton Edelsi is similarly conniving, but differs in one important respect. He already has a kingdom of his own, and has established an enviable level of trust and amity with his Danish counterpart, but sacrifices this after Adelbriht's death by sidelining his niece and opportunistically appropriating her lands. This tactic avails him little, as he is ultimately forced to cede all his territories –

rightfully held or not – to the wronged couple. Edulf is also decisively removed from the political scene after his defeat in battle by Haveloc's forces, although, once again, his relative lack of importance is emphasised by the relative ease with which he is defeated. Like Edelsi, Edulf does not appear to have any heirs to contest Haveloc's claim; in any case, as we will see, Haveloc's obvious suitability to inherit the throne of Denmark is made so clear that no other contender could hope to attract support.

Moreover, the symbolism of Argentille's dream (vv. 195-240) leads us to expect a grim fate for these two kings. The bear slain in the forest provides an image of stark brutality as the only strategy against tyranny, while Gaimar's implicit identification of Haveloc with the daring boar responsible for the killing points towards a violent end, both for Edulf and Edelsi. However, this does not happen. Edulf is indeed defeated, and presumably dies on the battlefield. All Gaimar tells us is that 'li reis Edulf fu dunke vencuz' ('king Edulf was defeated', v. 742), before noting that Haveloc displayed considerable prowess on the field that day; 'il sul en oscist plus de vint' ('he single-handedly killed more than twenty of the enemy, v. 744).³³ Whether Edulf was among their number is left unstated, but the opportunity to evoke the imagery of Argentille's dream is not taken by Gaimar in this instance. Edulf, in fact, is depicted as a king in name only in Gaimar's account; his death is less an act of regicide than an appropriate measure to restore the legitimate line royal line and right the wrong committed by Arthur. Freeman notes that Gaimar's description of Edulf's death is 'remarkably vague', and suggests that Haveloc was required to be blameless in order to support his status as the first of the Danish claimants to the throne of the land that would become England.³⁴ This element of moral purity serves to enhance the pacific image of Haveloc that Gaimar has developed throughout the episode, although this impression is undermined somewhat by the queen's macabre strategy on the battlefield in the subsequent clash with Edelsi, in addition to Haveloc's violence when dealing with Argentille's attackers. I would argue, however, that the key point here is not Haveloc's martial achievements, but Edulf's relegation to a

³³ The translation here is mine.

³⁴ Freeman, 'Geffrei Gaimar and Historiography', p. 196.

footnote in Gaimar's account of the young man's victories against his two foes. Haveloc has demonstrated that he is capable of violence when it is warranted, and mercy when an opponent's behaviour permits it. Edulf's death is implied by his rival's victory, but Gaimar does not appear to consider the usurper's fate worth expanding upon.

By contrast, Edelsi, as the first of the tyrannical kings to be introduced in the Haveloc episode, is an even more obvious candidate for a violent death as events turn in his niece's favour. His destiny, however, is simply to be moved aside in an unexpectedly – and implausibly – peaceful manner as the victorious couple return to claim Argentille's inheritance. A poignant note is struck by Gaimar's description of the British king's capitulation on the advice of his noble counsellors. Gaimar tells us that 'Il n'out nul eir si dreiturel/com Haveloc e sa muiller;/il out enfanz, mes morz esteient.' ('He did not have any heir whose claim was as legitimate as Haveloc's and his wife's, and the children he had were dead', vv. 811-813). Unlike Edulf, Edelsi is a largely successful king, who maintains peace in his lands and is brought low by a failed attempt to manipulate circumstances to his advantage. However, he does not perish on the battlefield. This would appear to have less to do with his character than with Haveloc's, as soon becomes apparent when the young man's personal traits of restraint in combat are examined more closely.

Haveloc and Argentille

Gaimar begins his account of Haveloc's career not with the story of his dispossession and exile, but with the parallel tale of his wife's miserable treatment at the hands of her uncle, the wicked British king, Edelsi. Weiss notes that both Gaimar and the author of the later *Lai d'Haveloc* 'must have seen the resemblances between the situations of Haveloc and Argentille, but they did not develop them'.³⁵ It would be more accurate, perhaps, to say that Gaimar did not make them quite as explicit as the Middle English poets responsible for subsequent versions of the story. Although husband and wife

³⁵ Judith Weiss, 'Structure and Characterisation in *Havelok the Dane*', *Speculum*, 44:2 (1969), 247-57, p. 247.

are similar in that they are both the dispossessed heirs to great kingdoms living in reduced circumstances, their situations are different in that those responsible for their unhappy predicament have displaced them under quite different circumstances. Argentille, as a woman without strong male support for her claim at the beginning of the episode, can only claim her father's throne once her husband has been established as a powerful ruler with a huge army at his command. Haveloc, by contrast, is a male heir whose right to rule in Denmark is highlighted at every stage.

The description of Cuaran provided by Gaimar is so close to the romance ideal that we soon realise he is no ordinary scullion: 'bele vis aveit e bele[s] mains,/cors eschevi, suef e plains' (vv. 107-108 – 'he had a beautiful face and fine hands, a slim body with soft and smooth skin'). This praise of physical beauty is rarely found in the *Estoire*. The only other occasion on which Gaimar goes into any detail on that subject is in his description of Edgar's queen, Ælfthryth, and the beauty of 'her face and her complexion, her body and her hands' ('...vis e color,/e cors e mains...', vv. 3659-3660). In his list of Haveloc's attributes, Gaimar is adhering to the art of description as set out by Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendôme, who state that *descriptio* must be consistent, with physical beauty reflected by moral excellence.³⁶ Viewed through the prism of traits appropriate in a king, this principle helps us to comprehend what appear at first to be paradoxes in Cuaran's character. Despite his constantly 'cheerful disposition' ('li sons semblanz ert tut tens lez', v. 109) he is far from averse to a fight when circumstances demand it:

Mes pur ço quë hardi estait
 e volunters se combateit,
 n'aveit valer en la meison,
 si lui feseit ahataison
 e sur lui començast mellees,
 k'il nel rüeit jambes levees;
 e quant il ben se coruçout,
 de sa ceinture le liout,
 e si cil donc n'aveit guarant,
 bien le bateit a un vergant;

³⁶ Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 55-6.

e nepurhoc tant frans esteit,
 si li vallez li prometteit
 ke pur ço mains ne l'amast,
 ignelure le deliast;
 quant il se erent entrebaisez,
 donc estait Cuharan haitez. (vv. 111-126)

But because he was fearless and enjoyed fighting, anyone in the household who dared challenge him or get into a scrap with him ended up on the ground with his legs in the air. And when he really lost his temper, he would wrap his belt round his opponent and, unless he had someone in a position to protect him, he would give him a good beating with a stick. Such was his nobility of character, however, that if his opponent promised that he would not harbour any ill feelings towards him for what he had done, he would immediately release him. No one was happier than Cuaran when they had kissed and made up.

Gaimar depicts Cuaran's aggressive streak while adding an important qualifying statement regarding the circumstances in which it is drawn out. When provoked to great anger, he is prone to cornering the person responsible for a beating unless the man in question has a friend willing to spring to his defence. This tendency towards violence is mitigated, however, by Gaimar's assertion that Cuaran is happy to let the matter drop, as long as the other party swears not to hold a grudge. Gaimar assures us that this behaviour is proof of the young man's nobility. He is quick to defend himself when necessary, but does not initiate violence without good reason, and is capable of assessing the potential repercussions of his actions and moderating his response accordingly. These are the actions of a prudent king with a sense of political perspective. It is this restraint that will explain the outcome of Haveloc's final challenge to Edelsi on his return from Denmark. The British king has undoubtedly aroused Haveloc's ire by dispossessing the young man's bride, but Edelsi, for all that his subjects are happy to accept this state of affairs while he has the advantage, has no-one to support him when the battle appears to be lost. True to form, Haveloc generously allows him to withdraw with some dignity; the weakened Edelsi is in no position to offer resistance, and spends his few remaining days in peace. This combination of good humour and generosity distinguishes Haveloc from Edelsi, who is shown to enjoy a joke

only when it is at another's expense, and who has to be told when to withdraw from an unwinnable fight. Edulf can expect no such mercy as a usurper responsible for the death of Haveloc's parents, so has nothing to lose – other than his life, already certain to be forfeit in the event of Haveloc's victory – from fighting to the death.

Despite – or perhaps because of – his tendency towards bouts of aggression, Cuaran is so well regarded by everyone in the royal household, including the king, that he is able to dine well on fine food sent to him by his social superiors. As a result, he is able to use this largesse to support his fellow servants, another quality that marks him out as special. Short notes that 'innate generosity, being the hallmark of true nobility, cannot remain hidden for long', while emphasising that what he describes as the 'protocourtesy' qualities of the young servant would go on to be expanded in later versions of the story.³⁷ Gaimar goes into considerable detail on the subject of the numerous traits that prove Cuaran's worth, such as his generosity and his patronage of two young 'retainers', fellow workers in the kitchens whom he believes to be blood relatives of his. Cuaran is effectively supporting those less fortunate than himself, even if he is entirely dependent upon the charity of his social superiors in doing so:

E li reis e li chevaler
 li donouent de lur manger:
 asquanz li donouent gastels,
 asquanz quarters de simenels,
 les altres hastes e gelines
 ki lur veneient des quisines,
 ke tant aveit pain e conrei
 ke dous vallez aveit od sei;
 e as vallez de la meison
 feseit sovent mult large don
 de simenels, de canestels
 e de hastes e de gastels. (vv. 127-138)

Both the king and the knights gave some of their own food to him: some gave him loaves, some slices of the finest bread, others roast meats and chicken which were brought up from the kitchens for them. He would have so much bread and other provisions that he

³⁷ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note 136.

himself was able to take two servants under his protection, and he would often donate generous presents of simnel bread, cake, meat, and loaves to the servants in the rest of the household.

The implications of this are that the young servant is maintaining a kind of household of his own within the king's, gaining trust and support through acts of charity. Cuaran's status as the husband of a princess, even one brought so low as Argentille, may warrant special treatment, although Gaimar makes no mention of this. Gaimar emphasises the initial embarrassment suffered by the king's niece due to her inappropriate union, but does not discuss another aspect of the pairing. Cuaran's status among his peers will have been raised by his connection with Argentille. Edelsi's strategy to secure his own place on the throne has counted on Cuaran's lack of connections and low status to keep his niece from making her own bid to take over her father's kingdom. Although none of the key players in the episode understand the full implications at this stage, Cuaran has already unwittingly acquired two marks of kingship: a beautiful, cultured wife of high status who will come to love him, and loyal followers whose friendship is all the truer for having been offered before he attains any real power.

We are confronted here, however, by an apparent paradox. Gaimar describes Cuaran as being 'held in contempt' ('ert en tel despit', v. 161), a statement which seems to clash with the image he has so far carefully built up of the preferential treatment accorded to the young man by the courtiers he serves. The king, unaware of Cuaran's real parentage, treats him as a figure of fun: 'de lui son juggleür feseit' (v. 166). Short translates 'juggleür' in this context as 'an object of mockery'. Edelsi and his entourage seem to view the unworldly young man as an amusing figure on several levels; his good looks and noble character make him the ideal husband for Argentille in every respect other than his apparent low status. Cuaran is in the unusual position of being both admired and looked down upon by the king and his court, hence the combination of generosity and distaste with which he appears to be viewed. Although Gaimar tells us nothing of Argentille's treatment at the hands of Edelsi and his associates, the fact that she is sharing Cuaran's bed and living quarters suggests that her loss of status has been total. This condescension on the part of king and court only serves to

underline Edelsi's moral inferiority; the man who has alienated his niece's lands finds Cuaran's honour and earnest desire to provide for his entourage amusing rather than admirable.

Cuaran's humiliated bride is not at all impressed by the unworldly youth at the start of Gaimar's account. She finds little joy in her hapless husband at first due to his unusual habit of lying face down as he sleeps, a trait which prevents any attempt at physical intimacy. Consummation of the union is made all the more difficult by Cuaran's own lack of experience in this area: 'Cil ne saveit ke femme estait/ne k[ë] il fere li deveit' ('Being ignorant of women, Cuaran did not know what he should do with her', vv. 177-178). Argentille is left to bemoan her fate and curse her uncle for his perfidy on all fronts. Her misery continues until Cuaran somehow becomes aware of his marital duty, at which point the marriage is consummated at last with an appropriate level of 'deduit' ('pleasure', v. 192). Short likens Cuaran's behaviour to that of a 'folklore 'dümmling' figure',³⁸ while another comparison might also be made to the naïve young men of vernacular romance whose knowledge of erotic matters tends to lag behind that of their female counterparts. Cuaran is the opposite of the opportunistic, grasping rulers with whom he is compared during the episode. He is reticent and unassuming, and has to be convinced to take the initiative, whether in the marital bed or in claiming a crown that is his by right.

That night, Argentille is troubled by the strange and unsettling dream which figures as one of the key imaginative/allegorical segments of the opening interpolation to the *Estoire*, and which is worth examining in detail (vv. 195-240):

La fille al rei en son dormant	195
songat k'ele ert od Cuherant	
entre la mer e un boscage	
u conversout un urs salvage.	
Devers la mer vëait venir	
pors e senglers pres d'asaillir	200
icel grant urs, ke si ert fier	
ki voleit Cuheran manger.	
Od l'urs aveit asez gopillz	
ki puis le jur ourent perilz,	

³⁸ *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note 241.

car les senglers les entrepristrent, 205
 mult en destruisirent e oscistrent.
 Quant li gopil furent destruit,
 cel urs, ki demenout tel bruit,
 un sul sengler fier e hardi
 l'ad par son cors sul asailli: 210
 tel lui dona de l'une dent
 en dous meitez le quer li fent.

Quant l'urs se sent a mort feru,
 un cri geta puis est chaü,
 e li gopil vindrent corant 215
 de tutes parz vers Cuherant,
 entre lur quisses lur cüetes,
 les chefs enclins, a genuletes,
 e funt semblant de merci quere
 a Cuheran, ki firent guere. 220
 Quant il les out fait tuz lier,
 envers la mer volt repaier.
 Li grant arbre ki el bois erent
 de totes parz li enclinerent;
 la mer montout e li floz vint: 225
 desi k'al bois [unc] ne se tint;
 li bois chäeit, la mer veneit,
 Cuheran ert en grant destreit.
 Après venaient dous lëons
 si chäeient a genullons, 230
 mes des bestes mult oscieient
 el bois ki en lur veie estaient.
 Cuheran, pur poür k'il ot,
 sur un des granz arbres montout,
 e les lëons vindrent avant 235
 envers cel arbre agenullant.
 Partut le bois out si grant cri
 ke la dame s'en eveilli.
 E cum ele out iço sungé,
 son seignur ad fort embracé. 240

As she slept, the king's daughter dreamt that she was with Cuaran between the sea and a wood in a place where a wild bear lived. She saw swine and boars coming from the direction of the sea about to attack this huge bear, so fierce that it was on the point of devouring Cuaran. There were a large number of foxes with the bear, and these subsequently came to grief that day because the boars set on them and destroyed and killed many of them. With the foxes destroyed, a single boar, fierce and intrepid, launched a solitary attack against the bear that was making such a loud noise, striking it so hard with one of its tusks that it split its heart in two.

Feeling itself mortally wounded, the bear uttered a cry and fell to the ground. The foxes came running up to Cuaran from every direction, their tails between their legs, their heads bowed as if kneeling submissively, giving every appearance of begging mercy from Cuaran, to whom they had previously been hostile.

He had them all tied up, and when this was done, he started to come back towards the sea. The tall trees in the wood bowed down to him on all sides. The sea began to rise and the tide came in right up to the wood without ever stopping. As the sea kept coming in, so the wood came crashing down, which caused Cuaran great distress. Then two lions arrived and fell to their knees, but not without first killing many of the wild animals they encountered on their way through the wood. Out of fear, Cuaran had been climbing into one of the tall trees, and the lions kept advancing towards this particular tree, bowing their knees. There was such an uproar throughout the wood that the lady woke up [to find that] in the course of her dream she had been holding her husband in a close embrace.

Cuaran's wife is deeply disturbed by the events of her nightmare, and even more so when she then witnesses the flame burning in her husband's mouth that, it transpires, signifies his true identity as prince of Denmark. Cuaran tries to reassure her with his own prosaic interpretation of the dream:

'Dame,' dist il, 'ço serra bien,
 anbure a vostre oes e al mien.
 Ore m'est avis ke ço pot estre:
 li reis tendra demain sa feste;
 mult i avra de ses barons;
 cerfs e chevrels e veneisons
 e altres chars tant i avra
 en la quisine en remaindra;
 tant en prendrom a espondant
 les esquiers ferai manant
 de bons lardez e de braüns
 des esqu[i]eles as baruns.
 Li esquier me sunt acilin
 anbure al vespre e al matin:
 cil signefient li gopil
 dunt vus songastes; ço sunt il.
 E l'urs est mort, hier fu oscis,
 en un bois fu salvage pris;
 dous tors i ad pur les lions,
 e pur la mer pernum les plums
 u l'ewe monte come mer
 desi que freit la fait cesser;
 la char des tors i serra quite.

Dame, l'avision est dite!' (vv. 267-290)

'My lady,' he says, 'things will turn out well, to both your advantage and to mine. Here is what seems to me to be possible. Tomorrow the king will hold a celebration. Many of his nobles will be present, and there will be so much meat—stag, roebuck, deer, and other game—that there will be lots left over in the kitchen. We'll be able to take loads of it, and I'll make a fortune from the squires with fine joints and roasts from the nobles' plates. From dawn to dusk [I can see] the squires bowing and scraping to me. The squires are the foxes you dream about; that's what they mean. As for the bear that died, that was the one captured yesterday running wild in a wood and killed. The lions stand for two bulls, and the sea, let's say, for the cooking pans in which the [hot] water rises up like the tide until it stops when it cools; that's where the meat from the bulls will be cooked. There's your dream interpreted for you, my lady!'

Cuaran's reading of the dream is rooted in his limited experience of the royal court, and Gaimar tells us before he even begins that it is quite inaccurate:

Cuheran [li en] respondi
de l'avision k'il oï,
solum son sens espeust le songe:—
kank[ë] il dist tut ert mençonge— (vv. 263-266)

On hearing about the dream, Cuaran's reply was to provide an interpretation of it, which he did to the best of his ability, though in fact he was wrong in everything he said.

Gaimar does not, however, go on to provide us with his own interpretation of Argentille's dream, although his comment on the inaccuracy of Cuaran's reading suggests that, in his view, there is a 'correct' way to construe Argentille's vision. Cuaran is certainly right on one point: the young couple's situation will improve drastically before much longer. His detailed 'explanation' of his wife's dream undercuts the tension created by the sinister and violent imagery she describes by providing light relief, in addition to creating an impression of Cuaran as the down-to-earth foil to his more sensitive and imaginative bride. With kitchen work as his only experience of life, Cuaran's ambitions are focused solely upon his goal of profiting from the sale of leftovers from Edelsi's feast, dispensing the scraps

from the royal table to the grateful squires. It is left to his wife, conscious of her royal status, to look for brighter prospects elsewhere. There is a sharp contrast between the couple's perspectives on the dream. Cuaran sees only financial gain and the flattery of those dependent upon him in his wife's visions of conflict and danger. His reading of the dream looks past the disaster implicit in that imagery, and finds in it the happy ending that the couple themselves will, in fact, experience. The dynastic implications are, for the moment, lost on him.

Amusing though Cuaran's interpretation of his wife's dream may be, the reasoning he uses to explain it is significant. Both the woodland in which the bear is attacked and slain and the royal banqueting hall in which Edelsi's feast is to be held will recur as imagery employed in later episodes within the *Estoire*. While the former is full of dangerous, predatory creatures, the king's banquet is ostensibly a place of safety, in which the only animal life to be found is in the form of the plentiful game from the hunt. Gaimar links these two apparently conflicting images in the Haveloc episode by juxtaposing them in Argentille's dream and Cuaran's 'false' interpretation. We are presented with two symbols of kingship: the beleaguered bear, set upon by attackers from overseas and abandoned as soon as he has been slain by followers all too quick to swear allegiance to the new power, and the jovial king presiding over a lavish banquet, secure in the apparent safety of his court.

Other images evoked by Argentille's dream seem to be reflected in the outcome of Haveloc's successful challenges to the two kings, and in the resulting response of various peripheral players to his emergence as a man of power and influence. The two lions who bow the knee to Haveloc as he looks for safety in a tall tree can be likened to the two princes, former allies of Edulf's, who immediately change allegiance on the latter's removal and swear fealty to the new king (vv. 744-746). Short identifies them with the two young men Cuaran initially believes to be his brothers, and for whose upkeep he makes himself responsible during his employment at Edelsi's

court.³⁹ Given that Cuaran's earlier life before his recognition as Haveloc acts as preparation for his later rule – that we see evidence of his generosity, his willingness to heed good advice from wise counsellors and his fundamental decency – this comparison is also valid. Whether as scullion or as king, Haveloc's good qualities draw men to him. His solicitousness towards his young 'brothers' also highlights his ability to display a fraternal loyalty, which continues even after he learns the truth of his parentage from Kelloc, and which stands in sharp contrast to Edelsi's lack of sentimental attachment to his niece, Argentille, after the death of her mother and Edelsi's 'brother' in spirit, Adelbriht.

Edulf's vassals – many of whom are slain in his service, while the survivors are quick to honour the rightful heir following his victory – resemble the bear's honour guard of foxes; the image also fits that of Edelsi's court, the members of which are almost as eager to acclaim Haveloc once their lord is dead. However, the image of the boar valiantly breaking ranks to pierce the bear's heart with its tusk is never realised; as we have seen, Haveloc never meets either king in hand-to-hand combat, with Edulf's killing elided and Edelsi's end notable for its relative peace. Another unresolved puzzle is the image of the rising tide sweeping over the land, leaving Haveloc terrified. The joyful ending of his story, with him and his wife ruling peacefully over their joint territories with the full support of their subjects, is undermined somewhat by these unexplained elements in Argentille's otherwise accurate prophecy.

Despite Gaimar's statement that Cuaran's interpretation of his wife's dream is incorrect in every respect, the level of detail with which he recounts the young man's attempt to reassure Argentille suggests that the passage is of more significance than it at first appears. A striking feature of Cuaran's analysis is his identification of the two lions with two bulls to be served at the king's banquet, and the destructive tide with the hot water in the cooking pans that will not cease to rise until it cools when the meat is cooked. This imagery undercuts the element of threat in Argentille's vision;

³⁹ Short considers the 'symbolic appearance' of these young men in the dream to be 'little more than coincidental'. Short, *Estoire des Engleis*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 155.

the predatory lions, still menacing even as they appear to offer the frightened Cuaran their allegiance, are reduced to the status of meat, while the rushing seas that accompany their arrival in the woodland of the dream landscape are, in Cuaran's reading, safely contained within the domestic context of the royal kitchens. Argentille's inconclusive, ominous dream is contrasted with Cuaran's prosaic and neatly resolved interpretation of her vision; Gaimar's statement that Cuaran is mistaken suggests that no such easy resolution should be expected, and that any outcome which appears to be such warrants closer examination. Given that two kings – more possible candidates for identification with the surrendering lions – will be defeated by the episode's end, Cuaran's cheerful dismissal of Argentille's fears is justifiable within the context of their story. If he is indeed wrong in his reading, despite the outcome of the Haveloc episode, then the likelihood that Argentille's dream is functioning here as an image of relevance to later events in the *Estoire* is only increased.

There is another important aspect to Gaimar's commentary on Cuaran's misunderstanding of the vision. His assumption that the dream relates to Edelsi's upcoming celebrations appears to be inaccurate, but he is correct in stating that he himself will soon be shown respect and favour by those subordinate to him when he is made king. Gaimar notes that Haveloc holds two similar celebrations himself when he is made king of Denmark and Britain: 'Grant feste tint e grant baldoire,/sicunt nus dit la vrai'estoire' ('He celebrated with great festivities and merrymaking, as the authentic written source informs us' (vv. 757-758) and 'Rei Haveloc la tin[t] sa feste;/les homages de ses barons/reçuz partut ses regiõns' ('King Haveloc celebrated with festivities, in the course of which he received the homage of his ealdormen from every region of his country', vv. 806-808).

Argentille's dream appears to foretell a violent future of regicide, in which the tyrannical bear is slain by the valiant boar, and the guard of foxes, chastened by their losses in the battle, do homage to Cuaran, despite their initial hostility to him. Cuaran is a bystander to the bear's slaying, making the foxes' opposition to him inexplicable, unless we identify him with the boar who struck the killer blow. After the foxes pay homage to Cuaran, the boars are never mentioned again; his identification with their leader, to

whom the foxes might have been expected to capitulate, is clear. It is at this point, however, that Cuaran's role shifts. The foxes were the slain bear's companions, and the latter's death has left a vacuum; their gestures of allegiance to Cuaran signify his new position as their lord. Cuaran has effectively taken on the bear's place in the wood's hierarchy, and receives the homage even of the tall trees which bow down around him. However, he is powerless to control the destructive power of the tide, which destroys his new kingdom and heralds the arrival of the two lions.

As the lions advance towards him, there is a mismatch between their actions and their attitude to Cuaran. They kill many of the creatures of the forest – Cuaran's new subjects – even as they bow to him in a show of reverence. Cuaran reacts with terror and seeks shelter in one of the trees, with the lions continuing to advance in his direction. It is at this point that Argentille's dream ends abruptly, with Cuaran's stand-off with the two lions left unresolved. While the lions echo the presence of both Cuaran's retainers and the princes who serve him after his final triumph in Britain, their aggression as they appear in the dream landscape presents an implicit threat that is left ominously unresolved. Cuaran's interpretation, by contrast, neutralises the threat of the bulls who take the place of the lions in his reading; the 'tide', safely contained, is the agent of their destruction, and they will be devoured by the king and his nobles. There is no place in Cuaran's reassuring explanation for the boars, who go unmentioned; he tells Argentille only that the bear was killed as it ran wild in the woods, presumably by Edelsi's hunters, although this is not stated.

Having travelled to Grimsby to find Cuaran's relatives, the couple learn the truth from his 'sister', Kelloc, who is at first reluctant to tell him about the real circumstances of his birth for fear that he will endanger himself by repeating it in the wrong quarters. Kelloc believes that '*il n'est mie si savant*' ('he's not clever enough', v. 349) to keep the facts to himself, and worries that '*s'il saveit ke des reis fu nez,/curtes ures serreit celez!*' ('If he knew that he had a king as father, it would be an extremely short-lived secret', vv. 351-352). Despite this, she follows her husband's advice and tells him the truth, including the poignant detail that her father, Grim, was

able to save Haveloc along with his family thanks to his own good reputation:

Mis pere estait lur conussant,
 pur ço guarirent li enfant,
 e jo e vus e mi dui frere,
 par la priere de mun pere. (vv. 433-436)

My father's identity was known to them, and the reason why the children, I, you and my two brothers, survived was because my father begged them to spare us.

Grim and his family have made the best of their new life in Britain, building a successful business as salters of fish. Kelloc's husband Algier has recently visited Denmark to sell his products and heard the mutterings of its disaffected people about the rightful heir: 's'il vus trovast, ke [venissiez]/e le país chalengissez' ('if you could be found, you should come and assert the claim you have to [rule over] the country', vv. 461-462). Having found an appropriate retinue and been supplied by Kelloc with suitable clothes to wear, Haveloc and Argentille duly set sail for Denmark, where they find lodgings in a town. Unfortunately, they are then waylaid by six knights who attack Haveloc and attempt to abduct his wife with great violence:

Sis bachelers donc l'asaillirent,
 pristrent la dame, lui ferirent
 e ses vallez mult leidengerent,
 en plusurs lius lur chef bruserent. (vv. 534-537)

He was then attacked by six young knights who abducted the lady, beating him and badly injuring his servants, smashing their skulls in several places.

Haveloc kills or maims the aggressors, an act which draws the ire of the townsfolk. The luckless couple seek shelter in the tall tower of a church, but are saved by the timely appearance of Sigar, a former retainer of Haveloc's late father, who is immediately struck by the physical resemblance between the young man and the betrayed king. While Sigar is presented as a good and loyal man who rightly opposes the usurper Edulf and is still devoted to

the memory of Haveloc's dead father, the behaviour of the six knights – identified by Gaimar as 'sis humes' ('his (Sigar's) men', v. 562) – strikes a jarring note. Sigar forgives Haveloc for killing and maiming his men and calls a truce, but Gaimar makes it quite clear that his forgiveness is granted purely as a result of his overwhelming emotion on realising that there is a connection between the young man and the late king Gunter: 'a sun seignur [si] resemblot/que, quant le vit, tel pitié ot/qu'a mult grant paine pot parler' ('He looked so much like his former lord that he was so moved on seeing him that he found it extremely difficult to speak', vv. 563-565). Despite Kelloc's fears, Haveloc follows her instructions closely, and gives a vague account of his journey to Britain as a child that avoids mentioning any royal connection (vv. 575-610). He is so circumspect that Sigar is forced to observe him covertly to see the flame burning in his mouth as he sleeps (vv. 625-645), and has to insist that Haveloc attempt to blow the horn that had belonged to his father, and which is another symbol of the legitimacy of his claim (vv. 655-734). After these tests, Haveloc is given no more dialogue; he has fulfilled all the requirements necessary to be recognised by his real name and title, shedding the last traits of his former unworldly persona along with his British name.

The battle between the forces of Haveloc and Edelsi on the former's return to Britain is marked by a vivid episode which brings the brutal fighting to an abrupt and peaceful close. After the battle's first day ends in deadlock – a markedly different scenario from Haveloc's glorious and swiftly realised defeat of Edulf's forces in Denmark – Argentille devises a plan, which is executed with great success:

Mes par conseil de la reïne,
 ki enseignat une mescine,
 remist le mal en la bataille;
 son regne out sanz greignur contraille:
 tute nuit fist enficher pels
 plus gros e greignurs de tinels;
 les morz homes ensus ficherent
 e tute nuit sus les drescerent;
 dous escheles en firent granz,
 ke veirement estait semblant
 k'il fuissent combatanz e vifs–

le jor devant erent oscis!
 Home ki de loinz les esgardout,
 tute la char l'en heriçout;
 ambure de loinz e de pres
 hydus semblent morz desconfés. (vv. 773-788)

The battle, however, failed to resume, and defeat was averted thanks to a counter-measure which the queen devised, and this was to lead to the kingdom being restored with the minimum of opposition. They spent the whole of the night erecting stakes that were thicker and larger in size than staffs, getting the dead bodies on their feet again, and all night propping them up against the stakes. They made two sizeable divisions of them, and the bodies gave every impression of actually being alive and ready for combat, despite the fact they had been killed the day before. Anyone looking at them from a distance felt all his flesh creep, and from both close up and from afar the unshriven corpses made a horrifying sight.

Edelsi's scouts are fooled by this trick, and take the news of Haveloc's terrifying host back to the king, who is promptly advised to surrender. Gaimar makes no comment on the ethical basis for this stroke of strategic brilliance, although the fact that it averts further bloodshed helps to assuage such possible concerns. However, there are a number of significant features in this passage. Haveloc himself plays no role in the scheme, with Gaimar taking care to point out that the idea was the queen's. The element of duplicity behind it, along with the unpleasant imagery of the unshriven bodies denied a decent burial so they can serve as part of an elaborate act of misdirection, casts Argentille's plan in a distinctly negative light. Gaimar stresses the importance of Christian rites and the dire fate of the pagans who cannot receive them, or the faithful who are for various reasons denied them, on several occasions in the *Estoire*. Once again, the Haveloc episode is the first occasion on which we see this theme appear. Another crucial aspect is the deflection of any possible blame arising from the deception onto Argentille, who, through her prophetic dream, has already been established as Haveloc's counsellor. Gaimar will direct criticism of royal strategy at subordinate figures such as queens or scheming associates in subsequent episodes. The presence of such a passage here, immediately before Haveloc and Argentille's moment of triumph as Edelsi steps aside

and leaves the path clear for them to rule jointly in Britain, casts a shadow over the otherwise ideal depiction of Haveloc as king.

The tranquillity of Haveloc's twenty-year reign does not last. Gaimar does not speak of the king's death or mention any heirs, but resumes his Chronicle-derived narrative after the interpolation in 495 (v. 819), the year of the English Cerdic's arrival with his son Cynric, an event which marks the beginning of many years of hostilities between the invaders and the British. The Haveloc episode marks the final occasion in the *Estoire* on which the matter of a disputed throne is settled to the apparent satisfaction of all sides. However, the unexplained imagery of Argentille's dream casts a long shadow over the events of the episode. Haveloc's success in his homeland rights an old injustice, but his accession in Britain on the basis of his wife's claim ensures Danish hegemony in the region, reinforcing the expansionist foreign presence Edelsi had feared. Gaimar's emphasis on the lack of resistance the couple face in asserting their right to rule only underlines the deceptive simplicity of the transference of power. The Haveloc episode is distinguished, like the Danish prince himself, by its uniqueness; the models for the kings who succeed him will be his antagonists, Edelsi and Edulf. Haveloc, with his ideal combination of regal qualities and human virtues, is destined to leave no heirs, or even any ruler truly worthy to follow in his footsteps. In this, he resembles no ruler more than the British king ultimately responsible for his father's deposition: Arthur, that complex figure whose legacy is detectable throughout the *Estoire des Engleis*.

Gaimar's final remarks on Haveloc as an expansionist king whose Danish associates assist him in enlarging his territories are illuminating, as is the lack of a real conclusion to Haveloc's reign. The resumption of Gaimar's annalistic description of subsequent kings, in keeping with the approach of his main source at this stage, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, only serves to emphasise Haveloc's uniqueness in the *Estoire's* narrative. Haveloc is initially a victim of Arthur's imperialism and unfair demands for excessive tribute; by the end of the episode, however, he is in a very similar position to the British king. Gaimar does not tell us how Haveloc acquires the territories that later fall under his control, although the unspecified

assistance granted him by his Danish kin is very likely to be military in nature.

Despite the happy conclusion to Gaimar's account of Haveloc's career, there are two sides to the narrative. We are reminded of the young prince's undisputed right to rule in Denmark on several occasions; his friend Kelloc stresses his ancestors' hereditary claim in that country, while the symbolism of the flame and the magic horn identifies him as the true heir to the satisfaction of his countrymen. Cuaran the Briton's identity is subsumed forever within that of Haveloc the Dane. This is unproblematic in his homeland, but, when he is invited to rule in Britain, it is made equally clear to us that his claim to the land in which he grew up is based solely on his marriage to the heiress, Argentille, with whose story of dispossession the episode ostensibly dedicated to her husband begins. It is she who dreams of a violent future for her country, with Cuaran – not yet elevated to his royal status – cast in the role of counsellor, and she who constructs the scheme to mislead Edelsi and his troops which decisively turns the course of the struggle for control in Britain. Haveloc's destiny to rule in Denmark is, like Arthur's in Britain, marked out by prophecy, signs and public acclaim.

However, as with Arthur in Denmark, Haveloc as king of Britain is liable to fall victim to hubris; though he rules at the behest of the British nobility, this is evidently only the first stage in his annexation of other lands. Arthur, after all, was invited to remove Gunter by Edulf, an action that did not meet with his people's favour. The dire consequences evoked by Argentille's dream do not come during his reign, but the Danish claim to the land that will become England – a claim found nowhere but in the *Estoire* – will prove disastrous for many subsequent rulers, and will not be decisively settled until the last representative of Cnut's line, Harold Godwineson, falls at Hastings. The seemingly ideal nature of Haveloc's reign is undermined by hints of trouble yet to come, but the elements of civil strife that mark Arthur's fall are left unrealised at this stage. The Arthurian subtext in the *Estoire* is not confined to the Haveloc episode, but extends as far as the reign of William Rufus at the very end of Gaimar's history. That king's predecessors will display the hallmarks of an Arthurian destiny, albeit in different ways: some represent the British ruler's imperial glory and hubris,

while others are doomed to an unhappy end by the repercussions of an earlier ruler's actions.

2. Edelsi's Heirs: Ælfthryth, Edgar and Edward

I have begun by identifying the distinctive features of Haveloc's career: the innate qualities that prepare him for kingship in Denmark, his union with the British heiress, Argentille, the multilayered symbolism of her prophetic dream before her husband's true identity is revealed, and the happy couple's relatively straightforward ascent to the Danish and British thrones. I have also examined the contrasting careers of the two kings displaced in this process: the Briton, Edelsi, and the Dane, Edulf. The former is Argentille's grasping uncle, a powerful king in his own right with expansionist aims, while the latter is a traitor who calls upon Arthur himself to remove a legitimate king, and is eventually overthrown by the true heir whose fitness to rule has been impressed on us by a number of unmistakable signs. Since Haveloc does not appear to leave any heirs, and his kingdom in the east of the land that will become England is, like the rest of Britain, left vulnerable to incursions by the Saxon invaders who arrive immediately in 495.

Gaimar's translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* begins with the coming of Cerdic and Cynric. With the exception of the Buern Bucecarle episode and its aftermath, Gaimar's additions to his main source are few until the reign of Edgar (959-975). His account of the reign is, with the addition of the related subsequent passage on the murder of Edgar's son, Edward, the second longest interpolation in the *Estoire*. Its length and position at the point in Gaimar's history at which the poet diverges from his main source render it significant. Short draws a distinction between Gaimar's account of Edgar's love for Ælfthryth and the shorter subsequent episode on Edward's short reign and violent end.¹ I will examine both passages together here, as the parallels between the events recounted gain in significance when both episodes are analysed alongside each other.

Edgar's reign is, in Gaimar's account, one of great territorial expansion and impressive political achievement. It is blighted by the consequences of a marriage which begins under the shadow of the killing of

¹ For a detailed account of these passages, see pp. 39-41.

his wife's former husband, and which draws the condemnation of the most eminent churchman in the kingdom. The union leads to the birth of a son, Æthelred, who is remembered for his overthrow by Danish invaders and the loss of his throne to the young Cnut, who also takes his predecessor's widow as his queen. Even before this, Æthelred's mother has been disgraced by her association with the murder of Edgar's older son, the ill-fated king Edward, whose martyr's death and widespread veneration provides the worst possible start to his young half-brother's reign. Edgar's sixteen-year period of imperial pomp and prestige has come to nothing, and his younger son has been forced to surrender his kingdom to foreign rule. The splendour of his reign, like Haveloc's, is all too brief, and his legacy is a bleak one.

Ælfthryth's apparent transformation from the object of the king's affections to the scheming power player ultimately responsible for her stepson's death is not an abrupt transition. Gaimar's account of her courtship and marriage offers several examples in which hints at her character undermine the superficially positive depiction of her impressive qualities as lover and queen. Edward's murder is carried out at the instigation of his stepmother, a key figure in the preceding episode, while the circumstances of his death and the language used by Gaimar to convey the element of doubt around the identity of the perpetrators echoes that employed in his version of Æthelwald's mysterious death. A complex web of allusions is woven around the royal couple, linking them to various models of adultery and inappropriate marital alliances, while the parallels between the two killings at the centre of each episode provide an inextricable link. Dunstan's condemnation of the match and his warning of dire consequences is only fully realised, however, in Æthelred's reign, during which all is lost.

The criticism of Edgar implicit in Gaimar's account of his widow's behaviour is indirect, but unmistakable nonetheless. Gaimar compares Edgar to Arthur in his power and imperial dominance, but the models most vividly evoked by the poet's allusions are Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, the doomed British king Vortigern, the Biblical David and – in the splendour of Edgar's court and the acquisitiveness of his nature, along with the suddenness of his disappearance from the political scene – Argentille's

opponent, Edelsi. However, the crucial player here is not the king himself, but his queen, Ælfthryth. If her husband calls to mind Edelsi, she is recognisable as the Edulf of this episode. Her involvement in a plot to remove the rightful heir and her place as a noblewoman elevated to a position of great power aligns her with Haveloc's Danish enemy. The reflection of her character and behaviour discernible in the *Estoire's* accounts of Eadric Streona, Godwine and Rufus's assassin, Walter Tirel, places her within a chain of such figures. None of the women present in the Haveloc episode – his queen, Argentille, his mother Alvine, or the wise Kelloc – is comparable to Ælfthryth. Emma of Normandy, her daughter-in-law, is guilty of similar conniving at the removal of heirs who threaten her own children's prospects, but the ultimate responsibility for this shameful bid to dispose of rival claimants lies with her second husband, Cnut. Ælfthryth stands alone in the *Estoire* as a female figure of great power whose capacity for brutality is the equal of similar male conspirators.

