

THE POLITICS OF ROYAL BURIAL IN LATE ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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August 2009

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Cornell University 2009

This dissertation investigates how kings' corpses, funerals, and tombs contributed to the process of royal succession in tenth and eleventh-century England. There are few explicit descriptions of dead monarchs in our extant sources, so the posthumous fates of Anglo-Saxon rulers must be pieced together from casual textual references, monastic records, and archaeological remains. This evidence indicates that the bodies and memories of English kings were systematically evoked by living royalty: at a time when regular hereditary succession was rare, new and aspiring rulers advanced their political ambitions by forging connections with dead predecessors. My study shows that kings' bodies were regarded as repositories of dynastic memory and used as political propaganda during periods of interregnum.

The opening chapters examine how prestigious burial were used to enhance the legitimacy of reigning monarchs and proclaim dynastic continuity. First, I demonstrate that royal mausolea were increasingly modeled on saints' shrines, identifying kings with Christian elites and distinguishing them in death from ordinary laymen. The following chapter investigates how kings' corpses became integral to the transfer of royal power: where earlier Anglo-Saxon kings were crowned at the palace at Kingston, tenth and eleventh-century rulers were acclaimed and anointed beside their predecessor's tomb. In these examples, royal corpses and tombs functioned as symbols of royal authority, advertising the unique status of the monarchy and the legitimacy of new rulers.

The later chapters investigate the inversion of prestigious royal burial practices

in instances of conquest and usurpation. I begin by examining kings who desecrated or concealed their rivals' bodies, and I contend that the infliction of recognizable criminal punishments helped suppress the royal claims of competing dynasties. Next, I focus on foreign conquerors who diverted attention from the bodies and tombs of deposed native rulers in order to deemphasize the change in regime. These deviations from normative burial indicate that royal memory and dynastic legitimacy were linked to the treatment of rulers' remains, and I conclude that modes of honorable and dishonorable burial were systematically used to construct signifying narratives about royal continuity, legitimacy, and authority.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicole Jeanette Marafioti received her Ph.D. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University in 2009. She received an M.A. from Cornell in 2006, an M.A. from the University of York in 2002, and a B.A. from Yale University in 2000.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation could not have been begun or completed without the help of so many mentors, colleagues, and friends. My advisory committee provided invaluable feedback and encouragement at every stage of this project and deserve especially warm thanks: Paul R. Hyams, Oren Falk, Thomas D. Hill, and Samantha Zacher. I am privileged to have benefitted from the vast collective wisdom of Cornell's Medieval Studies faculty, and I would like particularly to recognize Andrew Galloway, Carin Ruff, Masha Raskolnikov, and Carol Kaske. I am indebted to Christopher Bailey, whose insight and advice were indispensable, and to Cynthia Turner Camp and Ionuț Epurescu-Pascovici, whose careful critiques were vital as I refined my arguments. Numerous other colleagues read and commented on early drafts of my dissertation, and special thanks are due to Misty Urban, Leigh Harrison, Tricia Har, Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Curtis Jirsa, Jennifer Watkins, Bob Fredona, Colleen Slater, Jay Paul Gates, and Dan O'Gorman. I am also grateful for the advice I have received from the participants in many conferences and colloquia, notably the Haskins Society Conference, the Conference of the Southeastern Medieval Association, the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, the Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies, and Cornell's European History Colloquium and Medieval Studies Colloquium. In addition, I am grateful to everyone who offered me their support, encouragement, and hospitality over the past six years. Dianne Ferriss has made it a joy to be part of Cornell's Medieval Studies program; and I am indebted to Sarah and James Disley, Nathan Camp, Justin Harlan-Haughey, Jessica Metzler, Elise Marafioti, and Michael Paul Simons for their unwavering friendship and generosity. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Bob and Marcia Marafioti, to whom my work is dedicated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Alfred 5, VIII Æthelred 1.1, etc.	Liebermann, F. (ed.). <i>Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen</i> , vol.1 [lawcodes cited by king and Liebermann's code and chapter numbers].
ASC	Various editors. <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> [cited by manuscript and annal year].
Assmann	Assmann, Bruno (ed.). <i>Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben</i> [cited by homily, page, and line number].
Bede, <i>HE</i>	Bede. <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> . Ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors [cited by book and chapter number].
Bosworth-Toller	Toller, T. Northcote (ed.). <i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth</i> [cited by page number].
Byrhtferth, <i>Vita Oswaldi</i>	Lapidge, Michael (ed. and trans.). <i>Byrhtferth of Ramsey</i> [cited by page number].
CH I	Ælfric of Eynsham. <i>Catholic Homilies, the First Series</i> . Ed. Peter Clemoes [cited by homily number and line].
CH II	Ælfric of Eynsham. <i>Catholic Homilies, the Second Series</i> . Ed. Malcolm Godden [cited by homily number and line].
<i>Chronicle of Æthelweard</i>	Campbell, A. (ed.). <i>The Chronicle of Æthelweard</i> [cited by page number].
<i>De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi</i>	Arnold, Thomas (ed.). <i>Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey</i> , volume I [cited by page number].
EETS	Early English Text Society

<i>Encomium</i>	Campbell, Alistair (ed. and trans.). <i>Encomium Emmae Reginae</i> [cited by page number].
JW	John of Worcester. <i>The Chronicle of John of Worcester, volume II: The Annals from 450 to 1066</i> . Ed. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk [cited by page number].
LS I and II	Ælfric of Eynsham. <i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints</i> . Ed. Walter W. Skeat [cited by volume, homily, and line number].
Mason 239, 248, etc.	Mason, Emma. <i>Westminster Abbey Charters</i> [cited by Mason's charter number].
MS	Manuscript
Orderic Vitalis, <i>HE</i>	Orderic Vitalis. <i>The Ecclesiastical History</i> . Ed. Marjorie Chibnall [cited by volume and page number].
PL	Migne, Jacques-Paul (ed.). <i>Patrologia Latina</i> [cited by volume and column number].
S 307, 1443, etc.	Sawyer, P.H. <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography</i> [cited by Sawyer's charter number].
Vercelli 4, 10, etc.	Scragg, D.G. (ed.). <i>The Vercelli Homilies</i> [cited by homily and line number].
<i>Vita Ædwardi</i>	Barlow, Frank (ed. and trans.). <i>The Life of King Edward Who Rests at Westminster</i> [cited by page number].
Whitelock, <i>EHD I</i>	Whitelock, Dorothy (ed.). <i>English Historical Documents, volume I: c.500-1042</i> , 2 nd edition [cited by page number].

William of Malmesbury, *GP*

William of Malmesbury. *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum*, vol. I. Ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thompson [cited by book, chapter, and section number].

William of Malmesbury, *GR*

William of Malmesbury. *Gesta Regum Anglorum. The History of the English Kings*, vol. I. Ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors et. al. [cited by book and chapter number].

William of Poitiers, *GG*

William of Poitiers. *The Gesta Guillelmi*. Ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall [cited by page number].

PREFACE

The texts cited in this work have been transcribed from printed editions. All Old English translations are my own, except where noted. Latin translations have been adapted from printed editions, when these exist; otherwise, translations are my own.