However, there is another revealing episode that sheds light upon Gaimar's attitude to this distinctive female figure. The story of Buern Bucecarle and his revenge upon his lord, Osberht, after the latter's brutal and opportunistic rape of Buern's unnamed wife, contains a number of parallels with the affair between Edgar and Ælfthryth. Buern, quite unlike Æthelwald, is a loyal and courageous nobleman who spends his days safeguarding the coast of his native Northumbria against Danish attacks from the sea. Osberht takes advantage of his absence to visit Buern's beautiful wife, whom he has long coveted, and rape her with the connivance of his men. On Buern's return, his wife breaks down and tells him of what she has endured. Her husband tenderly reassures her of his love – which, as he makes very clear, would not have lasted had she kept her silence on the matter – and plans his revenge. After publicly renouncing his allegiance to Osberht, he has him driven from the country with the help of the Danes. This, however, is insufficient punishment in Buern's eyes. Gaimar tells us that his revenge is only complete when Osberht is slain during the siege of York by the very Danes against whom Buern once fought. The

repercussions of the feud also prove fatal for Osberht's blameless successor, Ælle, and his nephew, Orron.²

Gaimar's description of the reaction of Buern's wife to the king's actions painstakingly outlines the appropriate response, as Gaimar and his society saw it, of a woman in such a terrible position. Any deviation from this model behaviour in a similar account is notable, and Ælfthryth's conduct when her king makes his sexual interest in her clear is very different from that of Buern's unfortunate wife. I will argue here that Gaimar's account of the marriage of Edgar and Ælfthryth contains several layers of meaning, and that the analysis of the episode in the scholarship to date has largely failed to take into account the development of Ælfthryth's character in these closely connected episodes. While Gaimar refrains from offering overt criticism of Ælfthryth's behaviour, the patterns identifiable in his accounts of these events leave a negative impression of Edgar's powerful queen and widow.

Edward himself, the martyred king who meets with a terrible death as the result of his stepmother's political machinations, is the final element in this unedifying narrative. His ultimate fate, along with the numerous markers of his sainthood and the favour shown him by God before his demise, confers on him the same indisputable fitness to rule as that displayed by Haveloc on his return to Denmark from his British exile. Unlike Haveloc, however, he does not have the good fortune to encounter a faithful retainer determined to assist in his restoration. Instead, the trusting Edward is the victim of Ælfthryth, her unnamed assassin, and the equally mysterious figures in her household who scheme at the concealment of Edward's body but who are thwarted by the divine revelation of his secret resting place. The crucial figure in his assassination is an apparent traitor in his own household, the dwarf and *jongleur*, Wulfstanet, whose unmotivated defiance of the king and flight to Ælfthryth's house suggests a wider conspiracy, and one against which the apparently isolated young king has

² While Gaimar's account of Ælle's fate implicitly links the new king's defeat to Buern's actions in bringing the Danes to England, I will reserve my analysis of that section of the interpolation for the final chapter, on William Rufus. The blind soothsayer's warning, delivered to Ælle as he dines following a hunting trip, foreshadows that king's last dinner before his own killing in a number of significant aspects.

little chance of survival. Gaimar's telling of this bleak story, as with the other major episodes in the *Estoire*, cannot be interpreted on all possible levels without comparison to the models provided us elsewhere in his work. I will examine the three main figures in Gaimar's handling of these events, in which the martyred Edward – a Haveloc figure, but lacking any of that early king's good fortune – takes a central role, along with the treacherous stepmother whose duplicity eventually overshadows that of both her husbands.

Edgar and Æthelwald

The Edgar of the *Estoire des Engleis* is a ruler of great power, with one great flaw: his excessive enjoyment of the company of women. We are told that, following the end of Eadwig's reign:

Aprés regna Edgar son frere,
 cil tint terre com emperere.
 En son tens amenda la terre,
 partut out pes, n'ert nule guere.
 Il sul regnout sur tuz les reis,
 e sur Escoz e sur Galeis.
 Unc puis ke Artur s'en fu alez
 nen out un rei tel pöestez.
 Li reis ama mult seint' Eglise:
 de tort, de dreit sous la devise.
 Pur ço se penat de bien faire,
 car francs estait e debonaire.
 Bones costumes alevat,
 tuz ses veisins vers lui clinat:
 par bel amur e par supplei
 les acinat trestuz vers sei. (vv. 3565-3580)

After this, his brother Edgar reigned. He governed the country as if he were the ruler of an empire. During his lifetime the country improved; peace was universal and there was no war. Alone, he reigned over all other kings, as well as over the Scots and the Welsh. Not since the disappearance of Arthur had a single king been so powerful. The king was a devoted supporter of Holy Church, and knew how to tell the difference between right and wrong. Because he was noble-minded and high-born, he took pains to do good, and he established good customs. He made all his neighbours subject to him, and did so amicably and by humble petitioning.

Edgar's period of rule is distinguished by the king's extreme power over the British Isles. Gaimar's translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has emphasised disunity and fragmentation in its description of successive English rulers and their territories; the cumulative effect of internecine conflicts and rivalries between kingdoms makes for grim reading. However, Edgar achieves the seemingly impossible, and Gaimar is able to compare him explicitly to the vanished Arthur in terms of the extent of his imperial power. The poet then makes a statement that will inform much of what follows; 'de tort, de dreit sous la devise'. Edgar, as a deeply pious individual, is well able to recognise 'dreit' and 'tort'. This should be an admirable quality in a monarch, but in this context, it only serves to underline the fact that Edgar cannot plead ignorance as an excuse for his later involvement in incestuous adultery and murder. The king is capable of exercising restraint, which we have seen Gaimar praise earlier in his account of Haveloc's admirable nature. His 'humble petitioning' to rivals and neighbours only fails him once in Gaimar's telling, when the nobleman Thored rebels and plunders Westmoreland in 966. Thored is killed, and Gaimar points out that 'mar començat la guere a tort!' ('He should never have become involved in such a hostile and illegal act!', v. 3586). Edgar has pacified his kingdom and won the loyalty of other rulers through diplomatic measures, even as he strikes mercilessly at those who would appropriate territory to which he has laid claim. This is a characteristic described approvingly in Gaimar's account of Haveloc, but with a crucial difference; Haveloc knows when to forgive an adversary and come to terms. The account of Edgar's relationship with Æthelwald reveals the king's lack of that mitigating quality.

Gaimar refers to only one 'raïne' (v. 3588) of Edgar's before his marriage to Ælfthryth, stating that the king's three children were born to three different mothers, but failing to give details of the exact status of the mother of the first (Edward). This reflects the level of confusion prevailing in the twelfth century and later as to the order and number of Edgar's official consorts. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was no help to Gaimar here, confining its comments on Edgar's marital status to its terse entry for the

year 965: ‘Her on þissum geare Eadgar cyning genam Ælfyðe him to cwene. Heo wæs Ordgares dohtor ealdormannes.’ (‘In this year king Edgar took Ælfthryth for his queen; she was the daughter of ealdorman Ordgar’, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS D, 965).³ Æthelflæd, believed to be Edward’s mother, may have been a concubine with no official status at Edgar’s court. Almost nothing is known of her life, but the fact that she does not seem to have been crowned would loom large over the short reign of her son, and appears—along with Ælfthryth’s assiduous promotion of her own child’s interests – to have been the root cause of the objections raised against Edward by those who would eventually bring about his death. Edgar’s second wife was Wulfthryth, the mother of the saintly Edith; the king seems to have parted amicably from her at some point after his daughter’s birth, when she chose to enter a convent. Finally, there was Ælfthryth, mother of the short-lived Edmund (unmentioned in Gaimar’s account) and of Æthelred II ‘Unræd’ (‘the Ill-Counselled’).⁴ Gaimar passes over both Edgar’s first two consorts in silence, although the saintliness of their children, as stressed by his introduction, suggests that no particular scandal had attached itself to the memory of either woman, whose roles in public life appear to have been much less prominent than that played by the powerful and influential Ælfthryth.

Jayakumar notes that Gaimar and William of Malmesbury, the only other writer of this period to cover this episode in detail, ‘appear to have had access to a common stock of legend and scurrilous ballads dealing with Edgar’s private life’.⁵ The events of Edgar’s reign mark Gaimar’s first significant departure from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*;⁶ this is unsurprising, as that source has, as we have seen, almost nothing to offer on the subject of

³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 6, MS D, ed. by G.P. Cubbin (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996). The translation is mine.

⁴ Barbara Yorke, ‘The Women in Edgar’s Life’, in *Edgar, King of the English 959-975: New Interpretations*, ed. by Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 145-57, p. 145.

⁵ Shashi Jayakumar, ‘Eadwig and Edgar: Politics, Propaganda, Faction’, in *Edgar, King of the English*, pp. 83-103, p.96.

⁶ Short identifies Gaimar’s coverage of this period as the point at which the poet leaves behind the annalistic style of the *Chronicle*; he makes ‘only intermittent use’ of the source after Edgar’s accession at v. 3586. See Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxix. Dalton also points out that this is a decision made ‘for no apparent textual reason’ (Dalton, ‘Peacemaking’, p. 439).

Edgar's personal life. However, the two writers approached the tale from, on the surface, very different angles. Yorke suggests that they heard the stories in oral form from the convent at Wherwell to which Ælfthryth eventually retired; Gaimar tells us it was his source for the tale, while William locates Æthelwald's death in the nearby forest at Harewood. Yorke considers that the differences in their work can be attributed to the fact that both men used similar source material but recast it 'according to their own attitudes towards women, those of their anticipated audiences and the conventions in which they wrote'.⁷

Edgar inherited a volatile political situation from his elder brother, Eadwig, whose court had been a hotbed of faction fighting and dissent among competing noble families. The weapon of choice against unpopular rulers or dangerous rivals in the tenth century – other than murder – was evidently aggressive propaganda, and it is the shadow of these malicious briefings and counter-briefings, perpetuated by the learned men who supported one or other of the factions, that obscures much of the contemporary writing on the subject, as it must also have done for those studying the period in the twelfth century. Eadwig's reputation for avarice in ecclesiastical matters came later, as a result of his dealings with Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, who was driven into exile during his reign. Another power player and propagandist, bishop Æthelwold of Winchester, also took the opportunity to criticise Eadwig in the Preface to the translation of the Benedictine Rule.⁸ Jayakumar notes that Edgar would appear to have encouraged attacks on his brother's memory; it was 'politic under Edgar to mount a campaign against his predecessor.'⁹ Despite this, it seems that the transition of power between the two kings was not as dramatic as has been supposed. Twelfth-century historians informed their audiences that Eadwig died of despair at the loss of Mercia to Edgar when the kingdom he had inherited from their uncle was divided between the two of them, but it

⁷ Yorke, 'Women', p.156.

⁸ Jayakumar, 'Eadwig and Edgar', p. 83.

⁹ Jayakumar, 'Eadwig and Edgar', p. 83.

seems that Edgar's assumption of the role of king was, in fact, a decision taken to signal his status as his brother's heir.¹⁰

Details of Edgar's rule are scant, although recent studies have succeeded in illuminating some of the key issues surrounding his reign.¹¹ What is clear is that Edgar himself did not trust the great families who held considerable power in his kingdom, and that he appears to have been keen to raise his own men to positions of influence. One such individual was Ordgar, father of Ælfthryth; the high number of other men with links to south-western England at court towards the end of Edgar's reign is notable, and suggests a deliberate policy on Edgar's part.¹² The note on Ælfthryth's parentage found in MS D of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* indicates Ordgar's importance in Edgar's unified kingdom.

Jayakumar cites Stenton's comments on Edgar, which provide an assessment of the king that is, as she points out, similar to Southern's verdict on Henry I. On the face of it, both kings presided over England at a time when nothing of note took place.¹³ 'One receives the distinct impression that these two quite separate periods where 'nothing happened' encompass similar strands – most importantly, a type of rulership that might be called vindictive, or even (occasionally) despotic.'¹⁴ Both, she notes, were also known for their use of mutilation as punishment for transgressors, a method symptomatic of the kind of repressive regime that might be expected to lead to an outburst of acrimony and violence when the tyrant's death left a void that was filled, not by another 'strong' ruler, but by one vulnerable to such destructive forces. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that Gaimar chooses to deviate from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* just as he reaches Edgar's reign, thus allowing him to avoid the *Chronicle's*

¹⁰ Frederick M. Biggs, 'Edgar's Path to the Throne', in *Edgar, King of the English*, pp. 124-39.

¹¹ There have been relatively few historical studies of Edgar's life, but see Scragg, ed, *Edgar, King of the English* for a thorough survey of different facets of the king's reign, family life and depiction in contemporary sources. For insight into the depictions of the king's power and influence in Anglo-Saxon poetry, see Jayne Carroll, "'Engla Waldend, Rex Admirabilis": Poetic Representations of King Edgar', *The Review of English Studies*, 58 (2007), 113-32.

¹² Jayakumar, 'Eadwig and Edgar', p. 98.

¹³ See Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 368.

¹⁴ Jayakumar, 'Eadwig and Edgar', p. 98.

panegyrics on the subject, which cast Edgar as a Christ-like figure, lost to his kingdom too soon. This portrayal belongs to Edgar's long historiographical afterlife, due to the fact that 'a eulogistic trend may have continued well after' his death.¹⁵

By the 1130s, Edgar had become renowned for his amorous adventures with the opposite sex, and Gaimar presents us with a vivid account of the king's proclivities. After telling us of his surviving legitimate children, the virtuous Edward and the still more estimable Edith ('sa fille out nun seint' Edid,/la dame ke Deus beneit' - vv. 3591-3592 – 'his daughter, a lady specially blessed in the sight of God, was called saint Edith'). The language Gaimar uses to describe this pious daughter is similar to that he employs when introducing her brother, Edward, on his accession; we are told that 'ço fu cel reis ke Deus amat' ('he was a king who found favour in the sight of God', v. 3976). The absence of any comment at all on Edgar's son by Ælfthryth, the future Æthelred II, is all the more revealing in the context of the poet's emphasis on the saintliness of his two older stepsiblings. Gaimar goes on to describe the king's complicated domestic arrangements, which are, in many ways, more suited to a pre-Christian monarch, and which clash with the image of Edgar as a benevolent and wise prince. His statement on v. 3598 creates a negative impression of the account that is to follow, in which a pious and dutiful king with, in Gaimar's account, a power over Britain unknown since Arthur, is corrupted by his desires:

Uncore out il treis altres fiz,
par treis meres furent nasquiz;
treis meres ourent [i]ces treis:
de femmes ert jolifs li reis.
Quant sa raïne fut transie,
par femmes empeira sa vie. (vv. 3593-3598)

In addition he had three other sons, and all three were born to different mothers. Three different mothers bore these three, the king being someone who was particularly fond of women. After Edgar's

¹⁵ Mercedes Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in *Edgar, King of the English*, pp. 252-72, p. 271.

queen had died, his life took a turn for the worse on account of women.

Edgar summons Æthelwald, a knight raised at his court and hence especially dear to him ('Mult l'aveit cher si l'out nurri', v. 3633), and whom he addresses as 'frere' ('brother', v. 3635), a term implying that his confidant is a member of a trusted inner circle.¹⁶ He puts complete faith in Æthelwald, stressing that 'ço k'en dirras tendra pur vair./Jo te crei mult; fai mun afaire' (vv. 3644-3645, 'what you tell me about her I will accept as the truth. I have every confidence in you. Do what I ask of you.') This confidence is initially borne out, as his envoy immediately prepares for his journey as requested, displaying every sign of being a loyal and committed servant of his lord ('ne volt targer', v. 3648: 'he did not wish to delay').

After his sudden infatuation with Ordgar's beautiful daughter has taken hold, Æthelwald returns to impart his false report to the trusting king. Gaimar introduces this misdeed using the same construction with which he has previously announced Edelsi's act of betrayal in marrying his niece to the disguised Haveloc: 'Oiez ke fist cel losenger!' ('Just hear what this deceitful liar did!', v. 3677).¹⁷ Just as the British king's avarice is revealed only when the prospect of annexing his niece's lands becomes apparent on her parents' deaths, so Æthelwald's duplicity and covetousness come to the fore with his introduction to the desirable Ælfthryth. Like Edelsi, he is pragmatic enough to accommodate others until the benefits of doing so are outweighed by temptation, leading to a sudden change in behaviour that would otherwise seem out of character, but which in fact fits within a pattern of self-interested actions.

The divisions in Edgar's court quickly become apparent on Æthelwald's return, when he is able to fool the king into believing that Ælfthryth is a poor choice of queen. The impression given of the king here is not positive; despite having earlier professed to have fallen in love with

¹⁶ William Rufus addresses the helmsman of his ship in the same fashion as he insists on making his dangerous Channel crossing to Maine in the face of warnings about the stormy weather conditions (v. 5835), an incident I will discuss in detail in chapter four.

¹⁷ Gaimar instructs us to 'Oiez ke fit cel felons reis' by way of introduction to his account of Edelsi's misdeeds ('Just hear what this criminal king did!', v. 98).

the young woman's reputation, he loses interest immediately when told that she is unattractive, and unquestioningly accepts his friend's account of her. His gullibility is increased by his after-dinner merriment: Gaimar tells us that 'Li rei ert leez, trop out beü,/legerement l'unt deceü' ('The king, having had too much to drink, was quite merry, and they had little difficulty in deceiving him', vv. 3705-3706). Short translates 'trop' here as 'a great deal'. Although this is one possible meaning of 'trop' at this date, I detect an element of criticism in Gaimar's choice of word. Edgar is a man given to self-indulgence, and the ambiguity here hints at that tendency. The characterisation of Edgar in Gaimar's account is superficially positive, but the young monarch is a figure whose charm and enthusiasm for life's pleasures hardens, when thwarted, into a self-absorbed determination to take what he believes to be his. Gaimar's use of the word 'trop' leaves this potential implicit; like his future queen, Edgar is more complex than his attractive public face initially suggests.

Æthelwald is not acting alone. While the other courtiers have also been misled by Æthelwald into believing that Ælfthryth is an unsuitable bride, they are all too quick to lend their voices to his request to marry her himself ('Ço lur priad k'il li aidassent,/la fille Orgar li demandassent' ('He had requested them to help him by intervening on his behalf as a suitor for Orgar's daughter', vv. 3683-3684). Edgar is surrounded by courtiers who, on this evidence, offer no wise counsel, and are content merely to pander to their lord's desires. Gaimar concludes his account of Æthelwald's duplicity with his description of Edgar's confirmation of his permission to marry by extending the sceptre for his vassal to swear on. He tells us that Æthelwald is not to be trusted, in terms that make explicit Gaimar's views on such acts of bad faith and their consequences for any future pledge, regardless of context:

En icel liu s'est parjuré.
 Home ke traïst n'ad nule lei:
 nel deit l'om crere pur sa fei. (vv. 3718-3720)

Instead he perjured himself. A man who has betrayed another has no legal standing, and his word, even if pledged, is not to be believed.

Æthelwald remains nervous about the king's love of women, and formulates a plan to keep the monarch away from his wife for good. He goes to Edgar and asks him to stand as godfather to his son, a request to which the king readily assents (vv. 3735-3738). Such a connection creates a relationship between the king and Ælfthryth that is within the proscribed degrees of affinity; as such, any sexual relationship between the two is incestuous and unnatural. The fact that Edgar also does not appear to have had his previous marriage annulled goes unmentioned by Gaimar, but must have compounded his error in the eyes of the Church, represented here by Dunstan. According to Gaimar, the king notices nothing unusual in his vassal's conduct, as he is 'francs e gentilz' ('gracious and noble-minded', v. 3741). Æthelwald's status as a beneficiary of Edgar's largesse, having been brought up at court, is also emphasised as having reinforced the king's faith in him: 'nuri l'aveit, pur ço l'amout' ('he had brought him up, and for that (reason) loved him', v. 3744).¹⁸ With this stress on Æthelwald's ingratitude to a man who has shown him great favour, Gaimar aligns the *losenger* with Eadric Streona and with the unnamed villain who makes the false accusation of regicide against Robert of Mowbray in William Rufus's reign.¹⁹

Edgar realises his mistake when he overhears praise of Ælfthryth in courtly gossip, and makes a rash decision to visit her himself, a choice Gaimar considers ill-advised even in the context of Æthelwald's treachery, and which fits with the impression already created of Edgar's foolishness; 'or volt errer de mal en pis!' ('he finally decided on a course of action that would make a bad situation even worse', v. 3766). Under the pretext of hunting stags in Devonshire, Edgar chooses to rest overnight at a manor house that is also serving as lodging for Ælfthryth and her family. The house is close to the wood in which Edgar is to hunt ('prés ert del bois u volt chascer', v. 3775).²⁰ Æthelwald does his best to dissuade the king from going upstairs to the solar where his wife, son and father-in-law are sitting,

¹⁸ The translation of this line is my own.

¹⁹ See pp. 180-84 for discussion of Robert of Mowbray's treatment by William Rufus.

²⁰ The woodland is reminiscent of the site of Argentille's dream, and the image of the royal stag-hunting party appears also in the account of Ælle's downfall and Rufus's murder. I will analyse this recurring detail in chapter four.

but Edgar realises the deceit and, taking the hand of one of his knights, does just that. The king overlooks the many assembled ‘dames, puceles’ (‘ladies and young women’, v. 3787) – a choice Gaimar seems to be implying is uncharacteristic of Edgar – in his haste to speak to Ælfthryth. Gaimar identifies her here at v. 3779 as the king’s ‘cumere’ (his godson’s mother) when Edgar inquires as to her whereabouts, and again as his ‘comere’ at v. 3794 when he kisses her for the first time.²¹ This repeated reference to her relationship with the king under canon law emphasises the unnatural nature of the intimacy that will follow, and is underlined by Gaimar’s cautionary statement that ‘Ultredevise cil purprent/ki tolt sa femme a son parent’ (‘An outrageous act is committed by someone who makes off with the wife of someone to whom he is related’, vv. 3817-3818). The king’s earlier use of the term ‘frere’ to address Æthelwald now seems prescient; a familial relationship has been created, which the king, whose piety has been stressed, should be well aware cannot be broken without committing a terrible sin. Æthelwald’s infraction is severe and merits punishment in the eyes of the court, but Edgar’s crime is of a different order, and is one punishable by God.

It is at this point that Edgar’s previous guilelessness and piety disappear to be replaced by a covetousness and capacity for deceit equal to that shown by his former friend. The sight of Ælfthryth changes Æthelwald the loyal servant into a duplicitous ‘losenger’ (v. 3677); it makes Edgar an adulterer and murderer. The parallels that can be drawn in this episode are striking. David’s lust for Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, is one; similarly, Gaimar’s statement that Edgar has fallen so deeply in love that he believes he will die if he cannot have Ælfthryth evokes the love of Uther Pendragon for Ygerne, Arthur’s mother and the wife of the blameless, ill-fated Gorlois (‘Tel dame ne vist unkes mes,/en son quer pensa s’il ne l’ad,/donc murrat il, ja ne guarat’ – ‘He had never before seen a woman like her, and in his heart of hearts he thought that if he does not have her, he will never get over it

²¹ Short translates the line ‘e sa comere beisat’ (v. 3794) as ‘(he) then gave her a godfatherly kiss’. This has the effect of lending Edgar’s intentions in doing so an air of innocence that is absent from the Old French, a lack which is reinforced by the following lines.

and will die', vv. 3820-3822).²² However, unlike Uther, who can find no rest and must consult Merlin for advice on how to secure Ygerne, Edgar sleeps peacefully ('La nuit se just li reis en pes', v. 3819). Edgar keeps his own counsel in the matter, having presumably realised that his close counsellors are not worthy of his confidence; however, this ability to take his own bad decisions without consultation adds to the impression of him as a tyrant. At the same time, Ælfthryth's future as the murderer of her stepson is foreshadowed in the king's growing attraction to her as they drink together from a wide variety of different alcoholic beverages, as is the custom. Gaimar names these drinks in turn, and refers to 'le wesheil e le drinchail' ('wassailing' and its customary response to 'drink hail', v. 3809), an allusion that instantly evokes the inappropriate passion of the foolish British king Vortigern for the heathen Saxon princess, Renwein, who will go on to poison his heir, Vortimer, after her husband's death, leaving the way clear for her kin to seize power. Both these episodes are depicted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which Gaimar had used in creating his *Estoire des Bretuns*; the references to them here weave a complex web of allusions that identify Edgar and his beloved as representative of a familiar pattern of lustful kings and their inappropriate objects of desire.²³

These extratextual references are not the only models for Edgar's passion. Gaimar's earlier description of Osberht's rape of Buern Bucecarle's wife provides a point of comparison for Edgar's visit to his vassal's wife (vv. 2603-2700). Osberht, king of Northumberland, makes a similar hunting trip to the woods in the Ouse valley during his vassal's absence ('Un jor estait en bois alé,/aval Use ert alé chascer' - vv. 2606-2607). Like Edgar, he has heard much of Buern's unnamed wife's great beauty, although they have never met; while Gaimar does not describe the hunting trip as a pretext

²² Hans-Erich Keller, 'De l'amour dans le *Roman de Brut*', in *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Language and Literature in Honour of John L. Grigsby*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Gloria Torrini-Roblin (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1989), pp. 63-79, p. 74.

²³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of the De Gestis Britonum (Historia Regum Britannie)*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve, trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), §100 for Renwein and §137 for Uther and Ygerne.

for Osberht's act, this context leaves the matter in little doubt. After dinner, Osberht orders the lady to send everyone from the room but for a few of his men, who 'bien saveient [tut] son segrei' ('well knew his secret design', v. 2666). Gaimar uses this word again when he describes the confidence placed in Æthelwald by Edgar as he declares his love for Ælfthryth before despatching the vassal on his fateful mission ('Edelwoth frere', dit li rei, 'jo te dirrai de mon secrei' – 'Æthelwald, brother', said the king, 'I will tell you my secret', vv. 3635-3636). His desire for Ælfthryth is described as such again at v. 3682, when we are told that Edgar's other closest intimates also know of his love from afar ('e ki saveient cest segrei'). With this term established in an episode as unpleasant as that of Osberht's rape of Buern's wife, there is a shameful air to Edgar's love for Ælfthryth even at this stage when she is still free to marry and has not yet borne the king's godson. The presence of Æthelwald and a sizeable entourage prevents any sexual overtures, consensual or otherwise, on the first meeting between Edgar and the object of his desires, but Gaimar notes the king's intense feelings when he 'playfully and jokingly' lifts Ælfthryth's mantle ('par jeu e par gabel', v. 3797) and observes the beauty of her form, a sight at which he 'almost got carried away' ('pur un petit ne s'esperdi', v. 3800). Given the repeated reminders that Edgar is a man devoted to sexual pleasure, the reminders of Osberht's wicked behaviour are telling. As it transpires, however, the king's subsequent determined pursuit of his kinswoman will not involve violence; despite her 'simpleté' ('innocence', v. 3813) in responding to her king's kisses at this first encounter, Ælfthryth will prove to be a willing partner. Æthelwald is superfluous by this stage; he has no further dialogue and his behaviour at the dinner he presumably attends is not noted. After having set events in motion with considerable cunning, he is reduced to a passive victim of a very different plan, which will end with his decisive removal from the scene.

Edgar's behaviour at this point shows considerable craft and ruthlessness:

Ore quart engin e mal penser
ke sovent puise od lui parler.

De s'amur est mult ententis;
or quert engin, ço m'est avis.²⁴ (vv. 3823-3826)

Now he searches for a stratagem and thinks up some devious means of being able to speak with her frequently. His heart is now set on his love, and I guess he will be looking to make some shrewd move or other.

The repeated use of the word 'engin' emphasises Edgar's malice and cunning in arranging his love affair behind his vassal's back, visiting her several times, making her presents of venison he has killed on his hunting trips, and returning home having left her 'enluminee' ('fired with passion', v. 3832).²⁵ Ælfthryth's innocence has gone, and been replaced by a certainty of her future that Gaimar does not explain, but which subsequent events bear out; 'Tant out oï, bien entendeit/ke li reis prendre la voleit' ('She heard what he had been saying, and understood only too well that the king wished to have her for himself', vv. 3833-3834). Edgar wastes no time. Within a week, he holds court at Salisbury, and despatches the luckless Æthelwald to York to defend the volatile region around it, an area in which both Osberht and his successor Ælle met their deaths fighting the Danes. In the same language used to describe his earlier mission, Æthelwald – who has reverted to his earlier identity as a dutiful envoy – sets out without delay, 'sans targer' (v. 3847) to fulfil his task. On this occasion, however, he meets only death at the hands of unidentified 'uthlages e enemis' ('outlaws and individuals hostile to him', v. 3853). Gaimar will not be drawn on their identities, which he claims not to know: 'ne sai quel gent i encontrout' (v. 3852). Gaimar describes Æthelwald as 'cel fel' ('this criminal', v. 3854), and concludes his account in a manner that will be echoed twice in the *Estoire*: firstly in relation to Edward's murder, and finally in Gaimar's description of Rufus's death at the hands of Walter Tirel. The poet's sudden vagueness on the subject of Edgar's responsibility for the crime only reinforces the impression left on his audience that the king's guilt is certain, as it will in both subsequent instances of this approach:

²⁴ Vv. 3825-3826 are not present in MS R; Short has supplied them from MS D.

²⁵ For more on *engin*, see Robert W. Hanning, 'Engin in Twelfth-Century Romance: An Examination of the *Roman d'Enéas* and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', *Yale French Studies*, 51 (1974), 82-101.

Asquanz distrent ke cel convei
 li enveat Edgar le rei,
 Meis nul ne sout ki l'osast dire
 ki cil furent kil vont oscire. (vv. 3855-3858)

Some people say that it was king Edgar who had sent him people like this for company, but no one knew anyone who would have dared maintain that these were the same people as those who were to put him to death.

The king is informed of the crime, but can take no steps to punish those responsible ('fere vengeance', v. 3860), as 'he would have found no one able to tell him who had done the deed and killed him' ('car ne trovast ki li deist/ki ço out fait, ne ki l'oscist', vv. 3861-3862). Gaimar's point is difficult to miss. At the very least, Æthelwald's death is convenient; however, the context with which we have been provided suggests that his abrupt removal is no accident of fate. The subsequent coronation of Ælfthryth at Gloucester is a lavish occasion which bears a strong resemblance to Rufus's Christmas court at Winchester.²⁶ In his description of the new queen's rich garb, Gaimar points out that the king covets a costly ring on her finger ('forment le cuveita li rei', v. 3884), a detail that serves to sharpen the unflattering image of Edgar as an acquisitive individual with a taste for the superficial.

Edgar's legacy is a complex one, and Gaimar has other claims to make with regard to its lasting repercussions. One of the most noteworthy elements in Gaimar's subsequent brief survey of Edward's reign is the poet's assertion that the king's youth made him the target of vicious attacks by predatory foreign elements in his realm. Even more telling is Gaimar's unequivocal statement that blame for the power of such outside forces in England can be placed upon one person: Edward's father, Edgar. It was he who invited them into his kingdom; 'mal aveit feit', is Gaimar's view on the subject (literally, 'he had done wrong', v. 3980). There is no real reflection of such a special relationship in non-English sources. Edgar's presence in Scandinavian literature of that time is minimal by comparison with that of

²⁶ See chapter four for a comparison of these two episodes.

other Anglo-Saxon kings; the composers of the sagas appear to have favoured warriors and saints.²⁷ This may be due to the vagaries of storytelling practice and transmission, but it suggests that Edgar did not make a deep impression on his Nordic peers, regardless of the extent of his dealings with them. The seeds of this perception of Edgar apparently lie in Wulfstan, archbishop of York's addition to the 959 entry of the D version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in which he writes critically of Edgar's overfondness for foreigners, and their damaging effects on England. William of Malmesbury expanded on this theme:

Vnde factum est ut, fama eius per ora omnium uolitatante, alienigenae Saxones, Flandritae, ipsi etiam Dani, huc frequenter annauigarent, Edgardo familiares effecti: quorum aduentus magnum prouintialibus detrimentum peperit, quod a Saxonibus animorum inconditam ferocitatem, a Flandritis corporum eneruem mollitiem, a Danis potationem discerent, homines antehac in talibus integri et naturali simplicitate sua defensare, aliena non mirari. Inde merito iureque culpant eum litterae; nam ceteras infamias, quas post dicam, magis resperserunt cantilenae. (WM, *Gesta Regum* ii.148.3)

The result was that, as his fame 'flitted o'er the lips of all men', foreigners in crowds, Saxons, Flemings, even Danes, visited this country and became Edgar's friends; and their arrival had a very bad effect on its inhabitants, who learnt from the Saxons unalloyed ferocity, from the Flemings a spineless physical effeminacy, and from the Danes a love of drinking, though previously they had been immune from such failings and had maintained their own standards naturally and simply without coveting those of others. For this the texts properly and rightly blame him, while the other slanders of which I shall speak later were more the aspersions of popular song.

There is a sense in both Gaimar's *Estoire* and William's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, carried over from Wulfstan's original comments, that the later suffering of the English people at the hands of Viking raiders – ongoing at Wulfstan's time of writing – was a direct result of Edgar's foolish overtures of friendship to dangerous foreign elements.²⁸ In an incidental detail of a tranquil domestic scene, Gaimar hints at the real impetus behind the great

²⁷ Lesley Abrams, 'Edgar and the Men of the Danelaw', in *Edgar: King of the English*, pp. 171-91, p. 190.

²⁸ Simon Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', in *Edgar, King of the English*, pp. 3-58, p. 56.

favour shown to foreigners by Edgar. On Æthelwald's mission to judge Ælfthryth's qualities, he comes upon her and Ordgar playing a game Gaimar feels the need to explain for his audience: 'Orgar juout a un eschés,/un giu k'il aprist des Daneis;/od lui juout Elstruet la bele' ('Ordgar happened to be playing chess, a game which he had learnt from the Danes. The beautiful Ælfthryth was playing with him', vv. 3653-3655). This indicates the young woman's intelligence and cultivation, but also informs us that Ordgar has spent sufficient time in Danish company to have acquired a taste for one of their leisure pursuits. Gaimar does not make the link explicit for us, but he does not need to. Ælfthryth and her family, once they have the king's ear, will bring him closer to dangerous foreign influences. The subtext to Ælfthryth's choice of game would also likely not have been lost on a medieval readership; chess's association with a high degree of intelligence and political acumen is not a recent development.²⁹ From her first appearance, the future queen is a complex figure whose beauty blinds those around her to her true nature.

Ælfthryth

William of Malmesbury, writing in 1127, leaves us in no doubt as to the identity of those responsible for the deaths of both Æthelwald and Edward. In his account, Ælfthryth is a willing accomplice in her husband's killing, and goes to some lengths to win the young king's love. When William's Ælfthryth learns of her first husband's deceit, she immediately takes matters into her own hands:

²⁹ Jenny Adams, in her *Power Play: The Literature and Politics of Chess in the Late Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) p. 2, highlights chess's literary status as a game that 'encoded anxieties about political organization, civic community, economic exchange, and individual autonomy'. Several of those concerns might be read into the story of Edgar and Ælfthryth, from the breakdown in reciprocal political loyalties between the king and his vassal due to their shared passion for Ordgar's daughter, to Ælfthryth's own disruptive bid to promote her son's claim to the English throne following Edgar's death. For background on the nature of games in medieval literature, see also Serina Patterson, ed, *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Sed quid non presumit femina? Ausa est miseri amatoris et primi coniugis fidem fallere et speculo uultum comere, nichil omittens quod ephebi et potentis lumbos pertemptaret. Nec citra propositum accidit. Visam enim adeo inarsit ut, dissimulatio odio, comitem in siluam Warewellae gratia uenandi accitum iaculo traiceret. (*GR*, ii.157.2-3)

But is anything beyond a woman's ambition? She found the heart to break faith with her wretched lover and her first husband, and sat down at the mirror to paint her face, leaving nothing undone that might excite the lust of a young man and a man of power. All happened as she intended. He fell in love with her at first sight so passionately that, concealing his resentment, he sent for the ealdorman to come hunting in the forest of Wherwell, and there pierced him with a javelin.

After Edgar's death and Edward's accession, Ælfthryth's meddling in matters of state becomes dangerous:

Illum Dunstanus et ceteri episcopi consentanei regali culmine sullimarunt, contra uoluntatem quorundam, ut aiunt, optimatum et nouercae, quae uix dum septem annorum puerulum Egelredum filium prouehere conabatur, ut ipsa potius sub eius nomine imperitaret. (*GR*, ii.161.1)

He (Edward) was raised to the royal dignity by Dunstan in agreement with the other bishops, against the wishes (so the story goes) of certain nobles and of his stepmother, who tried to promote her son Æthelred, a child barely seven years old, in order that she might reign herself in his name.

Her resentment of her stepson's position culminates in murder:

...at mulier, nouercali odio uipereum dolum ruminans ut nec nomen regis filio deesset, insidias priuigno struere, quas hoc modo consummauit. Lassus uenatione reuertebatur propter laborem siti anhelus; comites, quo quemque casus tulerat, canes consecabantur; auditoque quod illi in contigua uilla habitarent, equo concito illuc contendit iuuenculus solus, nichil propter innocentiam metuens, alitorum quippe animos ex suo ponderans. Tunc illa muliebri blanditia aduentantem allitiens, sibi fecit intendere, et post libata basis porrectum poculum auide haurientem per satellitem sica transfodit. (*GR*, ii.162.1-2)

The woman, however, with a stepmother's hatred and a viper's guile, in her anxiety that her son should also enjoy the title of king, laid

plots against her stepson's life, which she carried out as follows. He was coming back tired from hunting, breathless and thirsty from his exertions; his companions were following the hounds where chance had led each one; and hearing that they were quartered in a neighbouring village, the young man spurred his horse and hastened to join them, all by himself, too innocent to have any fears and no doubt judging other people by himself. On his arrival, his stepmother, with a woman's wiles, distracted his attention, and with a kiss of welcome offered him a drink. As he greedily drank it, she had him pierced with a dagger by one of her servants.

Edward is interred without ceremony by his murderers, but word spreads of the miracles performed at his unmarked grave. When Ælfthryth attempts to set out on horseback to visit the site, divine displeasure prevents her from riding there; no horse will carry her. Along with Ælfhere, the nobleman William views as her partner in crime in the murky act – a figure not present in Gaimar's account – she suffers for her sins. While she is spared his unpleasant death by lice, she gives herself up to penitence and scourging in her sanctuary at Wherwell. Her greatest punishment, however, is the failure of her son as king. William is scathing on the subject of Æthelred. In his account, Dunstan loudly proclaims the king's unworthiness, identifying him as an accomplice in his brother's murder, and prophesying terrible suffering for his people as a result of the king's and his mother's machinations. With the coming of the Danes, this prophecy is proved correct.

Gaimar's version of events is, on the first reading, a more positive portrayal of the fraught political situation of the 960s. His depiction of the relationship between Edgar and his lover has drawn a significant amount of attention, and is a key point in the argument that Gaimar is a pioneer in the art of romance, a genre still in its earliest stages of development in the first half of the twelfth century.³⁰ In fact, the passage has been cited as an example of the 'courtly' tendencies often noted in Gaimar's writing.³¹

³⁰ See Alexander Bell, 'Gaimar and the Edgar-Ælfthryth Story', *Modern Language Review*, 21 (1926), 278-87.

³¹ See Jane Zatta, 'Gender, Love and Sex as Political Theory? Romance in Geffrei Gaimar's Anglo-Norman Chronicle', *Mediaevalia*, 21 (1996), 249-80, p. 264 and A.R. Press, 'The Precocious Courtesy of Geffrei Gaimar', in *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool: Cairns, 1980), pp. 267-76 for a discussion of Gaimar's 'courtliness'. Short describes the Edgar/Ælfthryth romance as an example of Gaimar's 'overwhelmingly secular view of society' (*Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xlii). While the

However, there are a number of indications, even at the beginning of the passage, that Ælfthryth is not quite the benign figure she appears to be at first sight. When telling us of Ordgar's power in the south-west, Gaimar mentions that:

...ço ke sa fille li conseile
 ço feit, e ço comande a fere;
 ne trovet ki s'en ost retraire. (vv. 3608-3610)

...and whatever his daughter advises him to do, he either does it or gives orders for it to be done. There is no one, he finds, who dares not comply.

Ælfthryth is, then, able to control her powerful father, and, by extension, his vassals in the region. Gaimar's statement that 'ne trovet ki s'en ost retraire' (v. 3610) is revealing in this context. He leaves us in little doubt that Ordgar's vassals are less afraid of his wrath than of Ælfthryth's. From the outset, her control over others, and her implied ability to enforce her demands, are evident. There is no limit to Ælfthryth's will, and no-one in her circle is capable of preventing her from exercising the power she wields.

Ælfthryth's most enchanting feature is her beauty, which Gaimar mentions directly no fewer than fourteen times, either by describing her as 'bele' or by referring to her 'belté'.³² Her other qualities are listed by the courtiers who praise her in front of Edgar and, in so doing, arouse his suspicions as to Æthelwald's real intentions in keeping her from his king:

Aprés parolent del saveir,

romance elements of Edgar's pursuit of his former friend's wife have been the main focus of previous studies of this episode (see the survey of Gaimar scholarship in the Introduction), I will focus here on the wider significance of each key player for the structure of the *Estoire* as a whole.

³² Gaimar tells us that he does not believe there was anyone as beautiful in the world ('ne quid suz ciel eüst si bele', v. 3612), and that she was known throughout the country for her beauty (vv. 3613-3614) which is spoken of by courtiers (v. 3618). Edgar has heard of this 'bealté' (v. 3620 and v. 3622) and tells Æthelwald that it is this trait he must assess on his mission (v. 3639). His vassal sees 'Elstruet la bele' (v. 3655), described as 'la bele flur' ('the beautiful flower') at v. 3660, whose 'bealté' (v. 3663) captures Æthelwald's heart. Later, Edgar hears the courtiers saying that there is nobody else as beautiful in the world (v. 3750) and that she is both beautiful and wise (v. 3755). When Edgar visits his vassal's wife, he knows her by her beauty (v. 3789) which captivates him (v. 3801). Gaimar addresses her beauty at length in his account of her arrival at court after her husband's death (vv. 3892-3898), and refers to her as 'Elstruet la bele' again at v. 3909.

e ke ço poait espeleir
 k'ele ert ambure bele e sage,
 e de parler de franc corage,
 k'unches nul hom de nul' envie
 ne d'eschar ne de vilainie
 ne pout en lui rien trover,
 si ert sage de sei garder. (vv. 3753-3760)

They then went on to talk about how intelligent she was, and how it could possibly be explained that she was both beautiful and clever and gracious and kind-hearted in conversation, and how no one could ever discover any discourtesy, jealousy or contempt in her, and how discreet she was in her behaviour.

Short notes, however, that Gaimar does not use the word 'corteise' to describe the future queen.³³ This is a crucial omission, as the description of Ælfthryth is the only other instance of *descriptio* in the *Estoire* after the lengthy account of Cuaran's beauty and good qualities. The positive traits described are superficial, and are not borne out by any evidence; the courtiers' talk is of the apparent absence of unpleasant features in Ælfthryth's character rather than the presence of their opposites, courtesy, generosity and goodness, while the detailed examples of laudable behaviour given to justify Cuaran's popularity are missing here. Gaimar's description of Edgar's queen is not the balanced one insisted upon by Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendôme. Ælfthryth's beauty is not matched by great kindness or virtue, and her subsequent misdeeds are less surprising when viewed within this context. A warning note is struck by the courtiers' opinion that she would have made an ideal queen, 'si el fust uncore virgine' ('if only she had still been a virgin', v. 3751). Another indication that all is not as it should be is provided by Æthelwald's belief 'ke ço fust fee,/k'ele ne fust de femme nee' ('that she must have been a fairy and not someone born of woman', vv. 3661-3662) due to her extreme beauty. This very early example of a connection between physical beauty and fairies that would become a trope during the twelfth century emphasises Ælfthryth's power over the opposite sex, with its inherent possibility for misuse if not exercised with restraint.

³³ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 3611.

In MSS D and L, we find ‘si ert sage de li garder’ at v. 3760, which, as Short points out, ‘could be taken to mean that it was nevertheless wise to keep her under close surveillance’.³⁴ This pronoun variation is striking, as it features in two of the manuscripts derived from Short’s postulated *beta* redaction of the 1150s. In the place of MS R’s reference to the young woman’s discreet behaviour, the alternative description reinforces the idea that she cannot be trusted. Both formulations foreshadow the duplicitous conduct that will see her embroiled in a clandestine love affair with Edgar, but MSS D and L make this element of the future queen’s poor character far more explicit. In the absence of Gaimar’s original manuscript, it is not possible to say which variant is his, but it is worth noting that they differ only in the subtlety with which they hint at Ælfthryth’s future misdeeds.

Gaimar’s introduction to Ælfthryth’s story casts her as a female figure in the mould of Argentille, a parallel strengthened by her subsequent marriage to the unworthy Æthelwald when the prospect of a royal union more appropriate to one of her great beauty and rank is denied her by his subterfuge. Gaimar tells us that she is the only child of Ordgar and his late wife, making her the heiress to his lands (‘nul altre enfant n’en ert remés’, v. 3602). Argentille inherits her father’s kingdom on the same grounds; he has no other heir (‘son pere n’out nul altre eir’, v. 70). Ordgar is ‘an important man’ (‘un riches home’, v. 3599), just as Adelbriht, Argentille’s father, is ‘cel riche reis’ (‘a powerful king’, v. 59). Gaimar goes on to describe the extent of Ordgar’s territories, which stretch from Exeter to Frome (vv. 3604-3606), as Adelbriht’s had covered the east of England from Colchester to Holland (vv. 75-76). Æthelwald secures Ælfthryth’s inheritance when he takes her as his wife; as we have seen, Gaimar’s description of his behaviour evokes that of Argentille’s grasping uncle, Edelsi, another figure who is suddenly revealed as a villain when the opportunity to acquire something desirable presents itself unexpectedly, and who betrays the love and favour shown to him by a king.

However, there is a subtle change in the dynamics of this love triangle when Edgar finally meets his future queen, an event that marks the

³⁴ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Notes to the Text’, note to v. 3760.

beginning of the reversal in her duplicitous husband's fortunes. When Edgar leaves Ælfthryth after his courtship of her in Devonshire, she is 'enluminee' ('fired with passion', v. 3832). This is the same word used to describe Æthelwald's feelings on observing her beauty when he is first sent to assess her qualities on the king's behalf (v. 3664), and Edgar's when she kisses the king on presenting him with the wassailing cup (v. 3814). The use of this particular adjective marks the point at which each falls irrevocably in love, and becomes an active participant in the events that follow. Ælfthryth has no dialogue in the account of her relationship with Edgar, but Gaimar gives us access to her thoughts; we are told that she is fully aware of Edgar's feelings and intentions before the Salisbury court at which he despatches Æthelwald on his fatal mission, and are informed of her hatred for archbishop Dunstan when he subsequently questions the validity of her second marriage.

The future queen's behaviour when faced with the king's lust can be usefully compared with that of Buern's unnamed wife following Osberht's violent attack on her. The situation is not exactly comparable; Osberht's intent is solely to rape the lady and to presume upon her shame and fear proving too great for his secret to emerge, while Buern's marriage, unlike Æthelwald's, is a happy one in which his wife feels sufficiently safe to give a full account of her suffering. She is left distraught and 'descoluree' ('pale', v. 2637) with the 'honte' ('shame', v. 2636) done her by the king. Buern cannot fail to observe the change in her, and gently questions her as to its cause. There follows a tender conversation in direct speech, during which Buern's wife displays her courage and strength of character in informing her husband of the king's crime, and reveals the depth of her pain in declaring that she would rather die than continue to live with it. We are told that she is very beautiful ('mult ert bele', v. 2613), but Buern also reminds her that 'en vus ad mainte bone tecche' ('You are a person of many good qualities', v. 2666). Ælfthryth, by contrast, hates and resents her husband, yet is quite happy for Edgar to visit her in private without her husband's knowledge. Bell considers that Ælfthryth's 'withdrawal' of affection from her husband is justified by her awareness of his duplicity; as

a result, her adultery with Edgar appears less morally unacceptable.³⁵ In his view, the ‘moral significance’ of this is unique to Gaimar’s version of the narrative, and is also present in the love between Haveloc and Argentille, and in Buern’s tenderness for his wronged wife.³⁶ I agree with Bell’s assertion that Æthelwald’s behaviour is depicted as treacherous in the extreme, but the parallels between Edgar and Osberht, taken alongside Ælfthryth’s enthusiastic pursuit of a relationship with her king, subvert the superficial resemblances to the story of Buern’s wife. Edgar’s marriage is also far removed from the successful romantic and dynastic union of Haveloc and Argentille, which ended in approbation and the expansion of their respective kingdoms. Like Buern’s wife, Ælfthryth must rely on the devotion of a powerful man in order to secure justice for the wrong done to her, but the comparison ends there. Her willingness to accept the king’s favour is in stark contrast to the deep suffering and shame experienced by Buern’s unfortunate spouse. Bell identifies the injustice done to all three women, but his assessment of the moral subtext to Ælfthryth’s fate is impeded, like Press’s consideration of this episode, by the absence of analysis of both Ælfthryth’s actions in the account of Edward’s murder and the hints of poor character that are present from her first appearance.

Ælfthryth’s intolerance of any who oppose her wishes is present in her anger towards the saintly archbishop, Dunstan, when he challenges her union with the king in a confrontation that takes place in the privacy of the royal bedchamber. Dunstan’s response to the king’s insistence on Ælfthryth’s status as his queen is unequivocal:

Dist l'arcevesque: ‘Ço est tort!
Mielz vus venist ke fussez mort
ke si gisir en avultrie;
vos almes irrunt a martirie!’ (vv. 3953-3956)

To this the archbishop replied: ‘But wrongfully so. It would have been better for you to be dead than to be wallowing in adultery in this way. The souls of both of you will suffer the torments [of Hell].’

³⁵ Bell, ‘Buern Bucecarle in Gaimar’, p. 174.

³⁶ Bell, ‘Buern Bucecarle in Gaimar’, p. 174.

The king's reaction to this statement goes unrecorded by Gaimar. Given the poet's earlier emphasis on the monarch's piety and awareness of right and wrong, perhaps Edgar's silence in the face of the archbishop's censure is the only possible answer after his sinful actions. His initial answer to Dunstan's reproving questioning as to the identity of his companion in bed is without anger, and stresses the queen's power rather than his own; 'Li reis respont: 'Ço est la raïne/Elstruet, a ki cest regne acline' ('The king replies: 'This is the queen, Ælfthryth, to whom this kingdom bends its knee in subjection', vv. 3951-3952). However, we are left in no doubt as to the strength of the queen's fury in the face of the archbishop's reproof, a sentiment that does not speak well for her character:

La raïne, quant el l'oïd,
 vers l'arcevesque s'en marid,
 si fort l'en devint enemie
 puis ne l'ama jor de sa vie. (vv. 3957-3960)

When the queen heard the archbishop, she was so angry with him that she became his life-long enemy and never again showed him any love.

The emphasis on the queen's response rather than the king's suggests that Dunstan has more to fear from the consort's ire than from that of the king himself. Gaimar offers no commentary on the archbishop's opinion of the king's and Ælfthryth's actions. This is interpreted by Short as tacit approval of the royal stance on the matter, signalling a triumph of romantic, secular love over the rigid dictates of the English church in the era of the Benedictine Reform.³⁷ However, the poet has already indicated his opinion on the subject when introducing the topic of Edgar's ungovernable sexual impulses. Gaimar tells us that 'par femmes empeira sa vie' ('his life took a turn for the worse on account of women', v. 3598), a statement that he does not, in fact, go on to justify with the events of Edgar's lifetime. The king manages to remarry successfully, holds the hectoring Dunstan at bay without, apparently, completely destroying his formerly solid relationship with the Church, and has a healthy son by his new bride. The negative

³⁷ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xlii.

consequences the archbishop predicts are not realised during Edgar's lifetime. However, the king's sudden death while his son by Ælfthryth is still a small child leads to the disorder Dunstan foresees as he censures the couple. Gaimar's statement that the 'queen never again showed him (Dunstan) any love' (v. 3960) not only casts Ælfthryth in a bad light for her impious refusal to accept the archbishop's concerns, but reflects the political situation, as it evolved after Edgar's death. Dunstan was at the head of the faction behind Edward as claimant to the throne, while Ælfthryth, inevitably, led the group backing the young Æthelred.

Edward

A different model of kingship emerges with Edgar's son, which nonetheless further challenges political stability. Edgar is succeeded by his eldest son, the saintly Edward. Gaimar introduces him to us in terms that immediately contrast his reign with that of his father:

Eadward son fiz après regnat;
 ço fu cel reis ke Deus amat.
 Meis en son tens, pur sa juvente
 estrange gent li funt entente,
 lesquels son pere aveit atret
 en son regne—mal aveit feit—
 e sa marastre, ki viveit,
 ki la force del regne aveit,
 pur la baldur de son linage
 fist fere al rei maint grant outrage,
 e pur son fiz ki tahisseit
 de ki el rei fere voleit. (vv. 3975-3986)

His son Edward reigned after him. He was a king who found favour in the sight of God, but during his reign because of his youth he was attacked by some foreigners whom his father had—wrongly—invited into the kingdom. His stepmother also, who was still living and who was the power in the land, committed several serious outrages against the king in order to add splendour to her own lineage, and with the aim of making her own son—still under age—king.

Edward is a good king, who, like his sister saint Edith, has God's favour (v. 3976). The implication is that his father, as a result of his sexual

entanglements and the skulduggery surrounding Æthelwald's death, did not, further increasing the sense that Gaimar ultimately concurs with Dunstan's assessment of Edgar's likely fate. Gaimar's condemnation of those who made trouble for the young king Edward during his relatively brief reign is absolute, and is conveyed in the strongest terms. He targets the events of Edward's final days with precision in the narrative, giving us no detail of the preceding years of his reign and omitting to expand on the reasons for the favour God shows to Edward. Gaimar has emphasised Edgar's power and wisdom, impressing upon us that the king is 'francs...e debonaire' ('noble-minded and high-born', v. 3575), 'savies e vaillant' ('wise and valiant', v. 3587). However, he undercuts that statement that 'li reis ama mult seint' Eglise' ('the king was a devoted supporter of Holy Church', v. 3572) merely by recounting the king's marital history. Edward, by contrast, is truly righteous. His father's reign may have approached the pinnacle of imperial ambition, but Edward has found divine favour. Unfortunately, the ultimate expression of this favour comes through a martyrdom, of sorts, as Edward is sacrificed for the sake of his step-family's ambitions.

Li reis Eadward dusze anz regnat.
 Ore vus dirrai come deviat.
 Il ert un jor joius e lee,
 en Wilteschire aveit mangé. 3990
 Wolstanet un [sun] naim aveit
 ki baler e trescher saveit,
 si saveit saillir e tumber
 e altres gius plusurs jüer.
 Li reis le vist si l'apelat
 e a jüer li comandat.
 Le naim li dist ke nu ferat,
 pur son comand ne jüerat.
 Cum li reis plus bel le pñiat,
 e il encontre le ramponat, 4000
 forment s'en est li reis marri.
 Wolstanet [i]donc s'en issi,
 son cheval prist, prest le trova,
 a la meison Elstruet ala.
 Il n'i aveit k'une lüette,
 ço ert mult pres de Sumersete,
 bois i aveit espés e grant;
 li naims la veit mult tost poignant
 Li reis muntad, sevant le vat

sur un cheval ke prest trovat;
 unc ne finat de galoper;
 le naim voleit v[ë]er jüer. 4012

King Edward's reign lasted twelve years. I shall now tell you how he died. One day, after dining somewhere in Wiltshire, he was in very good humour and merry. He had a dwarf called Wulfstanet who was very skilful at dancing and jigging and performing somersaults and acrobatics, and playing lots of other games. On seeing him, the king called him over and ordered him to give a performance. The dwarf refused, saying that he would not perform at the king's bidding. The king kept asking politely, but the more he did so, all the dwarf did was to insult him, and this made the king extremely annoyed. Wulfstanet then made up his mind to leave, and, finding his horse ready, set off for Ælfthryth's house. It was only a mile or so away, being very close to Somerset, and the way there led through a large thick forest, which the dwarf takes, spurring his horse forward. The king mounted and set off in pursuit of him on a horse he found ready saddled. He maintained a steady gallop, so keen was he to see the dwarf perform.

Wulfstanet is a character unique to the *Estoire*. There is no such historical figure recorded in any of the other accounts of Edward's murder; Ian Short suggests that Gaimar inherited him from another, probably oral source.³⁸ Given the lack of documentary evidence for Wulfstanet's existence, it has been easy to overlook him as another – not terribly successful – aspect of Gaimar's tendency to introduce romance episodes into the *Estoire*. Wulfstanet taunts the king, makes his escape to Ælfthryth's house, and apparently vanishes en route; Gaimar never refers to him again, except when he recounts the conversation between the king and his stepmother on the subject of the dwarf's whereabouts. On the first reading, this seems to be a straightforward failure in the structure of the narrative. Gaimar's attempt to create interest with the introduction of a stock figure in such a seemingly clumsy fashion, only to do nothing of great interest with him, appears to be no more than a hamfisted method of explaining the king's presence at his untrustworthy stepmother's house on the night of his killing. Short is unimpressed by Gaimar's characterisation, describing the episode as 'curiously unsatisfactory in terms of narrative motivation' and expresses confusion as to why the dwarf's 'traditional role as an evil, semi-

³⁸ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', p. 410.

supernatural schemer' has been substituted with a new portrayal as 'an unlikely lure whose fatal attraction to the saintly king is never explained'.³⁹ However, I will suggest another interpretation of this odd character and his seemingly incomplete narrative arc, a loose thread within the story of Edward's murder that only exacerbates the impression of a frustrating loophole in Gaimar's plotting. Wulfstanet's inclusion in the *Estoire* tests Gaimar's skill as a practitioner of *translatio* against Kelly's question on the subject of textual gaps; that is, whether the lack of explanation of the dwarf's involvement in the crime (and his sudden disappearance before it is actually carried out) is 'a potential, a topos that can be the seedbed of new growth, or a lacuna indicative of poor artistry'.⁴⁰ I suggest that Gaimar's Wulfstanet is the former, and that his intentions are left vague in order to create room for the audience to formulate their own interpretations of the events surrounding the king's assassination.

In order to piece together the reasoning behind Wulfstanet's appearance in the narrative, we must examine the context of the episode as a whole. The entire encounter between Edward and his stepmother is the epitome of treachery: the king is welcomed into Ælfthryth's home, given the customary hospitality and won over by her reassuring words, only to be brutally murdered by her or one of her entourage. When the king enquires as to Wulfstanet's whereabouts, he has little success with Ælfthryth's attendants; Gaimar tells us that 'nuls ne le dist ne oc ne nun' ('no one was willing to give him a straight answer' v. 4016) until he is greeted by his stepmother – 'fors la reïne ke issi/de sa chambre si respondi/'Sire, ja ne vint il nient.' ('...except the queen. Emerging from her apartments, she replied: 'Sire, he never showed his face here.' - vv. 4017-4018) She then informs her stepson that she will send out a search party for Wulfstanet: 'Vulstanet quere ça ferai,/jo quid ke bien le troverai.' ('...and I'll also get someone to go and look for Wulfstanet. I think I stand a very good chance of finding him.' - vv. 4023-4024)

Gaimar does not call the queen a liar for falsely reassuring the young king in such a way; he does not have to. Everything she tells Edward is

³⁹ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', p. 410.

⁴⁰ Kelly, *Conspiracy of Allusion*, p. 259.

untrue, from her offer of hospitality to her promise to find out where exactly Wulfstanet is hiding. Her statement that she thinks she has a strong chance of finding the errant dwarf is in itself telling – Edward’s belief that Wulfstanet is likely to be found somewhere on his stepmother’s property appears to be justified by some prior acquaintance between the dowager and the jester. It is unclear why the king would place his trust in a man associated to the stepmother he fears. Is Ælfthryth telling the truth when she says that the dwarf has never been in the house, and if so, why is she so confident that she can find him? This last comment seems particularly unnecessary to the outcome of the episode. Gaimar could have had the queen merely deny Wulfstanet’s presence and move on to proffering the fated welcome cup.⁴¹

Given the significance of dwarves as symbols of duplicity and trickery in twelfth-century literature, it is possible that Wulfstanet’s identity is intended to highlight his untrustworthiness.⁴² However, the fact that dwarves were familiar figures in court life could be no more than another instance of Gaimar’s apparently detailed knowledge of that world, displayed elsewhere in his accounts of Edelsi’s and Rufus’s splendid households. Edward’s evident youth would make the kind of entertainment provided by a *jongleur* of this kind all the more appealing, a detail that might help to account for his poor judgement in visiting his stepmother’s home without an escort, and to increase the pathos surrounding his early and brutal death. Gaimar’s emphasis on Wulfstanet’s inappropriate lack of respect and failure to show suitable deference towards his master reflects the troubled political situation during the king’s reign; foreign elements, left unidentified by Gaimar, along with the king’s own near relatives, foment discord and show their true colours by their actions. In depicting Wulfstanet’s flight to Ælfthryth’s house, Gaimar does not need to make explicit the fact that the dwarf is heavily involved in the plot against the king’s life. The mystery of why the king’s fool would immediately seek refuge with Ælfthryth is no

⁴¹ See Julie Kerr, “‘Welcome the coming and speed the parting guest’: Hospitality in Twelfth-Century England”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 130-46 and ‘The Open Door: Hospitality and Honour in Twelfth/Early Thirteenth-Century England’, *History*, 87 (2002), 322-35 for more on customs when welcoming visitors.

⁴² See Claude Lecouteux, *Les Nains et les Elfes* (Paris: Imago, 1988) for depictions of dwarves at this time.

real mystery at all. Gaimar is showing us that the ultimate source of the discontent that will take the king's life is to be found with his stepmother.

Edward allows Wulfstanet to lead him through a thick forest – itself a symbolic location of confusion and danger - allowing him to become separated from his loyal attendants, before venturing foolishly into his stepmother's home, where even he realises on some level that he is not safe. Wulfstanet, with his 'gius' ('games', v. 3994) is no different from Ælfthryth, except for the fact that he dupes the king in exactly the opposite way; the dwarf wins the king's misplaced trust with his antics and clever tricks, yet openly rebuffs his favour and rudely declares his insubordination. Ælfthryth makes all the correct gestures of subservience and loyalty, but the truth of her malicious intent towards the king is revealed by the brutality of his murder within her domestic sphere.

The most striking aspect of this episode, however, is the fact that Edward meets his death in a domestic context in which we have already encountered Ælfthryth on two separate occasions: the day of Æthelwald's visit and the first meeting with Edgar. When the young king arrives with the intention of seeing Ælfthryth for himself at last, Æthelwald attempts to prevent him from going upstairs and discovering his lie. Edward arrives at his stepmother's house determined to find the missing *jongleur*, but is confronted instead by Ælfthryth, who succeeds in detaining him long enough for one of her associates to strike the fatal blow. Edward's understandable lack of trust in her is demonstrated by his insistence that she drink from the welcome cup before him (v. 4030); this is explicable within the context of the 'grant utrage' ('serious outrages', v. 3984) that his father's widow has apparently committed against him as she furthers her own family's ambitions, and on which Gaimar does not elaborate.

The young king is 'lee' ('merry', v. 3987) after a pleasant dinner when Wulfstanet refuses to perform for him, a word also used to describe his father's state when Æthelwald takes advantage of his post-prandial confusion to lie about his visit to Ælfthryth. Like Edgar, Edward appears to lack any prudent advisers; he makes the foolish decision to set out and find the missing dwarf alone and without protection. His household arrives at Ælfthryth's house too late to save him. The 'house' in which she resides

(Corfe Castle, although Gaimar does not identify it by name) is near the thick wood through which Edward pursues the dwarf, a similar location to that of the dwelling in which the future queen is staying when Edgar meets her for the first time. Ælfthryth speaks for the first and last time as she welcomes her stepson, using the same kind of dissembling language as Æthelwald when he tried to prevent Edgar's ascent to the solar; 'Si te pleist, reis, herberge tei' ('Please, sire, take lodgings here', v. 4020 – as compared to Æthelwald's plea to Edgar: 'Reis, trop junez; alez manger!', 'But sire, you've been going without food for far too long; come and eat!', v. 3782). The intention in both cases is to prevent the king from seeing someone he is determined to find. He dies just as Ælfthryth is about to give him the kiss of welcome that she had earlier offered his father under very different circumstances.

The truth will not be concealed; local people are able to find the royal corpse's burial place with the guidance of a heavenly light. Gaimar describes it as sufficiently bright for it to resemble a sunbeam ('bien pres resemblout al solael', v. 4058), which echoes the earlier detail – unmotivated at that point in the narrative – that, when Edgar seeks out Ælfthryth before his evening meal, the sun is still shining brightly ('uncore luseit li soleil cler', v. 3778). The divine favour shown to Edward here cannot be misinterpreted; it is as impossible to refute as the evidence of Haveloc's successful passing of the relevant tests for a king of Denmark, and gives an unequivocal verdict on the succession crisis of the 970s. Edward is the rightful heir in the *Estoire*, and his stepmother has committed the terrible sin of having God's anointed killed. Having already introduced hints of a darker side to Ælfthryth's character in the earlier episode, Gaimar has the dowager cast off her role as passive object of the royal affections and take on the guise of the manipulative, conniving stepmother:

E la meisnee le vont sevant
 a la maison Elstrued querant:
 cele fuï, pur ço est dit
 ke la raïne le murdrît. (vv. 4051-4054)

The king's household, that had been following after him, arrived at Ælfthryth's house in their search for him. The very fact that she fled

explains why people say that it was the queen who had had him murdered.

This echoes Gaimar's earlier statement that king Edgar's complicity in Æthelwald's murder was suspected but remained unproven, and is undermined immediately by the poet's assertion that the queen had 'the martyr's holy body hidden' some distance away in a marsh ('e le saint cors de cel martir/fist la raïne loinz covrir', vv. 4045-4046). When the deed is discovered, Ælfthryth is given absolution by Dunstan and, as penance for having incurred 'la grant ire' ('God's wrath', v. 4084), retires to the convent at Wherwell. Gaimar concludes his story by declaring that 'Now may God, who [alone] has the power to save her, do with her what he will!' ('Ore en face Deu son pleisir! Il ad pöer de lui guarir', vv. 4093-4094). Dunstan's forgiveness can only mitigate her earthly punishment; Gaimar reserves judgement as to the treatment she might expect when she answers to God for her crime.

Despite the bleak ending to Edward's short reign, parallels with Haveloc can be discerned. His fitness to rule is highlighted by the indications of divine wrath after his murder, when his unsuitable grave is revealed by heavenly light; while his isolation and lack of suitable counsellors leaves him vulnerable to the wickedness of his extended family, his compensation for this suffering is elevation to sainthood, worth more than any earthly crown. The young king's fatal decision to go against his own sound instincts and accept his stepmother's hospitality displays his political inexperience, just as his rash desire to pursue the dwarf in the first place is emblematic of a youthful folly born of fundamental decency that was curbed in Haveloc – despite several humorous reminders of his tendencies in that direction – by the wise counsel of his 'sister' Kelloc, his wife and the loyal retainer, Sigar Estalre.

The echoing of Edgar's fateful encounter with his future wife in Gaimar's account of Edward's final visit cast those earlier events in a different light; the negative repercussions of the king's love for her are revealed by the foreshadowing of the murder: the bright rays of the evening sun, the conversational dissembling, and the significant kiss of welcome.

The parallel between Ælfthryth and Ronwen has been completed by the queen's involvement in Edward's death, just as the latter had schemed at the poisoning of her equally blameless stepson, Vortimer. However, the multi-layered use of models in this lengthy episode can only fully be understood with reference to figures found within it, as well as those external to the text. All three of the key players in the first section of the narrative have their turn to become 'enlumine(e)', and their characters are damaged by their unrestrained desires as a result. Æthelwald's passion for Ælfthryth – and, it is suggested, his wish to acquire her inheritance – causes him to opportunistically abandon his loyalties and betray Edgar's trust, but the royal couple's mutual desire relegates him to a passive role, lacking in speech or agency, before his sudden death. The figure of Edelsi, formerly visible in his manipulative actions, now becomes perceptible in Edgar, who maintains a court of similar opulence to that of the British ruler, and is equally keen to lay hands upon both Ælfthryth's desirable person and the extensive territories she brings to the union.

The queen herself begins as a figure similar to Argentille in her beauty, her status as an heiress, and her apparent powerlessness in the face of the machinations of a powerful man who wishes to acquire her inheritance. However, Edgar is no Haveloc. The queen's negative influence is magnified by her second husband's inability even to seek counsel, let alone to heed it; they ignore Dunstan's exhortations, with devastating consequences. Ælfthryth is perceived by Æthelwald to be a figure of supernatural beauty, resembling a fairy in her loveliness. When Edward comes to her home in search of his dwarf, however, he is confronted by his stepmother instead; the supernatural is evoked again, but this time, the connotations are exclusively negative. Wulfstanet has disappeared, his purpose served. Edward has followed a malign influence out of the safety of his court, and discovered Ælfthryth in its place, her true nature revealed now that she is 'la force del regne' ('the power in the land'). Her behaviour in her duplicitous welcome to her stepson echoes that of Æthelwald as he attempts to ward off Edgar's interest in his wife. Her husbands are both greedy opportunists in the mould of Edelsi, but Ælfthryth is all the more dangerous for having concealed her malice behind these two male

protectors. She is another Argentille, but with a nature coarsened by adversity, and a beauty permitted such great licence by all around her that she takes on the treacherous characteristics of an Edulf.

Her behaviour also foreshadows that of two other regicidal figures in the *Estoire*: Eadric Streona and earl Godwine, who, in different ways, will use similar levels of *engin* to remove obstructions from their path to power. This point in the *Estoire*, however, marks a shift in Gaimar's approach. We have now seen him handle material of varying degrees of political sensitivity. Gaimar's account of Haveloc is the safest terrain for the poet to tread, as it is the furthest removed from his own time and permits him a considerable degree of licence in his characterisation and in the construction of his narrative. The episodes covering Edgar and Ælfthryth's love and the fate of Edward present us with contrasting approaches. Æthelwald's perfidy is overtly condemned in strong terms, while the possible crimes of his lord and his wife are left for us to infer from Gaimar's deployment of allusions and recurring imagery. While Edgar and his queen are sufficiently distant from Gaimar and his contemporaries to permit some criticism, their status as direct ancestors of Edmund Ironside and his heirs means that some circumspection on Gaimar's part is called for. As the *Estoire*'s version of events draws closer to contemporary matters, the chain of references and allusions constructed by Gaimar in these earlier episodes will provide a key for understanding the material that follows, which increasingly relies upon such strategies to provide a context for the far more covert criticism found within it.

Part Two: Patterns of Kingship

3. Cnut, Godwine and Hastings

Having examined the imaginative model/paradigm for kingship set up by Gaimar in the early sections of the *Estoire*, this chapter seeks to examine how the poet then applies this model in later episodes. Æthelred's accession to the throne ends in disaster for him and his heirs. His alliance with the Normans through his second marriage to Emma, daughter of duke Richard II, fails to prevent the invasion of England by the Danish king, Swein, in 1013.¹ The king is sufficiently unpopular for some of his English subjects to support the invader; at first, this applies only to the Northumbrians, but they are quickly followed by the rest of their countrymen. Such is the dearth of opposition that Swein is able to take the country with ease. The English king and his family seek refuge in Normandy. Swein lives for only three more years, but his son, Cnut, retains the kingdom until Æthelred's return. When the latter is accepted as king by both the English and the Danes, Cnut raises an army from overseas, and quickly regains support in England after Æthelred's 'crüel[e] guere' ('harsh campaign', v. 4182) in Lindsey. Cnut besieges his foe in London, and takes the throne on Æthelred's death in 1016. Edmund Ironside, Æthelred's son from his first marriage, continues to attack Cnut, but is hindered by the treachery of his brother-in-law Eadric Streona and a number of other noblemen, who change sides at the battle of Sherston. Edmund is defeated again at Ashingdon, and his nobles initiate negotiations for a single combat between the two contenders in order to decide the issue once and for all. They meet for this purpose on a boat moored at Gloucester, but the duel is averted when Cnut makes a speech insisting upon the superiority of the Danish claim over that of Edmund's line, and asserting his desire to split the kingdom between them. Edmund agrees to this, and England is divided

¹ Gaimar introduces the unrest in Æthelred's reign by relating the efforts of his older brother, Edmund, to depose him by calling upon the family of his wife, a Welsh princess, to aid him. This brother is mentioned in no surviving source other than the *Estoire*; Bell suggests that 'it is probable that Gaimar found him in the source on which he relied for the reign of Æthelred.' See Bell, *L'Estoire*, 'Notes', note to v. 4100.

between the two kings. The sense of brotherhood between Cnut and Edmund is strong, but disaster strikes when Eadric Streona invites Edmund to stay with him, only to have the unwitting king killed by means of a bizarre contraption, 'l'arc ki ne falt' ('the Bow-that-Never-Misses', v. 4410), which he has had concealed in the privy. Cnut's subsequent consolidation of his own power in England is threatened by the presence of Edmund's two infant sons, whom he exiles in Denmark and eventually plans to kill. Their guardian, Walgar, puts paid to this, and the two adult princes' lives are related to us by Gaimar.²

Cnut's reign is accorded the largest amount of space in the *Estoire* after the Edgar and Haveloc episodes, and as such, merits closer scrutiny. Æthelred's career proves to be the disaster forecast by Dunstan, but his son Edmund Ironside offers an example of courage and nobility that suggests redemption for the English kings. Cnut's decision to sue for peace and divide the kingdom heralds a period of co-operation that is abruptly ended by the treachery of Eadric Streona, a man who owes everything to the patronage of Edmund and his father, but murders his lord in order to win favour with Cnut. Although Cnut executes Eadric for this crime, the Danish king's subsequent actions undermine his professed outrage and grief; the malicious intervention of Edmund's stepmother, Emma of Normandy, leads to the exile of the slain king's young sons. Cnut's behaviour towards the princes aligns him with Edelsi, the British king, whose mistreatment of his niece Argentille leads to his overthrow. The allusions to the Haveloc episode found within Gaimar's depiction of these events are numerous and create a subtext worthy of close examination. The murder of Edmund Ironside, meanwhile, evokes that of his half-uncle Edward in a number of respects, indicating that, once again, the promise shown by a new king with potential for greatness is destroyed by the evil actions of dissatisfied elements in the realm.

Cnut's claim to the throne of England appears to falter initially with the early deaths of his sons, but is upheld by earl Godwine, whose grand ambitions for his sons will alter the course of English history. Gaimar makes

² This section of the *Estoire* is described in detail on pp. 41-2.

explicit the comparison between Eadric and Godwine, obviating the need for any more specific attacks on the latter's character; his audience is able to assess Godwine's failures in the light of the *Estoire's* negative depiction of Edmund's murderer. The utility of this approach on Gaimar's part – the overt criticism of a particular player in a historically distant, politically neutral episode, who is then made to serve as a model for more recent figures whose portrayal remains sensitive at Gaimar's time of writing – becomes apparent as the *Estoire's* narrative draws to its close.

Gaimar deploys some of the imagery from Argentille's dream in his account of this period and its aftermath. Cnut's attempt to control the tide before admitting defeat and accepting his inferiority to God is particularly interesting when viewed from this angle. Similarly, Gaimar's comparison of the outlaw Hereward to both a boar and a lion – models we have seen sharply differentiated in the British princess's vision – adds nuance to his account of the doomed English resistance to William of Normandy. In this section, I will examine the techniques used by Gaimar as he handles a period fraught with political complexity for his mid-twelfth-century audience, and in which the disturbing portents of Argentille's prophetic dream become increasingly relevant. The Haveloc episode, to which Gaimar never directly refers, provides a context for the behaviour of the key players in these events that undermines any superficially positive elements in their portrayal.

Cnut, Edmund Ironside, and Eadric Streona

Æthelred's reign begins inauspiciously with the murder of his half-brother, and culminates in his overthrow. The unity achieved by his father, Edgar, breaks down in acrimony; Gaimar tells us that 'e les Escoz e les Pictais/[e] les Waleis e les Cumbreis' ('the Scots and the Picts, the Cumbrians as well as the Welsh', vv. 4117-4118) refuse to serve or obey him. No reason is given for this opposition, other than the fact that Edmund, the elder brother Gaimar gives Æthelred – otherwise unknown to history – is married to a Welsh princess and therefore has political and military support from that quarter. The king is terrified of losing his realm, a fear

justified by the vicissitudes of the previous reigns, and consults with unidentified advisers on how best to avoid what seems to be his imminent deposition, an act which might appear prudent, were it not for Æthelred's reputation as an ill-counselled monarch. Their advice concerns his marital prospects, and hinges on a match between the beleaguered English king and Emma, sister of Richard of Normandy. If her people become his 'amis' ('friends/allies', v. 4129), Æthelred will be safe; the duke of Normandy will suppress his British neighbours ('tuz ses veisins li pleiserat', v. 4132). This arrangement has the effect of underlining Æthelred's unsuitability for his role. He is so incapable of inspiring the kind of fear and respect accorded to his father that he must become reliant on the protection of a foreign ruler of lower rank. We are told that 'unc n'out sojur ne [nul] repos/desci k'il out Emme espusee' ('he brooked no delay and did not rest until he had married Emma', vv. 4134-4135). The marriage is a success; 'cher la tint' ('he cherished her', v. 4141). Gaimar notes that her dower lands from Æthelred had belonged to Ælfthryth: Winchester, Rockingham, and Rutland (v. 4138-4140). There was nothing unusual in the transfer of lands from one queen to another, and the queen mother's death in November of 1000 or 1001 had left them free for this purpose. Gaimar's care to mention this is, therefore, noteworthy. A link is immediately established between Ælfthryth and her successor as queen; Emma has taken on her late mother-in-law's estates, and her position as beloved spouse. We hear no more of her in Æthelred's reign.

In the short time, the new political alliance between England and Normandy avails Æthelred little. He amasses a huge army in Normandy during his exile while England is under Swein's rule, and returns to attack Cnut. Gaimar remarks that the Danish king 'n'ad soing de peis, mult aimet gueres' ('peace is no concern of his, war is what he loves best', v. 4178) but Æthelred's actions as he wages his 'crüel guere' in Lindsey are no better. The English king's weakness as he faced the prospect of war before the alliance with Normandy has been replaced by a keenness for the brutal, rapacious assault on and plunder of the very kingdom he hopes to regain, displaying his lack of restraint and forgiveness. Gaimar passes no direct comment on his qualities or character, and refrains from offering any

assessment of the king or his reign in his terse note on Æthelred's death while under siege in 1016. The king's son, Edmund Ironside, displays indefatigable courage in the fight against Cnut's Danish forces. At this point, Gaimar tells us that Æthelred's sons by Emma have been taken to Normandy '*car la esteit lur parentez*' ('because their family was there', v. 4204), a remark that underlines their isolation in an English political context.

The fierce fighting between Edmund Ironside and Cnut continues unabated. Gaimar implicitly criticises both men when he describes the devastation inflicted on England '*par lur orgoil e par lur guere*' ('by their pride and by their conflict', v. 4254). Neither is willing to sue for peace or to spare the kingdom they both covet from the horrors of war. It is left to their respective noble advisers to arrange a single combat from which the survivor will emerge victorious and will rule unopposed. Cnut makes the first move towards peace by addressing his English adversary '*mult sagement*' ('very wisely', v. 4307). He does this by setting out the validity of their respective claims, as he sees them. In Cnut's view, there is nothing to choose between them in terms of their immediate ancestry; both are the sons of powerful kings. However, he then evokes the distant past. He claims descent from the Danish king Dan, who, he says, ruled '*prés de mil anz*' ('almost a thousand years', v. 4317) before the invading Anglo-Saxon warrior Cerdic, from whom Edmund Ironside and his forebears are indisputably descended. He then makes the point that '*Daneis le tint en chef de Deu,/Modret donat Certiz son feu*' ('A Dane held the land in chief from God. It was Mordred who granted Cerdic his fief', vv. 4321-4322). This is crucial to Cnut's argument; '*il ne tint unkes chevalment,/de lui vindrent vostre parent*' ('he (Cerdic) never held in chief, and your family is descended from him', vv. 4322-4323). His proposed solution is that the two of them should wage war jointly upon the restive part of England that neither yet governs, before dividing their territories equally. After this, they will be '*freres en lai*' ('brothers by adoption/law', v. 4339). This collaborative future, and the close relationship engendered by it, is stressed by Cnut:

Jo jurrai vus, vus jurez moi,
 de tenir tel fraternité
 com de une mere fussum né,
 cum si fussum ambedui frere
 e d'un pere e d'une mere;
 si eit ostages entre nus,
 e créez mei, jo crerai vus! (vv. 4340-4346)

I shall swear a solemn oath to you, and you to me, that we will have the same sort of fraternal relations as if we had been born of the same mother, and as if we were two brothers with the same father and the same mother. Let there be exchange of sureties between us: trust me and I shall trust you!

This appeal to history by Cnut takes us back to the *Estoire's* opening, when Gaimar tells us that the Saxons brought over to England by Cerdic still held the land ceded to them by Arthur's opponent ('doné lur out Modret li reis', v. 12). This is the state of the kingdom immediately prior to Gaimar's account of the kings Adelbriht and Edelsi, both of whom will ultimately be succeeded by Haveloc. Cnut makes no mention of this, however; he alludes only to Danr, a figure whose existence falls within the chronological period Gaimar claims to have covered in the *Estoire des Bretuns*. This is not the first occasion on which Danr has been cited in Gaimar's work. In a brief interpolation within his translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account of the Danish plan to invade and claim England in the late eighth century, Gaimar recounts their belief in their status as England's rightful rulers:

Puis realerent en lur païs
 si asemblerent lur amis;
 en Bretagne voldrent venir,
 as Engleis la voldrent tolir
 car entr'els eurent esgardé
 e dit ke ço est lur herité,
 e mulz homes de lur linage
 urent le regne en heritage
 ainceis kë Engleis i entrast
 ne home de Sessoigne i habitast:
 li reis Danes tint le regnez,
 ki de Denemarch[e] fu nez,
 si fist Ailbrith e Haveloc,
 e plus en nomerent ovoc,

purquei il distrent pur verité
Breitaigne ert lur dreit herité. (vv. 2071-2086)

They then returned home and enlisted their allies with the intention of coming to Britain to seize the island from the English, for they had reached the decision, between them, and claimed that this country was part of their heritage, and that many of their ancestors had established an inheritance claim before any English had even arrived or before anyone from Saxony came to live there. King Danr, who was born in Denmark, had ruled over the kingdom, as had Adelbriht and Haveloc, and they named others in addition who had done so. It was on this basis that they claimed it to be true that Britain was their rightful inheritance.