Chapter 1. Introduction: The Politics of Royal Burial in Late Anglo-Saxon England

On 5 January 1066, Edward the Confessor died in his palace at Westminster. Within a few years, the king's anonymous biographer produced the following account of his burial:

The funeral rites were arranged at the royal cost and with royal honor, as was proper, and amid the boundless sorrow of all men. They bore his blessed remains from his palace home into the house of God, and offered up prayers and sighs and psalms all that day and the following night. Meanwhile, when the day of the funeral ceremony dawned, they blessed the office of the interment they were to conduct with the singing of masses and the relief of the poor. And so, before the altar of St. Peter the Apostle, the body, washed by his country's tears, is buried in the sight of God.¹

The author's foremost purpose in this passage was to illustrate the country's grief at the loss of its beloved king, but he incidentally provided one of the few existing descriptions of an Anglo-Saxon royal funeral. We learn from this passage that Edward's body was publicly carried into its burial church, where mourners kept vigil until it was buried before the high altar the next day. We are told that the funeral office was accompanied by masses and the distribution of alms, all conducted with the honor—and expense—worthy of a king. We may also assume that a considerable number of mourners were present, including prominent laypeople who accompanied the body from the palace and clergymen who prayed and kept vigil over the royal remains. While this excerpt provides an exceptionally detailed account of the burial of an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon king, however, there were still aspects of the funeral

¹ “Parantur ergo illa funebria regio, ut decebat, sumptu et honore, et cum omnium infinito merore. Deferunt eius felices exequias a domo palatii in aulam dei, precesque et gemitus cum psalmodiis celebrant tota illa die cum nocte succedenti. Orta interim die funeste celebritatis, decantatione missarum et recreatione pauperum officium beatificant perficiendi funeris, sicque coram altare beati Petri apostoli conditur corpus patrię lacrimis lotum ante conspectum dei”; *Vita Ædwardi*, 80-81. The *Vita* was written in two stages, in 1066 and 1067, by a monk of St. Bertin—possibly Goscelin or Folcard, according to Frank Barlow. On the purpose, dating, and authorship of the work, see *Vita Ædwardi*, xiv-xxx and xlv-lix; and below, Chapter 2.

that the author did not address. Who exactly was present? How was the body displayed and interred? What sort of memorialization did the king receive afterwards? Although the Confessor's biographer showed considerable interest in the liturgical and processional aspects of Edward's funeral, he found few of its mundane elements worth relating.

This silence is emblematic of most depictions of Anglo-Saxon royal death. Unlike Continental chroniclers, who regularly provided detailed accounts of rulers' funerals, tombs, and bodies, Insular authors shied away from explicit descriptions of their dead kings. Most pre-Conquest English texts offered few details about funerals or tombs or the preservation of royal memory, simply noting where a monarch died and where he was buried. Yet despite their cursory treatment in contemporary writings, kings' funerals and tombs were not modest or obscure. As royalty, kings received privileged burial inside churches alongside abbots, bishops, and saints; as influential and wealthy Christians, they were given memorial masses and included in monastic *libri vitae*; and as prominent political figures, they were provided tombs that advertised their exceptional earthly status.² Although the details of individual royal funerals in tenth and eleventh-century England must be pieced together from casual textual references, monastic records, and archaeological remains, this evidence indicates that kings' bodies and tombs were important political objects which were systematically evoked during periods of crisis and interregnum. At a time when hereditary succession was not guaranteed and few accessions went unchallenged, control of the royal corpse and its legacy offered potential successors a considerable strategic advantage. Rival political factions vied to dictate and deploy the memory of the last regime, with aspiring rulers offering competing identities for the dead monarch

² Elaborate tombs for royalty are attested but were not universal; see Brown, "Burying and Unburying," 242; Wright, "Royal Tomb Program," 229; and below, Chapter 2. For church burial as a royal prerogative, see Deliyannis, "Church Burial in Anglo-Saxon England." For *liber vitae* and other examples of royal commemoration, see Keynes, "*Liber Vitae*," 151-53; Gerchow, "Prayers for Cnut."

and strengthening their own status by defining themselves in relation to the previous king. Some royal candidates portrayed their predecessor as a legitimizing ancestor, forging a close relationship with his remains by appearing prominently at his funeral and staging public rituals, like acclamations and consecrations, in close proximity to his tomb. Those who had problematic relationships with the most recent ruler—illegitimate sons, or individuals who had contested the king’s authority during his lifetime—displayed respect for the established royal dynasty by providing an honorable tomb but distanced themselves from the remains, burying the body outside of major political centers and holding their accession ceremonies far away from the grave. Conquerors and usurpers, by contrast, validated the displacement of existing regimes by depicting their predecessors as rightly deposed tyrants; allegations of unlawful rule might be accompanied by the dishonorable or secret interment of the royal body, with the dead king’s shameful burial confirming that he had been unfit to rule.

These patterns of interaction were consistent through the tenth and eleventh centuries, indicating that royal remains—whether they were glorified, minimized, desecrated, or obliterated—could not simply be ignored. A ruler’s corpse was a volatile symbolic object which needed to be carefully defined and controlled during moments of political crisis: just as a king’s reign would be framed and interpreted by contemporary chroniclers, his body would be ascribed a particular identity in the days following his death and burial. Yet most written accounts were recorded in hindsight, after a new ruler had assumed power, and consequently give the deceptive impression that their assessments of recent kings were objective and universal.³ In the immediate aftermath of a monarch’s death, by contrast, a number of competing identities for the dead king might emerge, offering various interpretations of his reign. A distant

³ The seminal reevaluation of such interpretations is Keynes, “Declining Reputation.”

kinsman, for instance, might portray the dead king as a legitimizing ancestor; a member of a rival dynasty might label him a tyrant; a widowed queen promoting her son's accession might remember him as a doting father; while a close relative might designate him a saint. Despite the cohesive retrospectives of contemporary narrative sources, the scattered evidence for kings' funerals and succession debates indicates that aspiring rulers fought to manipulate the royal legacy to their own advantage, using their interpretation of the body to buttress their claims to the throne. The royal corpse offered contenders a concrete connection with the previous regime—a connection which could provide an ideological justification for their accession and authority.

This study examines the ways in which the bodies, tombs, and memories of dead monarchs were used to advance the political interests of the living. Focusing on the period between the death of Alfred the Great in 899 and the accession of William the Conqueror in 1066, the following chapters reconstruct what happened after a king's death and assess the political significance of the display, disposal, and memorialization of royal bodies. By investigating the ceremonial activity that accompanied royal death—or in some cases, its conspicuous absence—I hope to illuminate aspects of Anglo-Saxon political and mortuary ritual that are not immediately evident in our extant sources and which have received little attention from modern scholars.