Gaimar's response to this claim is dismissive in the extreme: 'Qui chald d'ico?' ('Who cares about that?', v. 2087).³ He does not have Cnut refer to the later reigns of Adelbriht and Haveloc, whose claims to lands in Britain were respectively reinforced by peaceful agreement with Edelsi and marriage to the rightful heiress; these earlier Danes are quick to draw attention to that more recent and widely accepted period of Danish rule. Gaimar's scepticism in this passage when writing of the would-be invaders of England from ages past is not present in his handling of Cnut's claim. The fact that he opts to impart the king's views on the subject through direct speech allows him to circumvent the need to assess the Danish claim's validity at this juncture, in sharp contrast with his disbelief when recounting it earlier. Edmund, however, makes the sensible decision to accept Cnut's offer, and the two kings proceed as the Danish monarch has suggested.

Edmund Ironside's subsequent killing takes place under particularly unpleasant circumstances, which Gaimar sets out for us in graphic detail.⁴ At the beginning of Gaimar's account of this period, all is well; Edmund and Cnut have divided England between themselves to, we are told, the satisfaction of both rulers. Edmund's territories are in the south, while Cnut has London and the north. In Gaimar's view, the two kings feel greater warmth for one another than any blood relation, even one brother to another,

³ Short translates this expression as 'That, however, is neither here nor there', which I do not think quite captures the force of Gaimar's dismissal.

⁴ This episode is not present in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* entry for 1016. For discussion of sources, see C.E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), pp. 198-212.

ever could ('e plus s'entreamerent [c]il dui/ke ne funt frere, ço qui', vv. 4397-4398). The equality enjoyed by each is greater than a brother or another blood relation could experience ('Ore regnouent plus üelement/ke ne funt frere ne parent', vv. 4395-4396). This bond of friendship is greater even than that of the Briton Edelsi and the Dane Adelbriht, who were 'compaignon par fei' ('bosom companions', v. 56), although their effective brotherhood was achieved through the latter's marriage to Edelsi's sister.

The Haveloc episode is never referred to in Gaimar's account of these years, but is evoked by his description of this situation. The efforts of the two warring kings have achieved what had previously seemed impossible; stability and reconciliation between the English and the Danes, in a situation that Gaimar has projected back onto the period when Anglo-Saxon dominance of the land is about to begin. Gaimar's emphasis upon the fraternal bond forged by Edmund and Cnut is underlined by his allusion to the border between the lands having been fixed at Watling Street, the road constructed by the British king Belinus, whose feud with his brother by blood, Brennius, was only ended by the desperate intervention of their aged mother in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The potential for true success and shared power is evident in these comparisons. However, as with the prelude to Haveloc's story, the sudden death of one party in this arrangement will erase these hard-won political gains. A grim note of foreboding is struck by another reference made by Gaimar in his description of the divided kingdoms. We learn that Edmund's share was the south of England, where his uncle saint Edward was present ('Del suth avint Eadmund sa part/la ert son uncle seint Edward', vv. 4383-4384).⁵ This detail takes on more than historical significance when Edmund Ironside's fate is taken into account; like his unfortunate uncle, he is destined to meet a brutal and unmerited death at the hands of a traitor.

The climate of peace and goodwill is not destined to last long:

Quant un treître en out envie,
 donc fist cel fel sa felunie:

⁵ Short describes Gaimar's reference to the martyred king as 'obscure' (*Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to 4384).

Eadmund sumunst e veit prier
 k'il venget od lui herberger.
 Cil ert sis hom, tant le preiad
 li reis Eadmund s'i herbergat.
 Cunrei i out a grant plentez,
 mais malement fu alouéd:
 cil kil donat tut le perdi,
 car come fel le rei murdri!
 Edriz out fait un engin feire,
 l'arc ki ne falt eissi set traire:
 si rien atuche sa cordele,
 tost pot oïr male novele:
 nais un ewet, s'il si fereit,
 de la seïte le fendreit.
 La u cel arc fu apresté
 un novel ostel i out posé:
 "privé ostel" l'apela l'om,
 pur cel mester i entrad hom.
 Li reis i fu la nuit mené
 sicom Edriz out comandé:
 tresk'il s'asist [de]sur la sette,
 el fundament fiert la saiette.
 Amunt li vint tresk'al pomun,
 [unc ne parurent li penun]
 de la saiette k'[il] ot el cors,
 ne neient del sanc n'en issi fors.
 Li reis crïad un cri mortel,
 l'alme s'en vait, il n'i out el;
 del revenir ne fu niënt!
 D'iloc l'emporterent sa gent,
 en un muster [en] fu porté:
 assez i out lit e chanté
 e dît matines e servise.
 Deus, si li pleist, face justise
 del mal felon, del traïtur
 ki si out murdri son seignur! (v. 4399-4436)

This bred envy and brought a traitor to the fore, a common criminal who, as such, committed a common crime. He sent word to Edmund begging him to come and stay at his house with him. Since he was the king's vassal, and since his invitation was so insistent, Edmund came to stay with him. There was conviviality in plenty, but there was also malice in the use to which it was put. It turned out to be the undoing of the person who provided it, since, like the common criminal he was, he actually murdered the king. Eadric [Streona] had someone construct a device [enabling him] to shoot with the Bow-that-Never-Misses. The merest touch on the string meant bad news: even if a bird's egg were to brush against it, the bow would shatter it with the arrow. In the place where the bow was installed, a brand-new room had been set up: 'privy' is the name that is given to it, and

that is the business people go to it for. That night the king was taken there, just as Eadric had ordered. The moment he sat down in the privy, the arrow struck him in the anus, then came up and pierced right through into his lungs. Not even the flight feathers of the arrow that transfixed him remained visible, and not a single drop of blood came out. The king gave the shout of a dying man, his soul left him—it could not have been otherwise—and there was no question of it ever coming back. His men carried him out, and he was taken to a church where there were many readings, much chanting, and matins and [other] services were said. May God be pleased to bring his judgement to bear on the traitor and evil criminal who murdered his lord in such a way!

Gaimar's account of the king's murder differs in several respects from those of his peers. One notable variation in the *Estoire's* account is the method of assassination used by Eadric. William of Malmesbury offers us a different version of the brutal crime:

Nec multo post, in festo sancti Andreae ambiguum quo casu extinctus, Glastoniae iuxta Edgarum auum suum sepultus est. Fama Edricum infamat, quod fauore alterius mortem ei per ministros porrerexit: cubicularios regis fuisse duos, quibus omnem uitam suam commiserat, quos pollicitationibus illectos et primo immanitatem flagitii exhorrentes, breui complices suos effecisse; eius consilio ferreum uncum ad naturae requisita sedenti in locis posterioribus adegisse.

Not long afterwards, on St Andrew's day, he met his end (by what accident, is an open question), and was buried at Glastonbury near Edgar his grandfather. Rumour implicates Eadric as having, in support of Cnut, contrived his death by means of servants. There were, it was said, two of the king's chamberlains to whom he had entrusted his entire life. Eadric won them over with promises, and though at first they were horrified at such a monstrous crime, he soon made them his accomplices, and, as he had planned, when the king took his seat for the requirements of nature, they drove an iron hook into his hinder parts. (*GR*, ii. 180)

Henry of Huntingdon presents a similar account of the murder, although his version of events identifies Eadric's son as the killer, and identifies a different murder weapon:

Edmundus rex, post paucos exhinc dies, prodicione occisus est apud Oxineforde. Sic autem occisus est. Cum rex, hostibus suis terribilis et tremendissimus, in regno floreret, iuit nocte quadam in domum

uacationis ad requisita nature. Vbi filius Edrici ducis in fouea secretaria consilio patris delitescens, regem inter celanda cultello bis acuto percussit, et inter uiscera ferrum fugiens reliquit. (*HA*, vi. 14)

A few days after this, King Edmund was treacherously killed at Oxford. This is how he was killed. When the king, fearful and most formidable to his enemies, was prospering in his kingdom, he went one night to the lavatory to answer a call of nature. There the son of Ealdorman Eadric, who by his father's plan was concealed in the pit of the privy, struck the king twice with a sharp knife in the private parts, and leaving the weapon in his bowels, fled away.

While the king's unpleasant death follows broadly similar lines in all these versions, the manner of his disembowelment is described in particularly grim detail by Gaimar, and is distinctive in its gruesome ingeniousness. The hook used to kill the king in William's and Henry's accounts of the crime has gone; in its place is a sophisticated contraption, imagined by the devious Eadric and crafted by someone in his employ. This 'bow that never misses' appears to be identical to the 'arc qui ne faut' found in Bérout's *Tristan*. In that tale, Tristan sets up the device while he and his lover, Iseult, are hiding in the woods as they try to escape her cuckolded husband, king Mark. The deadly trap is intended to prevent anyone, man or beast, from stumbling upon the lovers' camp. Short notes the resemblance, but feels that there is unlikely to be a link between the two; the almost identical name, however, suggests a common source if not direct influence of one text upon another.⁶ This element – unique among extant accounts of the king's death – is another instance of Gaimar's inclusion of the uncanny in his depiction of a ruler's removal from the scene, by murder or by deposition. It ranks with the presence of the blind soothsayer who forecasts Ælle's doom, the dwarf Wulfstanet's fatal luring of Edward to his stepmother's home, and the tokens which establish Haveloc's status as rightful heir to Denmark before Edulf's defeat.⁷ The infallible bow is not

⁶ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', notes to vv. 4409-4429.

⁷ See M. Dominica Legge, 'The Unerring Bow', *Medium Aevum*, 25 (1956), 79-83. Legge notes that Gaimar and Bérout provide us with the only instances of the bow as a concrete concept in romance literature; it is used figuratively elsewhere, evolving into shorthand for the infallibility of death by the thirteenth century, by which time it had become a commonplace (p. 82). See also J. Szövérfy, 'The Unerring Bow and Petrus Olavi', *Medium Aevum*, 30 (1961), 102-3.

itself supernatural, but its unerring ability to kill without any human assistance, striking at Edmund in the most intimate domestic environment imaginable and at a moment of supreme vulnerability, is a vivid metaphor for the inescapability of the threat from an enemy within the king's own close circle. Eadric's unexplained knowledge of the technology required to construct such a device carries a hint of the *merveilleux*; on his execution, Gaimar notes, 'Le vif diable les en maine:/issi finist Edriz Estreine!' ('The living devil leads them (Eadric's severed head and body) away. This is how Eadric Streona met his end', vv. 4775-4776). This impression of a diabolical influence upon the deceased traitor is then reinforced by Cnut's exclamation that 'Puis k'il est [eis]si avenu,/le cors Edriz ait Belzebu!' ('Now that it's come to this, let the Devil take Eadric's body!', vv. 4483-4484).⁸

The Biblical parallels with the story of king Eglon the Moabite (Judges 3:12-30), who is stabbed in the stomach while in his private chamber by Ehud as a result of his oppressive behaviour, do not appear to be prominent in Gaimar's account. Given his characterisation of Edmund as a good king who 'guereiad mult vassalment' ('put up a valiant fight', v. 4220) against the Danes, it is perhaps not surprising that this point of reference is difficult to discern in the *Estoire's* version of events.⁹ Eadric is portrayed by Gaimar as a villain with no redeeming characteristics, whose murder of the blameless Edmund is carried out for entirely self-serving reasons, while Ehud liberates the Israelites from tribute to the Moabite regime, ushering in an eighty-year period of peace in the region.¹⁰ Henry of Huntingdon's account, however, includes one specific detail that evokes the death of Eglon; Eadric's son leaves the weapon embedded in the king's abdomen, as Ehud does when he finds he cannot withdraw it from the

⁸ The translation here is mine. Short renders these lines as 'Now that things have turned out as they have, Eadric can go to the Devil for all I care!'

⁹ Eglon permits Ehud to visit him to 'offer tribute' in his private apartments, having dismissed his servants, who assume that he is using the latrine; embarrassed at the thought of disturbing him in this, they wait for a long time before discovering the body and raising the alarm, leaving plenty of time for Ehud to flee. The king's great size prevents the withdrawal of the weapon, and he is effectively disembowelled by the killer blow, causing his wound to leak excrement.

¹⁰ It is believed that this tale, amongst others, had its origins in folk tales incorporated into Judges as part of the cyclical narrative that covered the Israelites' journey from apostasy to subjugation and finally to deliverance. See Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: the Hebrew Bible in its Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 176.

corpulent Eglon's body. Gaimar's addition of the deadly concealed bow achieves quite a different effect. Eadric's creation allows him to kill the king while appearing to be innocent of any wrongdoing. Gaimar tells us that the bow penetrates the king's body so deeply that no trace of it can be seen on his person; his grieving men take no action against Eadric, implying that they have been deceived into thinking that their lord has died of natural causes. Only Eadric's ill-advised confession to Cnut reveals his guilt.

The actual circumstances of Edmund Ironside's death are unclear, as William of Malmesbury acknowledges; all that is known for certain is that it occurred unexpectedly on the 30th of November, 1016, at a convenient time for his co-ruler, Cnut. Henry of Huntingdon affects certainty as to the manner of the king's death, but William of Malmesbury describes it as an 'open question'. This lacuna permits Gaimar to add details of his own, and to locate Edmund Ironside's apparent murder within a pattern of similar killings in the *Estoire* as a whole. In each of the three accounts here, the emphasis is on the fact that Eadric's hands are superficially clean on a technicality. William ascribes guilt to Edmund's disloyal chamberlains, Henry identifies Eadric's son as the assassin, and Gaimar removes direct human involvement from the crime altogether with the addition of the lethal, self-activating contraption concealed in the privy. Eadric differs from Edgar and Ælfthryth in that his crime cannot be traced back to him thanks to his cunning, yet Gaimar identifies him as the killer without hesitation. He is able to do this because Eadric is a traitor to his lord, an Edulf figure who can be presented as such without the distancing techniques employed by Gaimar when hinting at the guilt of a ruler who has committed a crime suspected by many but never proven beyond doubt.¹¹

The previous royal murder in the *Estoire* – that of Edward by Ælfthryth's henchman – shares its domestic setting with the killing of Edmund Ironside. This is not the only point of similarity between these two episodes. Henry of Huntingdon does not specify the location of Edmund's death, stating only that Eadric's son was despatched to commit the deed,

¹¹ Eadric was, in fact, Edmund Ironside's brother-in-law through marriage to the king's sister, Eadgyth, compounding his disloyalty. Gaimar and other contemporary writers might have been expected to mention this, had they been aware of it, but there is no reference to this familial bond in twelfth-century accounts of the period.

while William's statement that the kings' chamberlains had to be bribed to betray their lord suggests that Eadric arranged for the king to be killed in his own home. Gaimar takes a different approach; he has Edmund and Eadric reconcile for long enough that Edmund is persuaded, after considerable effort on the part of a vassal whose disloyalty has already been established by his actions on the battlefield, to visit Eadric's household. At this point, Eadric most closely resembles the *losengier* Æthelwald, who appropriated Edgar's intended bride and paid the ultimate price. When Eadric is first introduced, as a deserter at the battle of Sherston along with a number of other disloyal English lords, Gaimar is scathing in his assessment: 'Edriz Estrene' (v. 4239) has committed this act of betrayal 'par treïson e felunie' (v. 4237). Like Æthelwald, he and his fellow turncoats were brought up at court by Edmund Ironside and his father ('Edriz Estrene li faillit,/e plusurs altres k'out nurit', vv. 4239-4240). The ingratitude of an upstart courtier is a recurring theme in Gaimar's writing, and functions, here as elsewhere, as shorthand for poor character. On his reappearance when Edmund and Cnut are reconciled, Eadric is once again characterised as a 'fel' ready to commit the ultimate act of 'felunie'. Edmund's decision to accept Eadric's invitation is foolhardy, as was Edward's to visit his stepmother's residence, but Gaimar justifies this by stating that Eadric was 'his vassal' ('sis hom', v. 4403), a statement that highlights Edmund's appropriate awareness of the reciprocal bond between him and his men. Given Gaimar's earlier praise of Cuaran/Haveloc for his ability to forgive an offence when an offer of peace has been made, this also casts Edmund in a positive light; unlike Haveloc, however, he is not fortunate in those who claim to serve him.

In his account of Edmund's murder, Gaimar employs a number of words that echo both his earlier description of the circumstances of both the young king Edward's killing, and that of the mysterious end met by Æthelwald while on the king's business. Edmund is entertained lavishly at his vassal's home; Gaimar tells us that 'Cunrei i out a grant plentez/mais malement fu alouéd' ('There was conviviality in plenty, but there was also malice in the use to which it was put', vv. 4405-4406). We have already encountered this term as 'convei' in the account of Edgar's rumoured guilt in the matter of Æthelwald's assassination (v. 3855); it is also present

shortly afterwards in Gaimar's description of Ælfthryth's magnificent garb at her wedding and coronation.¹² Another recurring term found here is 'engin', used at v. 4409 with the sense of 'device' or 'machine' to describe the concealed bow responsible for the king's death. This term has already been used twice to describe king Edgar's plans to woo Ælfthryth during her marriage to Æthelwald, at v. 3823 and v. 3826, on both occasions with the sense of 'scheme' or 'strategy'. The presence of these words triggers associations between the Edgar interpolation and the account of Edmund Ironside's death; it prepares the audience for a passage of underhanded violence similar to the earlier events, while simultaneously offering us a new frame of reference for Gaimar's account of Æthelwald's death. Those who fail to discern the subtext to Edgar's romance with Ælfthryth, or whose suspicions on that subject have remained unformed, are confronted by a passage that deploys the same terms in a context of overt, unmistakable violence and treachery. The term 'engin', earlier used merely to hint at some secret and unspecified design, now recurs as the label for a lethal device of extreme brutality, constructed with the inarguable purpose of regicide.

This is not the only incident called to mind by Gaimar's detailed description of the manner of the king's death. We are told that 'Li reis criād un cri mortel' ('The king gave the shout of a dying man', v. 4427), a statement that evokes the bloody death of king Edward. The latter 'fell with a cry' as his unnamed assailant pierced his heart with a huge knife ('Li reis chet jus, un cri geta', v. 4039). This image, which will recur in Gaimar's account of the death of Rufus, is a direct link back to the Haveloc episode. More specifically, it alludes to the slaying of the bear in the forest of Argentille's dream, who is struck through the heart by a daring boar as an assault is mounted upon the ursine ruler of the woodland as a terrified

¹² MS D, v. 3855 has the form 'cunrei'. The AND offers a possible translation of 'bad news (?)' for this particular line, but I share Short's suspicion that an 'ironical' meaning of 'company' is more suited to the context (*Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 3855, and *AND² Online Edition* (Aberystwyth: Taylor and Francis, 2011) <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/conrai> [accessed 21 May 2017], entry for *conrai*). There is a certain black humour in the contrast between such a reading's implications of Æthelwald's inglorious death at the hands of unsavoury 'company' in rebel territories, and the term's recurrence in Gaimar's description of Edgar and his queen's pomp and ceremony at their union shortly afterwards. The term appears again in the first of Emma's dialogues with Cnut, this time with the same sinister undertone as on its appearance in the account of Æthelwald's death.

Haveloc looks on. The piercing of the heart, and the king's dying cry as he feels the mortal wound, has become a recurrent image of regicide; the bear's identity as a symbol of kingship is unmistakable by this point. Neither Eadric nor Ælfthryth, however, can be aligned with the courageous boar, who strikes the fatal blow himself in open combat. Both avoid taking direct responsibility by relying on a secret, concealed weapon in the former's case, and an unnamed 'averser' in the latter's.

Cnut's response to Eadric's proud declaration of guilt for this offence is not as his would-be vassal might have hoped. At first sight, the king's behaviour when he learns of the crime cannot be faulted. He has Eadric tried in front of all his nobles, and then personally executes him in the presence of all the citizens of London. Eadric's attempt to curry favour with Cnut has foundered on the Danish king's justified suspicions of such an individual. Cnut's punishment of the errant nobleman, while brutal, fits the magnitude of the traitor's crime, while his preceding public denunciation and trial of this unrepentant murderer creates an impression of the monarch as a just and honourable man righteously outraged by the killing of his 'brother', Edmund. The shameful private act of Edmund's killing is brought into the light by Cnut, who is therefore able to distance himself completely from the crime of which he is the most obvious beneficiary.

However, the events immediately following Eadric's execution undermine the positive impression of Cnut's rule created by the previous lines. The king's request for advice from his wife, queen Emma, is made behind closed doors in their domestic sphere, and gives the lie to Cnut's public denunciation of Eadric's actions. The traitor has put Cnut in an awkward position; the boys are now in his custody, and are his responsibility. His public reference to Edmund as his brother 'en lai', in fact, makes him more than a mere guardian; he is, in effect, the princes' surrogate uncle. Emma's counsel makes no reference to any duty of care for the fatherless children:

D'iloc turnat li reis aval
 si est monté sur un cheval.
 A la raïne veit parler
 pur conseil quere e demander

de douz valeiz, les fiz Eadmund.
 Dist la raïne: ‘Cil u sunt?’
 Respont li reis: ‘A Westmuster,
 a l’abbé les livrai l’autrer’.
 ‘Sire’, fait ele, ‘crëez mei,
 prendre en estut altre conrei:
 ço sunt li dreiz hair de la terre
 [e] s’il vivent, il ferunt guere.
 E quant vus pöez peis aveir,
 si me crëez, faites saveir.
 Saient menez en altre terre!
 Gardez k’il ne pussent mal fere:
 a tel hom[e] les comandez
 de forfere saient gardez!’ (vv. 4485-4502)

Having come down from the tower, the king mounted a horse and goes off to speak to the queen and seek her advice on what to do with Edmund’s two young sons. ‘Where are they?’ the queen asks, to which the king replies: ‘At Westminster. I handed them over to the abbot there just the other day.’ ‘Sire’, she says, ‘take my word for it: they need very special treatment, being, as they are, the legitimate heirs to the kingdom, and if they survive, they will certainly make war. Believe me, you would be wise to ensure there can be peace by having them sent abroad. Take what precautions are needed to prevent them from doing any harm by entrusting them to someone capable of keeping them out of harm’s way.’

The wording of Emma’s advice is ambiguous, and there is a sinister implication to her statement that the boys need, as Short translates it, ‘very special treatment’. This is underlined by her statement that ‘s’il vivent, il ferunt guere’ (v. 4496). The ill intentions lying behind her advice to Cnut might remain no more than a suspicion on the audience’s part, were it not for the word used here: Emma speaks of ‘altre conrei’ (v. 4494), a term which we have seen used with sinister overtones in Gaimar’s account of Edgar’s plans to secure Ælfthryth as his own bride (v. 3855). This remark is made in response to Cnut’s statement that he has left the two young princes in the care of the abbot of Westminster for the immediate future. In that context, an alternative translation for Emma’s words would be ‘other company/hands’. Given that this was the expression used to describe the lawless men believed by many to have been sent by Edgar to remove his rival, Æthelwald, ‘conrei’ is a term charged with violent meaning. While Cnut’s decision to seek advice on the subject of the boys’ fate might be

laudable in another context, the fact that he goes to his far from impartial queen for this reveals him to be easily led and quick to break his bond with the princes' late father. Emma's suggested treatment of the two infants is difficult to misunderstand; despite Cnut's public denunciation of a man who was willing to have the boys killed in secret, the plan fomented by his queen will lead to the same outcome, albeit one perpetrated in distant Denmark, far from suspicious English eyes.

The vassal to whom Cnut entrusts Edmund Ironside's heirs, however, manages to do exactly that:

Donc demanderent un Daneis,
 un gentil hom, loingtein marceis;
 cite aveit e grant conté,
 si estait Walgar apelé.
 Les douz vallez li comanderent
 ki fiz de rei e gentilz erent.
 Cil les receut pur bien nurir,
 pur alever, pur espeldrir,
 e bien pensat ke, s'il vivait,
 par grant honur les nurirait.
 K'en dirrai[e]? Cil s'en turnat,
 en Danemarche s'en alat. (vv. 4503-4514)

Accordingly, they sent for a certain Dane, a nobleman and distant marcher lord; he possessed a city and an extensive county, and his name was Walgar. They entrusted him with the two infants, both noble and the sons of a king. He for his part took them in with the intention of weaning them, giving them a good upbringing and a good education. His hope was that he would live long enough to provide them with a highly honourable upbringing. What should I say? Walgar set off and returned to Denmark.

Walgar, a landowner in Cnut's homeland, is a man of integrity as well as power and influence; he appreciates the honour of being asked to bring up two princes, and takes the children into his household with the full intention of raising them in a manner appropriate to their high status. Gaimar cannot (or will not) tell us whether this behaviour displays wilful disobedience of Cnut's order for reasons known only to Walgar himself, or is evidence of the inability of a decent man to interpret the subtext of the instructions he has been given; the poet's only comment is: 'K'en dirrai?' ('What should I say?', v. 4513). Walgar fits into the template established by that earlier

noble Dane, Grim, who took responsibility for the welfare of the displaced Haveloc after king Gunter's overthrow and queen Alvide's drowning. Short points out the fact that Henry I offered his brother Robert's son, William Clito, similar protection after his father's imprisonment; his offer was, however, declined.¹³ Henry's subsequent decision to entrust the youth's safety to Helias of Saint-Saëns, Robert's son-in-law, caused problems due to Helias's 'astute understanding of the propaganda value of the sight of a pathetic child driven from his home by a wicked uncle.'¹⁴ Henry decided to imprison his nephew, but Helias's family got wind of the plan and spirited the boy away. Helias promptly took Robert into exile.

Emma, whose own two sons by Æthelred, Edward and Alfred, are, as Gaimar informs us, 'derechef drait hair,/Engleterre voldrunt aver' (v. 4537, 'in their turn legitimate heirs to the throne of England') is deeply concerned by this threat to her bloodline's future, and by the possible risk to Cnut's own position and life should the two princes return. It is at this point that MS D refers to her as 'Elvive Emeline' (v. 4530), a name that evokes that of Haveloc's mother, Alvide.¹⁵ It is not clear why MS D's scribe should have chosen to use this particular form, which is not found in any of the other manuscripts derived from the *beta* redaction. This is the same manuscript in which we find a warning that Ælfthryth should be kept under close watch. We might wonder whether its scribe, conscious of the densely allusive nature of Gaimar's history, has taken the opportunity in both these cases to emphasise the references between connected, but non-sequential, episodes within the *Estoire* by making subtle changes to the wording of his source manuscript.

There is a certain irony in this; Alvide sent her own son away for his protection, while Emma's suggestion for the banishment of Edmund's heirs to Denmark is superficially for their own safety, but is in fact intended to remove them permanently from the scene. Gaimar goes into some detail about her motivations for raising the matter a second time. Once again, we

¹³ See C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, ed. and completed by Amanda Clark Frost (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 268-69.

¹⁴ William M. Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, c.1050-1134* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 252-53.

¹⁵ See chapter one for detailed discussion of this name and its origins.

see the term 'engin' (v. 4547) used to describe her scheme; the dark connotations of that word, established by its earlier appearances, are unmistakable here.

Pur ses dous fiz k'el mult amout
 dé de[u]s meschins mult li pesout,
 e uncore pur son seignur, partie,
 lur portout ele mult grant envie.
 E quant ele ot ke les Engleis
 unt coveité d'els fere reis,
 purpensat sei de mal engin,
 a son seignur vint chef enclin:
 'Sire', feit ele, 'tu ne sez
 les fiz Eadmund serrunt mandez.
 Engleis d'ient k'il sunt dreit hair
 sis volent sur tei receveir.'
 Cnuth respont: 'Por ço vers estre?'
 'Oïl, cher sire, a Por[e]cestre
 est une nef aparille[e]
 kis amerrat od grant meisne[e].' (vv. 4541-4556)

She loved her [own] two sons a great deal, and this made her very unhappy about the position of [Edmund's] two youngsters. Partly also she was very jealous of [Edmund's] sons on her husband's account, and when she heard that the English desired to make them kings, she thought up a malicious scheme. She came to see her husband with a downcast face.

'Sire', she said, 'something you are not aware of is that Edmund's sons are about to be called over here. The English maintain that they are the legitimate heirs to the throne, and are willing to welcome them in preference to you.' Cnut replies: 'Can this possibly be true?' 'Yes, indeed, my dear lord. There is a ship ready to set sail from Porchester and bring them back over with a huge retinue.'

Cnut's decision to have the princes killed in secret is an act of deep dishonour. It surpasses Edelsi's cruelty in dispossessing his niece, Argentille, by marrying her to the socially inferior Cuaran, and establishes him as a ruler in that mould. His professed loyalty to Edmund is now revealed as a temporary measure entered into due to the realisation that the courageous English king will not, unlike his father Æthelred, retreat or surrender. Edmund's convenient death has freed Cnut of his obligations to the English king and his heirs; Cnut may have pronounced himself unsuitable to raise another king to Edmund's throne, but he has done

everything possible to prevent the obvious candidates for that position from taking their rightful place as they reach maturity. The implicit comparison with Edelsi's breach of faith is compounded by the other parallel with Edulf's usurpation of the throne and the infant Haveloc's forced exile on threat of death; Walgar's immediate escape from Denmark when an unidentified well-wisher makes him aware of Cnut's intentions for the boys mirrors Grim's flight with king Gunter's surviving family. Haveloc's and Argentille's stories converge here, as Cnut's disloyalty and malice combine strands of the behaviour of both their opponents.

This is not the only instance of Cnut's dispossession of a rightful king. He goes on to overthrow king Olaf of Norway, who ends up being killed in battle by his own countrymen as he fights to regain his kingdom. Gaimar does not trouble to conceal his opinion of this political development: 'Olaf oscistrent ki dreit reis ere.' (v. 4694, '(The Norwegians) killed Olaf, the country's legitimate king.')

Regardless of Gaimar's terse description of Cnut as 'bon rei, riche e poant' (v. 4683, 'a just king, mighty and powerful') this creates a distinct impression of Cnut as a tyrannical ruler, whose accession to the throne of all England, and methods of expansion within Scandinavia, are not especially laudable. His brief eminence as a just and pacific king is over; he has reverted to the bellicose invader described by Gaimar on the Dane's first appearance during Æthelred's reign, whose love of making war overrides any other tendencies. No earthly king can oppose him, but his warlike behaviour is finally curbed by a sudden realisation of his fallibility in the face of God's omnipotence.

Donc fu Cnuth de treis regnes sire,
 poi trovot ki l'osout dedire;
 e nepurquant si fut desdit
 e son comandement despit.
 A Londres ert desur Tamise;
 li floz veneit pres de l'eglise
 ki Westmuster ert apelé.
 Li reis a pié s'est aresté
 en la greve sur le sablun.
 Li flodz veneit par contençon:
 mult s'apresma, pres del rei vint.
 Cnuth en sa main sa verge tint
 si dist al flod: 'Return' arere,

fui desur mei, ke ne te fere!’
 La mer pur lui pas ne leissat,
 e plus e plus le flod montat.
 Li reis estut si atendit,
 de sa verge l’ewe ferit:
 l’ewe pur ço n’ad pas leissé,
 ainz vint al rei si l’ad moilé. (vv. 4695-4714)

From that time on, Cnut was lord over three kingdoms, and few people were to be found who dared oppose his wishes. Nevertheless he did meet resistance and his orders were [on one occasion] treated with contempt. He was in London on the banks of the River Thames, and the tide was coming in near to the church called Westminster. The king had dismounted and was standing on the sand along the strand. The tide kept rising and rising remorselessly, and as it got closer, it came right up to the king. Cnut grasped his sceptre in his hand and addressed the tide: ‘Turn back and get away off me, otherwise I shall strike you!’ The sea did not leave off on his account, and the tide kept rising and rising. The king stood his ground and waited, then struck the water with his sceptre. This did not make the water leave off; on the contrary it came right up and drenched him.

Cnut’s inability to control the tides provides him with a sharp lesson in the limits of human power. Like Brennius, one of the brothers alluded to earlier by Gaimar, he will now go to Rome; unlike him, however, he will travel there as a supplicant, ready to become God’s vassal (‘A Rome voil l’aler require;/de lui tendrai tote ma terre’, vv. 4727-4728). He has been reminded that Danr’s claim to Britain was derived from God, as he himself noted in his rebuke to Edmund Ironside. The imagery of the waves and their inexorable rise calls to mind the landscape of Argentille’s visionary dream; the tide sweeping through the forest proved fatal to all within it, but Cnut is sufficiently wise to acknowledge its dangers at a point when his status as tyrant leaves him open to rebellion. He is, by his own admission, ‘cheitif’ (‘a miserable wretch’, v. 4723), unlike the ‘bon rei’, God (v. 4723). Unlike the bear of the prophecy, Cnut is able to avoid disaster; this notorious incident permits Gaimar to explain the apparent lack of divine retribution for his behaviour. The Danish king’s hubris has its limits.

Gaimar goes on to recount the story of how, after the latter’s death, his sons were sent for by the English, but were shipwrecked off the coast of Scotland as they attempted to return from their Hungarian exile. Malcolm

III took them into custody, but promptly fell in love with ‘la preciose gemme’, Margaret (v. 4648), the princess who would be made a saint thanks to her status as ‘a humble and devoted servant of God’ (‘ele fu bien a Deu encline’, v. 4662). The poet lists their six sons, three of whom had been kings, and emphasises that ‘cest linage de Eadmund issit,/ki fu en Engleterre reis,/e ses aincestres tuz ainceis’ (‘This family line traced its origin back to Edmund [Ironsides] who was king of England, as all of his ancestors had been before him’, vv. 4668-4670). He does not mention that another child of this Anglo-Scottish union was Edith-Matilda, who married Henry I in 1100 and whose own daughter was Empress Matilda. Gaimar resumes his account of Cnut’s reign by telling us that he now intends to get back to the Danes (‘Ore voil a Daneis reparer’, v. 4672).

This lengthy digression on the subject of Edmund Ironside’s descendants is the final time that the royal line of Cerdic is mentioned in the *Estoire*. The Haveloc episode is reflected again in the fate of Edward the Elder and his brother, who, having been spirited away by their guardian, Walgar, find themselves at the court of the noble and generous Hungarian monarch, whose realm stands to be inherited by his only daughter. The kingdom to which the two English princes have fled is closer to Adelbriht’s British territories than to Edelsi’s, and the happy conclusion to the romance highlights the suitability of the pairing. When a storm arises as the returning heirs of this union are about to enter England via the Humber, there is an element of providence in their arrival in Scotland. Gaimar’s focus on the establishment of a new royal dynasty in Scotland provides an opportunity for him to remind us of these distinguished rulers’ ancestry as heirs to Edmund Ironside, who, in his turn, had inherited the claim to England from all his forebears. Gaimar dismissed the claim of the Danes in no uncertain terms when describing earlier bids for the English throne; despite his silence on the subject when Cnut describes his own rights in England, the poet’s emphasis here on the long, unbroken line of English kings descending from Cerdic – significantly placed at the point at which Gaimar concludes his account of their story – is an implicit rebuttal of the Danish king’s argument. Margaret and Malcolm’s children will have a crucial role to play

in later English history, but Gaimar's decision to conclude his work in 1100 means that their deeds are outside his remit.¹⁶

Godwine

After Cnut's death and the brief reigns of his sons, Harold (Harefoot) and Harthacnut, English anger at their humiliating treatment by their Danish overlords can no longer be restrained. With the descendants of Edmund Ironside in distant Hungary, and Edward, son of Æthelred and Emma, fighting alongside his cousins in Hungary in Gaimar's account, the only available candidate the English can find in Normandy is Alfred, Edward's younger brother.¹⁷ Given that Cnut's line appears to have come to an end with the deaths of his childless sons, Alfred's claim to the throne seems secure. However, he and his English supporters have reckoned without the intervention of earl Godwine, who 'had a son by the sister of kings—by Cnut's daughter, who was also Harold's sister' ('de la sour as reis fiz aveit,/fille ert Cnuth e sour Harold', vv. 4796-4797). Godwine's claim for his own children is, in fact, even more tenuous than Gaimar's description would have it.¹⁸

Gaimar's subsequent account of Godwine's behaviour is all the more revealing for what is left unsaid. Godwine's plans to make his own sons heirs are introduced with a familiar phrase as Gaimar addresses us directly; 'Ore entendez k'il feire volt' ('Now just listen what his plan was', v. 4798). We have seen this particular formulation used as Gaimar censures the

¹⁶ The immense political value of Margaret Atheling's status as a saint, and of the *Estoire's* unqualified acceptance of the rightfulness of the family's claim to England, is of great relevance to a discussion of Gaimar's potential audience and the ultimate purpose of his work. I will address these issues in the Conclusion.

¹⁷ Edward the Confessor's time in Hungary is not attested in any other source; Short speculates that this could be 'a garbled echo' of Edward the Elder's exile there (*Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 4785 ff.). The fact that the future king is fighting in support of his cousins in Gaimar's account gives an impression of familial unity that is in stark contrast with the behaviour of Edward the Confessor's mother, Emma, towards Edmund Ironside's sons.

¹⁸ Short gives a detailed explanation of the ways in which this statement – inaccurate on the first reading – might be interpreted (*Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 4795). Godwine's wife, Gytha, was in fact the sister of earl Ulf, Cnut's brother-in-law, but the 'semantic overlap' between the terms for siblings by birth and siblings by marriage in Old French permits Gaimar to simplify the connection here. The claim of the house of Godwine is, in any case, revealed as dubious by comparison with that of the house of Wessex.

behaviour of Edelsi and Æthelwald earlier, two figures distant from his own time, and at whom strong criticism can safely be directed. This prepares us to expect an act of treachery and dishonour, but Gaimar does not follow it with a description of Godwine as ‘fel’. Instead, he foreshadows what is to come by stating that ‘ço compara il puis, espeir’ (‘he will pay for it, I daresay’, v. 4800).¹⁹ When Godwine rests overnight at Guildford before Alfred’s arrival, he decides ‘to do something unlawful and very wrong indeed’ (‘talent ad grant de faire tort’, v. 4812). He dishonourably leads the unwitting Alfred to the top of Guildford Hill, and gives the order to attack just as the young man is earnestly telling him of the ‘bones custumes’, ‘peis e drait’ (‘good customs’, ‘peace and justice’, v. 4821 and v. 4822) he intends to uphold in England when the throne is his, after Godwine has reminded him of the extent of the lands that will be his (vv. 4816-4818).²⁰ Alfred is killed in a manner described in unpleasant detail by Gaimar, as the blameless young prince is blinded and disembowelled by Godwine’s followers. The horror of this event is heightened by Gaimar’s assertion that Alfred’s killers, acting ‘pur amur Godewine’ (‘for love of Godwine’, v. 4842), are ‘leez’ (‘merry’, v. 4840), a term Gaimar has earlier employed when describing both Edgar and the murdered Edward’s merriment at the fateful dinners described by Gaimar in those significant interpolations. By this point in the *Estoire*, Gaimar has primed us sufficiently for no more overt condemnation of Godwine to be required. The fury of the English nobles when they learn of Alfred’s death speaks volumes; ‘nel pot guarir rien terriene,/mult pis murra ke Edriz Estriene’ (‘nothing on earth can save him (Godwine) from dying an even worse death than Eadric Streona’s’, vv. 4847-4848). In this evocative allusion to an earlier episode in which Eadric’s evil and treachery was criticised at every opportunity, Gaimar reveals his true opinion of Godwine, while being spared any need to

¹⁹ Short translates this ‘a decision he will live to regret’, a slightly misleading formulation as Godwine in fact died in 1053, long before the destruction of his house at the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings. This sequence of events must be the punishment Gaimar has in mind, given that Edward’s attempt to prosecute Godwine for Alfred’s murder ends very well in the short term for his brother’s killer.

²⁰ Laura Ashe sees here an invocation of ‘the figure of Christ’s temptation by Satan’; see her “Exile-and-return” and English law: The Anglo-Saxon Inheritance of Insular Romance’, *Literature Compass*, 3 (2006), 300-17, p. 306.

belabour the point in his account of this politically sensitive period. Godwine evades their reprisals by fleeing to Denmark where he is ‘well received’ (*‘bien recuilli’*, v. 4852).

Edward the Confessor is accepted as king without demur in Godwine’s absence, and sets about establishing himself as the greatest of kings in his commitment to *‘peis...dreit e justise’* (*‘peace, the law, and justice’*, v. 4863). Gaimar tells us that *‘unc devant ço, ne puis son jur,/ne pout nul rei feire meillur’* (*‘neither before nor after him could any better king have been appointed’*, vv. 4865-4866). This commitment to justice will prove to be Godwine’s salvation. Those who had proclaimed their hatred and desire for vengeance after the murder of Alfred go unmentioned; instead, we are told that Godwine has many powerful men willing to stand hostage for him (*‘maint riche home l’ostegat’*, v. 4880). After intercession from these friends of his, Edward is prevailed upon to meet Godwine in court. The earl presents an impressive pledge consisting of seven silver caskets filled with precious gems and magnificently worked: *‘mult honorable e bel e gent’* (*‘honourable, beautiful and fitting’*, v. 4882).

Two factors undermine the validity of this gesture on Godwine’s part. In the Edgar interpolation, Æthelwald’s pledge of allegiance to his king after conveying the false information of Ælfthryth’s unsuitability for the role of queen is dismissed by Gaimar as perjury; *‘Home ke traïst n’ad nule lei:/nel deit l’om crere pur sa fei’* (*‘A man who has betrayed another has no legal standing, and his word, even if pledged, is not to be believed’*, vv. 3719-3720). The other is Gaimar’s statement – made without further comment or additional detail – on the subject of this treasure’s origins. We are told that *‘Li quens Godewine les conquest/del rei de Swave k’il oscist’* (*‘Earl Godwine had got them as spoils from the king of Sweden when he had killed him’*, vv. 4897-4898). This bald statement of Godwine’s regicidal activities overseas adds to the highly negative impression that has already been created.

Like Eadric Streona, Godwine is tried before his peers, but the outcome of this process could not be more different. Despite the king’s *‘grant ire’* (*‘great anger’*, v. 4902), he adheres to the appropriate legal practices. Gaimar conveys Godwine’s defence, and the attendant lords’

views on the case using direct speech, which, as in the case of Cnut's earlier arguments on the English succession, enables him to avoid either calling Godwine a liar or offering an opinion on the judgements of the earl's peers. Edward's accusation is paraphrased by Gaimar; the king calls Godwine 'fel e lere' ('a common criminal and lawbreaker', v. 4904), a claim Gaimar has shown to be difficult to dispute. However, Godwine denies this vigorously, and declares that he will 'refute it word by word' ('de mot en mot le nïerai', v. 4909), which he notably does not go on to do.

Twelve lords, along with other noblemen and the clergy, retire to a private chamber to give the matter their consideration; Gaimar has four of the most powerful present their views on the subject of his guilt. The Dane 'Marleswain' (Mærle-Swein), who is one of Godwine's vassals, but speaks 'tut dreit' ('fairly', v. 4940), states that the king did not see the crime himself; without a witness, reconciliation is still a possibility. The fact that Godwine had the majority of the Norman witnesses killed along with Alfred is not mentioned at this point. Siward, earl of Northumbria, counters with the remark that the king's accusation carries great weight, and that Godwine must be tried by ordeal; 'de feu u de ewe u de bataille;/de un de ces trais n'ert pas faille' ('fire or water or combat, it will surely have to be one of these three', vv. 4961-4962). This imagery evokes a significant detail of the Haveloc episode, in which Sigar Estalre informs the heir to Denmark and other potential challengers that, should any attempt to blow the ancestral horn be successful, the winner will be presented with a special ring that will guard against fire, water or weapon; 's'il chet en [mer, ne neierad],/ne feu nel pot de rien dampner/ne nul arme nel pot nafrer' ('he will not drown if he falls into the sea, fire will not harm him in any way, and no weapon will succeed in wounding him', vv. 692-695). In other words, the legitimate claimant to Denmark will be protected from any of the potentially fatal outcomes of any such trial. Godwine, who represents the Danish claim to England, is fortunate to avoid this fate when the Northumbrian warlord Frithugist insists that English law does not permit such a trial ('nen est pas dreit en cest païs', v. 4964), and suggests that Godwine swear an oath instead. Leofric of Northampton dismisses both these options, and instead states that Godwine and his sons should pledge their armour to the king and

pay him homage. This is judged acceptable by all present, and both Edward and Godwine agree to uphold the verdict. Edward has been established as a fair ruler, so his adherence to the lords' judgement is to be expected; Godwine's continued loyalty is more surprising, until subsequent events are considered. Edward is married to Godwine's daughter, Edith, Godwine's earldom is restored, and his sons have earldoms conferred upon them.

Edward reigned, Gaimar tells us, 'par grant honur' (with great honour', v. 5034); given the king's political strength and undisputed status in England, Godwine's strategy here is a sound one. As with Edelsi's behaviour in the Haveloc episode, a prudent dynastic marriage permits all parties to circumvent political stalemate; however, as with the union of Adelbriht to Edelsi's sister, the lack of a male heir (or, in Edward and Edith's case, any heir at all) will create a complex problem after the king's death. Gaimar praises Edward in the strongest terms on the king's passing; he was 'le meildre rei e le meillur/ke Engleis eüssent a seignur' ('the best king and the best overlord that the English ever had', vv. 5139-5140). However, his reign has been only a temporary break in the unremitting violence and turmoil of the previous decades, which will recommence immediately after his death in 1066. Godwine is dead, but his son Harold will be attacked, firstly by his own brother, the exiled Northumbrian magnate, Tostig, acting in concert with Harald Hardrada, and then by William, duke of Normandy, who will emerge as the victor. This volatile period, during which power will pass out of English hands for good, is an episode for which we have been well prepared by Gaimar. The weakness of the Danish claim has been demonstrated by his complex depiction of Cnut and Emma's alliance, while two great traitors – Eadric and Godwine – have done their best to remove the heirs to Cerdic from the English political scene. Gaimar's detailed account of Eadric's crimes allows us to recognise him as a model for Godwine, allowing Gaimar to skirt the difficult task of criticising the latter directly while evoking his true character nonetheless through comparison with a figure vigorously condemned in an earlier episode. In these connected episodes, Gaimar has moved from the safer ground of Edmund Ironside's rumoured murder over a century earlier to the much thornier territory of the massacre of Alfred and his Norman entourage,

an event that serves as a catalyst for the unrest to follow. Before moving on to his account of the Norman kings of England, however, Gaimar tells us of the posthumous punishment Godwine receives for his crimes on the battlefield at Hastings.

The distinctive features of Gaimar's depiction of Hastings have been noted by Eley and Bennett in their study of the battle's handling in the *Estoire*, Wace's *Roman de Rou* and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*. They view the defeated Harold Godwineson of the *Estoire* not as a traitor, but as an English hero overcome by insuperable odds. In their reading, the *Estoire* is constructed as an 'anglocentric epic of Harold', with the Normans depicted as 'la gent de ultramarine' (v. 5266), a term that evokes the Saracens of crusade literature.²¹ Eley and Bennett dismiss any suggestion that Harold and his family are to blame for English suffering in Gaimar's account, despite the statement at v. 5342 that 'Engleis cumprerent lur ultrages' ('The English paid dearly for their outrageous behaviour'.) They suggest that the meaning of *ultrage* here is 'excessive courage', a term that aligns Harold with heroes of epic such as Roland.²² This would fit with a reading of v. 5339 ('Harald remist e ses dous freres') as 'Harold remained (on the battlefield) with his two brothers (to fight)', leading to the deaths of many Englishmen, who pay dearly for the ostentatious bravery of the Godwinesons. The comet at v. 5145 appears to announce Tostig's invasion as the real disaster of 1066, a view supported by Gaimar's careful balancing of the accounts of Stamford Bridge and Hastings, which run to 99 and 98 lines respectively.²³ The ambiguity Eley and Bennett see in Gaimar's account of Hastings leads to a version of events in which the unfortunate English king emerges as a figure of epic potential, with his seemingly unmentioned death granting him a possible Arthurian afterlife in 'a heroic fall resonant with mythical possibilities'.²⁴ Short reads *ultrages* as 'outrages', but considers this a reference to 'the sins of the

²¹ Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 51.

²² Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 53.

²³ Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 49.

²⁴ Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 55.

English in general rather than Harold's supposed perjury, of which Gaimar makes no mention'.²⁵

Much of the analysis offered by Eley and Bennett is convincing. Gaimar does not appear to be preoccupied by the Norman chroniclers' assertions that Harold reneged on his promise to accept William as king after the death of Edward the Confessor.²⁶ However, I suggest that, based on the depiction of Harold's family up to this point, the 'outrages' referred to are indeed those committed by the house of Godwineson. These are not sins against William of Normandy, but rather the otherwise unpunished crimes of Godwine in his bid to position himself and his family as heirs to the English crown, by means of their connections to Cnut's line. Despite William I's perfidy and brutality in Gaimar's account, and regardless of the courage displayed by Harold and his loyal brothers in their final battles, Gaimar's version of Hastings serves to underline that the king is paying the price for his family's misdeeds. With this in mind, I am inclined to disagree with Short's reading of 'outrages' as referring to those of the English in general, although I acknowledge that the ambiguity of the pronoun *lur* means that Gaimar's phrasing – perhaps intentionally – leaves some room for doubt on this point. I am similarly unconvinced by Bennett and Eley's translation of *ultrages* here as 'excessive courage', which does not seem to tally with the previous depiction of the Godwineson family's behaviour; their prowess on the battlefield would, if anything, be a redeeming feature after their father's misdeeds, rather than a trait worthy of Gaimar's criticism.

The absence of William of Normandy from Gaimar's account of Hastings, until his identity as the new ruler is revealed at the very end of the episode, is striking. It is also notable that Harold Godwineson's status as successor to Edward the Confessor is not referred to for the first time until v. 5225, when he is introduced as 'Harald fiz Godewine' – an immediate reminder of his unfortunate antecedents – as he fights his invading brother, Tostig, and Harald Hardrada at Stamford Bridge. We learn that he is, in fact, the king of England when Gaimar describes him as 'li reis Harold' ('king Harold', v. 5229) in order to distinguish him from 'l'altre Harald', the

²⁵ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 5342.

²⁶ Eley and Bennett, 'The Battle of Hastings', p. 50.

Norwegian invader ('the other Harald', v. 5231). While this phrasing is justifiable simply by the need to identify which of the two Harolds Gaimar is referring to at this juncture, it also emphasises the incongruity of Tostig's alliance with a foreign king who shares a name with his estranged brother. Gaimar's handling of the events leading up to Tostig's exile and the former earl's subsequent invasion of his northern territories is telling.

The brothers are introduced during the reign of Edward the Confessor. Tostig is made earl of Northumberland after the death of Siward, the very nobleman who had advised trial by ordeal as the appropriate way to judge the guilt of Tostig's father. Gaimar reminds us that 'le fiz Godwine cil estait,/en Everwic nul dreit n'aveit' ('this was the son of Godwine, who had no rightful claim to York', vv. 5063-5064). This remark on Tostig's wrongful elevation is the strongest negative commentary Gaimar offers on the subject of the sons of Godwine, until the very end of his account of this period. The brothers' power is highlighted by their involvement in diplomacy within the British Isles. When the Welsh king, Gruffydd, breaks faith with king Edward on numerous occasions, he is confronted by a huge army led by Tostig and Harold, who have travelled from 'del north' and 'del suth, de Oxenford' respectively ('from the north', v. 5075, and 'from the south, from Oxford', v. 5076). Gruffydd is attacked and beheaded by the South Welsh; they present his head to the two brothers, who in turn offer it to their king. While this has the desired effect of quelling Welsh opposition, it is notable that the Godwinesons, despite their impressive army, do not fight the king themselves. Tostig accompanies two of Edward's bishops to peace talks with king Malcolm of Scotland, but the agreed truce does not last, and the Scottish ruler raids Tostig's northern territories while the earl is in Rome with his Flemish countess. The image of the two brothers leading a victorious campaign evokes Belinus and Brennius, but this parallel is undercut by the nature of their actions in Wales, and by Tostig's visit to Rome alone, on a mission of diplomacy rather than conquest. The brothers are capable of uniting to fight a common antagonist when necessary, but they have different interests; Tostig's desire to safeguard his Northumbrian territories is his main preoccupation. Subsequent events reveal that this is a matter of self-interest rather than concern for the region's security.

It is at this point that a familiar pattern emerges in Gaimar's narrative. For reasons unexplained, but which are presumably the result of Tostig's reconciliation with Malcolm of Scotland after the latter's depredations in Northumberland, the people of York – a city to which Gaimar has already declared that Tostig has no right – take a violent dislike to their earl, such that they are almost ready to kill him, and will not permit him access to the city ('pristrent Tosti si a häir/k'en la cité ne pout entrer,/pur poi nel voleient tüer', vv. 5120-5122). This reference to the city of York provides a link with the Buern Bucecarle episode and its aftermath. Osberht, the disgraced and overthrown king, remains behind in his former city and is there to defend it, albeit unsuccessfully, from an attack by Buern's Danish forces (vv. 2713-2722). The contrast between the unpleasant Osberht, who, despite his earlier characterisation as a man of bad faith and violence, is possessed of sufficient courage and loyalty to fight for the people who have overthrown him against a foreign enemy, and Tostig's banishment due to his readiness to forgive Malcolm, is not flattering to Godwine's son. Unlike Osberht, however, Tostig is not – in Gaimar's view – the rightful ruler of York.²⁷ His actions afterwards seem to confirm this reading; returning with an army composed of Flemish mercenaries from his wife's homeland, he is responsible for violent and rapacious attacks in his former lands that cause great suffering. His alliance with the Norwegian interloper Harald Hardrada, with the aim of dividing England between them, serves only to underline this impression.

Tostig's behaviour puts him to the forefront in Gaimar's account of the pre-Conquest activities of Godwine's sons, and places him within a sequence of such figures in the *Estoire*. It is only on his death at Stamford Bridge – apparently at Harold's hand – that the king himself takes centre stage as the final battle approaches. His father is the most obvious recent example, but his behaviour is also reminiscent of Æthelwald's: a royal servant believed to be loyal and efficient, but whose duplicity and self-

²⁷ See Green, p. 100. Tostig had been appointed earl by Edward in 1055, despite his 'lack of a power base' with either the men of York or the Northumbrians. In Green's view, Malcolm's opportunistic invasion in 1061 'was probably aiming at plunder rather than annexation'. When Tostig was subsequently expelled in 1065 by both the citizens of York and the Northumbrians, he was replaced by the Mercian nobleman Morcar, 'whose main claim to the earldom was evidently that he was not a member of the Godwineson family.'

interest emerge when an opportunity to seize a desirable possession (in Tostig's case, territory) makes itself apparent. Given that Hardrada is presumably keen to acquire the northern part of England coveted by his forebears, Gaimar's account suggests that Tostig wishes to make himself king by securing the southern territories held by his brother even before his elevation to the throne. Gaimar passes no comment on the former earl's moral failings, but his behaviour has exposed him as unsuited to the title in every sense. He is unworthy of allegiance, and is swiftly abandoned by his Flemish allies, who return home, laden with spoils, after the new earl of Northumbria, Morcar, prevents them from landing (vv. 5185-5188).

Harold's actions, by contrast, show him as a king of some promise in his brief period of triumph before the English defeat at Hastings. His attack on the Norwegian raiders in the north is launched as they steal cattle, showing the new ruler in the best light as a guardian of his people's interests. He fights 'irément' ('ferociously', v. 5230) against his brother and Hardrada, killing them both. His treatment of Hardrada's son and the surviving invaders is honourable and merciful; they are set free with suitable hostages left behind, although Harold's acceptance of a promise of 'treü' ('tribute', v. 5241) is interesting for its evocation of Arthur's actions in Scandinavia (v. 411), and hints at a king with his own expansionist ambitions.

These will come to nothing as Harold perishes on the battlefield, fighting against an opponent who will not be identified until the day is won, when, we are told, 'li quens Willame out le pais' ('count William had the land', v. 5344). No explanation is given for William's invasion, and the identification of his ethnically mixed forces as 'Franceis' throughout Gaimar's account of the battle (vv. 5248, 5271, 5307) obscures the Norman connections to earlier English rulers; Alfred's slain Norman companions are described as 'Normanz' (v. 4825). William's acquisitive invasion of England aligns him with the earlier Danish marauders, and his lack of characterisation only emphasises this. The fate of Harold and his brothers represents the ultimate failure both of Godwine's machinations and, by extension, the efforts of Cnut and Emma to dispossess the descendants of Cerdic. Despite Harold's impressive qualities as a soldier and his political

astuteness, he fails as a consequence of his brother's greed and disloyalty. Gaimar last wrote of 'ultrages' in his description of the schemes devised by Ælfthryth against her stepson, the murdered Edward ('fist fere al rei maint grant utrage', v. 3984). When he informs us that 'Engleis cumprent lur ultrages' ('The English paid dearly for their outrageous behaviour', v. 5342), the imagery reminds us not of alleged broken promises made by Harold to William, or even ignoble behaviour by the English people, but of internecine feuding, the disastrous consequences of which have left the way clear for William's army. The slain bear of Argentille's dream is nowhere in this account; for Gaimar, Hastings is a narrative of one usurper slain by another, to the benefit of no-one in England. The political landscape of violence and disarray is all too reminiscent of that of the 860s, the decade in which Alfred and his family will move to fill the gap in leadership left by the confusion of the Danish onslaught. As Gaimar moves towards the conclusion of his *Estoire*, the models with which he has worked throughout will recur in their final configurations, leading us inescapably back into the forest of Argentille's vision.

4. Hereward and William Rufus

Gaimar brings his *Estoire* to a close with an account of the Norman conquest of England in 1066, an event that leads to the destruction of the house of Godwineson, followed by a terse summary of William I's reign – into which is woven Gaimar's interpolation on the career of the English outlaw, Hereward – and a lengthy treatment of the reign of William II (Rufus), the last of the *Estoire's* kings. Following the defeat of Harold Godwineson at Hastings, William, duke of Normandy, takes the throne, and sets about dispossessing English landholders while making strenuous efforts to pacify his new realm with considerable violence, especially in the north. This brings about an uprising led by Hereward, who has some success in his East Anglian rebellion, but is ultimately killed in a surprise attack by William's forces. His death spells the end of English dissent, and William Rufus, in Gaimar's account, faces no such opposition upon his accession after his father's passing in 1087. In the *Estoire's* account, Rufus quickly asserts himself in his English domains, but Gaimar's focus is on his struggle to keep the restive province of Maine under control. This process appears to be going well for the king, but his expansionist activities are brought to an abrupt halt with his death in the New Forest in 1100.¹

William I's opportunism, brutal suppression of his new subjects and readiness to break his word combine to form an unattractive portrait, and Gaimar's focus during this reign on the outlawed Englishman Hereward is significant. However, Hereward's heroic depiction in the *Estoire* is not without qualifying factors. He too is capable of plunder and great violence, while his demise is brought about by the distracting romantic attentions of another Ælfthryth. His killing prepares the way for the pacification of England under the Conqueror's son, William Rufus.

Rufus is the last great 'English' statesman of the eleventh century, yet, as Emma Mason notes, he also anticipates the rulers of the twelfth.² His reign is the end point of the *Estoire*, and, as such, serves as the final exemplar of Gaimar's views on kingship. All the models we have

¹ The post-Conquest period is summarised in greater detail on pp. 46-50.

² Emma Mason, *William II: Rufus, The Red King* (Tempus: Stroud, 2005), p. 234.

previously seen appear again in this account of his reign, the focus of which is on Rufus's attempts to pacify his borders after the persistent unrest in England that has marred his father's reign has been, in Gaimar's account, swiftly quelled. Gaimar's Rufus is a king with a taste for pomp and ceremony, whose splendid court is the equal of Edgar's, and whose control over his territories is equal to the power wielded both by that monarch and by his more recent precursor, Cnut. The amount of space devoted to Rufus in the *Estoire* is the most significant after Haveloc, Edgar and Cnut, and marks him out as a ruler of great importance.

Short considers Gaimar's account of Rufus's reign to be a calculated attempt to present 'a more fitting exemplar and a more appropriate model of kingship than his recently deceased brother, Henry I.'³ However, the patterns established earlier in the *Estoire* cast this view of Rufus in a different light. Rufus is a successful king of England whose downfall lies in his immense hubris; his attempts to claim territories to which he has no right lead to his untimely death, an event which, Gaimar hints, is in fact murder. The depiction of Tirel's plan to prevent Rufus from invading Poitiers is a passage of enormous significance, and one for which an understanding of the preceding episodes of regicide is crucial. Gaimar's work begins with the dream landscape of the woodland and its warring animals, as envisioned by Argentille, and ends in a similar location. Rufus is described by Gaimar as a 'lion' feared by his enemies; the outlaw Hereward, meanwhile, is likened to a boar for his bravery and tenacity. These final episodes permit the complex imagery of the dream sequence, and its ramifications for Gaimar's depiction of power and its transference, to be developed fully.

Hereward

Hereward is introduced to us as the victim of a grave injustice perpetrated by William I. In 1068, the new king travels to the farther reaches of his realm, and issues a summons from Nottingham to the barons of York and its environs. This summons is issued, Gaimar tells us, 'par ban/e par

³ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xlvi.

prière e par amor ('couched not only in terms of a proclamation but also as an entreaty and an amicable request', vv. 5380-5381), and bids all those addressed to present themselves at York in order to recognise his overlordship and receive the lands they hold from their ancestors. The unbroken chain of descent is emphasised: *'ke li ancestre ourent devant/e lur pere furent tenant* ('that their fathers, and ancestors before them, had held', vv. 5391-5392). Should any lord refuse to accept William's rule, he will be permitted to leave in peace. When the barons arrive, they are thrown in prison; the king advances to York, where he does the same to the local nobles, and reassigns their lands 'as Franceis' ('to the French', v. 5402). On his return south, he lays waste to many towns (v. 5404). Gaimar offers no comment on this breach of faith on William's part, but it reflects badly upon the king. A duke of Normandy with only a tenuous claim to the throne has dispossessed English noblemen who have held their lands for generations.

In 1071, after William has fought off two attacks – one by Harold Godwineson's sons in concert with the Dane Tostig Raegnald, and another by the brother and sons of the aggressive Danish monarch, Swein Estrithson – he faces a rebellion, led by Siward Bearn, Æthelwine, bishop of Durham, and the earl of Northumberland, Morcar. These outlaws cross paths with Hereward, *'un des meillurs del region* ('one of the most important figures in the region', v. 5470) who has been *'deserité* ('expelled from his rightful inheritance', v. 5471) by the Normans.⁴ They join forces and succeed in plundering Norman-occupied territories.

The outlaws' intention is to winter at Ely, but the king prevents this by surrounding the city with his soldiers and stationing his naval forces along the coast. William issues a harsh threat to kill all involved, prompting the townspeople to throw themselves upon his mercy; Hereward and his kinsman, Geri, manage to escape with a handful of followers. They subsequently execute a surprise attack upon a group of William's French soldiers while the men are eating their evening meal, taking their fine horses as they do so; Gaimar tells us that they are 'in the habit of stealing in this

⁴ It is also possible to translate this more literally as 'one of the better men in the region', a rendering that reinforces the impression of Hereward as a decent man wronged by an oppressive king.

way' ('a us erent de fere mal', v. 5537), and are therefore well able to select the best mounts. This criminality contrasts with the loyalty Hereward's nobility inspires in the allies he encounters along the way, leading him to amass an army numbering seven hundred men. A note of discord is struck by Hereward's attack on the towns of Peterborough and Stamford, where his men seize much 'or e argent e veir e gris' ('gold, silver, and miniver-lined cloaks', v. 5560) along with 'altre herneis' ('other booty', v. 5561), although they do at least leave the monks' property alone ('la chose as moignes unt tenez', v. 5562). Gaimar justifies these actions by telling us that the citizens of these towns are responsible for Hereward's having fallen into disfavour with the king, for they instigated ('brascé', v. 5565) his exile, 'a mult grant tort e a beslai' ('unfairly and without any justification', v. 5568). Although we are assured that Hereward 'ne fu mie tort' ('was not acting in the least unlawfully', v. 5569) by seeking reprisals in this way, Gaimar has nonetheless already described the sacking of Peterborough as 'cil forsfait' ('this transgression', v. 5557). Hereward and his men are able to hold their ground in the Forest of Bourne for several more years, withstanding a number of attacks thanks to Hereward's great strength and martial prowess; we are informed that 'unc plus hardi ne fu veü' ('a braver fighter than he was never seen', v. 5590).

Hereward is on the point of coming to terms with the king when fate, in a rather familiar form, intervenes. A certain lady has fallen in love with Hereward after hearing reports of his valour, and repeatedly asks him to visit her. Her entreaties are so ardent that Hereward eventually agrees, abandoning his plans to travel to France and attack the people of Le Mans, who have seized several of William's castles; he has already defeated and held captive the count of Mayenne on a previous occasion, proving his potential value as an ally to the king. He assumes that this permits him to travel without concerns for his safety, but the Normans attack as soon as they learn of his plans. The lady, whose name is Ælfthryth, has offered to make over her father's estates to the object of her desires on their marriage, a dowry that would make him sufficiently wealthy to continue fighting the king's allies ('bien purreit Franceis guerreier', v. 5598). Hereward's position here is the opposite of Edgar's; he is being actively pursued by

another *Ælfthryth*, whose name and inheritance from her father identify her strongly with the queen of the same name whose desirability revealed Edgar's darker traits. Gaimar's strategy here appears to be the same as his earlier identification of Emma with Alvide, Haveloc's mother, apparently in a bid to underscore the differences in their relative positions as mothers desperate to safeguard their children's interests. Hereward's aspirant lover's identity is a lacuna in Gaimar's history, and provides an ideal opportunity for the poet to allude to an earlier episode in his work. The noblewoman's name carries with it negative connotations, and Hereward's ultimate fate does not, therefore, come as a surprise.

Hereward meets his death while eating in his camp; he has been let down by the inattention of Ailward, his chaplain, who falls asleep while ostensibly keeping watch. Gaimar's only comment on this incompetence is the by now familiar '*Ke dirraie?*' ('What more should I say?', v. 5623). Hereward fights with extreme valour in a lengthy and vividly described battle sequence, but is eventually brought down by four spears and decapitated by the Breton, Halsalin, who often speaks of his courage afterwards. Gaimar's use of animal imagery here is interesting. He tells us that Hereward '*se content cum un leün*' ('defended himself like a lion', v. 5625) and '*s'est acesmé come leüins*' ('he made ready for combat like a lion', v. 5634). Despite his earlier surprise attack on Norman troops in very similar circumstances, Hereward is furious. He angrily accuses the foreigners of treachery, as he has declared a truce with the king (vv. 5636-5640). This is Hereward as the embodiment of power and terrifying aggression, symbolised by the comparison to the beasts who ravage the forest killing indiscriminately in Argentille's dream.

Another image is evoked by the following lines. One French knight, having already killed ten of Hereward's men, shouts his target's name, but is brought down by the outlaw's gavelock (javelin), which pierces his heart (v. 5654). This incident is very similar to the combat between *Ælle*'s nephew, Orron, after his flight from the tower in which his uncle imprisons him following the blind soothsayer's forecasts of his death. The French knight '*chäi, ne pout altre estre;/a son murir nen out nul prestre*' ('the knight fell—there was no other possible outcome, and no priest was there to

officiate at his death', vv. 5655-5656). A Danish soldier Orron kills dies in a similar manner. Gaimar tells us that 'jus chaït mort, ne pot altre estre;/paiens estait, n'out soing de prestre' ('he fell down dead, it could not be otherwise. Being a pagan, he had no need for a priest', vv. 2803-2804). Orron obtains three 'gavelocs' from 'un bacheler' ('young man', v. 2785); Hereward is similarly presented with three such weapons by 'un sergeant' (v. 5641) in his company. The implicit comparison here between the 'fels traïtres' ('treacherous curs', v. 5640) as Gaimar has Hereward describe them, and the 'fel Daneis' ('foul Dane', v. 2807), as another of Orron's assailants is termed, is not flattering to William's forces. While the French knight is a Christian, he will suffer a similar punishment to the heathen Dane; the latter is deprived of an afterlife by his lack of faith, the former by a death without the last rites. Gaimar's phrasing does not encourage us to mourn either outcome.

Hereward's martial glory is, like Orron's, short-lived. In his final desperate efforts, the outlaw strikes out at his attackers; 'il fiert els, com feit sengler' ('he strikes at them, like a wild boar', v. 5661). The imagery changes once again; we are back in the dream landscape of Argentille's vision, but with a difference. Hereward is now compared to the valiant boar, also described as 'hardi' ('brave', v. 209), who pierced the heart of the tyrannical bear with his tusk. This is a heroic action. Hereward's more questionable plunder of the Norman domains was carried out with the aid of an army, putting him in the position of the lion to whom he was earlier compared. Now, facing the unfair odds of single combat with a succession of enemies who have won an unfair advantage through treachery, his heroism is beyond dispute. He is brought down by four spears from behind, in another unchivalrous act. Gaimar concludes his account of Hereward's demise with the statement that 's'il ne fust issi oscis,/tuz les chasçat fors del païs' ('if he had not been killed in the way he was, Hereward would have succeeded in expelling them all from the country', vv. 5699-5700). This would have included William I, identified here as a tyrant by his earlier actions. Gaimar's earlier remark that a man who has broken his pledge once can never again be believed (vv. 3719-3720) has already been proven correct in the case of Godwin; Hereward too has fallen victim to it with his

acceptance of the perfidious Norman king's truce. Hereward's identity as fierce lion or intrepid boar may fluctuate, but the figure who most closely resembles Argentille's bear in this episode is William I.

William Rufus

On William I's death in 1087, he is succeeded by his second son. Gaimar immediately links Rufus to his father by telling us that 'Willame out nun, sicum sis pere' ('...who was, like his father, called William', v. 5776) and 'Celui refu mult alosé' ('(he was) a man of high renown, likewise', v. 5777). Two points stand out in this brief description of the king. One is the immediate link back to his father, thanks to their shared Christian name, immediately stressing continuity between the two monarchs. Another point of similarity is their status as 'alósé' in the eyes of their contemporaries.⁵

Most of Rufus's reign is passed over quickly by Gaimar, with the period from 1087-1098 summarised as one of strong and stable governance. We are told that 'Normanz, Engleis fort justisat' ('He exercised strong government over the Normans and the English', v. 5782). His acceptance as ruler by both these sharply differentiated ethnic groups is notable, and the repetition of a similar formulation in v. 5782 and v.5778 ('Engleis, Normanz l'ont coroné' – 'he was crowned by the English and the Normans') adds to the impression of him as a ruler of both peoples. In contrast, his elder brother, Robert, has already been strongly identified with the continental Normans:

Celui fu duc de Normendie,
sur Normans out la seignurie.
Maint bonté e maint barnage
e maint estrange vasselage
fist icest duc de Normendie... (vv. 5745-5749)

⁵ This usually indicates renown or fame, but also has a secondary meaning of 'infamy' or 'notoriety', a possible early indication of the complexity found in Gaimar's portrayal of William Rufus, while further reinforcing the negative subtext to the poet's depiction of William I. It must be noted, however, that this would be a very early instance of such a meaning; the AND's example dates from no earlier than the fourteenth century. See *AND² Online Edition* (Aberystwyth: Taylor and Francis, 2011), <<http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/aloser>> [accessed 21 May 2017], entry for *aloser*.

He was duke of Normandy, lord of the Normans. This was a duke of Normandy who accomplished deeds of valour on many occasions, who made great display of his knightly accomplishments and who performed many singular feats of bravery...

The first real test of Gaimar's true opinion of Rufus, and the most telling example of the king's significance for the poet's broader vision for the *Estoire* and his forecast for the future of the Anglo-Norman kings, occurs in a short passage that precedes Rufus's journey back to Maine. This involves a brief dialogue between the king and a sailor as he prepares to board a ship bound for continental France, on his way to curb the activities of the young upstart, Helias, in that county. On being informed of the unrest in his continental possessions while at his hunting lodge in Brockenhurst, deep in the New Forest, Rufus travels at speed to the south coast to take ship, accompanied by a hastily assembled retinue:

Li reis, quant l'ot, mult s'esmarri,
sur un cheval est tost sailli,
a Hamtone s'en est alez,
ses soldiers ad tuz mandez:
ço lur mandat k'après li vengent
desci k'a lui sujor ne tengent,
e il od meisnee privee
vint a la mer si l'ad passee. (vv. 5823-5830)

On hearing this, the king became extremely vexed. He immediately leapt on a horse, and made his way to Southampton, where he summoned all his mercenaries to join him. He ordered them to follow after him and to waste no time in doing so. With his household retinue he arrived at the seashore, and prepared to cross the Channel...

The ship's helmsman asks whether the king really wishes to set sail that day, given that the winds are against them:

Encontre vent la mer passat:
li esterman lui demandat
s'il voleit contre vent aler
e periller enz en la mer. (vv. 5831-5833)

...despite the fact that the winds were unfavourable. The helmsman asked if he really wished to set sail in such weather and run the risk of coming to grief at sea.

Rufus is unimpressed by the man's arguments, and expresses his unshakeable confidence in his own safety in no uncertain terms:

'Frere', respunt li reis, 'teisez!
 Unc ne veïstes reis neiez,
 ne jo nen ere ja le primer!
 Feïtes voz eschipes nager!' (vv. 5836-5838)

To which the king replies, 'Silence, brother! You've never before seen a king drown, and I'm certainly not going to be the first! Have the sailors man the oars!'

The use of 'frere' to address the helmsman immediately establishes the contradiction at the heart of Rufus's personality. He is capable of a down-to-earth rapport with his underlings at the same time as maintaining a retinue and lifestyle of considerable splendour. He appeals to the helmsman's own knowledge of the natural order of things, stating that 'you've never before seen a king drown'. The captain's response, if he dared offer any, is not recorded by Gaimar, but the man does not challenge Rufus's assertion.⁶ Rufus, or rather his royal status, will serve as a talisman against wind and weather. Finally, the king declares that he will not be the first to meet such an ignominious end. On the surface, this appears to be a typically hubristic statement by Rufus, indicative of little more than his arrogance and tendency to court disaster. Although he survives on this occasion,

⁶ Barlow notes that, from the year of the Conquest until 1086, the royal yacht's captain – or 'steerman' – was Steven FitzAirard, who is listed in the Domesday Book as owning properties in several parts of England, including Southampton; 'if he held a naval command it was clearly Southampton and its hinterland'. The name FitzAirard has a grim significance in the context of the Anglo-Norman regnum. Steven FitzAirard's son, Thomas, inherited his position, and was evidently a trusted captain of the royal fleet. On November 25th, 1120, he was at the helm of *La Blanche Nef* (*The White Ship*) when it ran aground off Barfleur during a night-time crossing. On board were several of Henry I's children, including his only legitimate son, William. All were lost, along with many of the offspring of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. We are told by Gaimar and Wace that Rufus took ship at Southampton, which was the area in which the FitzAirard family seem to have lived and held property, so it would have been logical for the king to charter the royal yacht on his planned journey to Maine. If Gaimar's well-connected audience was reminded of this by such an image, it would have only served to reinforce the ominous impression created by this passage. See Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 277.

successfully reaching his destination of Barfleur by the efforts of his crew, there is a grim sense of foreboding. Rufus may succeed in his grand gestures of defiance, but he will eventually die a mundane death, felled by a stray arrow on one of his hunting trips. However, the king's conviction that he is safe from drowning by virtue of his royal status is noteworthy. In the Haveloc episode, as we have seen, Sigar Estalre presents the exiled Dane with a special ring that will guard him, and all the rightful heirs to Denmark, against drowning, fire or a blow from any weapon. Rufus, as a king of England, has no such safeguard, and his unjustified belief in his own ability to confront the tides is based on no foundation at all. Another image evoked by Rufus's hubris on this issue is that of Cnut, who had himself attempted to control the waves and had been embarrassed by his own impotence in the face of divine will. Cnut accepted his status in relation to God; Rufus's reliance on superstition for his safety provides a stark contrast.

This attractive vignette appears to have captured the imagination of most of Gaimar's peers and immediate successors in the art of historiography. Wace provides us with his own version of the anecdote, as do the Latin writers William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon. Diana Greenway has identified the stormy crossing as a trope based upon an incident involving Caesar in the Roman author Lucan's account of his life.⁷ This is an interesting and multifaceted allusion that leaves some aspects of Gaimar's depiction of Rufus open to question. The comparison between Rufus and Caesar appears, at first sight, to be a fine example of the kind of doubling typical of the process of *translatio studii*. Gaimar's Rufus and the historical Caesar share two key traits, great military prowess and sweeping imperial ambitions. Rufus is, apparently, being prepared for his entry into the pantheon of heroic exemplars and models for kingship, of which Caesar, traditionally, was one; Wace would, for example, go on to draw covert parallels between the Roman general and his own Arthur in the *Roman de*

⁷ Diana Greenway, 'Authority, Convention and Observation in Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 18 (1995), 102-15.

Brut.⁸ However, various readings of these characters were possible, and neither Caesar nor Arthur was free from certain negative connotations.

Greenway's analysis of this episode poses a problem. The Caesar of Lucan's account is not a ruler to be admired or emulated; instead, he is reviled and made a target for heavy political criticism.⁹ Given Henry and William's low opinion of Rufus, their eagerness to deploy this particular trope is not altogether surprising. Gaimar's use of the anecdote is, on the first reading, rather more puzzling. If Gaimar had studied this episode in Lucan himself, he would have understood its significance and the ways in which it was likely to have been interpreted by his fellow historians, if not by his immediate audience.¹⁰ This is the first major indication of a negative undercurrent contradicting the surface image of Gaimar's Rufus. William II is a courageous warrior and skilled strategist, but all the twelfth-century writers are in agreement on the subject of his immense and fatal hubris. The stormy sea acting as a potential barrier between Rufus and the continental lands he is so keen to protect is only the first warning of a path fraught with danger. A comparison of Gaimar's account of this sequence with the treatments found in other twelfth-century historians complicates the picture of Rufus still further. Henry of Huntingdon's Latin account retains the high drama of Lucan's original:

Rursus cum venaretur in nouo foresto, uenti ei subito nuntuis a Cenomannie, dicens ei familiam suam ibi obsideri. Ilico rex festinus ad mare ueniens naues introiit. Cui naute, 'Cur, regime maxime, tempestate intolerabili maris alto laccessis et mortis imminens periculum non formidas?' Quibus rex, 'De rege fluctibus submerso loqui non audivi.' Ergo mare transiens, nichil dum uiueret egit, unde tantam famam, tantum glorie decys, haberet. (*HA*, 21, Book VII)

⁸ See Véronique Zara, 'The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace's *Roman de Brut*', *Arthuriana*, 2 (2008), 17-30 for a study of Wace's treatment of Arthur.

⁹ Greenway, 'Authority, Convention and Observation', p. 105.

¹⁰ See Frederick M. Ahl, *Lucan: an Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), and Nicola Homke and Christiane Reitz, eds, *Lucan's Bellum Civile: Between Epic Tradition and Aesthetic Innovation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010) along with Eva Matthews-Sanford, 'Lucan and his Roman Critics', *Classical Philology*, 26 (1931), 233-57, M.P.O. Morford, *The Poet Lucan: Studies in Rhetorical Epic* (Bristol Classical: London, 1967), Charles Tesoriero, ed, *Lucan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Francesca D'Alessandro Behr, *Feeling History: Lucan, Stoicism and the Politics of Passion* for background on Lucan as an historian.

Again, when he was hunting in the New Forest, a messenger suddenly came to him from Le Mans, telling him that his household was being besieged there. He instantly went down to the sea in haste and embarked in the ships. The sailors asked him, 'Why, O greatest of kings, do you challenge the height of an intolerably stormy sea: have you no fear as you stand in danger of death?' The king to them, 'I have never heard tell of a king who drowned in the waves.' Then he crossed the sea and did nothing in his lifetime that brought him so much fame and glorious honour.

Henry takes a notoriously dim view of 'fame and glorious honour', the transience of which is one of his major themes in the *Historia Anglorum*. Like Gaimar's Rufus, Henry's king transfers his belief in divine protection to his office rather than his person, stating proudly that he has never heard of a royal death at sea. Henry's evocation of this episode, though, retains all the characteristics of classical epic. There is no real human interest, and the unidentified sailors present a chorus of dissenting voices. They do not attempt to prevent this 'greatest of kings' from setting sail, but instead – rather implausibly – question his grandiose statement of self-belief. Henry's Rufus is a man who will let nothing stand in his way. William of Malmesbury provides us with a similar account of the incident:

Hoc igitur modo pene solus ad mare pervenit. Erat tunc nubilus aer et ventus contrarius; flatus uolentia terga maris uerrebat. Illum statim transfretare uolentem nautae exorant ut pacem pelagi et uentorum clementiam operiatur. 'Atqui' inquit rex 'numquam audivi regem naufragio interisse. Quin potuis soluite retinacula nauium; uidebitis elementa iam conspirata in meum obsequium.' Ponto transito obsessores euis audita fama dissiliunt. (*GR*, 320, 2)

In this fashion he arrived at the seacoast almost alone. The sky was overcast, the wind against him, the sea lashed into waves by the fury of the blast. He wished to cross at once: the sailors begged him to wait until the deep grew calmer and the winds relented. 'Why,' said the monarch, 'I never heard of a king being drowned. Cast off at once, and you will find the elements in league to obey me.' He crossed the Channel, and hearing the news of his arrival, the besieging forces melted away.

William's recasting of the episode differs the least from Lucan's, retaining as it does Caesar's original justification for his lack of fear in the face of wind and weather. He adds to Henry's depiction of the king's arrogant

conceit and deluded faith in his own station, allowing his Rufus to state that he can harness the power of wind and wave to his own advantage, smoothing his passage to mainland Europe. The confidence in his bold use of the future tense – ‘you will find the elements in league to obey me’ – is unmistakeable. William adheres closely to the distinctive tropes of classical epic, describing the ‘fury’ of the gales and their opposition to him as they ‘lash’ the ocean into a frenzy. The elements here are terrifying and powerful, yet Rufus is able to control them. William elides the difficult journey with the statement that Rufus succeeded in crossing the Channel. Just as he manages to ride out the storm, so his enemies in Maine are dispersed by news of his approach. The king is, in this telling, as great a force of nature as wind and weather. Unlike Henry, who – despite referring to Rufus in the singular – mentions ‘ships’, implying a sizeable host, William describes Rufus as having arrived at the port ‘almost alone’. This detail only serves to increase the overriding impression of Rufus’s extreme power; the sailors’ pleas are only given to us in indirect speech, leaving the king’s words of challenge to the deep to stand alone.