My starting point for this analysis is the corpus of contemporary and near-contemporary writings that cited royal deaths and burials. The various recensions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provide the fullest and often earliest textual records of when kings died and where they were buried.⁴ While the Chronicle's typically pithy

⁴ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (hereafter abbreviated as ASC) was initiated under King Alfred in the 890s; the six extant manuscripts, designated by letters A through F, were produced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and reflect distinct recensions of the text. MS A (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 173), known as the Parker Manuscript, covered the years from 60 BC through 1070 AD; it was begun in the first quarter of the eleventh century, possibly at Winchester, and was brought to Christ Church, Canterbury by the late eleventh century. MS B (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius

annals offer valuable logistical information about royal death, more extensive accounts sometimes appear in contemporary prose—royal panegyrics, hagiography, and the occasional narrative passage in a charter or *liber vitae*.⁵ Twelfth-century chronicles complement these pre-Conquest sources, and I have relied particularly on authors like William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester, who, despite their temporal distance from the events they described, drew upon earlier writings that have not survived independently.⁶

A.vi) was produced in the last quarter of the tenth century and ended at 977 AD; it may have originated in Abingdon and was brought to Christ Church, Canterbury by 1100. MS C (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.i) was begun in the early 1040s and continued through the first part of 1066 AD; it has long been identified as a product of Abingdon Abbey, but its most recent editor makes a case for a Canterbury provenance. MS D (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.iv) extended to 1080 and may have been produced at Worcester in the 1050s. MS E (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 636), the Peterborough Chronicle, is the only version of the ASC that continued through the twelfth century; the MS was copied from an earlier exemplar *c.*1121 and concluded with the year 1154. MS F (London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A.viii) is an abridged, bilingual version of the ASC written in Old English and Latin at Christ Church, Canterbury; it was probably written in the first decade of the twelfth century. The complex relationships between these texts are laid out in the introductions of the volumes in the Collaborative Edition, under the general editorship of David Dumville and Simon Keynes: see Bately, *MS A*, xiii-cxxvi; Taylor, *MS B*, xi-lxii; O'Brien O'Keefe, *MS C*, xv-xcii; Cubbin, *MS D*, ix-lxxxiii; Irvine, *MS E*, xiii-ci; Baker, *MS F*, ix-lxxx; Conner, *Abingdon Chronicle*, xi-lxxxiii. I have used the above-cited editions of the texts throughout this study, but I have also consulted Plummer's edition and commentary in *Two Saxon Chronicles*; Dorothy Whitelock's translation in *EHD I*; and Michael Swanton's translation in *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. I have also referred to Tony Jebson's online edition of the Old English text.

⁵ Royal panegyrics include the *Vita Ædwardi*, composed in the 1060s, and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, composed in the 1040s. Contemporary hagiographical works include Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita Oswaldi* and Abbo of Fleury's *Life of St. Edmund*, each composed in the late tenth century. The dates, authors, and composition of these texts will be discussed in later chapters.

⁶ William of Malmesbury, who flourished in the second quarter of the twelfth century, was a monk of Glastonbury and the author of various historical works, including the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (completed 1126), *De Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* (completed in the late 1120s), and *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, which are all cited below. William's sources included Bede, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser's *Life of Alfred*, the *Vita Ædwardi*, the *vitae* of tenth-century monastic reformers, Anglo-Norman hagiography, and Continental chroniclers including William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers. He also incorporated charters (some forged) into his works and gathered information during his extensive travels in England. On William and his sources, see for example Thompson and Winterbottom, *Gesta Regum II*, xvii-xlvi; Thompson and Winterbottom, *Gesta Pontificum II*, xix-liii; Southern, "European Tradition of Historical Writing," 253-256; Farmer, "William of Malmesbury's Life and Works"; Gransden, *English Historical Writing*, 166-85.

The Chronicle of John of Worcester was composed in the first half of the twelfth century, treating the history of England from 450 to 1140. The Chronicle was commissioned before 1095 and written *c.*1124, and it seems to have drawn on the work of the monk Florence, who was formerly credited with the text's composition. John's main sources for the tenth and eleventh century were the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Asser's *Life of Alfred*, and various saints' lives; these were supplemented by texts which no longer survive but which appear to have been used independently by other twelfth-century chroniclers (including William of Malmesbury). For the sources, date, manuscripts, and

In addition to the textual accounts of royal death and burial, I have drawn upon material evidence from late Anglo-Saxon England and archaeological analyses of early medieval burial practices. Although the tombs and physical remains of most pre-Conquest kings can no longer be identified with certainty, excavations of other English graves of the tenth and eleventh centuries offer a template for burial practices in this period.⁷ For instance, scholars such as Dawn Hadley and Victoria Thompson have examined a broader range of burial practices in the later Anglo-Saxon period, assessing the wide variety of acceptable funeral rites that are evident in the archaeological record and outlining the components of honorable Christian burial in this period; while Martin Biddle's excavation of Winchester's Old Minster uncovered the probable remnants of the dynastic mausoleum of the West Saxon kings, providing an idea of what prestigious burial looked like in a preeminent royal center.⁸ Andrew Reynolds' work on execution cemeteries, by contrast, has identified signifying components of deviant burial—such as physical desecration and interment in unconsecrated ground—which firmly distinguished condemned bodies from the remains of ordinary Christians.⁹ These models of normative and deviant burial practices help contextualize the royal burials I investigate in this project: the extravagance of kings' funerals is measured against the more modest graves of most Christian laypeople, while the occasional desecration of royal remains is comparable

reliability of John's Chronicle, see JW xvii-xx; Darlington and McGurk, "'Chronicon' of 'Florence,'" 185-96, especially 192-94; Gransden, *English Historical Writing*, 143-48; Brett, "John of Worcester and his Contemporaries."

⁷ The notable exception is Edward the Confessor, whose tomb has been prominent at Westminster since his body was elevated in the mid-twelfth century; see below, Chapter 2.

⁸ See Thompson, *Dying and Death*, especially 102-31; Hadley, "Burial Practices in Northern England"; Hadley, "Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw"; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead." Martin Biddle's excavations of Old Minster revealed an intramural "memorial court" with above-ground stone tombs, which contained the bodies of prestigious individuals—royalty or high-ranking ecclesiastics—before the remains were moved to the new Norman cathedral in the early 1090s. See Biddle, "Fifth Interim Report," 270-72; "Sixth Interim Report," 275; "Seventh Interim Report," 320-21.

⁹ See Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology" and unpublished PhD thesis, *Anglo-Saxon Law in the Landscape*. See also recent excavation reports for execution cemeteries: Hayman and Reynolds, "42-54 London Road, Staines"; Buckberry and Hadley, "Walkington Wold, Yorkshire."

to the humiliating punishments inflicted on the bodies of condemned offenders.

As well as establishing a cultural context for royal funerals and tombs, interpretations of the archaeological record have provided a broader framework for my analysis. Recent scholarship on early medieval burial practices has shown that the living created new identities for the dead through mortuary ritual, with funerals and graves offering survivors a precisely constructed memory of the deceased. Scholars such as Guy Halsall, Martin Carver, Heinrich Härke, and Howard Williams have construed early medieval graves as “texts,” through which the deceased are inscribed with posthumous identities that can be “read” by living observers.¹⁰ Prestigious graves represent the most conspicuous examples: Halsall, in his analysis of Merovingian royal burials, and Carver, in his work on the Sutton Hoo mounds, offer complementary models in which monumental tombs projected political authority and religious legitimacy at times of crisis.¹¹ This sort of interpretation is not restricted to elite burials, however. Even modest assemblages of grave goods might proclaim particular identities for the dead in pagan and conversion-era burials, as Härke has shown, and the wide range of burial practices within superficially uniform churchyard cemeteries of tenth and eleventh-century England likewise conveyed deliberate information about the deceased.¹²

Furthermore, as Howard Williams has noted, mortuary practices were part of a larger strategy of “selective remembering and active forgetting” in the early Middle Ages.¹³ Williams regards ceremonial funerals and the composition of individual

¹⁰ See for instance Carver, “Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality”; Halsall, “Burial, Ritual, and Merovingian Society”; Williams, *Death and Memory*; Härke, “Cemeteries as Places of Power.”

¹¹ See Halsall, “Burial, Ritual, and Merovingian Society,” “Social Change around A.D. 600,” “Childeric’s Grave”; and Carver, “Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality,” *Sutton Hoo, A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground*. See also Effros, “Monuments and Memory”; Williams, “Prehistoric and Roman Monuments.”

¹² See Härke, “Warrior Graves.” For the variety of burial practices in Christian cemeteries, see Thompson, *Dying and Death*, especially 102-31; Hadley and Buckberry, “Caring for the Dead”; Hadley, “Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw, c.650-1100.”

¹³ Quotation from *Death and Memory*, 2.

graves as mnemonic devices that instilled a final identity for the deceased in the minds of observers—a model which, I suggest, pertains to the funerals and tombs of later Anglo-Saxon kings as well as to the graves of pre-Christian individuals. Like the remains of Edward the Confessor, the bodies of most tenth and eleventh-century English kings were carried in funeral processions and displayed in state before being entombed in monumental churches and monasteries, last rites which offered ritualized displays of royal authority and wealth while confirming the prestige of the king's dynasty and the dignity of the English monarchy. The funeral constructed a final image of the dead monarch that would be instilled in the memory of his subjects and survivors, and I contend that rival factions' attempts to create and deploy royal memory were analogous to the process of ascribing particular identities to other categories of dead through mortuary ritual. In the immediate aftermath of a king's death, his legacy was anchored to the treatment and reception of his mortal remains.¹⁴

Although royal funerals and graves drew on technologies of remembrance attested in the archaeology of conversion-era interments and the Christian cemeteries that would emerge towards the end of the first millennium, the tombs of late Anglo-Saxon kings bore little resemblance to these burials. In England, the remains of earlier pagan rulers were typically installed amid monumental earthworks, while most Christians were buried in extramural churchyards from the tenth century onwards.¹⁵ By contrast, intramural church burial was a royal prerogative in England from the earliest days of Christianity, a practice which associated kings with the saints and ecclesiastics who were entombed inside churches and distinguished them in death

¹⁴ As Victoria Thompson notes, "late Anglo-Saxon burial techniques centre on the body as the basis of identity"; *Dying and Death*, 118.

¹⁵ For prestigious pre-Christian burial in the landscape, see Effros, "Monuments and Memory"; Williams, "Cemeteries as Central Places"; Williams, "Prehistoric and Roman Monuments"; and above, n.11. Also, compare Young, "Sacred Topography." For the emergence of consecrated churchyards in tenth-century England, see Gittos, "Anglo-Saxon Rites"; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 126-27. Compare also Zadora-Rio, "Making of Churchyards," 12-13; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, 178-81.

from ordinary laymen whose graves were exposed to the elements.¹⁶ Given the posthumous proximity of royal bodies and the remains of the spiritual elite, it is natural that these two groups came to share an aesthetic. As royal graves proliferated in churches and monasteries, kings' funerals and tombs appropriated the visual vocabulary of saints' cults. I argue that royal tombs, like saints' shrines, became prominent features of churches; they were coveted by ecclesiastical communities, became objects of popular reverence, and attracted the patronage of living royalty.¹⁷ This is not to suggest that all tenth and eleventh-century kings aspired to sanctity or were regularly identified as saints. Rather, saints' shrines and ecclesiastical burial provided archetypes for prestigious burial at a moment when an ideology of Christian kingship permeated English political thought. The tenth century saw a rise in royal anointing, the proliferation of spiritual regulations in royal law, royal endorsement of the monastic reform movement, and the revival of cults of seventh and eighth-century royal saints. It is in this context that kings adopted the funerary trappings of the most revered category of Christian dead.

The association between royal burials and saints' shrines went beyond superficial similarities, however. Patrick Geary has remarked that "relics were actually the saints themselves, continuing to live among men"; their bodies remained the locus of their miraculous and intercessory power.¹⁸ I propose that an analogous phenomenon is evident in the earthly after-lives of later Anglo-Saxon rulers, for like saintly relics, kings' corpses were invested with meaning and continued to exert influence among the living. Reverential activity provides one point of comparison between royal and saintly bodies. Like saints' shrines, royal tombs attracted pilgrims and became

¹⁶ See Deliyannis, "Church Burial"; James, "Merovingian Cemetery Studies." Compare with the situation in early medieval Francia, for instance, where graves of non-royal secular elites crowded churches despite ecclesiastical prohibitions; see Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 201-12; Sapin, "Architecture and Funerary Space," 40.

¹⁷ See below, Chapter 2.

¹⁸ See Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 124.

destinations for seekers of sanctuary, and churches that housed a king's grave often benefited financially from this attention. In addition, the public re-burial of royal corpses capitalized on the impact of spectacular display: just as saintly translations highlighted the authority of the presiding bishop and exhibited the spiritual resources of the Church, the ceremonial relocation of kings' bodies emphasized the unique status of Christian rulers and the exceptional prestige of the monarchy.¹⁹

Yet it is the political functions of Anglo-Saxon saints' cults which are most useful in framing the current project, for in addition to advancing the spiritual interests of the faithful, relics were frequently manipulated for mundane purposes. Scholars like Alan Thacker, David Rollason, and Susan Ridyard have illuminated how relics were used to promote regional and national identity, how ecclesiastical communities benefited from their relationships with patron saints, and how royal saints in particular were used to enhance the monarchy's claims to divinely sanctioned authority on earth.²⁰ Others, like Christine Fell and Catherine Cubitt, have examined the cults of royal saints who suffered violent deaths, noting how allegations of martyrdom might be used as a political weapon against a saint's living enemies.²¹ In all of these scenarios, the saints' spiritual authority was paramount: their connection with the divine made their memories and relics political commodities; when effectively manipulated by the living, they could be understood to reflect God's approval or displeasure. The removal of relics from a conquered territory, for instance, could signal a shift in divine favor; the ceremonial elevation of a royal saint might remind detractors that God had endorsed a reigning king; and ostensible responsibility for a

¹⁹ For the role of translations in the early Middle Ages, see especially Thacker, "Making of a Local Saint."

²⁰ See especially Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries and Family Cults," "*Peculiaris Patronus Noster*," "Chester and Gloucester," "*Membra Disjecta*," "Saint-making and Relic Collecting," and "Making of a Local Saint"; Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*, "Relic-cults," and "Cults of Murdered Royal Saints"; and Ridyard, *Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*.