Rather than the portentous, powerful declarations of the sailors in Henry of Huntingdon’s work, or Rufus’s statement that ‘you will find the elements in league to obey me’ in William of Malmesbury, Gaimar merely has the captain warn of poor weather, and Rufus dismiss his warning. The voyage passes by apparently without incident, and Rufus arrives ready to triumph in Maine. Unlike his contemporaries, Gaimar appears to shed Lucan’s high drama and obvious sense of coming disaster in favour of a more prosaic approach. The epic qualities of the storm at sea are not found in Gaimar’s account; conversely, the helmsman’s description of the bad weather conditions seems insufficiently serious for them to be classed as a ‘storm’ at all.

This subtle reinterpretation of the king’s expansionist tactics overseas gives the lie to Gaimar’s seemingly favourable depiction of his relative leniency towards Helias, count of Maine when he captures the young rebel. Gaimar has this to say on the subject, after describing the king’s good-humoured suggestion that Helias should go off and make war

against him when the count boasts of his prowess and the favour in which his people hold him:

Tuz ses chastels rendu li ad
 li reis par bone volunté,
 naïs le Mans la fort cité.
 E cil manda pur ses barons,
 mover voleit la contençons,
 meis si baron li unt löé
 k[ë] il rende al rei la cité
 e les chastels de son païs:
 sis home liges seit a tuz dis.
 Li quens Helies issi fist,
 devint sis home, nel contredist,
 e s'il issi ne l'eüst feit,
 mult fust entrë els amer plet:
 li reis par force le preïst,
 de mult vile mort l'osceïst. (vv. 5948-5962)

As a gesture of goodwill the king returned all his castles to him in addition to the stronghold of Le Mans. The count summoned his barons with the intention of beginning hostilities, but the barons' advice to him was to make over Le Mans and the castles within his jurisdiction to the king: let him acknowledge the king as his liege lord for always. Count Helias did as they advised, and became his vassal rather than antagonise him. Had he not done so, he would have become embroiled in a bitter dispute: the king would have had him forcibly taken prisoner and put ignominiously to death.

This last note of the level of violence the king could have used against Helias, had the young man foolishly decided to confront him, seems to undercut Mason's view that Gaimar's 'light-hearted' depiction of the encounter was intended merely to reinforce the idea of co-operation between ruler and ruled as a more effective and peaceful mode of conflict resolution.¹¹ Rufus's depiction in Gaimar may be more favourable on the surface, but beneath his banter, those with more experience of the king's methods are wise enough to fear him.¹² The presence of Helias as a key player in this episode would doubtless have registered with Gaimar's audience as a hint of things to come. Helias was a friend of the future Henry

¹¹ Mason, *William II*, p. 201.

¹² See Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', p. xlv and Barlow, *William Rufus*, pp. 186-7, 212. Both writers feel that Gaimar viewed Rufus from a secular point of view that was more favourable than the angle taken by monastic chroniclers.

I, and his grandson, Geoffrey of Anjou, would become the Empress's second husband.¹³ As Hollister put it, the 'green tree' of prophecy would 'blossom again, even luxuriantly, in the reign of (Henry's) grandson', but its roots would be nourished by a measure of Manceau blood.¹⁴

Immediately after Gaimar's account of Rufus's sea crossing to Maine, he tells us more about Rufus's impressive retinue, and the lavish lifestyle enjoyed by his magnates. All these details combine to create an image of overwhelming magnificence. We hear of Rufus's enormous host as he journeys to meet the unruly Helias:

Les soldats k'il out mandez,
d'icels i out plus k[ë] assez:
treis mil en out el bref le rei.
Il les teneit, ne sai purquai,
car nule guere n'i aveit
ne de nul home ne se cremait,
mes par sa grant nob[i]leté
aveit tel gent od sei justé. (vv. 5851-5858)

As for the mercenaries whom he had summoned, there were more than enough of these—3000, according to the official royal record. I am not sure why he retained so many, for he was not engaged in any war and went in fear of no one; he had brought such a powerful force with him as a display of his great personal nobility.

Following this rather sinister description of Rufus's perhaps excessive display of force, we are introduced to Earl Hugh of Chester, a man whose taste for finery does not merely rival that of his liege lord, but surpasses it:

Ke dirraie de ses barons?
Quels hom estait li quens Huons?
L'emper[e]ür de Lumbarde
ne menout pas tel compaignie
cum il feseit de gent privee.
Ja sa meison ne fust vëe[e]
a gentil hom[e] në a franc;
ewe en viver u en estanc
ert plus leger a espucher
ke n'ert son bevre ne son manger.

¹³ See Richard E. Barton, 'Henry I, Count Helias of Maine, and the Battle of Tinchebray', *Haskins Society Journal*, 17 (2007), 62-90.

¹⁴ Hollister, *Henry I*, p. 248.

Tuz tens aveit richesce asez:
 ja tant n'eüst le jur donez
 ke l'endemain l'en sovenist
 e ke altretant ne departist. (vv. 5859-5872)

What should I say concerning the king's barons? What sort of man was earl Hugh? Not even the emperor of Lombardy would have had a larger company than Hugh had in his personal retinue. The door of his house was never closed to any free-born or noble man; the food and drink that he dispensed was less likely to run dry than water in a fishpond or lake. His munificence knew no bounds: however much he might have given away one day, he would remember it on the following day, and then distribute just as much again.

Short feels that Gaimar – whose patrons were connected to the earls of Chester – is possibly ‘in dialogue’ with Orderic Vitalis here; the latter took an extremely dim view of Hugh’s ‘munificence’, viewing his household as a den of vice.¹⁵ He also suggests that Gaimar’s description of Hugh’s generosity with the victuals he dispenses to all comers may be decidedly tongue-in-cheek, given that Hugh was renowned for his enormous girth.¹⁶ However, there is one detail in Gaimar’s account of Hugh that raises suspicion that the poet may not entirely disagree with Orderic on the matter of the earl’s true nature. The emperor of Lombardy is Henry V, Holy Roman Emperor and future first husband of Henry I’s only daughter and eventual heir, the Empress Matilda. The Emperor was, as Short puts it, a ‘familiar yardstick of opulence’. Henry I’s efforts to strengthen his alliance with the Germans through his daughter’s marriage made his intentions for the future of his dynasty quite clear. The Emperor headed the most powerful ruling house after Byzantium, and took precedence over neighbouring royal families by virtue of his line’s long association with the imperial title. Henry I’s main aim in arranging the match was surely ‘the exaltation of his own house’.¹⁷ If a magnate who makes a great show of deference to Rufus can indulge in a level of display that could surpass even the German emperor’s

¹⁵ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Introduction’, p. xxvi. Hugh’s holdings in Lincolnshire were considerable; he had, in fact, been granted all but one of the estates in the county that had once belonged to Harold Godwinson. Green notes that they were ‘amongst the most valuable held by the earl outside Chester’. See Judith A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 91.

¹⁶ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Notes to the Text’, note to v. 5866.

pomp, then we might assume that the king's own lifestyle took opulence to new heights. The implications of an imperial atmosphere at Rufus's court are strong, but are undermined by the following passage, found only in MS R:

De els devrait hom essample prendre,
 hui del munter, demain descendre.
 Ki en sa vie fait bonté,
 li son en sunt mielz honoré;
 ensement ki vilement aire,
 al dei le mustre l'em en la faire,
 e dient tut: 'Vëez [le] la,
 celui ki ja rien [ne] durra!
 Le mal trebuz puisse il prendre:
 trop est munté, bien deit descendre!'
 Cil est de linage Neiron
 e del Judas al mal felon,
 e del Herode e del Caïn
 ki ne quidet ke vienge fin.
 De quanke pot agrapiner
 fait sa musage pur garder.
 Tut tens quide ke bien li faille,
 a usure met sa m[ä]aille:
 un sul dener fait usurer,
 en poi de tens pot amonter
 un sul dener maint marc d'argent.
 Ki issi monte sovent descent. (vv. 6055-6076)

Such individuals should serve as examples to us all of how men rise one day only to fall the next. An act of generosity in one's lifetime ensures that one's nearest and dearest reap the benefit in honour. In the same way, people in the marketplace point the finger at anyone guilty of base behaviour, and they all say: 'Just look at him! Nothing can stand in his way. Let's hope he comes a real cropper! He's risen far too high and he's due to fall.' Such people are in the same category as Nero, that evil traitor Judas, Herod and Cain, never expecting their evil deeds to catch up with them. Anything this sort of person can get their clutches on, they waste their time trying to hang on to. They are always expecting their money to run out, and see every farthing as capable of earning interest for them. They extract interest from a single penny, and in less than no time this single penny can add up to several silver marks. People who rise in this way frequently fall.

This digression ends here with a resumption of the account of William Rufus's activities: 'Laisom d'ïço, del rei parlom!' ('Enough of this talk; let

us get back to the king.’ – v. 6077). Short suggests that this passage could be an interpolation, given its absence from the three other MSS.¹⁸ Bell drew attention to the incongruity of this criticism of usury in Gaimar’s generally secular history, a difference in tone he found so jarring that, in his view, ‘it raises doubts over Gaimar’s authorship’.¹⁹ Given its position in the work immediately after a description of Hugh’s costly lifestyle, it is difficult to view this passage as anything other than an implicit criticism of Hugh of Chester, and of the king who showed him favour. The removal of such a passage would seem to support Short’s argument, as it suggests a strategy favourable to the earls of Chester.

However, the most significant lines in the context of the *Estoire* as a whole are those which describe the figures whom these unnamed, grasping individuals resemble. These acquisitive people are the heirs to (‘de lineage’, v. 6065) Nero, the Roman tyrant: Judas, whose status as Christ’s betrayer warrants the description of ‘mal felon’ (‘evil traitor’, v. 6066), Herod, the child-killer, and Cain, murderer of his own brother. Such unsavoury characters, it is noted, never expect to be called to account for their misdeeds, but very often undergo a spectacular fall from grace. This is an explicit reference to the medieval Wheel of Fortune topos, a conventional image, but one which allows us to see a rationale for Gaimar’s focus upon figures who are brought down by hubris. The presence of such dialogue in this passage would seem to mark it as being of some importance. It is possible that it was added to Short’s hypothetical *R as an amplificatory passage, intended to clarify the categories into which Gaimar’s less laudable figures might be expected to fall, hence its presence in MS R only; whether this was done by Gaimar himself or a copyist who saw such meaning in the surrounding material is open to question. Another possibility is that the copyist(s) of the *beta* exemplar used as the source for MSS D, H and L chose to remove the passage, either because it was considered digressive or because any political subtext was perceived to be undesirable.

Leaving aside the question of earl Hugh’s character, the figures cited here are revealing. The first two are easy images to comprehend within the

¹⁸ Short, *Estoire*, ‘Notes to the Text’, note to vv. 6063-6076.

¹⁹ Bell, *L’Estoire*, p. 274.

context of the *Estoire*'s tyrants and traitors. Nero's name is a byword for tyranny, and Judas's for treachery. There is nuance to these figures; Nero is an emperor renowned specifically for his immoderate cruelty and hubris, while Judas represents a particular kind of traitor: the former friend made a turncoat by greed. The name of Herod, meanwhile, has several connotations. The first allusion to come to mind is that of Herod the Great, whose desire to avoid losing his throne causes him to order the Massacre of the Innocents, as described in the Gospel of Matthew. Cnut, with his fear of the infant sons of his murdered rival, Edmund Ironside, might best be represented by such a reference. However, there is also Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, whose marriage to his former sister-in-law Herodias was condemned by John the Baptist, provoking the queen's wrath and her demand that he be executed. This parallel is closer to the controversial union of Edgar and Ælfthryth, both warned by archbishop Dunstan that they risked eternal damnation for marrying despite their pre-existing affinity due to Edgar's status as godfather to Ælfthryth's son by her first husband. Herod Antipas is referred to dismissively by Jesus as 'that fox' in Luke 13:32, in a reference to his duplicity and scheming.

The image of the fox immediately calls to mind the symbolism of Argentille's dream, in which the foxes who act as the bear's guard are quick to hail Haveloc as their leader after the intrepid boar has killed their former lord. As a symbol of tyranny, the bear represents the negative aspects of an imperial ruler. In the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Arthur's dream of a dragon defeating a bear in battle is interpreted by him to mean that he, son of Uther Pendragon, will succeed in vanquishing the Roman emperor, Lucius. Nero is one such emperor, but Arthur himself is another, especially within the context of the *Estoire*, in which he is depicted as a ruler from a far-off land demanding tribute and wreaking havoc in Denmark when this is denied him.

Gaimar's reference to Cain is particularly noteworthy. That figure's murder of his brother does not meet with an exact parallel in the *Estoire*, but Gaimar's accounts of kings whose amity brings them together as brothers, or even closer – Adelbriht and Edelsi, Edmund Ironside and Cnut – provide context for such an allusion. In 1 Enoch 85-86, Enoch describes to his son a

vision of his in which Cain and Abel are represented as a black bull and a red bull respectively. The former gores the latter to death. Such an image does not appear in Argentille's dream. However, it is at this point that Cuaran's own interpretation of his wife's prophetic vision takes on real significance. Cuaran tells her that the two lions – symbols of kingship – which cross the sea, slay many of the forest's creatures, and then appear to offer allegiance to the terrified Cuaran – do not in fact represent anything more than the meat that will be served at the king's feast the next day:

E l'urs est mort, hier fu oscis,
 En un bois fu salvage pris;
 Dous tors i ad pur les lions,
 E pur la mer pernum les plums
 u l'ewe monte come mer
 desi que freit la fait cesser;
 la char des tors i serra quite. (vv. 283-289)

As for the bear that died, that was the one captured yesterday running wild in a wood and killed. The lions stand for two bulls, and the sea, let's say, for the cooking pans in which the water rises up like the tide until it stops when it cools; that's where the meat from the bulls will be cooked.

This description, which Gaimar dismisses as quite inaccurate, in fact contains an allusion to the animals symbolic of Cain and his murdered brother. Cuaran's identification of the two lions with the two bulls adds another layer of meaning to the analogy; the lions arrive in unison and appear to be of equal power, but one will ultimately destroy the other. Before this happens, however, they will advance towards Cuaran/Haveloc, whose fear of them is warranted, even though they seem to come in peace; having received the homage of the foxes, he has taken on the role of the bear.

The final incident of Rufus's reign that Gaimar chooses to recount before progressing to the king's death is an instance of regicide followed by rebellion. Malcolm III – husband of Margaret Atheling, the saintly queen of whom Gaimar writes with glowing praise, and father of Edith/Matilda, future wife of Henry I – is murdered at the behest of Robert of Mowbray, earl of Northumberland. Gaimar names the actual killers as Geoffrey

Engulevent and a kinsman of earl Robert's, Morel of Bamburgh. The former is unknown outside of the *Estoire*, while both Morel and Robert of Mowbray were kinsmen of Hugh of Chester. The trial takes place after Robert's apparent guilt is brought to light by the actions of an unnamed and treacherous associate of the earl:

Li quens, cil de Munbrai, Robert
ert encusé par un culvert;
sis hom estait, si l'out norit,
celui al rei aveit ço dit.
Ço li out dit cel mal felon:
cil ert retté de treïson,
un de ses treïtres estait
ki le rei oscire voleit.
De meïsmes la treïson
ke purparlerent li baron
pur quei Wallief esteit oscis,
në el Willame d'Ou malmis:
Geffrai Baignard l'en rapelout,
Willam[e] d'Ou cil vencu out. (vv. 6129-6142)

This accusation against earl Robert of Mowbray had been brought by a low-born individual who was a vassal of his and whom the earl had raised from an early age. This was the same person who had spoken to the king and basely and maliciously relayed to him the news that the earl stood accused of treason, that he had treasonably sought, amongst others, to have the king killed. Just as with the treacherous plot that the barons had hatched [in 1075], and which had resulted in the death of earl Waltheof, so the mutilation of William count of Eu happened in a not dissimilar way; the appeal of treason had been moved by Geoffrey Baynard, who overcame William of Eu [in judicial combat].

After the blinding and castration of the unfortunate William of Eu, who was widely believed to have been wrongly accused, the king laid siege to the castle at Bamburgh, to which earl Robert had withdrawn.²⁰ The earl becomes aware that he is losing, and puts to sea in a small boat, arriving at Tynemouth; however, his jubilation is short lived, as Rufus manages to intercept him there. Unlike William of Eu, he is neither mutilated nor killed, but meets with a rather different fate:

²⁰ See Barlow, *William Rufus*, pp. 346-59 for an account of Robert of Mowbray's rebellion.

Tant engeina k[ë] il le prist:
 ne l'ad defeat ne ne l'oscist,
 meis en prison fu puis vint anz.
 En la prison finat moranz,
 prodrom devint ainz k'il morust:
 ja ne veiast rien k'il eüst. (vv. 6173-6178)

He set a trap and succeeded in capturing Mowbray: he neither mutilated nor killed him, but kept him a prisoner for twenty years, and the earl ended his life in gaol. Before his death, however, he had become a reformed character, someone who would never have refused [to give] anything he had.

The reference here to Rufus's having 'set a trap' for the fleeing earl ('engeina') does not present the king's behaviour in a positive light, in view of the earlier instances of *engin* in the *Estoire*. Robert of Mowbray's fate is less dramatic than the punishment meted out to William of Eu, whose wrongful arrest is linked overtly to the Conqueror's similarly unjustified treatment of the executed English earl Waltheof. William of Eu's innocence, in Gaimar's view, is made plain by this comparison. Gaimar has already told us of Waltheof's fate, in a passage described as Short as heavy with a subtext 'full of allusion', and of particular relevance to its Lincolnshire audience, given the proximity of the slain earl's shrine at Crowland.²¹ Gaimar passes no comment on Waltheof's guilt or innocence, but leaves us to infer the righteousness of his rebellion against William I from his account of the events following Waltheof's disinterment and translation to Crowland:

puis en perdit Wallief la teste
 pur cel surdit, e a Wincestre
 long tens après fust defui,
 sicum Deu plout e sa merci;
 moignes furent ki l'emporterent,
 a saint Gulac le presenterent,
 en Crulande l'ensepelirent;
 le cors de lui tresbien cherirent.
 Puis est sovent el liu veüz
 ke Deus en fait mainte vertuz. (vv. 5727-5736)

²¹ Short, *Estoire*, 'Introduction', pp. xlv-xlv.

He was then executed for his part in the uprising. After some considerable time his body, as God in his mercy willed, was disinterred at Winchester. Some monks carried it off and, dedicating it to St Guthlac, reburied it at Crowland, where it became the object of the monks' veneration. Subsequently, God has been seen to perform many miracles in this place on numerous occasions.

Gaimar's unusual directness in connecting Waltheof with William of Eu reveals his true opinion of the former's fate, given the poet's statement that the accusations of treason against him and earl Robert were maliciously put before the king by a lowborn and unnamed traitor. However, it is the fate of the earl of Northumberland that is the most significant for a broader view of the message Gaimar seems to be trying to convey. We hear that the earl is confined in prison until his death twenty years later, during which he finds peace and, presumably, spiritual redemption through his suffering. This echoes the fate of Rufus's elder brother, another Robert, who was imprisoned by Henry I after his defeat at the battle of Tinchebray, and who died in prison at the age of eighty. Gaimar is not obliged to write of this unpleasant episode in the history of the Anglo-Norman regnum; his *Estoire* ends with Rufus. However, given his lavish praise of Robert of Normandy ('suz ciel nen out meillor baron', 'there was none nobler, none braver in all the world than he', v. 5744), we might wonder whether this account of the fate of the earl of Northumberland is an attempt to address, however indirectly, the future dispossession of the Conqueror's eldest son. The last we hear of Robert of Normandy is during Gaimar's description of the state of affairs within the family in the later years of Rufus's reign:

Pur ço ert ducs de Normendie:
 del quens Robert n'i aveit mie,
 en Jerusalem en ert alé;
 li reis aver l'en out doné.
 Despuis la tint tant cum vesqui;
 Henri son frere le servi. (vv. 6204-6210)

He (Rufus) had become duke of Normandy in the absence of count Robert who had gone to Jerusalem, using finances that the king had provided. He held Normandy for the remainder of his life, and his brother Henry was in his service.

It was ‘Henri son frere’ who would bring the protracted issue of the inheritance of both Normandy and the English crown to a murky conclusion. Gaimar manages to avoid discussing Henry I’s treatment of his brother directly, but nonetheless alludes to Robert of Normandy’s miserable fate even as he appears to skirt the issue.

In order to understand the circumstances leading up to Rufus’s death, we must return to the point at which Gaimar chooses to begin his account of the king’s reign. As we saw in the previous chapter, Gaimar elides most of Rufus’s period of rule, passing over all his military and political endeavours until he reaches the king’s adventures in turbulent Maine. Having focused exclusively on William I’s activities in England, Gaimar provides us with no background information on Rufus’s intense interest in Le Mans, which his father had pacified, and over which he had gained control when his brother Robert had mortgaged the city to him before going on crusade in 1096. Instead, we are told how Geoffrey Martel’s troops besiege the city ‘e mult manacent cels dedenz,/dient mar entrent laienc!’ (‘bringing great pressure to bear on those inside and telling them how misguided they were ever to have occupied the town’ - vv. 5795-5796). Rufus receives news of this attack shortly afterwards, when a messenger succeeds in escaping the beleaguered city and finds the king at his dinner. Intriguingly, Gaimar makes a point of telling us Rufus’s location; the king and his companions are, presumably, on a hunting expedition, as they are ‘a Brochehe[r]st/el chef de la Nove Forest’ (‘at Brockenhurst, at one end of the New Forest’, vv. 5799-5800). Gaimar does not appear to expect us to recall the exact location of Brockenhurst when he has cause to mention it again later in the narrative. He repeats its name on this second appearance, ensuring that we are aware of its position within the New Forest:

El treszime an k’il si regnout
 [i] donc avint, sicom Deu plout,
 li reis esteit alé chascer
 Vers Brokehe[r]st, e archeier—
 Ço est en la Nove Forest
 Un liu ke ad nun Brokehe[r]st. (vv. 6251-6256)

In the 13th year of his reign it so happened, and God so willed it, that the king had gone on a game-shooting expedition in the region of Brockenhurst—Brockenhurst is the name of a place in the New Forest.

The reason for Brockenhurst's reappearance at this juncture is its significance as the location of Rufus's mysterious death in August 1100. There is a circular logic to the king's presence in the New Forest in these two major setpieces of his reign, separated from one another in time by a mere two years. The news of the Angevin aggression at Le Mans is the trigger for the king's successful foreign campaigns after his achievements in England, signalling the beginning of what Gaimar describes as a vaulting imperial ambition. His killing, accidental or otherwise, by the Picard, Walter Tirel, takes place in the same corner of his own New Forest, and is, in Gaimar's account, motivated by the king's having voiced his intentions to gain more territories in continental Europe. Gaimar's foregrounding of the later days of Rufus's reign makes sense within this narrative; we are left in no doubt that Rufus's expansionist tendencies are at the root of his ignominious end. In a fine touch of poetic justice, Rufus meets his demise in the controversial New Forest, the site of his deeply unpopular afforestation laws and a symbol – not entirely fairly – of Norman affronts to English liberties.

It is interesting to compare Gaimar's fixation with Brockenhurst to his contemporaries' approach. William of Malmesbury prefaces his account of Rufus's journey to Le Mans with the statement 'Venationi in quadam silua intentum nuntius detinuit ex transmarinis partibus, obsessam esse ciuitatem Cinomannis...' (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* 320.1, 'Once, when he was intent on hunting in some forest, he was stayed by news from overseas of the siege of Le Mans...'). William evidently does not see the location of the forest as being important to his version of the episode, or, indeed, in his account of the king's death, which he again merely describes as taking place while Rufus hunted in an unnamed forest: 'diu cunctatus est an in siluam, sicut intenderat, iret' (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* 333.3, '(he) spent a long time wondering whether to go hunting in the forest as he had intended'). Henry

of Huntingdon, by contrast, notes the king's location in the New Forest in his account of both these episodes:

Rursus cum uenaretur in nouo foresto, uenit ei subito nuntius a Cenomania...

Again, when he was hunting in the New Forest, a messenger suddenly came to him from Le Mans... (*Historia Anglorum* vii.21)

...iuit uenatum in nouo foresto in crastino kalendas Augusti.

...he went to hunt in the New Forest on 2 August. (*Historia Anglorum* vii.22)

The campaign in Le Mans is clearly perceived as important by Gaimar, who, as we have seen, passes over much of the king's reign in silence, before merging Rufus's several journeys to the unruly territory into one. Given that Gaimar elides so much of Rufus's reign, the sections he does choose to focus on acquire great significance when examining his depiction of the king's career. The king's successes are granted little space, while the difficult issues in Maine and on the Scottish border are covered in detail.

Rufus's location as he receives word of the attack on Maine is significant for another reason. He is dining, presumably after one of his hunting trips in the New Forest. This detail both points forward specifically to the location of the king's killing, and refers us back to the aftermath of Buern Bucecarle's feud with Osberht. Ælle, the 'chivaler' ('knight', v. 2700) of non-noble birth who is made king in the latter's stead, is on a hunting trip on the day of the Danish invasion. Rufus learns his bad news from a polite messenger; Ælle, however, is confronted by a blind man with clairvoyant powers, who overhears the king's boasting of his prizes at hunting – 'bisses' and 'chevrels' ('deer' and 'roebucks', v. 2735), the contents of Edelsi's kitchen as listed by Cuaran – and informs him that 'Si vus en bois avez tant pris,/perdu avez tut cest païs' ('You may have won all the prizes at hunting, but you've managed to lose the whole of this country', vv. 2739-2740). The angry king refuses to believe him, but learns the truth when he advances towards York, before charging foolishly into battle on learning of the death of his cherished nephew, Orron. His lack of restraint,

along with his preoccupation with hunting over the security of his lands, is an implicit indication of his unsuitability for the role of king; he is not of the line of Cerdic. Although Rufus triumphs in Maine, the comparison here does him no favours. It also reinforces the impression of this particular incident as the first in a chain of events that will lead to the king's death.

Gaimar's Rufus, shrewd and intelligent though he may be, is no judge of character. His revealing conversation with his assassin, Walter Tirel, provides ample evidence of the king's inability to distinguish friend from foe. Though Tirel feigns cordiality, hatred for Rufus and his imperial ambitions lies beneath his superficially amiable demeanour. Gaimar conveys this vividly through his use of direct speech to recount the conversation between the two men on the eve of Rufus's killing:

Ensemble vont li dui parlant,
 de mainte chose esbaneiant
 tant ke Walter prist a gaber
 [e] par engin al rei parler.
 Demandat lui tut en riant
 a quei il sujurnout [i]tant:
 'Reis, quant tu es si poëstifs,
 a quei n'eshalces tu ton pris?
 Ja n'as tu nul vaisin proscain
 ki contre tai ost drescer main,
 car si sur lui aler voleies,
 tuz les altres mener purreies.
 Tuit sunt ti home, a tei acilin,
 Breton, Mansel e Angevin,
 e li Flemenc tienent de tei,
 cil de Boloigne te unt pur rei:
 Eüstace, cil de Boloigne,
 poez bien mener en ta bosoigne;
 Alein le Neir, cil de Bretagne,
 poez bien mener en ta compaigne.
 Tant as aïes e grant genz
 mult me merveile ke tant atenz
 ke aucune part ne movez guere
 e ne conquers fors de ta terre.'
 Li reis respont asez brevement:
 'Desci k'al Mans merrai ma gent,
 en occident puis m'en irrai,
 a Peiters ma feste tendrai
 a cest Noël ki ore vendrat;
 si jo tant vif, mon siéd serrat.'
 'Ço est fort chose,' dist Walter,

‘al Mans aler puis repaier
 e a Peiters feste tenir.
 De male mort puissent morir
 li Burgeinon e li Franceis
 si ja sugét sunt a Engleis!’
 Li reis par gab li aveit dit,
 e cil ert fel e mult requit:
 en son quer tint la felunie,
 purpensat sei de un' estutie:
 s[ë] il ja lui vëer purreit,
 tut autrement le pleit fereit. (vv. 6269-6310)

They spent a long time talking together about many things and making pleasant conversation, and eventually Walter started to joke and indulge in clever banter with the king. With a huge smile on his face he asked him what he was hanging around waiting for. ‘Sire, what is preventing a powerful king like you from increasing his reputation still further? There's not a single one of your close neighbours who would dare as much as raise a finger against you, for if you ever decided to attack him, all of the others would come in on your side. The Bretons, the Angevins, and those from the county of Le Mans are all your vassals and have submitted to you, and the Flemings also hold their land of you. Those in the county of Boulogne recognize you as their king, and [count] Eustace of Boulogne is someone whose support you could easily enlist should you need to; similarly you could easily get Alan Niger [count] of Brittany to come and fight in your army. You have such military aid at your disposal and such large numbers of men that I find it very surprising that you are now delaying so long before starting a war somewhere and gaining new territory outside your own country.’

The king's reply is brief: ‘I'll lead my army as far as Le Mans, and then make my way west and hold my ceremonial feast at Poitiers this next Christmas. If I live long enough, it will be my official place of residence.’ ‘It's no easy matter’, replied Walter, ‘to get first to Le Mans and then on to Poitiers and to celebrate your feast there. May the Burgundians and the French meet a violent death if ever they find themselves subjects of the English crown!’ The king had spoken in jest, but Walter was altogether untrustworthy and had ulterior motives. He harboured criminal thoughts in his heart and had planned an act of extreme recklessness: if ever he were able to prevent him, he would ensure that there was an altogether different outcome.

Tirel is secretly outraged by the thought of a successful English conquest of continental territories, but he is sufficiently dishonest to be able to conceal this behind a veneer of urbane charm; this is precisely the kind of flattery that, it seems, is the way to curry favour at the court of Gaimar's Rufus. The

Picard's opportunity to cut short Rufus's career presents itself in the very next line of the *Estoire*, as he and the king set out on the fateful hunting expedition.

Gaimar frames the conversation between Rufus and Tirel as a succession of jokes. Tirel's apparently lighthearted denunciation of the king's plans for French territories camouflages his deadly intent. However, there is something more puzzling here. Gaimar tells us that Rufus is speaking in jest, 'par gab'. His plans for conquest are, apparently, not to be taken seriously, rendering his eventual fate all the more tragic. What Gaimar's version of events hides, however, is the fact that Tirel is not the only one of the two speakers to pass off the truth as an idle jest. One of Henry I's first acts as king was to send home the huge army Rufus had assembled, ready and waiting on the English coast. In the glorious projected future the king speaks of – the version of events cut short by Tirel's stray arrow – Rufus would indeed have marched victorious through France, backed up by exactly the assets Tirel emphasises: impressive military might, and the lure of hard cash to offer to mercenaries. Gaimar introduces the issue by bringing up Le Mans once again, as the location where the king's strike will begin, in a neatly circular piece of plotting that leaves us back where Gaimar started: at Brockenhurst, on the eve of a military campaign in Maine.

Gaimar was not the only contemporary writer to refer to Rufus's plan to extend his powers as far as Poitou. Bachrach notes that Orderic Vitalis also mentions the scheme, as he tells us that William IX, duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitou, was possessed with crusading zeal after being inspired by the exploits of noblemen such as Robert of Normandy in the East.²² William of Malmesbury makes a passing reference to the proposal, in similarly condemnatory terms:

Denique ante proximam diem mortis interrogatus ubi festum suum in Natali teneret, respondit Pictauis, quod comes Pictauensis Ierosolimam ire gestiens ei terram suam pro pecunia inuadaturus dicebatur. Ita paternis possessionibus non contentus, maiorisque

²² Bernard S. Bachrach, 'William Rufus's Plan to Invade Aquitaine', in *The Normans and their Adversaries at War: Essays in Memory of C. Warren Hollister*, ed. by Richard P. Abels and Bernard S. Bachrach (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), pp. 31-63, p. 31.

gloriae spe raptatus, indebitis incubabat honoribus. (*Gesta Regum Anglorum*, iv. 333.7)

For instance, on the day before his death, when he was asked where he would celebrate Christmas, he replied 'Poitiers', because it was thought that the count of Poitou desired to go to Jerusalem and would mortgage his territory to the king for cash. Not content with his paternal inheritance, and carried away by hopes of greater distinction, he was always intent on titles to which he had no right.

William – who does not identify Tirel as the questioner who learns of the king's plans – portrays Rufus's designs on Poitou as aspirational; the king has heard something, from some unnamed and possibly unreliable source, of the count's intentions to dispose of his lands, and is, as William puts it, 'carried away' by the prospect. Gaimar follows a similar line to William, but, as that revealing conversation between Rufus and Tirel demonstrates, he goes further. Gaimar's Rufus does not mention William IX, the crusade or any intimation that he might be welcome in Poitou. Instead, he merely sets out his plans: to invade and take Poitiers by Christmas. This phrasing casts Rufus in the role of imperialist, goaded into revealing his true intentions by Tirel's suggestion that, with his great assets, he should make war overseas. There is no mention here of a mortgage, or of any kind of diplomacy. Rufus will lead an army into the west to claim his prize by force. Tirel's statement that Rufus can rely on the support of his many vassals in lands as diverse as Brittany, Flanders and even the old Norman foe, Anjou, lends real weight to the idea of Rufus as an unstoppable military and political force. It is not difficult to understand how a jest from Rufus could be viewed as a very real threat by those with cause to fear his expansionist ambitions.

Having been presented with at least two differing interpretations of the political situation underlying Rufus's plans in the west, we might question the veracity of these depictions. What is certain is that Rufus was planning to expand his overseas domains in the summer of 1100. As Bachrach puts it, Rufus's reasons for wishing to acquire Poitou are 'opaque', and can only really be explained, in the absence of any concrete evidence to the contrary, as forming part of the general Norman desire to expand, a

policy exemplified by his father's acquisition of England.²³ It was this unpredictable tendency that must have alarmed Rufus's contemporaries; if the king could aggressively pursue one territory that was, as William put it, a title 'to which he had no right', there was little to prevent him from making similarly bold claims on other domains. Rufus has challenged divine power once in his sea crossing to Maine; this time, he courts disaster with his open flouting of the Christian duty to wage a just war.²⁴ In sharp contrast with his brother Robert, whose achievements on crusade Gaimar lauds, Rufus is determined to seek out new territory at any cost.

Given all the evidence to support it – backed by the testimony of William and Orderic, whose sources could have been no more or less reliable than Gaimar's – it is clear that Rufus's plans to acquire Poitou, if not Aquitaine as a whole, were entirely serious. However, Gaimar describe Rufus's description of his plans as a *gab*, albeit one that will prove to have fatal consequences for the king when 'misconstrued' by his killer. There are different ways to interpret this statement on Gaimar's part. The first would be to assume that the words he puts in Rufus's mouth are the result of guesswork. This seems unlikely given the accuracy both of the timeframe he writes of (the king could indeed have been in Poitiers by Christmas 1100, had he concentrated all his efforts on extending the frontier of his domains westwards after a campaign launched in late summer that both neutralised Robert and settled the Maine situation once and for all) and the description of Rufus's strategy, which fits in well with that also discussed by several of Gaimar's peers.

If Gaimar knew, as surely he must have done, that Rufus's plans were in earnest, there is another answer available to us: that Gaimar was aware that his audience would know Rufus was not joking when he discussed Poitou with Tirel, and that the poet was himself using humour to underline the serious point that Rufus died, ultimately, as a direct consequence of his arrogant bravado. Gaimar's audience is already familiar

²³ Bachrach, 'William Rufus's Plan', p. 39.

²⁴ For more on the Augustinian concept of 'just war', see John Langan, 'The Elements of Augustine's Just War Theory', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 12:1 (1984), 19-38, and Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

with the outcome of the hunting party; otherwise, the meaning of the language he uses would not have its force. Rufus states that Poitiers will become a permanent base for him, should he live long enough to claim it as such. This statement serves as overt foreshadowing of the king's imminent death.

It is also intriguing to note that Gaimar uses the same verb to describe the conversational strategies used by both Rufus and his interlocutor. Tirel 'prist a gaber' (v. 6271), but we learn after the king's response that his jokes hide 'felunie'. Gaimar mentions this as he tells us that Rufus's answer had, in fact, been 'par gab' (v. 6306). Both the king and the traitor, then, are hiding behind a tendency to *gaber*. In Tirel's case, this is a sign of his duplicity; he is a man who has benefited financially from the king's support, but who is secretly plotting against his benefactor. We are left to wonder exactly what this makes Rufus. On one level, the king can be read as an astute political operator who knows he is being baited, and responds with the same kind of loaded humour employed by Tirel. On the other hand, he might be perceived as a single-minded imperialist who sees his plans for expansion as an appropriate subject to joke about in front of a French noble, who was unlikely to respond positively; perhaps the king's assumption is that the favour he has shown Tirel has effectively bought the latter's loyalty. The king's immense hubris has rendered him incapable of seeing any potential pitfalls, short of his own death, along his path to glory overseas. Rufus has proved his power and determination, but his preference for foreign companions has provided his enemies with, in this account, the only possible method of preventing English dominance.

Having established the ominous significance of Brockenhurst as the location of Rufus's demise, Gaimar is not slow to explore the dramatic potential inherent in his forest backdrop. We have already been given explicit warning that Tirel is of poor character, and is ready to strike at the king, but there is more to come. After the conversation with Tirel, the scene changes to the hunting party and its activities moments before the fatal shooting. Given that we have already been informed in the previous lines (vv.6309-6310) that Tirel plans to prevent the king's territorial expansion

should the opportunity ever arise, this choice by Gaimar allows us to understand implicitly that the hunting trip is indeed Tirel's chance to attack:

En la forest estait li reis
 en l'esspesse joste un mareis:
 talent li prist d'un cerf berser
 k'en une herde vit aler.
 Dejuste un arbre est descenduz,
 il meismes ad son arc tenduz.
 Partut descendent li baron,
 li altre aceignent d'environ.
 Walter Tirel ert descenduz
 trop pres del rei juste un sambuz,
 après un tremble s'adossat. (vv. 6311-6321)

The king was in the densest part of the forest in proximity to a marsh. He had set his mind on shooting one particular stag which he had seen passing in a herd. He dismounted next to a tree, and tensed his bow himself. When the barons dismount, they are scattered all around, and the others fan out in a circle round about. Walter Tirel had dismounted near an elder tree very close to the king, and he took his position with his back against an aspen.

Gaimar carefully sets out the exact locations of all the key figures in his tableau, taking especial pains to make sure that we are fully aware of Tirel's position in relation to the king and the other barons in attendance.

Mason suggests that Gaimar may have gleaned his detailed knowledge of the hunting party and its activities from a first- or second-hand source, a hypothesis all the more likely if we bear in mind that his patroness, Constance, was a member of the de Venoz family. Her grandfather having been a steward in Rufus's household – a post that would almost certainly have included some level of responsibility for the organisation of such a hunting expedition – it is tempting to assume that Gaimar included such incidental detail as a way to lend *auctoritas* to his history, in a manner that also served to flatteringly underline his patrons' close familial links with the royal court.²⁵

It is notable that Gaimar continues his insertion of courtly elements here, giving Rufus an elaborate funeral cortege that compensates somewhat

²⁵ Mason, *William II*, p. 226.

for the hastiness of his burial as documented by other sources.²⁶ The significance of this imagery, followed by Gaimar's pious hope that the king will find salvation despite the fact that he had not taken communion since the previous Sunday, is worth bearing in mind for later:

Ja avint si k'al cerf failli,
 descî k'al quer le rei feri;
 une saiete el quer li vint,
 mes ne savom ki l'arc sustint;
 mes ço disaient li altre archer
 k[ë] ele eissi de l'arc Walter;
 semblant en fu, kar tost fuï.
 Il eschat; li reis chaî,
 par quatre faiz s'est escriez,
 le corpus domini ad demandez,
 mes il ne fu ki li donast;
 loinz de muster ert en un wast.
 E nepurquant un veneür
 prist des herbes od tut la flur,
 un poi en fist al rei manger,
 issi quidat l'acomenger.
 En Deu est ço e estre deit:
 il aveit pris pain ben[ë]eit
 le d[ë]maigne dedevant:
 ço li deit estre bon guarant. (vv. 6327-6346)

As the herd passed by, and the huge stag came within range, he (Tirel) drew back the string of the bow he was holding and—sad misfortune indeed—let fly a barbed arrow. What happened is that it missed the stag and pierced right into the king's heart. An arrow struck him in the heart, but we do not actually know who it was who was holding the bow, although the other archers maintained that the arrow came from Walter's bow. And so indeed it looked, because he immediately fled.

At the same time as he made good his escape, the king fell. Four times he cried out; he begged to be given the host, but they were in an uninhabited area far from any church, and there was no one there to administer it. Nonetheless one of the huntsmen took a handful of grass, flowers and all, and gave some to the king to eat, intending in this way to give him Communion. This matter is in God's hands, and it is right and proper that it should be. The previous Sunday he had

²⁶ Mason, *William II*, p. 226. She views the Latin chroniclers' depiction of the confusion and lack of mourning for Rufus as symptomatic of the different audiences targeted by their histories. A clerical audience would be less likely to view Rufus in a favourable light due to his decided lack of spiritual devotion, and his interest in ecclesiastical wealth.

taken consecrated bread, and this should surely stand him in good stead.