²¹ See Fell, "Edward King and Martyr"; Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity." See also Rollason, "Cults of Murdered Royal Saints."

martyrdom might cast a powerful magnate as the enemy of Christ.²²

As I demonstrate below, there are significant correlations between the political uses of saints' cults and the posthumous treatment of kings' bodies and legacies. Just as religious supplicants sought spiritual benefits by interacting with saintly relics, political figures advanced their secular ambitions by forging relationships with royal corpses.²³ Based on trends in royal burial practice during the tenth and eleventh centuries, I contend that kings' remains were regarded as embodiments of royal legitimacy and authority, much as relics were seen as manifestations of spiritual power and divine endorsement. The manipulation of royal remains did not simply imitate the activity associated with saints' cults, however. Rather, the honorable treatment of royal and saintly bodies engaged a common discourse: once a corpse was invested with spiritual or political meaning, it would be treated in a particular, recognizable way. High-status lay corpses in pre-Christian and conversion-era England were disposed of with distinctive and politically significant sets of ritual practices—grave-side feasting, interment with rich grave goods, cremation or mound burial.²⁴ By the tenth and eleventh centuries, when demonstrative Christian behavior was a component of royal authority and an indicator of social prestige, kings adopted the sensory and ritual aspects of saintly and ecclesiastical burial, identifying themselves in death with the Christian elite.²⁵

Nevertheless, however greatly the treatment of royal bodies might have resembled the superficial aspects of saintly relic cults, a ruler's death had predominantly secular rather than spiritual consequences. Interregna could last months

²² Examples of this sort of activity are provided in the sources listed above, nn.20-21, and are discussed in the chapters that follow.

²³ On cultivating relationships with saints, see Brown, *Cult of the Saints*. And see below, Chapter 2.

²⁴ See Williams, *Death and Memory*; Williams, "Cemeteries as Central Places"; Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, 2-7.

²⁵ On the shift between pagan and Christian modes of burial, see especially Boddington, "Final Phase Reviewed."

or even years, as rival candidates competed for the throne.²⁶ Royal funerals provided an opportunity to ease the transition between regimes, offering a public forum for ritualized negotiation and consensus.²⁷ By staging ceremonial activity by the body or tomb of their predecessor, new and aspiring kings forged a symbolic link with their dynastic past, and whether their hereditary claims were real or imagined, candidates regularly construed themselves as the dead ruler's legitimate successor by publicly demonstrating their reverence for his earthly remains. To some extent, this anticipates the political theory of "the king's two bodies," which Ernst Kantorowicz has identified in the funerary rituals of later medieval monarchs; this model distinguished between a mortal ruler and the transcendent body politic, which was assumed by a successor upon the death of a king.²⁸

While Kantorowicz sees this theory epitomized by the lavish royal funerals that flourished in the early modern period, it is clear that kings' funerals were vital transitional moments during the early Middle Ages as well. The political considerations that informed the location and practical components of kings' burials have been illuminated by Janet Nelson, in her work on Carolingian royal funerals.²⁹ She shows that kings' interments were integrally connected with the process of succession and demonstrations of royal authority: mausolea reinforced the legitimacy of dynastic sub-groups, burial in a king's home region proclaimed the area's political primacy, and royal tombs placed in conquered territories signified the dominance of peripheral areas. Nelson also notes that those who controlled a royal funeral gained a

²⁶ For rivalries among potential royal heirs, see for example Dumville, "The Ætheling."

²⁷ The political importance of royal funerals is discussed below, Chapter 3.

²⁸ By Kantorowicz's reckoning, the earliest version of this theory in the Middle Ages appeared c.1100, in a Norman tract which saw the king as a "twinned person" (*gemina persona*). I would suggest that Kantorowicz's model has earlier English antecedents, as Anglo-Saxon royal corpses exerted their strongest legitimizing influence during interregna. See Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, especially 42-48 and below, n.35.

²⁹ See Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," which covers royal funerals from Charles Martel (d.741) through Charles the Fat (d.888).

distinct political advantage in the ensuing succession debate, particularly at the expense of contenders who were relegated to a lesser role in the proceedings or excluded from the event altogether. Charlemagne's funeral, for instance, was overseen by his daughters while their brother was abroad; in the absence of their father's heir apparent, the princesses crowned their own royal candidate.³⁰ This pattern is also evident in the Ottonian Empire some two centuries later, when the funeral procession of Otto III was commandeered by Duke Henry of Bavaria, Otto's kinsman and one of three major competitors for his throne. Henry's impromptu participation in the funeral—he seized the royal regalia, carried the king's casket on his shoulders, oversaw the burial of his entrails, and made a generous donation to the burial church—highlighted his kinship with Otto and helped him overcome opposition to his accession.³¹

In England, descriptions of this sort of activity were minimal and it is unclear why Anglo-Saxon authors were more hesitant than their Continental counterparts when it came to chronicling royal death. One explanation may be that royal funerals were dominated by secular concerns and therefore of relatively little interest to the ecclesiastical authors committing recent events to parchment;³² yet even ecclesiastical ritual gets short shrift in English accounts when compared to Continental texts. Alternatively, chroniclers who wrote in retrospect, after the accession of a new ruler, may have been reluctant to draw attention to the succession debates that accompanied the previous monarch's burial, preferring to gloss over any political wrangling that might suggest a lack of consensus at the new king's election.³³ Or perhaps this silence

³⁰ The brother was Louis, who nevertheless managed to reclaim the throne once he returned to the kingdom. See Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 147-49.

³¹ The episode is detailed in the *Chronicon* of Thietmar of Merseburg, book IV chapters 50-53; see Thietmar, *Chronik*, 166-70; Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 187-90. For commentary, see Bernhardt, "Henry II of Germany," 44-46; Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, 83-84.

³² This explanation is suggested by Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 135.

³³ For a comparable phenomenon in accounts of the Norman Conquest, see Otter, "1066."

should be attributed to the narrative style of the extant sources. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which provides the greatest amount of contemporary information concerning kings' deaths and burials, is notoriously pithy, and it may be simply that texts which provided more elaborate accounts have not survived. Still, even twelfth-century chroniclers, who worked from a wider range of pre-Conquest source material, found little to embellish when it came to tenth and eleventh-century royal funerals.

While any of these factors could have contributed to the lack of written evidence for royal death in Anglo-Saxon England, I suggest that this textual silence may also have derived from a sense of propriety, which discouraged contemporary authors from emphasizing royal mortality.³⁴ Once anointing had become an integral part of royal inaugurations, the king's body was recognized as God's instrument, the earthly manifestation of the undying body politic, invested with the authority to govern a Christian nation.³⁵ There was little doubt that all but the most saintly royal bodies would eventually be subject to decay, but kings were usually safely entombed by the time decomposition set in, sparing their subjects the spectacle of a vulnerable, mortal royal corpse.³⁶ This ideal may well have been reflected in the texts produced

³⁴ It is telling that the only full description of an Anglo-Saxon king's funeral was written by a Continental author, who cast Edward the Confessor's death in strictly hagiographical terms—the king's departure from the world was construed as the prerequisite for his entrance into heaven. The anonymous author of the *Vita Edwardi* was probably a monk of St. Bertin; see *Vita Edwardi*, xliv-lix and above, n.1.

³⁵ On royal anointing in the early Middle Ages, see the works of Janet Nelson: "National Synods," "Symbols in Context," "Inauguration Rituals," "Ritual and Reality," "Earliest Royal *Ordo*," and "Second English *Ordo*." See also Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, especially 13-14 and 42-48; and below, Chapter 4 n.70.

³⁶ A comparable anxiety about physicality is evident in a general reluctance among Anglo-Saxon authors to depict acts of physical consumption. Sympathetic figures are never explicitly shown eating and drinking in Old English literature; graphic images of consumption are applied almost exclusively to monstrous or unsympathetic characters, like the cannibalistic Grendel in *Beowulf*, and seem designed to shock and horrify. According to Hugh Magennis, this "social anxiety about the physicality of eating" stems from "the recognition that eating is essentially a bodily function, a function that does not distinguish human beings from animals." It is possible that a similar uneasiness characterized discussions of dead bodies during this period, for descriptions of decomposing corpses were meant to shock—to advertise the gruesome consequences of crime and impiety or illuminate a persecutor's exceptional cruelty (as I show below); or, as some homiletic tracts do, to demonstrate the transitory nature of earthly life with horrifying images of disintegrating bodies. For eating and drinking in Old English literature, see Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites*, especially 58-59; Marafioti, "Images of Food

during this period, which regularly described living kings and buried bodies, but rarely mentioned anything in between.³⁷

Despite this lacuna, contemporary texts nevertheless offer some insight into royal death in tenth and eleventh-century England. From the end of the ninth century, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provided a consistent, formulaic record of rulers' deaths.³⁸ The annalists typically offered logistical information—the date of the king's death, the extent of his empire, or the length of his reign—and concluded by identifying the successor to the realm.³⁹ From 978, however, the entries began to list the location of the king's death and his burial place with considerable regularity.⁴⁰ Of the forty-two annals that describe rulers' deaths between 899 and 977, only seven entries note where the king died and only five mention where he was buried; of the thirty entries from 978 to 1066, twenty-three provide the place where the king died and eighteen cite his place of burial.⁴¹

and Eating.” For the shocking nature of descriptions of mutilated or decomposed bodies, see O’Brien O’Keeffe, “Body and Law”; and see below, Chapter 4.

³⁷ See below, Chapter 4.

³⁸ For the ASC, see above, n.4.

³⁹ Alfred’s death provides the template for this formula: “In this year, Alfred, Æthelwulf’s son, died six days before All Hallows. He was king over all the English except for the part that was under Danish rule, and he held that kingdom a half a year less than thirty winters; and Edward his son then ascended to the kingdom” [Her gefor Ælfred Apulfing, syx nihtum ær ealra haligra mæssan, se wæs cyning ofer eall Ongelcyn butan ðæm dæle þe under Dena onwalde wæs, 7 he heold þæt rice oþrum healfum læs þe .xxx. wintra; 7 þa feng Eadweard his sunu to rice]; ASC A 900 (*recte* 899). This entry also appears in BC 901, with an abbreviated version in DEF 901 (all *recte* 899).

⁴⁰ The provision of this information was not limited to this period or to royal deaths, but it had now become a consistent feature of royal obits in the ASC. For an earlier example, see for instance ASC A 962.

⁴¹ The tables below indicate which annals record each king’s death and burial place; these include instances where the place of death is not explicitly cited in the notice of death but is clear from the context of the annal (as for Æthelred and Edmund Ironside in 1016). In the forty-two early annals (899-977), 17% of the entries provided a king’s place of death and 12% provided his burial place. In the thirty later annals (978-1066), 77% provided a king’s place of death and 60% provided his burial place. Furthermore, in the later annals, a king’s burial place was almost never noted without a reference to his place of death (the only exception being the account of Harold Harefoot’s death in ASC F).

This textual attention indicates that the transportation and resting places of kings' corpses had become points of historical interest. Although the movement of royal bodies was surely not a new development of the late tenth century, the chroniclers' increased focus on rulers' remains implies that funerals and funeral processions had begun to hold greater significance. Some of these journeys were in fact quite short: Æthelred II and Edward the Confessor were each buried in the church next door to the palace where they died.⁴² Yet the Bayeux Tapestry's depiction of the Confessor's funeral suggests that even brief processions merited considerable ritual display, and the chroniclers' increasingly prominent references to sites of kings' death and burial may reflect a change in the degree or the type of ceremonial activity that preceded royal interment. Longer processions to distant mausolea certainly allowed ample opportunity for funerary spectacle: the corpse of Edward the Martyr was carried approximately twenty miles from Wareham to Shaftesbury; Cnut was carried thirty miles, from Shaftesbury to Winchester; Harthacnut was carried fifty miles from Lambeth to Winchester; Harold Harefoot was carried fifty miles, from Oxford to London; and Edward Ironside was carried one hundred miles, from London to

King	Alfred (d.899)						Edward Elder (d.924)						Æthelstan (d.939)					
ASC MS	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
Death Place							x	x	x							x		
Burial Place							x	x	x									

King	Edmund (d.946)						Eadred (d.955)						Eadwig (d.959)					
ASC MS	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
Death Place				x			x											x
Burial Place										x		x						

King	Edgar (d.975)						Edward Martyr (d.978)						Æthelred (d.1016)					
ASC MS	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
Death Place										x	x	x			x	x	x	x
Burial Place										x	x	x						

King	Edmund Ironside (d.1016)						Cnut (d.1035)						Harold Harefoot (d.1040)					
ASC MS	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
Death Place			x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x						x
Burial Place			x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x						x

King	Harthacnut (d.1042)						Edward the Confessor (d.1066)						Harold Godwinson (d.1066)					
ASC MS	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
Death Place					x	x			x	x	x					x	x	
Burial Place					x	x			x	x	x							

⁴² See below, Chapters 2 and 3.

Glastonbury.⁴³ These journeys would have taken days to complete, and an increase in ritual activity during the processions might explain the shifting focus of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Perhaps royal burials generated broader public interest once the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were consolidated under a single English king, whose death would have had greater consequences than the passing of a regional leader; perhaps ecclesiastical involvement in the funerals had escalated, sparking the interest of clerical chroniclers; or perhaps royal remains were now taken on tours around the kingdom before burial, a practice attested among Carolingian and Ottonian rulers, rather than delivered immediately to their grave.⁴⁴ In any case, a spectacular procession sought to fix a final, deliberate image of the dead ruler in the public memory.⁴⁵

Where such recognizable elements of royal burial reinforced the dignity of the monarchy and emphasized the prestige of the individual king, there were also established ways to divest royal bodies of legitimacy, and a handful of late Anglo-Saxon rulers were deliberately denied the royal rites and graves that their status should have merited. Instead, their bodies were desecrated, obliterated, or refused public burial by political enemies who appropriated the familiar symbolic vocabulary of

⁴³ These approximate distances were calculated from the maps in Hill, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*.

⁴⁴ Otto III (d.1002), for instance, had at least nine stops on the way to his final resting place at Aachen, including Ausburg, where his intestines were ceremoniously interred by his eventual successor, and St. Peter's church in Cologne, where the archbishop granted absolution to the gathered crowd and evoked the ruler's memory in the presence of the corpse. It is not impossible that the bodies of English kings were taken on similar tours of the realm. For Otto's funeral, see Thietmar, *Chronik*, 166-70; Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 187-90; Bernhardt, "Henry II of Germany," 44-46. Compare also with the funeral processions of Ottonian bishops, in which vigils would be held over the body at various churches; Warner, "Adventus," 264-65.