Gaimar's obfuscating tactics in casting doubt on the identity of the archer who fired the fatal shot are revealed as a device only a few lines later; on the subject of Rufus's funeral, he tells us that 'the burial was an altogether different ceremony from the one which the barons had performed when Walter shot him' ('Tut altrement l'ensepelirent/ke li baron n'avei[e]nt fet/la u Walter out a lui treit.', vv. 6430-6432). This is the same kind of hedging Gaimar has previously employed in his account of the mysterious circumstances of Æthelwald's death, a similarity remarked upon by Short.²⁷ Another allusion is less direct, but of equal importance. Eadric Streona, indisputably a villain, makes use of the 'arc-ki-ne-falt' to murder Edmund Ironside with impunity; this strange contraption is found, as we have seen, in no other account of that king's death. Tirel, whose status as Rufus's killer is not confirmed beyond doubt, is said by Gaimar to have accidentally killed the king by mistaking him for a deer. Unlike Eadric's deadly machine, Tirel's aim was not – so we are told – unerring. This link between the two passages strengthens the implication of Tirel's guilt, while also creating a distinct impression that this was, in fact, no accident.

The nature of the ritual carried out by Rufus's companions, and unattested elsewhere, is a revealing detail. Numerous examples of this secular communion – administered *in extremis* to dying men on the battlefield who will expire before a priest can reach them – are found in epic literature.²⁸ Short attributes this curious scene to a desire on Gaimar's part to show Rufus 'making a good death', rather than being roughly and unceremoniously interred, as in the accounts of other chroniclers.²⁹ However, the poet's tentative reference to Rufus's having taken

²⁷ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to vv. 3861-2. Short does not, however, refer to the similarly vague allusion to Ælfthryth's implicit involvement in her stepson Edward's death at vv. 4053-4054.

²⁸ See Walter Sylvester, 'The Communion, with Three Blades of Grass, of the Knights-Errant', *Dublin Review*, 121 (1897), 80-98, J.D.M. Ford, "'To bite the dust" and Symbolical Lay Communion', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 20 (1905), 197-230 and G. H. Hamilton, 'The Sources of the Symbolical Lay Communion', *Romanic Review*, 4 (1913), 221-40 for further discussion on the romance background to the hunters' attempt to provide the king with a makeshift communion.

²⁹ Short, *Estoire*, 'Notes to the Text', note to v. 6336ff.

Communion the previous Sunday suggests that he is not at all convinced that the makeshift ceremony will have the desired effect. His earlier remark that only God will determine whether or not Ælfthryth's attempts to expiate her sin have achieved their aim is called to mind by his statement here that the matter 'is in God's hands'.

On the first reading, the secular communion appears to elevate Rufus to the level of a hero of epic, cut down in his prime on the cusp of his greatest victory. However, in the context of Gaimar's evocation of the king's reign so far, the allusion serves only to undermine him further. Rufus does not perish on the battlefield, but in the forest he has taken such pains to create for himself with his punitive laws, a space created for his own pleasure and forbidden to others with the threat of severe reprisals. Stag hunting, that pastime earlier used as a pretext for Edgar's fateful courtship of Ælfthryth, appears now as the background to a royal murder. Despite his followers' best efforts, Rufus dies not as a military commander but as a vain and hubristic ruler, slain at close quarters by an ambitious man in whom he has foolishly placed his trust. In contrast with his elder brother, who has won praise for his valour in the cause most sacred to any Christian, Rufus's temporal gains have availed him little. Like Edmund Ironside and Edward before him, he cries out in pain, a gesture that instantly evokes the stricken bear of Argentille's prophecy. However, this is where Gaimar ends his account. We do not see the subsequent actions of his honour guard; the foxes of the dream landscape, with their obeisance to the bear's successor as ruler of the forest, are only hinted at in the behaviour of Rufus's followers. We have seen a number of candidates for the role of boar, from Buern to Hereward, but in the end, it is Tirel who most closely matches the prophetic imagery, with his prompt and timely disappearance from the scene, pursued by no-one, and with his task complete. The *Estoire* has reached a natural conclusion.

Conclusion

The research question I posed at the beginning of this study of Gaimar's work hinged on his depiction of kingship and its role in the transition of power in the *Estoire* as a whole. Previous scholarship has identified the importance of Gaimar's interpolations and expansions; their significance was highlighted by the structural analysis of the history I carried out at the beginning of the thesis, which revealed the reigns of four monarchs in particular – Haveloc, Edgar, Cnut, and William Rufus – as focal points of the narrative in terms of the space allotted them by Gaimar. Haveloc's position at the beginning of the *Estoire*, along with his status as the king who claims the largest amount of space within the narrative, placed him front and centre in the analysis. The reign of Edgar, notable as the point in which Gaimar diverges from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account of English history, provided the other major focus for the first part of my study, in which I examined the paradigm of kingship developed in the accounts of these rulers, and in which Edgar is, in fact, a secondary character. Gaimar's negative commentary on the actions of rulers and noblemen in these episodes is overt and strong in tone. The subsequent reigns of Cnut and William Rufus, as explored in the second part of the thesis, represent a distinct shift in Gaimar's approach to English history, in which, as I have argued, his criticism of actions taken by those kings and their associates is veiled, relying as it does upon the audience's use of earlier episodes in the *Estoire* as an interpretive key for what follows. At the *Estoire's* close, we are left with a final image of the dead Rufus whose killing in the New Forest is presented in such a manner as to undermine the pretensions to glory that mark his reign, with references to earlier episodes deployed in order to emphasise his ultimate failure.

This holistic approach to Gaimar's history has revealed patterns in structure and language that do not become fully apparent when analysis is restricted to any individual episode. I have analysed material covering the reigns outlined above in detail, along with the other, shorter interpolated passages – Buern Bucecarle, Hastings, and Hereward – that add further detail to Gaimar's portrayal of the transition of power. John Gillingham

identified kingship, chivalry and love as three major themes in Gaimar's work; in this thesis, I have examined the significance of the former, which is crucial to the *Estoire's* treatment of English history. Having divided the analysis into two sections in order to demonstrate Gaimar's establishment of his models, followed by their development in subsequent episodes, I will now examine these figures, and Gaimar's methods of praising or criticising each of them, alongside one another. I will also return to the subject of the *Estoire's* epilogues. The references to Henry I in the longer epilogue found in MS R, when viewed through the prism of Gaimar's earlier commentary on models of kingship, offer insight into the potential audience for Gaimar's history. This king, whose court is described by Gaimar as a place of splendour, and of whom he undertakes to write in the future, is the last monarch to be mentioned in the *Estoire*, but the poet's focus on Henry as he concludes his history is significant, especially in view of the political situation both at Gaimar's time of writing, and in the period during which Short has suggested the appearance of the later edition represented by MSS D and L, with their shared shorter epilogue.

Legge argues that Gaimar's history lacks an overarching theme to its narrative, unlike Langtoft's chronicle, which focuses on the figure of Edward I.¹ Her view is that historians working on Langtoft have – or had at her time of writing, in 1950 – overlooked this structure due to their decision to study Edward's reign in isolation, an approach that obscures the chronicle's design. Legge's own perception of the *Estoire* as a history lacking a political dimension is, I would argue, made as a result of a similar approach: that is, an analysis of Gaimar's writing that fails to take him seriously as an historian. This is not surprising, as Bell's edition of Gaimar's chronicle was then only in preparation, and the process of reassessing the *Estoire's* value as a history was yet to begin. Legge, writing before this reappraisal of Gaimar, is certain that the poet, swayed by his patroness's tastes, is an exclusively 'courtly' writer with no concern for larger historical themes. This causes her to overlook the need for his history to be accorded the same thorough, holistic examination that she advocates for the work of a

¹ Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, p. 105.

chronicler such as Langtoft. Dalton's search for allusions made by Gaimar to the civil war between Stephen and the Empress credits the historian with political insight, while serving to highlight the potential for deeper analysis of the work's themes and structure. The study I have carried out here has revealed a strong political subtext to the *Estoire*, which becomes more apparent as the work progresses, and which can only be discerned when the history's major episodes are examined alongside one another.

Haveloc, Edelsi and Edulf

The Haveloc episode is crucial to understanding the *Estoire* as a whole; any doubt as to its importance is removed by Bell's deduction that it was interpolated by Gaimar at some stage after the work had been begun, but before its completion. A number of models of kingship are presented to us throughout the narrative, of which Haveloc, following his transformation from the scullion Cuaran, is the most successful. This episode is well suited to the insertion of allusions to contemporary events, and to the construction of models that will inform our understanding of later figures in the *Estoire*. It takes place at a crucial point: English history has not, in fact, begun when Haveloc's dispossession and reinstatement takes place. The backdrop to his story is, in fact, Arthurian Britain, with the legendary British king's imperial era of aggressive expansion overseas providing the catalyst for the act of treachery that displaces the infant Haveloc's family and results in his exile in Edelsi's kingdom. Cerdic and his descendants have not yet arrived in the land that will become England, while all the kings we encounter in the episode – including Haveloc – are distant figures whose existence is impossible to confirm or disprove for certain, as the several candidates suggested as possible sources for the figure of Haveloc make clear. This grants Gaimar considerable latitude in shaping his characters, setting and narrative, while the distance in time between this period and Gaimar's own leaves minimal space for political controversy.

The Haveloc episode hinges on two separate acts of treachery, which take the form of distinctly different methods of dispossession. The first is related to us by Gaimar, and concerns the British king Edelsi's attempt to

remove his niece, Argentille, from the political scene following her parents' death by arranging a disadvantageous marriage to Cuaran, the scullion. Embedded further within the narrative is the parallel account of Cuaran's own true status as Haveloc, the heir-in-exile to the throne of Denmark, of which he is informed by Kelloc, herself a Danish noblewoman living incognito in Lincolnshire and the daughter of the infant Haveloc's protector, Grim. Between these two stories of disinheritance is Argentille's prophetic dream, in which her husband looks on as a battle takes place between a bear who is ruler of a great forest, his guard of foxes, and attacking boars; the bear's slaying by the boars' implied leader is followed by a destructive tidal wave and the arrival of two lions, who show deference to the uncomprehending Cuaran but whose presence terrifies him into taking shelter in a tall tree. Cuaran's mundane explanation of the dream to his wife is dismissed as completely inaccurate by Gaimar; the poet does not, however, offer us a contradictory interpretation. Edulf is quickly removed on the battlefield once Haveloc has been recognised in Denmark, while the more testing battle against Edelsi in Britain concludes with the latter's decision to step aside in favour of his niece and her husband.

This scenario sets up a number of models that will recur in subsequent episodes within the *Estoire*. We are introduced to Haveloc and Argentille, each with a kingdom to regain, and to their supporters: or rather, to Haveloc's, as Argentille has no kin other than her duplicitous uncle, Edelsi. Instead, she is supported by her husband, after his two loyal Danish retainers – Grim, deceased but represented by his daughter, Kelloc, who has made a home in Britain after the shipwreck that brought them all there, along with Sigar Estalre, Edulf's opponent in Denmark itself – assist him in winning back his own realm. In addition to these loyal servants, we encounter several other models of kingship. One is the predatory Arthur, whose excessive demands for tribute see the patriotic Guntier, Haveloc's father, defeated and killed at Edulf's instigation. The others are the two archetypes of treachery, Edulf and Edelsi. The former is never characterised in any depth, while the latter is given a more distinctive personality and a small amount of dialogue, along with a more detailed explanation of his motivations in displacing his niece, Argentille.

Before moving on to analyse the interplay of these models and the figures paralleled by them later in the narrative, the setting for the Haveloc episode merits closer examination in the context of the history as a whole. Leckie points out the suitability of the post-Arthurian era as a point at which to insert Haveloc's story; with Arthur vanished from the scene by the time Haveloc hears the story of his exile from Kelloc, the reign of Constantine ('cil Costentin, li niés Artur/ki out l'espee Caliburc' – 'the same Constantine who was kinsman to Arthur who owned Excalibur', vv. 45-46) 'offered an appropriate juncture to make the interpolation because Gaimar already perceived the mid-sixth century as a time of political fragmentation'.² The story of Haveloc's father's overthrow by Arthur takes place in the recent past and provides a context for events, but Arthur's disappearance in the intervening period leaves the way clear for Haveloc to regain his throne and assert his wife's rights in Britain without the prospect of a confrontation with the ultimate architect of his father's downfall. Such a backdrop of political turmoil provides the ideal setting for a story of exile and displacement, while creating a plausible context both for the arrival of the Dane, Adelbriht, in Britain, and for the British king Edelsi's need to form an alliance with him. This instability also provides some justification for Edelsi's decision to disinherit his niece, whose status as the unmarried heiress to a kingdom leaves her open to assault by opportunistic suitors, either from abroad or closer to home.

Haveloc's story is anchored in a time and place associated with the volatility to be expected after Arthur's passing; whether Arthur is truly dead or merely vanished in Gaimar's account is impossible to determine in the absence of his British material, but the confusion left by the removal, by any means, of such a world-conquering figure is there regardless. Despite this specificity, however, the overall impression left by the episode is one of timelessness, and of a certain blurring of ethnic distinctions that belies Gaimar's construction of a Britain far distant in time from the England in which he worked. The names of two of its minor characters are, as I have

² R. William Leckie, Jr., *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 85.

noted, redolent of the Anglo-Saxon world that forms the basis for much of the *Estoire's* subsequent context. Adelbriht's name is a form of the distinctive English royal name, Æthelbert, while that of Alvide, Haveloc's Danish mother, is used later to render Emma of Normandy's English name, Ælfgifu, into acceptable Old French. This curious detail serves to undermine the 'Danishness' of both figures, and evokes a very different cultural context. It also creates a political situation that is unlike any other in the *Estoire*, and one that enables Gaimar effectively to detach the episode from more recent conflicts.

Edelsi is a Briton, but his ethnicity amounts to no more than a requirement of the time and location(s) in which the Haveloc episode takes place; the absence of Britons from much of the narrative that follows shifts the emphasis from Edelsi's personal background to his status as a model for subsequent Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman rulers in a similar position. Similarly, the Danish background of Adelbriht – the exact circumstances of whose ahistorical arrival in Britain are left unexplained – is elided by this implicit identification with Anglo-Saxon kings, an impression heightened by the use of an English-sounding name for Haveloc's own mother. England does not exist in this period, and the line of Cerdic has yet to be established; however, Gaimar guides us in the direction of those rulers with these anachronistic details. Gaimar's depiction of Denmark as a Christian country only serves to underline that Haveloc's story, despite its setting, is not bound by the historical constraints. Haveloc and Argentille seek shelter in 'un muster' ('a church', v. 348) as they flee from Sigar Estalre's men, despite the fact that such an edifice, and indeed the concept of sanctuary, would not have been found in the homeland of the Danes fought by Orron after Buern's betrayal three centuries later; Gaimar notes that one of the dead invaders 'paiens estait, n'out soing de prestre' ('being a heathen, he had no use for a priest', v. 2804). Similarly, Edelsi's 'British' court, with its lavish feasting and hunting parties, its high-quality foodstuffs and its army of staff, is echoed in Gaimar's descriptions of the courts of Edgar and Rufus, and indeed in the details of the court of Henry I, the apparent omission of which from David's life of that monarch prompts Gaimar's rebuke to his fellow historian. The Haveloc episode is at once familiar, with

its connections to Gaimar's Lincolnshire and its anachronistic setting, and remote in time and political relevance. It is the ideal episode for Gaimar to insert the models and themes that will establish his paradigm for the *Estoire* as whole.

In the first chapter of part one, I examined the relevance of the models of kingship on display in the Haveloc episode. Edulf and Edelsi present us with two different faces of treachery; both displace the rightful claimant to their respective thrones and have names that echo one another, although this is the point at which the similarities end. Edulf is a usurper who calls upon Arthur to displace Guntier in his favour, under the pretext that the latter is refusing to pay sufficient tribute to the British ruler. Gaimar does not specify whether this is a decision made solely for personal gain, or from a more honourable desire to avoid further bloodshed as a result of Guntier's intransigence in the matter. He has no dialogue, while his only distinctive characteristics are his disloyalty and his status as a focus for the opposition to his rule represented by Guntier's former retainer and Haveloc's powerful supporter, Sigar Estalre. His straightforward removal from the Danish throne after a successful battle, and the fact that Gaimar does not trouble to specify how or by whom he is killed, indicate his relative lack of importance. Denmark's true heir is Haveloc; this is confirmed by two magical signs – the flame that burns in his mouth as he sleeps, and the horn upon which only a legitimate Danish monarch can blow – along with the recognition conferred upon him by Sigar Estalre, who is nonetheless careful to have the young heir's identity confirmed beyond dispute by organising the horn testing contest. His caution in failing to reveal his covert observation of Haveloc's flame even to his own wife emphasises the extreme danger the unworldly young man is in at this stage, as does Kelloc's astute advice to her 'brother' to keep his own counsel after he has learnt his true identity. The swift dismissal of Edulf as a rival leaves Haveloc in an unassailable position in Denmark: with the full support of his people, he is restored to his rightful position with minimum effort. Gaimar has earlier told us, through Kelloc's explanation of the circumstances of Haveloc's exile, that Guntier and his ancestors were legitimate kings with a long-standing claim in Denmark. Nothing in the events that unfold after

Haveloc's return to his homeland challenges or undermines this assertion in any way, and Arthur's assault on Guntier is presented as an entirely negative and unjustified act on the British ruler's part, with the minor caveat that Edulf had connived at Arthur's involvement.

Edelsi, Argentille's uncle, poses a different problem. The bloodless coup that sees him push aside his niece and appropriate the land left to her by her deceased father is not an attempt to seize power by an opportunistic vassal, but an expansionist move by a king who already has a realm of his own. Edelsi's behaviour is more subtle than Edulf's; his strategy for disposing of his niece safely in marriage to the scullion Cuaran follows a policy of appeasement and friendship with his Danish neighbour, Adelbriht, which should have been cemented by the marriage alliance between the latter and Edelsi's sister. Given Edelsi's previous avoidance of military force, and the apparent lack of any male relatives willing to uphold Argentille's claim on her father's side, his pragmatism would doubtless have led him to appoint any male offspring of that union as his own heir. In the absence of such a nephew, however, he is left with the problem of Argentille, although his attempt to quash this political threat is thwarted by the revelation of Haveloc's true identity. The relative length and difficulty of the battle between Haveloc's forces and Edelsi's indicates the particular challenge presented by the circumstances. Haveloc is British by upbringing, but he is the king of Denmark, and can rule in Britain only by his marriage to Argentille; Edelsi's decision to return her kingdom to them, and the invitation to Haveloc and his bride to take the throne in Edelsi's own lands after that king's death, removes the final impediments to that process, and elides any potential for unrest in the new, unified kingdom. The unique nature of this situation is confirmed immediately by the return to a cycle of conflict and invasion. Haveloc and Argentille leave no heirs, but the Dane's unwitting legacy is a dangerous one; the Britons with whom he has established an accord disappear from the scene, to be replaced by the Anglo-Saxons, and by successive Danish invaders who use his accession to justify their own claims to the English throne. The Haveloc episode, a self-contained narrative with a superficially straightforward resolution to its dual succession crises, in fact leaves the audience with a sense of unease.

Argentille's recommended battle strategy, a grisly trick using the unshriven corpses of fallen men that is, implicitly, unworthy of Christians, is an underhanded method of pressing the enemy to sue for peace. Gaimar's concluding reference to Haveloc's expansion of his territories with the assistance of his kinsmen hints at the desire for conquest that acts as a potential temptation for any powerful monarch. While Cuaran's admirable qualities of good-heartedness, restraint and bravery are described in detail, by the end of Gaimar's account of his reign, he has been transformed into the powerful, decisive Haveloc: a model of kingship and the indisputable heir to Denmark, but with the potential to overstep the bounds in the kingdom that he has acquired by marriage.

There is, however, a more thought-provoking lacuna at the heart of the Haveloc episode: the dream experienced by Argentille on the night that her union with her husband is finally consummated, and that precipitates her sudden interest in his family and their flight to Grimsby. That this is a prophetic vision is not in doubt. Its resemblance to other, similar dreams in literature of this time, from Arthur's to Charlemagne's, is clear, as is the dream landscape's resemblance to that of the Prophecies of Merlin contained in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Gaimar's source for the lost British part of his *Estoire*.³ No explanation is given by Gaimar for the scenes witnessed by Argentille; all we are told is that Cuaran's cheerful dismissal of the imagery as a portent of the lavish feast to be held by Edelsi the next day, from which he will make a handsome profit by selling on the finest leftovers to the squires, is completely inaccurate. The poet does not, however, go on to offer an alternative explanation.

One notable feature of this sequence is the fact that Haveloc – at this point still known as Cuaran, and with his true identity a mystery to himself and his wife – is not the dreamer, but the would-be counsellor. Instead, it is Argentille who witnesses the terrifying scenes in the forest of her imagination, in which both she and her husband are present ('songat k'ele ert od Cuherant/entre la mer e un bosage', '(she) dreamt that she was with Cuaran between the sea and a wood', vv. 196-197). By the end of the

³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, §111-117.

dream, however, the perspective has shifted to include only Cuaran, who climbs a tree out of terror caused by the menacing advance of the outwardly respectful, but deadly, lions (vv. 233-236). Argentille wakes to find her husband in her arms, observes the flame burning in his mouth as he sleeps, and begins to question him about his background and family. This, along with the sole focus on him in the final scenes of the dream sequence, points towards an explanation of the vision as a possible future for the king-in-exile's own life. The parallels between a number of incidents in his story and the dream's imagery highlight this. We have the two Danish princes who offer homage to the victorious Haveloc after having previously been vassals of Edulf's and who could be interpreted as equivalent to the lions, the potential identification of the bear slain by the host of boars with either Edulf or Edelsi, and the obeisance of the foxes with Edelsi's acquiescent nobles. The intrepid boar, meanwhile, could be taken for Haveloc, the slayer of one tyrant and the victor over another who, defeated, opts to abdicate; this impression is heightened by the fact that Haveloc is merely an observer of the struggle until the boar has killed the bear, whereupon the boars disappear and Haveloc receives the foxes' homage.

These parallels, while significant and comprehensible within the parameters of the self-contained episode, allow for more than one level of meaning. One important detail is the fact that Argentille, not her husband, is the dreamer. The emphasis on Haveloc in the episode obscures Argentille's status as heiress to her father's British kingdom; her husband's claim is dependent on his marriage to Adelbriht's daughter. Despite the lengthy passage set in Denmark, the episode hinges on events in Britain. Argentille's dispossession is the first story we are told, while Cuaran's true identity is only revealed later. The longer and more difficult of the two battles is fought on British terrain, while Haveloc's glory in that country – with his half-British, half-Danish queen at his side – receives the greater share of Gaimar's attention. Although Danish invaders will reappear in the *Estoire's* narrative on a regular basis, and, in Cnut's case, will have great success in dominating England, the politics of Denmark itself will not be Gaimar's focus. Haveloc's return to Denmark and his legitimacy in that nation is secondary to his and his wife's acclamation in Britain. This, along

with Gaimar's use of anachronistic names to evoke the Anglo-Saxon England of the future, creates a sense that the dream's imagery should be interpreted with reference to subsequent events in that land.

A number of discordant images within the dream add to this impression. Chief amongst these is the fate of the bear – an animal associated with tyranny, and one that, like the boar who serves as a symbol of his Cornish origins, is also linked to Arthur. The loss of Gaimar's British material has ensured that we will never know whether the missing section of his history retained Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Arthur's prophetic dream of the warring dragon and bear, which would go on to feature in both Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Layamon's *Brut*.⁴ Bell's identification of the bear as representative of Arthur in this sequence, with Haveloc's father Gunter as the boar who fights the tyrant, is only a partial fit given that Gunter, unlike the boar, is the losing party, although such a context could serve as one element of a multi-stranded allusion, and would provide an implicit trigger for Argentille's questioning of Haveloc regarding his real origins.⁵ If such a connotation did occur to Gaimar's audience, it would serve to reinforce their identification of the bear with a tyrannical monarch. Apart from the imperialist Arthur, two such appear in the Haveloc episode: Edelsi and Edulf. There are grounds for considering either, or both, as the objects of such an allusion. If Haveloc is represented by the boar, the slain Edulf would seem a likely point of reference, while the fawning guard of foxes who change sides when the bear is removed from power offer a brief glimpse of Edelsi's fate. Taken together, the combination of such references offers a powerful evocation of the destiny of expansionist kings whose territorial reach exceeds their grasp.

The method of the bear's killing, however, does not fit the fate of either of these kings. He is struck through the heart by a blow from the boar and falls dead with a cry: 'Quant l'urs se sent a mort feru,/un cri geta puis est chaü' (vv. 213-214). While Edulf perishes on the battlefield, Gaimar does not tell us if Haveloc is responsible, and the manner of his death is passed over in silence; this is as we might expect from a king who, in the

⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, §164.

⁵ Bell, *Lai d'Haveloc*, 'Introduction', p. 48.

final analysis, is no true king at all. Edelsi dies a fortnight after his withdrawal from the fray, but of natural causes. This vivid, unexplained detail is anomalous within the context of the Haveloc episode, and instead serves as a metaphor for regicide that will recur in later passages in the *Estoire*.

Another anomaly appears in the account of what comes after the foxes' submission to Cuaran. As the tall trees bow down to him in apparent subservience, the sea rises and an unstoppable tide sweeps through the forest, leaving devastation in its wake. It heralds the appearance of the two lions, whose respectful advance towards the fleeing Cuaran does not prevent them from killing many of the forest's animal inhabitants. The dream ends on this note of panic and confusion, with Cuaran desperately climbing a tree in order to escape them, while the lions purposefully move towards it, bowing as they do so. Other than the possible identification of the lions with the two unnamed princes who switch allegiance to Haveloc after Edulf's defeat – a parallel that is plausible as one strand of meaning, but which, if taken as the sole point of reference, seems too inconsequential in the narrative to warrant its significant position at the end of the dream sequence – there is little here that matches the resolution of the Haveloc episode. No similar disaster befalls either of his new kingdoms, and both sets of subjects survive to celebrate his accession as ruler of Denmark and co-ruler with Argentille in Britain.

It is notable that Argentille's dream comes before Cuaran begins his transformation into the all-conquering Haveloc, who benefits from his supportive Danish connections, his undisputed legitimacy as a ruler, and the martial prowess he has already displayed in his time as a scullion. The disaster that destroys the woodland of which Cuaran has taken possession represents the kind of catastrophe that might be predicted to befall a land governed by a man without experience or a solid claim to rule. Argentille's wise advice to her husband – along with the exiled noblewoman Kelloc's prudent counsel, and the retainer Sigar Estalre's caution born of experience of conflict – sets the young man on the path to establishing his true identity, and to acquiring the additional qualities that safeguard both their prospects. The conclusion of the dream, then, can be read as a vision of a possible

future that Haveloc, fortunate in his associates and in his circumstances, is able to avoid. However, the image of the destructive tide, a symbol not of worldly opposition, but of divine punishment, remains in our minds as we progress through the *Estoire*. Along with the slain bear, and the other key animal figures – the rebellious boar, the politically astute foxes, and the two lions whose gestures suggest submission even as their actions convey the opposite – the dream’s imagery creates an indelible framework of tyranny destroyed by a daring attack, followed by a difficult transition of power that gives rapacious enemies ample opportunity to take advantage of the situation for their own benefit. The Haveloc episode, with its happy couple restored to their rightful places at the head of two prosperous kingdoms, offers an object lesson in how to circumvent such pitfalls. However, the good fortune enjoyed by Haveloc and Argentille proves to be in short supply during subsequent events.

Cuaran’s own guileless interpretation of the dream as he attempts to reassure his frightened wife provides us with another set of images. Gaimar insists that Cuaran’s reading is entirely inaccurate, although the inexperienced servant has done his best to construe the vision (‘solum son sens espeust le songe:—/kank[ë] il dist tut ert mençonge’, vv. 265-266). As a result, the explanations he offers are rooted in his own domestic experience. Edelsi’s planned celebration will offer the scullion the chance to make ample profit from selling the leftover meat, including stag, roebuck and deer, which will win him the favour of the squires with whom he plans to do business. He connects the bear, with sound logic, to one captured and killed in a nearby wood on the previous day. His interpretation of the lions appears rather more fanciful; they are, in his view, representative of the bulls, with the sea a stand-in for the cooking pans in which the lions will be cooked. In Cuaran’s understanding of Argentille’s vision, none of the destructive force of the dream itself is conveyed. The wild animals of the imaginary wood are reduced to meat, ready to be savoured by Edelsi’s court. As for the bear and the boar, they are destined to be brought under control by hunters. The bear is not a ruler, but a predatory danger fit only to be hunted down, while the bulls will not follow in the uncontrollable tide’s wake, but will be boiled in it; the water’s ride and fall is controlled by

Edelsi's cooks. Argentille, conscious of her royal birth and thwarted destiny, sees a broader and more dramatic landscape in her vision. Cuaran, still unaware of his real parentage and glittering future, is confined by the narrow parameters of Edelsi's court, a place in which the self-satisfied king's banquets are the main focus of his entourage's efforts. Gaimar tells us that Cuaran is incorrect in his reading of the dream; as he and his wife will go on to leave before the feast takes place, this is true. However, the characterisation of the royal court as a site in which fortunes are made through patronage, and in which the active beasts of the woodland are reduced to passive objects of consumption by greedy courtiers, is another image to retain for future reference as the *Estoire's* narrative progresses.

Edelsi's own interpretation of Argentille's dream would likely be similar to Cuaran's; on the couple's departure, the king laughingly remarks to his men that they will be back at his court as soon as they get a bit hungry ('s'il unt un poi de faim', v. 325). The king's *gab* masks genuine pleasure at the fact that his political rival, Argentille, will no longer be at court ('sin fu heité', v. 322). Under the guise of a condescending avuncular interest in the luckless pair's prospects, Edelsi is hiding his determination to neutralise the threat his niece poses to his dominance in the region. His preoccupations are as limited as Cuaran's at this stage; he advertises his royal status with the trappings of kingship, but this superficially regal demeanour is undermined by his indulgence in the venal pleasures hinted at by the description of his court: hunting, feasting, and idle, mean-spirited jests. Edelsi rediscovers his earlier diplomatic skills – in evidence with his arrangement of a diplomatic marriage between his sister and Adelbriht at the beginning of the episode – only when it is far too late, when he gains some measure of redemption by acting upon his advisers' recommendations to sue for peace. The fact that Edelsi and his army have been misled by a ruse in which dead men have been made to resemble the living is appropriate for a king whose persona is based upon artifice. The British king could not recognise the true worth of the youth Cuaran; his eventual deception by Haveloc's grim 'army' proves a fitting conclusion to his reign.

Haveloc's ascent to kingship provides a rare moment of unalloyed happiness and success in the *Estoire*. A number of models are introduced at

this stage: the hapless youth whose inheritance is coveted by a scheming individual (there are two of those in this episode in the shape of Haveloc and Argentille, although all later examples will be male), a treacherous upstart who connives at the overthrow of a ruler, a superficial and grasping king given to empty hubris, and good-hearted retainers determined to protect a young heir. The neat resolution of the story of Haveloc and his bride is undermined by the presence of several unexplained and disturbing images in the dream experienced by Argentille. In subsequent episodes, the recurrence of this imagery and of the models described above stands out as significant in Gaimar's account of English history. The Haveloc interpolation – in which Gaimar has the most licence to condemn his villains and laud his heroes, within the context of a distant British past free of the dangers posed by contemporary political issues – offers us a key to understanding all that will follow.

Ælfthryth, Edward and Edgar

Gaimar's account of the reign of Edgar and its aftermath marks a turning point in the *Estoire* with the poet's divergence from his translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. However, Edgar is not the main focus of the interpolation, despite his prominence in the narrative. Instead, he fits into the pattern established with Edelsi of a vain, superficial monarch with expansionist tendencies who introduces discord into his immediate family with his marriage to Ælfthryth. She, along with her unfortunate stepson, Edward, is the real protagonist of this murky episode. By this point in the *Estoire*, as the narrative enters the 960s, the descendants of the Anglo-Saxon king, Cerdic, are well established as legitimate rulers, despite frequent attempts at invasion by Danes claiming rights in the land due to the presence there of their countrymen, Adelbriht and Haveloc, five centuries earlier. Those two kings in fact left no heirs, and the Danish invaders who follow them have inherited none of their admirable qualities; Wasing, the Danish king who is the first figure in the *Estoire* to commit an 'ultrage' ('outrage', v. 902) is so belligerent that he even attacks those of his own countrymen who remain in Norfolk after Haveloc's time. Given that Wasing's brief

career is interpolated by Gaimar, this dismissal of Danish claims after the approbation given to Haveloc is notable. Gaimar's careful translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account of the formation of England constructs a narrative in which the heirs of Cerdic attain legitimacy through the defeat of the Britons and their subsequent conversion to Christianity. Edgar's reign begins in 959, with the land united and ruled by him 'com emperere' ('as if he were the ruler of an empire', v. 3566). His position seems unassailable: with the other kings of the British Isles in his service, his power is, in Gaimar's account, indisputable. However, his sexual promiscuity and self-centredness will bring about the downfall of his line.

Ælfthryth, the only daughter of the powerful noble, Ordgar, is at first sight another Argentille; in fact, Gaimar's lengthy account of her fine qualities is matched elsewhere only by his similar description of Cuaran in his time as a scullion. Like Argentille, she is beautiful and highly educated; however, Gaimar's detailed summary of her virtues significantly omits the term *curteise*. This, bearing in mind Gaimar's adherence to the balanced art of *descriptio*, must be intentional, and offers us an early indication of the trouble to come. The models in this episode appear to follow an established pattern at the outset. Again, a young heiress is kept from her rightful destiny – in Argentille's case, a kingdom of her own; in Ælfthryth's, elevation to the position of queen by marriage to Edgar, who intends her to be his own bride before Æthelwald wins her – by the treacherous actions of an acquisitive and duplicitous man. Æthelwald is a villain of the Edulf type, who deceives Edgar into giving up the woman he has desired from afar by an act of treachery, just as Edulf had done to Arthur, whose power over the British Isles, Gaimar tells us, Edgar is the first English king to attain. There are further disquieting hints at a darker side to Ælfthryth's nature even at this stage, with Gaimar's fleeting reference to the fearful obedience she inspires in her father's household, but for now, she appears to be the victim of Edgar's covetous vassal. The comparison of her great beauty to that of a fairy is, however, a troubling indication of the power she is able to exert, which

Despite his power, Edgar is revealed to be an unimpressive king; the husband of whom Ælfthryth is at first deprived is a selfish and grasping

individual. He is duped by Æthelwald while in a state of inebriation, and is dissuaded from marrying the young woman merely by the lie that she is physically unprepossessing, a statement that is enough to quell temporarily the shallow desire he has conceived for her from listening to tales of her reputation. He is surrounded by sycophantic courtiers and favours lowborn vassals like Æthelwald who offer loyalty when they are receiving favours, only to reveal their true colours when a more desirable proposition comes along. Edgar's fatal decision to pursue Ælfthryth when he learns of his former friend's duplicity is the start of a chain of events that will bring about his eldest son's death and leave England with an heir, Æthelred, who is not capable of withstanding the external threat posed by the Danes who are, once again, poised to take advantage of internal turmoil and invade. Edgar's moral weakness is exposed by his inability to challenge his archbishop, Dunstan, when the latter confronts the couple as they lie in their marriage bed. Gaimar's earlier statement that Edgar knows right from wrong serves to condemn the king for his behaviour at this stage; he is quite capable of discerning that he has committed adultery by marrying his godson's mother. The splendour of Edgar's court and the impressive wedding and coronation ceremonies he organises for his new bride – quite apart from the unseemly haste with which this is all accomplished in the wake of her husband's killing – are tarnished by the covetousness with which he regards the expensive ring Ælfthryth is wearing. Edgar's legitimacy as king and the extent of his lawfully obtained powers are beyond dispute, but his acquisitive tendencies are a fatal flaw in his character. Just as his queen's resemblance to the attractive and unfortunate young people in the Haveloc episode is undermined by hints that her behaviour is not all that it should be, so Edgar's superficially successful rule is subtly criticised by Gaimar. Ælfthryth's bridegroom is no Haveloc, but a tyrant in the mould of Edelsi.

The allusions present in the episode help to contextualise Edgar's love for Ælfthryth, while foreshadowing the difficulties to come. On one level, the king's passion for his vassal's wife resembles that of the British ruler Vortigern for the Saxon princess, Ronwen; the occasion upon which they fall in love, after the king has imbibed freely at a dinner in Ælfthryth's

residence, is similar to the events of the former tale, present in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The description of Edgar's lustful thoughts that evening and his determination to win Ælfthryth for himself is, meanwhile, reminiscent of Uther Pendragon's desire for Arthur's mother, Ygerne. These references are interesting for two reasons. One is the implicitly negative connotations of both these love affairs, given that Ronwen's heathen status makes her an unsuitable match for the Christian Vortigern, while Ygerne is married to the blameless Gorlois when Uther obtains Merlin's potion in order to disguise himself as her husband and visit her marital bed. The other important implication is for the future of Edgar's line. Ronwen poisons her stepson, Vortimer, in order to remove him from the political scene for the benefit of her own kin. Ygerne bears Uther the mighty Arthur, but we have already seen that the Arthur of the *Estoire* is an imperialist whose legacy, without an heir to maintain it, has fragmented into discord by the beginning of the Haveloc episode. Taken together, these allusions offer us a glimpse of the future for Edgar's family. Ælfthryth, it is suggested here, is responsible for the murder of Edward, Edgar's son by a previous marriage, while her own child, Æthelred, who accedes to the throne in his stead, will lose his kingdom to Cnut, who will also go on to marry the English king's widow, Emma of Normandy. The product of Edgar's inappropriate union will suffer the humiliations faced by Arthur after Mordred's deception, while enjoying none of that monarch's prestige. The comparison between Edgar and Vortigern also establishes this period as one of immense political danger; a powerful, unscrupulous king squanders his legacy by marriage to a woman whose personal goals drive her to involvement in a crime that leaves the way clear for foreign invaders to attain dominance in the land.

Such an impression is only increased by the allusions to an earlier episode in the *Estoire*. This is the second of Gaimar's larger interpolations, which tells the story of Buern Bucecarle's betrayal by his lord, Osberht, who rapes his vassal's unnamed wife and boasts of his crime openly amongst the associates who facilitated it while Buern was away defending the coast against marauding Danes. The unnamed lady's misery as she reveals the crime to her husband, and her unwitting welcome to the king as

he arrives at her home with his crime planned in advance, is in stark contrast with Ælfthryth's quick understanding of Edgar's interest in her and his numerous subsequent visits in her husband's absence, under the same pretext of hunting in the area that Osberht had used to justify his presence in the area around the river Ouse, where Buern and his wife reside. Osberht's desire for Buern's wife, which he has conceived even before meeting her after hearing tales of her beauty – just as Edgar had yearned for Ælfthryth from afar after listening to his courtiers' stories – is described by Gaimar as 'son segrei' ('his secret design', v. 2666), a term that is echoed in Edgar's instructions to Æthelwald to facilitate his 'secrei' (v. 3636 and again at v. 3682 in the discussion of the courtiers' knowledge of his love). Despite Æthelwald's initial betrayal and the couple's mutual love, both elements absent from Buern's story, the predatory element of Edgar's attachment to his vassal's bride provides an uncomfortable subtext, as his near loss of control when admiring her figure on their first meeting emphasises. Edgar, like Osberht and Edelsi, is not content with what he has; his fixation on the wrong done him by his former friend compels him to pursue Ælfthryth and follow an unwise course of action, symbolic of a lack of the restraint praised in Haveloc, Gaimar's model of good kingship. Edgar's *engin* in his pursuit of his love is mentioned twice (v. 3823 and v. 3826), a crucial term that will recur later in similar contexts.

With both her husbands dead, the widowed Ælfthryth is no longer a passive player in her own story, as indicated by the dialogue Gaimar gives her as she greets her stepson on his fateful visit to her home. The circumstances of Edward's murder are a distorted version of those under which his father and stepmother met. Edward is drawn to her home by his dwarf, Wulfstanet, a figure found only in the *Estoire* and whose presence is representative, I argue, not of a lacuna in Gaimar's work but of a narrative thread intended to lead us back to the source of opposition to Edward: that is, Ælfthryth herself, who claims to know the missing dwarf's location, and whose treachery reflects the *jongleur's* own insubordination.

Ælfthryth's transformation is complete: she has become a dissembling traitor in the mould of her first husband, Æthelwald. This parallel is created by their shared tactics as they try to achieve their goal of

diverting the two kings' attention away from a desired object: in Edgar's case, a meeting with Ælfthryth, and in that of Edward, reunion with his errant *jongleur*. Both try to distract the royal search with offers of hospitality; Edgar refuses his vassal's desperate suggestion of food, at which point Æthelwald's role in the narrative is downgraded in such a manner as to reflect his superfluity. Edward, however, agrees to receive the welcome cup on condition that his stepmother drinks from it first. He is murdered by an unnamed villain just as Ælfthryth is about to give him the kiss of welcome, a gesture which had earlier marked the point at which his father's love for her took hold. Edward falls with a cry, struck through the heart: the imagery evoked here is that of the slain bear in the dream woodland of Argentille's vision. The bear's death as a symbol of regicide is confirmed, although nuance is added. Edward is no tyrant, and Ælfthryth's crime is motivated by her own desire to gain political power through her son, rather than any nobler aims. The mutability of the figures in the dream vision becomes increasingly apparent, although the young king's insistence that the dwarf Wulfstanet perform for him, and his anger when this does not happen, hints at imperious tendencies.