⁴⁵ Despite the public ceremonial associated with royal funerals, it is unclear whether royal bodies themselves were put on display. Although royal embalming is attested on the Continent and was probably used in England as well, preservation usually had the short-term objective of preventing decomposition before burial. Nevertheless, embalming might help prolong the illusion that a king's body was extraordinary, and such methods were used with varying success in Continental royal funeral processions: in Janet Nelson's words, embalming might open up "whole new possibilities for artificial prolongation of a king's political 'life'." Alternatively, kings' bodies may have been carried in coffins or shrouded on biers, as in the Bayeux Tapestry and in Continental accounts of royal funeral processions. For embalming, see Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 165; Camp, "Incorruptibility of Cuthbert"; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 21.

criminal executions in their treatment of royal corpses. From the tenth century onward, there was an increasing emphasis on consecrated burial for Christians in good standing with the Church, while excommunicants and criminals were conspicuously denied hallowed graves: they were interred at execution sites and borderlands, well away from consecrated churchyards and the prayers of the pious.⁴⁶ Condemned corpses might be crammed into shallow or short grave-cuts, buried face down, interred together with other executed corpses, or mutilated before burial; in some cases, the body or body parts might be exposed, with hanged corpses left suspended on gallows and decapitated heads displayed on stakes.⁴⁷ Such posthumous treatment clearly differentiated the condemned from the rest of Christian society and may have been thought to impact the fate of the executed in the afterlife.⁴⁸ But these modes of burial also affected how offenders were remembered by the living. Because their bodies were publicly desecrated, the condemned were indelibly identified as deviants who had been unworthy of honorable burial; they were cast out of the Christian community, deprived of intercessory prayer and pious memorialization.⁴⁹ Like executions themselves, deviant burials were demonstrative acts that were meant to be witnessed and interpreted.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ The exclusion of condemned bodies from consecrated burial was first decreed in II Æthelstan 26 in the mid-tenth century. For exclusion and other deviant burial practices, see Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology"; Reynolds, "Burials, Boundaries and Charters"; Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls"; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 170-80. On the rise of consecrated burial, see Bullough, "Burial, Community and Belief"; Gittos, "Anglo-Saxon Rites"; Hadley, "Burial Practices in Northern England"; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead"; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 463-67.

⁴⁷ On execution cemeteries, see especially Reynolds, *Law in the Landscape*. See also Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology"; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 128-30; Owen-Crocker, "Mutilation, Decapitation, and Unburied Dead"; Hayman and Reynolds, "42-54 London Road, Staines"; Buckberry and Hadley, "Walkington Wold, Yorkshire."

⁴⁸ See Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 170-80; Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls"; Marafioti, "Punishing Bodies."

⁴⁹ For excommunication as an implicit component of death sentences, see Treharne, "Unique Old English Formula," 195. A condemned man's survivors were affected as well, for his property was typically forfeited upon his death and his kin might be excommunicated along with him; see Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*, 8 and 20-24; Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 31; Treharne, "Unique Old English Formula," 195-97.

⁵⁰ For public execution as a signifying spectacle, see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 3-69; O'Keefe, "Body and Law"; Richards, "Body as Text."

This penal context provides a backdrop for the exceptional fates of a number of usurped, conquered, or assassinated rulers of the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵¹ Instead of receiving royal funerals and prestigious graves, their bodies were mutilated, exposed, interred in unconsecrated ground, or even buried without memorialization by political enemies who aimed to re-cast their royal antagonists as sinful criminals. These rulers were not simply deprived of the royal tombs to which they were entitled; they were denied Christian burial altogether. This inversion of normative burial practice retrospectively cast aspersions on the legitimacy of the deceased, for by contemporary reasoning, a true king would never be equated in death with social and religious deviants. For the new rulers who oversaw these acts of desecration and obliteration, the abuse of their predecessors' bodies was deliberate, spectacular propaganda: if their rivals were remembered as criminals, then their own accession could be portrayed as the righteous restoration of royal dignity rather than an illicit act of usurpation.

Significantly, however, these instances of desecration and obliteration appear to have backfired on their instigators. Medieval chroniclers denounced the abuse of royal bodies, concluding that they were anomalous manifestations of cruelty or barbarism. I argue, however, that this sort of dishonorable treatment engaged a familiar mode of physical discourse: the denigration of royal bodies drew on the symbolic vocabulary of criminal punishment, just as prestigious royal tombs adopted the outward signs of saintly burial. In itself, the shameful treatment of bodies would not have been exceptionally shocking, given the pervasiveness of corporal penalties in the late Anglo-Saxon period. Rather, it was the application of these punishments to royal bodies that inspired outrage. At a time when kings' bodies were transformed by consecration and interred after death with extraordinary funeral rites, the subjugation

⁵¹ These are detailed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

of a royal corpse to physical humiliation was enough to provoke outcry among contemporary authors. Because there was such a pervasive understanding of how a royal corpse ought to be treated, deviation from the norm was met with controversy.

This project examines how these modes of honorable and dishonorable burial were deployed in late Anglo-Saxon England, assessing how royal corpses and tombs were manipulated for the political ends of the living. The first part of the study is concerned with the prestigious treatment of kings' bodies, investigating how royal remains were used as legitimizing tools during times of interregnum or political uncertainty. Chapter 2 focuses on two kings who constructed enormous new necropolises when their royal authority was threatened. Edward the Elder founded Winchester's New Minster as a family mausoleum just a few years after his accession in 899, when his rule was challenged by one of his cousins; and Edward the Confessor began building his own mausoleum at Westminster in the 1050s, soon after a domestic revolt by one of his most powerful noblemen. Both Edwards responded to insubordination by commissioning monumental burial churches, and I contend that their glorification of legitimizing royal remains helped them assert their hereditary claims to the kingdom. Chapter 3 explores the convergence of royal burials and coronations between 1016 and 1066, a period which saw seven different kings of England who each interacted publicly with his predecessor's remains. I show that candidates who forged a physical connection with the previous ruler—accompanying his body to its burial church, appearing prominently at his funeral, being elected or consecrated beside his tomb—were able to situate themselves as natural heirs to the kingdom and gained advantages over their rivals by proclaiming their dynastic and administrative continuity with the previous regime.

Where the first part of this dissertation is concerned with continuity and the

promulgation of established royal lines, the second part focuses on how normative royal burial practices were inverted in instances of discontinuity, especially in the wake of conquest and usurpation. Chapter 4 considers the maltreatment of royal bodies by two Scandinavian kings of England: Harold Harefoot, who spectacularly mutilated his West Saxon rival, Alfred, in 1036; and Harthacnut, who subsequently exhumed Harold from his monastic tomb and threw his corpse into a swamp. Although these actions were roundly denounced by contemporary chroniclers, I propose that Alfred and Harold's bodies were subjected to standard judicial punishments which were deployed to undermine their subjects' claims to royal legitimacy. Where Chapter 4 focuses on the spectacular abuse of royal bodies, Chapter 5 examines the attempted obliteration of an assassinated king, investigating why the remains of Edward the Martyr were hidden after his murder in 978. In addition to upsetting the process of succession and preventing the killers from being brought to justice, the missing body meant that there could be no ceremonial closure to Edward's reign; as a result, various competing identities for the king—Christian monarch, illegitimate tyrant, saintly martyr—emerged in the wake of his death.