As Ælfthryth's resemblance to the traitor Æthelwald emerges, so too does another uncomfortable parallel. Edgar's possible involvement in her first husband's death at the hands of unsavoury characters is suggested through Gaimar's statement that some spoke of the king's involvement in the matter; he uses similar language when telling us of Ælfthryth's flight after Edward's murder, which convinced many that she was responsible. This final *utrage* on his stepmother's part has sealed the unfortunate young king's fate. Edward shares Haveloc's youth, inexperience and fine qualities, but his father's foolishness in inviting foreigners into the land, a point upon which Gaimar does not expand, along with his ill-advised marriage, dooms him to an early death. The key figure missing from this episode is the loyal retainer whose decency protects a vulnerable young heir from the threats posed by grasping rival claimants. Ælfthryth's gamble will bring her own son to the throne, but their dynastic success will be short-lived.

At this point in the *Estoire*, Gaimar has established his models. We have been shown the idealised path of one young ruler to the throne from

which he has been displaced, one complemented by the similar fate of his wife, and concluded happily with their rule as king and queen of both Denmark and the British territories belonging to both Argentille and her uncle. In addition to the development of these models in the shape of Haveloc, Argentille, and the two treacherous kings, Edulf and Edelsi, a possible future has been displayed in Argentille's prophetic dream, elements of which are not explained within the Haveloc episode itself. Gaimar's freedom to comment critically upon the behaviour of all involved at this stage in his work is total, due to the considerable historical distance involved and the resulting possibilities for invention and expansion on the poet's part. In the Edgar/Ælfthryth interpolation, his licence for such techniques is constrained by the relatively well documented material with which he is working, although the events described are beyond living memory and therefore open to some reinterpretation. Gaimar criticises Æthelwald freely; he is, however, more circumspect in his handling of the royal misbehaviour he documents. The imagery of the Haveloc episode, along with the strong criticism he is able to make of Osberht's behaviour in the Buern Bucecarle passage, enables Gaimar to offer covert criticism of Ælfthryth's and Edgar's behaviour, and to create a vivid impression of Edgar as an acquisitive and ultimately unsuccessful ruler, whose son is killed as a direct result of his weakness and the treacherous Ælfthryth's scheming. The recurrence of a number of key images and terms here evokes the Haveloc episode, while introducing new details – a schemer's *engin*, a traitor's *ultrage* – that will serve as a link to the material that follows. This will serve Gaimar well as he deals with more politically sensitive topics in the later interpolated passages.

Cnut, Eadric, Godwine and Hastings

Gaimar tells us that Edgar is the first English king to match Arthur in the extent of his power; it is apt that the situation in England after the death of Æthelred II, his son by Ælfthryth, is similarly fraught with political turmoil and division. Æthelred's replacement by Cnut, who appropriates both his kingdom and his widow, Emma, is challenged by Edmund Ironside,

the late king's son. The attempt at reconciliation and a fair division of the kingdom suggested by Cnut when the two meet to resolve the conflict in single combat does not last long; Edmund is murdered by the traitor Eadric Streona, leaving Cnut to rule alone. Under pressure from Emma, who is keen to preserve her own sons' inheritance, Cnut sends Edmund Ironside's own infant heirs into exile in Denmark, from where they are eventually forced to flee to Hungary with the assistance of their kindly guardian, Walgar.

The scenario within which these events take place is familiar in a number of ways. In my analysis of the Haveloc episode, the issue of anachronistic details – such as Anglo-Saxon names for several principal 'Danish' characters – emerged as a distinctive feature of this section of Gaimar's narrative. One of the most notable of these is that of Haveloc's mother, the exiled queen Alvive (Ælfgifu). Emma of Normandy is introduced to us by Gaimar as 'Elvive Emeline', a double form that reflects both her adopted English name and her Norman birth name. This parallel immediately evokes Haveloc's story, and directs the minds of Gaimar's audience back to the first of the *Estoire's* interpolations. The anomalies in that early episode now take on new meaning. Emma's name is a direct connection between Gaimar's account of the early eleventh century and his version of Haveloc's life, but it is far from the only echo of the latter to be found in the material that covers Cnut's reign. The models found in the Haveloc episode recur here, but are distorted by the prism of political sensitivity; Gaimar is venturing onto dangerous ground as he approaches his own time. Imagery developed during his account of Edgar's reign and its aftermath proves to be useful here in allowing covert criticisms through allusions to the events of that earlier, slightly less controversial period.

Once again, Gaimar presents us with a situation in which two kings – one a Dane recently arrived in the country, one a member of the established royal line (English in this case, British in that of Edelsi) – become co-rulers, having sworn to maintain the peace and to rule with the same level of amity as two brothers; Cnut in fact proposes that they swear an oath to achieve this, making them 'freres en lai' (v. 4339), and bound by the same obligations as if they were related by blood. With their conflict

resolved, this returns us to the scenario outlined at the beginning of Argentille's story, with Adelbriht and Edelsi ruling adjoining kingdoms as brothers and friends. Cnut's reference to Edmund Ironside's family, the English ruling house descended from Cerdic, and their inferior claim – in his view – as a result of the latter's having received his fief from Mordred, is undermined, as I have shown in chapter three, by Gaimar's earlier rejection of the Danish claim from the mysterious Danr. The allusion to Mordred, however, serves another narrative purpose, in evoking the Arthurian world that served as a backdrop to Haveloc's dispossession and exile. Cnut's own status as something of a Mordred figure, with his kingdom and queen both formerly Æthelred's, adds a note of irony, while increasing the sense of foreboding around these events.

The peace between these two kings is brought to an abrupt end by the death of one of them, as that in ancient Britain is by Adelbriht's passing; on this occasion, however, murder is the cause. Gaimar, along with Latin chroniclers writing at this time, is offered an opportunity for expansion here by the mystery surrounding Edmund Ironside's sudden death at an early age, and he makes the most of it. Eadric Streona is a thoroughly unpleasant character whose personal irrelevance to twelfth-century politics renders him a prime target for creative rewriting. Gaimar's account of Edmund's murder contains a number of images encountered before. The king is killed in an intimate domestic setting in which he should have been safe, having been offered a false show of hospitality similar to that presented to Edward shortly before his death at the hands of an associate of Ælfthryth's. Eadric's deadly machine, the *arc-ki-ne-falt*, is a remarkable contraption – in fact, an *engin* (v. 4409) – that enables the king's murder to be carried out in total secrecy, and to go undetected until his disloyal vassal unwisely reveals his crime to Cnut. The exact manner of Edmund's death, in which an arrow penetrates his body so deeply that it pierces his heart, causing him to let out 'un cri mortel' as he dies (v. 4327) is another echo of the dying bear in the dream forest witnessed by Argentille. As in the case of Edward, there is no real indication of tyranny in Edmund's behaviour, other than his belligerent reluctance to concede to Cnut. However, the unerring bow is as anonymous as the unidentified evildoer responsible for slaying Edward. The brave boar

responsible for striking down the rampaging bear is not represented by Ælfthryth or Eadric; both are content to let another do the wicked deed for them. These are not courageous rebels, but scheming traitors, whose crimes are committed against undeserving rulers. The parallel here is reinforced by an earlier and otherwise unmotivated reference to the saintly Edward's continuing activities in the south of England, which is his nephew Edmund's allotted portion of the kingdom after the peace with Cnut has been established (vv. 4383-4384).

Cnut is not involved in the wicked deed, and punishes the satanic Eadric appropriately when his would-be vassal brags of his crime to him, but the king's actions afterwards are a betrayal of his pledge to his 'brother', Edmund. Cnut has disposed of the most obviously treacherous figure in this section of the narrative, but his own behaviour reveals him to be the worst of all possibilities: a hybrid of Edulf and Edelsi. His vulnerability to the malicious counsel of his queen, Emma, does not speak well for his character. Emma's shared name with Haveloc's mother, the noble Alvive who perished as she attempted to flee Denmark with her child and their retinue, only serves to emphasise that she is Alvive's mirror image: a queen with an understandable desire to protect her own sons' interests, but who allows that impulse to drive her to suggest a bloody fate for Edmund Ironside's infant boys, who are sent into exile in Denmark from England just as Edulf's machinations led to Haveloc's journey in the opposite direction. Given that Cnut was their father's 'frere en lei', and hence a surrogate uncle to the fatherless princes, his behaviour here is even worse than Edelsi's in dispossessing his niece. The soundness of Kelloc's advice to her 'brother', Haveloc, to stay silent on the subject of his real identity is confirmed here by the immense danger in which the children are placed due to their status. Gaimar's efforts to explain such a predicament at this early stage enable the audience to interpret the situation here by identifying the numerous parallels in evidence.

The boys' survival is entirely due to the caring protection of Walgar, a kind Danish nobleman assigned by Cnut to act as guardian to the children, and whose decency causes him to misread the dark intent behind the royal command. This character is another hybrid, identifiable as a steadfast

retainer with a similar nature to Sigar Estalre and Kelloc's father, who, like Walgar, is able to save the young heir from disaster by a similar good reputation to that which secures a warm reception for Walgar and his charges at the Hungarian court after their escape from Denmark. The language used to describe their high standing is very similar; we are told that 'Walgar esteit lur conuissant' ('Walgar was known to them', v. 4583), and that, in Kelloc's words, 'Mis pere estait lur conussant' ('My father was known to them', v. 433). The princes thrive in Hungary, and Gaimar writes in glowing terms of their descendants. Singled out for special praise is 'la preciose gemme', Margaret Atheling, who will become a saint, and, as queen of Scotland, the mother of Edith-Matilda, consort of Henry I. This is the last we hear of Cerdic's direct line in the *Estoire*. Like Haveloc, they find themselves shipwrecked, although in Scotland rather than the England that is their birthright, and Edith-Matilda's return to that land as queen – a story with which no-one in Gaimar's audience would have been unfamiliar – remains unmentioned.

With his rival dead and Edmund's heirs sequestered abroad, the unopposed Cnut seems set to become a tyrant. His invasion of Norway, which loses its legitimate king after its ruler, Olaf, is killed by his own countrymen as he fights to regain his throne, is portrayed by Gaimar in a negative light. However, Cnut's Arthurian path to imperialism and self-destruction is cut short, not by death, but by the unexpected reappearance of another image from Argentille's dream. The king's arrogant attempt to command the tide to stop rising as he dismounts from his horse by the Thames is a failure. This reminds Cnut of God's omnipotence and his own relative weakness, and prompts a journey to Rome as a symbol of the Dane's new-found humility. Cnut is wise enough to escape God's punishment by changing his ways; the unstoppable tide's final appearance in the *Estoire* will be misinterpreted by the last of its kings, with fatal consequences.

Godwine's appearance in the *Estoire* brings Gaimar to a particularly sensitive period in English history, and it is at this point that the approach he has taken in earlier episodes comes into its own. Like Ælfthryth before him, Godwine has grand ambitions for his family; his heirs represent the Danish

claim to England, which Gaimar has already dismissed. Gaimar is careful not to criticise Godwine directly, but his deployment of familiar structures and terms to describe the nobleman's behaviour is telling. 'Ore entendez k'il volt feire', ('Now just listen what his plan was', v. 4798), Gaimar tells us, using a construction with which he has earlier introduced the misdeeds of Edelsi and Æthelwald. However, he does not on this occasion condemn Godwine directly, confining himself to the remark that 'ço compara il puis, espeir' ('he will pay for it, I daresay', v. 4800). After the horrific murder of the earnest young Alfred, son of Æthelred and Emma, on Godwine's orders, all that is necessary to condemn the schemer is the vow made by Alfred's supporters that Godwine, if intercepted, will die a worse death than Eadric Streona's (vv. 4847-4848).

This does not happen; Godwine is spared after a trial in which various legal arguments are put forward on both sides. Again, Gaimar refrains from direct criticism, but Godwine's lavish pledge to the king is – despite its acceptance by the monarch – rendered worthless by Gaimar's handling of an earlier episode. Æthelwald's pledge of loyalty to Edgar has earlier been dismissed by Gaimar on the grounds that a man who has committed an act of treachery cannot be trusted, regardless of what he might undertake to do (vv. 3719-3720). As Godwine's guilt is beyond dispute in Gaimar's account, this is damning indeed, and made more so by the additional detail – presented without comment – that the treasure was obtained from the king of Sweden after Godwine had killed him, too (vv. 4897-4898). Edward the Confessor calls Godwine 'fel e lere' ('a common criminal and a lawbreaker', v. 4904), but Gaimar adds nothing to this assessment. Earl Siward's suggestion that Godwine should face trial by ordeal is interesting in view of the power conferred upon the legitimate claimant to the Danish throne by the magic ring granted to Haveloc; the fact that the guilty Godwine would presumably fail such a test serves to further undermine the claim presented by his heirs. Fortunately for him, the nobles' decision to accept Godwine's innocence in the absence of more evidence to the contrary is not challenged by the king, with his famous respect for the law, and Godwine's house becomes extremely powerful.

Gaimar's statement that Godwine will pay for his crimes is confirmed by the events of Hastings. The earl himself died in 1053, but the deaths of all his sons – Harold, Gurth and Leofwine at the battle itself, and the invading Tostig at the earlier battle of Stamford Bridge, slain by Harold – ends his line's influence in England. With Godwine's evil confirmed in Gaimar's account, and bearing in mind the earlier use of *ultrage* to describe Ælfthryth's misdeeds against her stepson Edward, the statement at v. 5342 that 'Engleis cumprent lur ultrages' ('The English paid dearly for their outrageous behaviour') is a reference to Godwine's crimes and his family's undeserved ascent. Gaimar's handling of Godwine, whose crimes are committed in order to advance his family's aims, in fact aligns that character with Ælfthryth as much as with Eadric; unlike her, however, his plans prove unsuccessful in the long term.

Harold's death at Hastings is recounted with a lack of detail that recalls Edulf's in battle with Haveloc: a fitting end for a king whose claim is weak, and whose admittedly brief reign is barely discussed by Gaimar. Although his actions at the end show some promise, his father's *ultrages* have sealed his fate. William, duke of Normandy may share Haveloc's Danish antecedents, but his character, as conveyed through the subsequent Hereward interpolation, compares most unfavourably with that exemplary ruler. He is only mentioned for the first time at the very end of the account of Hastings, rendering him the equal of the earlier nameless Danish invaders whose regular attacks on England punctuated the section of Gaimar's work derived from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Tostig's resemblance to the dethroned Northumbrian king Osberht, whose rape of Buern Bucecarle's wife drives the latter to summon the Danes to England in order to punish him, has already directed the audience's minds back to that period of intense conflict in the ninth century. William's use of extreme violence to suppress dissent as he attempts to pacify his new land adds to this sense of him as a brutal interloper; the lack of any discussion of his contested claim to the English throne in Gaimar's account increases the sense of his arrival as a continuation of a pattern that, by this stage in the *Estoire*, has come to appear impossible to break. After the gradual ascent of the line of Cerdic to a level of Arthurian power and influence under Edgar, internecine conflict

and the malice of traitors seeking to promote their own dynastic interests has once again plunged England into turmoil and bloodshed.

Hereward and Rufus

The Buern Bucecarle interpolation, along with its related but distinct sequel, the reign of the ill-fated Ælle, can be discerned in a number of images present in the remaining material within the *Estoire* as Gaimar brings his history to its conclusion in 1100, on William Rufus's death. However, there is no one-to-one correspondence between its events and those that take place at this late stage in the work. Instead, those early episodes are broken up into their constituent parts, with fleeting references to them appearing at different points in the accounts of Hastings, Hereward and Rufus. Tostig's exile from York mirrors that of his predecessor Osberht; William of Normandy, meanwhile, whose arrival in England was the end point of the grim trajectory begun by Tostig's response to his removal from power, soon shows himself to be a similar ruler by his dispossession of the surrendering English nobles. One such is Hereward, whose life as an exile is the one incident in William I's reign upon which Gaimar sees fit to elaborate in detail.

Of all the figures in the *Estoire*, Hereward most closely fits the image of the daring boar who breaks ranks to slay the bear-king in Argentille's dream. His retaliation against those who oppose him is notable for its violence, and the pillaging carried out by him and his followers does not go unnoticed by Gaimar, but his actions against the tyrannical monarch are fully justified by the latter's breach of his promises to the English nobility. The fact that Hereward will be slain by William's soldiers in a dishonourable surprise attack, despite his attempts to make peace with the king, only serves to confirm Gaimar's earlier statement that the word of a man who has already betrayed another can never again be trusted.

The manner of Hereward's fall is interesting for its incorporation of another lacuna, which Gaimar is able to fill with an allusion to an earlier passage. The wealthy lady who offers her love and her estates to Hereward,

having become enamoured of him from a distance, is named Ælfthryth. This reversal of Edgar's inappropriate passion for the queen who shares this noblewoman's name and status as an unmarried heiress carries negative associations: that it should bring about Hereward's downfall is not a surprise. Gaimar's use of a character with the same name as another in the *Estoire*, but whose actions are the opposite of that earlier figure's, reflects his reference to Haveloc's mother, Alvive, and 'Alvive Emeline' (Emma). In that instance, the audience was reminded of the dangers surrounding youthful heirs to a disputed throne; here, the promise of love from afar again leads to violence.

In the final battle of Hereward's life, imagery from previous episodes in the *Estoire* combines to provide a vivid composite picture of doomed courage and defeat. The English hero is likened by Gaimar to two of the animals present in Argentille's vision: the lion and the boar. He is both the terrifying predator capable of slaughter and destruction, and the valiant warrior against the tyranny represented by William's knights. When one of the soldiers is struck through the heart and killed by one of Hereward's javelins, the familiar image of regicide is evoked; this unnamed man is standing in for the absent William, whose authority he represents. However, the description of his death features very similar language to that employed by Gaimar when Orron, Ælle's brave but luckless nephew, strikes down an invading pagan Dane. We are told that the dying heathen has no use for a priest, while William's soldier, though Christian, dies unshriven. The comparison is stark. William's forces, whether French or English, are no better than the Danes who overran England after Ælle's defeat; they are in service to a tyrant. Hereward and his allies have the potential to overthrow such tyranny, but misfortune intervenes. The English will, as Gaimar has already informed us, continue to pay for Godwine's interference in the English royal line.

With William I dead, the focus shifts to his son: William Rufus, the final king in Gaimar's history. The *Estoire's* superficially positive account of Rufus's career is undermined by all that has gone before. Gaimar's methods in the episodes that precede this reign have left him with a stock of images and phrases that enable him to skirt the political difficulties inherent

in discussing a very recent period in English history, still within living memory. As with Gaimar's account of Edgar, the methods used by the king to pacify his country are passed over quickly; the focus here is on the campaign in Maine and its aftermath, the success of which appears to reinforce Rufus's already strong self-belief and convert it into a fatal hubris that will bring about his death in the New Forest. Gaimar's opening reminder that Rufus is the son of William I, whose first name he shares, echoes his introduction of Harold as 'fiz Godewine' (v. 5225). The son's reign carries with it the potential for repetition of the father's misdeeds. Rufus is a legitimate king in England, according to Gaimar; unlike his father, he has been accepted by both the Normans and the English, and has been able to establish good governance in the land to an extent his father was unable to equal. However, like Edelsi, Edgar and Cnut before him, he is unsatisfied with these laudable achievements.

Brockenhurst, the site of Rufus's hunting lodge in the forest in which he will meet his end, is the site both of his final dinner with Tirel on the night before his death and of his encounter with the messenger who brings news of the uprising in Maine. Gaimar's references to this location create a sense of circularity; Rufus's killing in this place is the result of a chain of events for which his actions against Helias in Le Mans are the catalyst. The image of the king at his dinner, disturbed by the news of unrest from an unexpected quarter, is familiar. Once again, a scene from the Buern Bucecarle episode recurs. Ælle, the 'chivaler' who replaces Osberht, is disturbed while enjoying the fruits of his hunting trip by a blind man who tells him of the catastrophe that has occurred in York with the invasion of the Danes after Buern's summons. Gaimar makes no direct reference to Ælle's status as an interloper, elevated from the ranks of the common people after Osberht's removal, but a number of factors in his account of that king's brief reign raise questions of that nature. The references made elsewhere in the *Estoire* to the ingratitude of those raised by kings and nobles to positions of power – Æthelwald, and the unnamed traitor who accuses Robert of Mowbray of murdering Malcolm III – along with Ælle's unthinking self-sacrifice on learning of his nephew Orron's death, and his focus on hunting over matters of governance, suggests that Gaimar views

Ælle as an inappropriate substitute for Osberht. The implicit comparison between such a figure and Rufus increases the sense that the latter is lacking in the restraint and temperament appropriate to a truly successful king.

The voyage across the Channel is significant for a number of reasons. As in the reign of Cnut, the force of the tide threatens to impede the king's progress. Its destructive force has already been displayed in front of a terrified Cuaran during Argentille's dream. Cnut, himself guilty of numerous acts of tyranny, learned the correct lesson from his ill-advised bid to challenge the waves at Westminster. Rufus, however, risks a sea crossing and is successful. His overwhelming confidence in his own safety, guaranteed by nothing more than his royal status, is justified on this occasion, but his good fortune will not endure. The language used by Rufus himself in the direct speech Gaimar gives him is notable. He addresses the ship's captain as 'frere', a term earlier used by Edgar to his associate Æthelwald, and insists that his position as king will protect him from the sea. This calls to mind the magic ring inherited by Haveloc as heir to Denmark, which offers similar safeguards against fire, water and violence. Rufus, however, has imperial aspirations, and, like Edgar, will brook no obstacle to his ambitions. With his sights set on overseas conquest, he is laying himself open to attack; unlike Haveloc, whose acquisition of such territories through marriage is lawful, Rufus is determined to expand his empire by force. Unlike the Latin writers, Gaimar minimises the fierceness of the stormy conditions faced by Rufus and his sailors; it is the power of the sea itself in inclement weather, and its attendant risk of drowning, that the king is determined to challenge, an adaptational choice on Gaimar's part that focuses our attention upon the earlier appearances of such imagery.

Rufus's treatment of Helias, the rebellious young count, is also not quite as it at first appears. Like Edelsi after Argentille's battlefield trick has frightened his men, Helias is advised to submit to the king and accept him as his liege lord; Gaimar tells us that, had he failed to do so, he would certainly have been imprisoned and put to death. This is a prudent decision on the young man's part, but the events of the Haveloc episode are reversed here. An older, more powerful king has intimidated a younger man, whose claim to the disputed territory is hereditary, into withdrawal. Despite Rufus's

jocular behaviour with the courageous youth, whose castles he returns, the message is clear; the king enjoys a joke, but it is inadvisable to pursue a quarrel with him too far.

Both Edelsi and Edgar kept splendid courts; Rufus is their equal in this, but there is a suggestion of profligacy behind the finery and feasting enjoyed by him and his entourage. The comparison drawn between Hugh of Chester and the Emperor of Lombardy is double-edged, as the prospect of a king whose vassals outstrip him in wealth is hardly conducive to political stability for a monarch as acquisitive as Rufus. As this remark follows Gaimar's expression of confusion as to the need for Rufus's huge army of mercenaries in peacetime given the king's apparent personal safety, the ominous hint of trouble on the horizon is notable. Given the earlier praise of Cuaran's great generosity to those around him, the fact that Gaimar makes reference to Hugh's munificence rather than Rufus's implies that the king falls short in this area.

The following passage, present only in MS R, offers a condemnation of usury and greed that jars slightly against the tone of the rest of the *Estoire*, to such an extent that its authorship has been questioned. Regardless of the identity of its writer, this passage exposes a deeper theme – either clarified here by Gaimar, or highlighted by a later reader and copyist – in the history as a whole: the destruction brought about by figures such as Judas, Herod, Nero and Cain, all of whose behaviour fits one or more of the kings whose reigns form the basis for Gaimar's expanded material. The fact that this attack on immoderate wealth and cupidity appears in the Rufus material highlights that king's adherence to the inadequate models of kingship found in rulers such as Edelsi, Edgar and Cnut.

Given the mystery surrounding his own death, it is appropriate that Rufus's final act as king in the *Estoire* should be to investigate the killing of Malcolm III of Scotland, a crime for which first the apparently innocent William of Eu and finally Robert of Mowbray, earl of Northumberland, are punished. The overt comparison made by Gaimar to William I's 1075 execution of earl Waltheof, a controversial act, serves to provide another negative link between Rufus and his father. Another detail appears here that

is, by this point, well established as a criticism of characters given to devious behaviour. Rufus schemes to intercept the fleeing earl as he escapes his besieged castle of Bamburgh by boat; Gaimar informs us that ‘tant engeina k[ë] il le prist’ (‘He set a trap and succeeded in capturing him (Mowbray), v. 6173). Once again, we see the concept of *engin* used as a reference to a clever scheme. While this credits Rufus with intelligence, it does not reflect well upon his sense of honour, and nor does Robert of Mowbray’s twenty-year confinement without trial upon his capture.

Rufus’s death in the New Forest is the final indictment of his failings as a king. Tirel, despite the description of his malice towards Rufus and his falseness as he flatters the arrogant king with the same empty courtesies extended by Eadric to Edmund Ironside, is a complicated figure. Gaimar uses the same phrasing to express his possible guilt as he did with both Edgar and Ælfthryth in his accounts of the respective crimes with which they were associated, before making Tirel’s guilt explicit by speaking directly of the Picard’s shooting of the king. The parallel with Eadric is made more unclear by the king’s own use of jests to conceal his true intent: to invade Poitiers without any justification other than his own desire to expand his territories. Rufus is announcing his intention to wage an unjust war, in the Augustinian sense; as such, he is not acting as a Christian king. We have already seen in his treatment of Helias of Maine that he is capable of making serious threats in jest, and that he is not a man to be crossed. Walter Tirel may be an ungrateful upstart, favoured because of his foreign birth – another detail in the pattern of resemblances between Rufus and Edgar, whose preference for such individuals, Gaimar tells us, helped create the unstable political climate that led to his own son Edward’s murder – but he is also quite correct to believe the worst of the English king. *Engin* is met with *engin* in this case; Tirel’s ‘clever banter’ as he tries to draw the king out ‘par engin’ (v. 6272) is met with a truth framed as a *gab*, of the kind used by Edelsi to conceal his satisfaction as his niece and her husband leave his court to seek their fortune. Tirel’s response is one of mock horror masking a justifiable fear of Rufus’s future actions. The other murdered kings in the *Estoire* were killed for personal gain; Tirel, by contrast, commits regicide against a monarch who has shown him great favour out of

an awareness of the king's destructive potential. John of Salisbury would go on to advocate such an action against a tyrant in his *Policraticus*; Rufus fits the model of a king whose actions disturb the unity of the state and its constituent parts.⁶

It is no surprise, then, to find ourselves for the final time in the dream woodland of Argentille's vision, as Rufus's last hunting party sets out. The king is struck through the heart and killed by Tirel's arrow, crying out four times for the host, which is provided in the form of a handful of grass and flowers as a makeshift secular communion, a topos familiar from epic literature. This gesture, which appears at first to elevate Rufus to a hero worthy of epic, in fact undermines him. He does not die on the battlefield, but perishes, ostensibly mistaken for a stag, during the course of a hunt undertaken purely for pleasure. The associations of hunting in the *Estoire* – a distraction for the ill-fated Ælle, a ruse to cover Edgar's underhanded visits to his vassal's wife, a favourite pastime for the glib and devious Edelsi – serve to diminish Rufus, especially by comparison with his elder brother Robert's crusading glory. Rufus is both the bear of Argentille's dream, and – ironically – the 'bear running wild in a wood and killed' of Cuaran's interpretation, reduced to the status of the slaughtered animals listed as meat for the feast. Gaimar's suggestion that Rufus will benefit from having taken communion the previous Sunday does not inspire hope as to the king's prospects of salvation. Like the heathen felled by Orron and the soldier killed by Hereward, Rufus has died without the ministrations of a priest. His hubris and grasping desire to expand his territories without regard for justice have brought him low.

The bear is dead, and the foxes surrounding him have completed their obsequies. This is the point in the scenario at which we might expect to see Cuaran, or his equivalent, ready for his elevation to the status of king. Gaimar's repeated allusions to the violence and civil unrest following Osberht's deposition and Ælle's defeat by the Danes have led us to anticipate a period of similar conflict. However, the *Estoire* ends here, with these issues seemingly unresolved.

⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Henry I

In the longer epilogue present in MS R, Gaimar expresses a wish to extend his work to encompass the reign of Rufus's younger brother, the late king Henry I, 'li reis meillur/ki unkes fust ne jamés seit' ('the best king that ever was', vv. 6504-6505) and 'crestien fust ben[ë]it' ('that Christian of blessed memory', v. 6506). He criticises Henry's biographer, David, whose life of the king – apparently commissioned by the latter's widow, Adeliza of Louvain – omitted entertaining details of the monarch's lavish court. Such splendour evokes the richness of courts held by kings such as Edelsi, Edgar and William Rufus: yet Gaimar's acclaim for Henry's piety and his status as the best of England's rulers ranks the king with Edward the Confessor, who Gaimar has earlier described as 'le meildre rei e le meillur/ke Engleis eüssent a seignur' ('the best king and the best overlord that the English ever had', vv. 5139-5140).

Two threads of Gaimar's narrative remain unaddressed at the *Estoire's* close. One is the succession following Rufus's death. The other is the fate of the line of Cerdic, represented at this stage by Edgar Atheling and his siblings, who, on their final appearance, are resident in Scotland. They are not mentioned in Gaimar's account of Malcolm III's murder, despite the Scottish king's marriage to Margaret Atheling. Gaimar also says nothing of the union between Henry I and Edith-Matilda of Scotland, daughter of 'la preciose gemme', Margaret. All these facts would, however, have been well known to his audience. The marriage between the Conqueror's youngest son and the Scottish princess, daughter of a saint and female descendant of Cerdic, restored that bloodline to the English throne in the long term. Their son, William Atheling, perished on the White Ship in 1120, and their daughter, Empress Matilda, was displaced by Stephen. However, her own son would rule as Henry II from 1154.

I suggest that Gaimar's construction of kingship was, in fact, intended to elevate Henry I and diminish his elder brother – and, indeed, their father – by comparison. Le Saux has noted the resemblance between

the young Henry and Cuaran/Haveloc in the later *Roman de Rou* by Wace.⁷ Like Haveloc, Henry, who had inherited only money from William I, was forced to make the best of his relatively lowly status before he could ascend to his rightful place; in the view of his supporters, the very fact of his birth in 1068, during his father's reign, rendered him the most suitable of all William I's sons to accede to the English throne by virtue of his having been 'born in the purple'. His fractious relationship with Rufus, a king modelled on Edelsi in Gaimar's history, mirrors Cuaran's contradictory status at court as both an admired object of royal favour for his beauty and bearing, and a figure of mockery and distaste. His marriage to the displaced heiress Argentille – herself an object of charity, as Edith-Matilda's mother had been at the Scottish court prior to her union with Malcolm – is an ideal match, despite Edelsi's scheming. It provides Argentille with the powerful male support she needs in order to assert her rights, and cements the alliance between the Danes and Britons that Edelsi's alliance with Adelbriht was originally intended to achieve.

One element of the depiction of Edgar's union with Ælfthryth stands out as a possible reflection of Henry I's own domestic marital situation. It is worth noting that Dunstan's objections to Edgar's match, which Gaimar implies are solely the result of the king's having been chosen as godfather to Ælfthryth's son, were in fact also founded on Edgar's separation from his second wife/queen, Wulfthryth. Though Gaimar states that the queen 'fut transie' (v. 3597), Wulfthryth was, in reality, still very much alive at the time of Edgar's remarriage, albeit resident in a convent.⁸ This casts Dunstan's assertion that the couple are lying 'en avultrie' (v. 3957) in a rather different light. Gaimar must have been aware of this, which begs the question of why he should have chosen to depict the situation differently. His intention may have been to simplify matters, placing all the drama in the narrative squarely on the tale of Edgar and his controversial third wife. There is, however, another possibility. Gaimar's Dunstan bears a resemblance to a figure who goes unmentioned by Gaimar in his later account of Rufus's reign, but who would have been very familiar to the

⁷ Françoise Le Saux, "La geste des trois fils Guillaume?", p. 195.

⁸ See Yorke, 'Women', for further discussion of Edgar's complicated domestic affairs.

poet's contemporaries: Anselm, another archbishop of Canterbury. Just as Dunstan was driven into exile by Edgar's elder brother, Eadwig, so Anselm was compelled to flee the country by Rufus after one too many spats between the men. Anselm was recalled by Henry I, but was highly critical of the new king's marriage to Edith-Matilda of Scotland, the half-Saxon princess who had sought refuge in the convent at Wilton until her elevation as queen. Anselm took issue with the match on the grounds that Edith-Matilda had been considered by many to have been professed as a nun; she strenuously denied this and was judged free to marry, eventually forging a supportive relationship with the archbishop. Dunstan was said to have imposed a seven-year penance on Edgar for his inappropriate marriage to Ælfthryth, while Anselm was often highly critical of what he perceived as poor moral standards at the courts of both Rufus and Henry. Rufus's decision – made while prone on what he believed to be his deathbed during a bout of sickness – to make Anselm the chief primate in the land proved to be a choice he would live to regret.⁹

In the late 1120s and early 1130s, some residual doubts as to the validity of Henry and Edith-Matilda's marriage were raised again, notably by Hermann of Tournai. Eadmer, Anselm's biographer, was so concerned that he felt the need to defend Anselm's decision, after convening a council to rule on the princess's status, to permit the marriage. However, Hermann's allegations that Anselm had confided in him that he feared he had been mistaken, and that 'England will not long rejoice in the children she will bear', must have resonated with many after William Ætheling's untimely death at sea and the Empress's failure to establish her position.¹⁰ Instead of reiterating William's criticisms of Edgar's behaviour with nuns, Gaimar focuses all his dramatic retelling on the king's third marriage. This serves to evoke Henry's first union, while, as with the issue of exactly where and how Æthelwald was killed, neatly sidestepping too exact parallels. If the desired Ælfthryth represents, in Gaimar's telling, the land Edgar was so keen to acquire, then Henry I's marriage to Edith-Matilda, whom rumour identified

⁹ Anselm's relationship with Rufus was always fraught; see Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 373.

¹⁰ Lois Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. 30.

as Rufus's bride of choice, had he lived longer, should have symbolised Henry's triumph.¹¹ Gaimar's apparent desire to depict Henry I in as positive a light as possible could account for his omission of any such troubling comparisons.

The *Estoire* concludes with a convergence of numerous allusions to earlier episodes in the history, upon which Gaimar is able to draw without recourse to overt political statements on sensitive recent topics. Its final image, evoked by the manner of Rufus's death and the absence of a priest, refers back to two grim scenes full of foreboding, both of which herald the dominance of invaders: Danes in Orron's battle, and William's forces in Hereward's. The possibility for disaster, and for the vacuum left by a powerful ruler to be filled by chaos and a lack of leadership, is evident. The sequel to Buern's rebellion ends in disaster, but a brighter future is on the horizon. The kings of Wessex mount the resistance to the Danes, and the hope of the English will rest upon the younger brother of Æthelred I. This brother, 'ki bien saveit conseil doner/e bataille bien ordeiner' ('who gave extremely good advice, who knew how to draw up battle lines', vv. 2847-2848) and who, Gaimar tells us, is 'a learned cleric and skilled in the art of astronomy' ('clerc ert, bon astronomien', v. 2850), is none other than Alfred. Gaimar will go on to recount his great deeds, in an account closely derived from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, before adding his own summary of the king's virtues on his death. He makes another approving comment on the subject of Alfred's erudition, stating that 'nul mielre clerc de lui n'estait' ('there was no better scholar than he', v. 3447). Alfred commissioned, says Gaimar, the *Chronicle* itself, the great work of English history 'u li bon clerc vont sovent lire' ('which good scholars frequently consult', v. 3454). No critical subtext mars Alfred's reign in the *Estoire*; the patron of the 'good scholar' Gaimar's main source is a king whose place in history is assured. Gaimar is able to wish for God and the Virgin to have mercy on the king's soul without any qualifications (vv. 3455-3456), in

¹¹ See Karen Pratt, 'The Image of the Queen in Old French Literature', in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College, London, April 1995*, ed. by Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), pp. 235-59, p. 255 for further discussion of a possible link between woman and land derived from Celtic mythology.

stark contrast with his remarks on Ælfthryth and Rufus, and the justification given for Cnut's need to expiate his sins in Rome. The parallel with the mature Henry, who earned the soubriquet Beauclerc for his own learning and provided solid governance, is a positive one.

The most prominent rulers in the *Estoire* are spiritual successors to Edelsi and Edulf, presenting us with various unedifying combinations of treachery, violence and greed. The great Haveloc, Gaimar's model king, proves his worth by the peace and stability that enables the later years of his reign to be passed over quickly. The heir to this inheritance of military might allied with virtue and great learning is Alfred, ready to take the English throne at a point when disaster looms as a result of the Danish invasion. Henry I – friend to Helias of Maine, and husband to the daughter of the murdered Malcolm III whose death is inadequately investigated by Rufus – is a king in such a mould. By the narrative sleight of hand that enables Gaimar to cast the Dane Haveloc as an English hero by his use of anachronistic details in that episode, the immediate ancestors of Henry I's queen are also cast as spiritual descendants of that model ruler. Margaret Atheling's father, like the young Haveloc, is sent into exile as the result of a usurper's machinations, and only narrowly survives thanks to the devoted care of a loyal retainer.

The numerous links between these two interpolations create a strong sense of this family as the true heirs to England; despite Gaimar's understandable reticence in making such a case, the parallels drawn between their story and the Haveloc episode, along with his high praise for Margaret Atheling, make his views plain. Henry I's dual identity in this reading – both a young hero in the mould of Haveloc, and a wise, learned ruler in the tradition of Alfred and Edward the Confessor – circumvents the difficulties surrounding his ancestry and his father's own dubious claim. In view of Gaimar's repeated references to the dim prospects for salvation awaiting certain kings, including his uncertainty on the subject of Rufus, it is notable that he highlights Henry's piety in his short description. Haveloc and Argentille leave no heirs of their own; the Danes who follow Haveloc to England and attempt to capitalise on their shared heritage, from the earliest marauders to Cnut, have little in common with him. William of Normandy,

whose claim to the English throne Gaimar does not discuss, is one of their number. Henry and his pious, well-educated first queen, whose parents' deaths within weeks of each other had left her suddenly orphaned, like Argentille, and at William Rufus's mercy during her confinement at the abbey of Wilton, are of a different order.

Gaimar's well-connected patrons, able to organise the loaning of books from eminent figures such as Robert of Gloucester, the Empress's half-brother and chief supporter, would certainly have appreciated the significance of Gaimar's approving references to the surviving heirs of Cerdic. The relevance of this message to the Empress and those who defended her claim was obvious. The *Estoire* provides no comfort for any partisan of her cousin Stephen, the son of William I's daughter, Adela of Blois. Gaimar's explicit condemnation of Edelsi's mistreatment of his niece, Argentille, despite the king's pledge of friendship to her father Adelbriht and to his queen, Edelsi's own sister, makes his views on the subject of such disinheritance clear, especially in view of Stephen's oath to Henry I to support the Empress's claim. It remains impossible to ascertain why the *beta* redaction of the *Estoire*, plausibly dated to the 1150s, was made, or by whom it was commissioned. However, the accession of Henry II in 1154 – a state of affairs secured the previous year, when Stephen ended hostilities between them by making his rival's son his own heir – would have created an atmosphere most conducive to a new edition of Gaimar's history.¹²

The shorter epilogue found in MSS D and L – both derived from the *beta* redaction – could reflect such a change in the political circumstances. Henry I and his queen are mentioned only briefly, while the circumstances of the work's composition are set aside in favour of more general comments on the *Estoire*'s veracity and the nature of English history. Gaimar's stated aim to compete with David in producing a biography of Henry I has been abandoned; at this remove, his apparent rival's 'livre grant' ('long volume', v. A5) is sufficient to tell the story of that monarch. Rather than dwell upon

¹² Henry II displayed an interest in the Anglo-Saxon royal past, especially the cult of Edward the Confessor; any political concerns around such veneration of a pre-Conquest king had apparently waned by the mid-twelfth century. See Judith A. Green, 'Henry II and the Origins of the Court Culture of the Plantagenets', in Martin Aurell and Noël-Yves Tonnerre, eds, *Plantagenêts et Capétiens: confrontations et héritages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 485-95, p. 490.

the circumstances of the *Estoire*'s creation and the recent political past, the truncated epilogue focuses on the work's value as an authentic history worthy of close attention and presenting a tale of war and peace that is incontrovertible. ('Issi cuvint: ne pot al estre' – 'This is how it has to be; it cannot possible be otherwise.', v. 21). The appeal of the Haveloc episode in particular, with its daring, youthful hero returning to wrest his wife's British kingdom from a king who reconciles with him and dies not long afterwards, could only have increased during that decade. Like his grandfather, that other Henry, the young king represented the union of the English royal line with that of the Norman invader. The potential of the Haveloc story, with its flexible models of kingship and its promise of renewal for a land weary of conflict, would endure.

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