In Chapter 6, I move towards some conclusions by examining how two eleventh-century foreign conquerors—Cnut of Denmark and William of Normandy—engaged both burial strategies as they coped with the politically charged remains of their royal predecessors and attempted to justify their deposition of the West Saxon dynasty. I show that Cnut, while appearing to glorify the memories of his immediate predecessor and recent West Saxon royal saints, actually made these remains less conspicuous as he minimized other politically problematic bodies, including those of his Viking father and his Anglo-Saxon royal rivals. Some fifty years later, William the Conqueror concealed the remains of the vanquished king Harold Godwinson, even as he portrayed himself as Edward the Confessor's designated heir and cultivated his

Westminster tomb. These final examples confirm the pervasiveness of corporal propaganda in the process of English royal succession. The simultaneous use of both modes of burial discourse by foreign invaders confirms that these were integral elements of Anglo-Saxon political vocabulary, routinely employed by kings who hoped to ease administrative transitions and situate themselves within the scope of English regnal history.

Chapter 2. Royal Tombs and Political Performance: New Minster and Westminster

My starting point for this study is the piece of information supplied most consistently in late Anglo-Saxon sources: the locations of kings' graves. By the end of the ninth century, the most prominent of these sites was Winchester's Old Minster, which housed the largest necropolis of West Saxon kings. This dynasty had become England's dominant royal line by the ninth century, but it began entombing its rulers in Old Minster by at least the mid-eighth century.¹ In the following centuries, Winchester developed into a major royal and episcopal center; located in the heart of Wessex, it was operating by the tenth century as the *de facto* capital of the realm. The cultivation of a royal mausoleum there meant that the city's episcopal church doubled as a repository for dynastic memory, its collection of prestigious tombs visually reinforcing the legitimacy and continuity of the royal line.

It is remarkable, given this context, that royal burial shifted away from Old Minster in the tenth century. This move was initiated by Edward the Elder (r.899-924), who opened his reign by building a large burial church, New Minster, next door to Winchester's mother church. The king intended his foundation to supersede Old Minster as the kingdom's premier royal necropolis, but the mausoleum lost its allure after Edward's own burial; only one further Anglo-Saxon ruler would be entombed there.² But neither did Edward's successors return to Old Minster for interment. In 955, Eadred was the last West Saxon monarch to be installed in the dynasty's traditional mausoleum, and just two other pre-Conquest kings would be buried there:

¹ The earliest Winchester burials cited in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle were Cynewulf (ABCDE 755) and Æthelwulf (ADE 855, BCF 856); the twelfth-century Winchester Annals list other early kings buried at Old Minster: Cedric (d.534), Cenwalh (d.674), Æscwine (d.676), and Centwine (d. c.686). In addition, sixteenth-century mortuary chests claim to contain the bones of Cynegils (d.643). See Luard, *Annals Monastici* II, 3-5; Yorke, "Foundation of Old Minster," 80; Biddle, "Development of an Early Capital," 246.

² This was Eadwig, who reigned 955-59. Edward's son Ælfweard was also buried in New Minster after a very brief reign; he died a month after his father in 924.

the Danish usurper Cnut in 1035 and his son Harthacnut in 1040. Other tenth and eleventh-century rulers were interred in various and often unprecedented locations: Æthelstan (d.939) at Malmesbury; Edward the Martyr (d.978) at Shaftesbury; Æthelred II (d.1016) at St. Paul's, London; Harold Harefoot (d.1040) at the early monastery at Westminster; and Edward the Confessor (d.1066) at his newly built Westminster Abbey.³ A small West Saxon mausoleum also emerged at Glastonbury, housing the tombs of Edmund (d.946), his son Edgar (d.975) and his great-grandson Edmund Ironside (d.1016).

These foundations all benefitted from royal patronage, and rulers likely designated them as burial churches during their lifetimes. The fact that royal corpses were often transported a considerable distance for burial, carried to diverse locations rather than buried in the nearest church or deposited in a well-established mausoleum, suggests a degree of enduring agency on the part of the deceased.⁴ The wide geographical dispersion of their graves, along with their inclination to be buried individually or in small family groups, implies that rulers were making deliberate decisions about where they wanted their tombs and attempting to distinguish themselves in death from their predecessors—perhaps especially from the mausoleum that housed so many West Saxon ancestors. The collective move away from Winchester's established necropolis may have been guided in part by spiritual calculations, for if there were only one royal tomb at a particular church, its inhabitant would be the exclusive beneficiary of the intercessory prayers of the resident religious

³ See Appendix I below for the distribution of these burials.

⁴ Edward the Elder and Edward the Confessor each designed new burial churches for themselves, while Alfred and Eadred, the only kings who left written wills, each bequeathed a sum to the church that would house his body (although neither specified the name of the foundation in these documents). Sometimes survivors selected royal burial sites, however: Eadred's intentions seem to have been simply ignored after his death, while William the Conqueror had the Confessor's widow buried at Westminster despite her plan to be interred at Wilton. Yet even in these cases, Eadred and Edith apparently expected that their wishes would be carried out—implying that this was the norm. Alfred's will is S 1507 and Eadred's is S 1515; all of these burials are discussed further below.

community. A king entombed amid generations of his royal predecessors, by contrast, could claim only a fraction of the community's attention.⁵

But it is clear that mundane political interests also informed the kings' decisions to designate their own burial churches. It is thus with the rise of individual royal entombments that we finally encounter some details about the after-lives of Anglo-Saxon rulers. While posthumous prestige had previously been generated by a body's proximity to established and successful ancestors, royal tombs now projected status and legitimacy in their own right, no doubt assisted by the promotional efforts of religious communities eager to attract continued royal patronage. This shift conspicuously coincided with an increasing interest in royal sanctity. The Anglo-Saxons' predilection for posthumously sainting their rulers was especially pronounced from the tenth century, when cults emerged around the tombs of newly martyred or especially pious members of various royal dynasties.⁶ The development of such cults was usually a matter of local concern in this period, as there was not yet an official process of canonization which required saints to be recognized by the pope.⁷ This is not to say that claims of sanctity were treated lightly or casually. In addition to their value as spiritual intercessors, saints were lucrative business for churches and monasteries, and religious communities went to great lengths to increase the public profiles of their resident saints and to defend their own rights as custodians. Ruling monarchs appealed to public sentiment by cultivating relationships with their saintly predecessors, overtly demonstrating their piety while emphasizing that their ancestral line had attracted divine favor.

⁵ See Hallam, "Royal Burial," 367-69.

⁶ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*; Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity," 67. The revival of earlier royal saints' cults is discussed below, Chapter 5.

⁷ In 1161, Edward the Confessor was the first English saint to be canonized. Before this, elevation and translation were the most effective ways for ecclesiastical authorities to demonstrate their endorsement of a cult. See Scholz, "Canonization of Edward the Confessor," 57; Thacker, "Making of a Local Saint." For the development of canonization from the twelfth century and its impact on local cults, see Kleinberg, *Prophets in their Own Country*, 26-31.

Yet although the sheer number of royal saints in Anglo-Saxon England was unparalleled in Western Europe, and although persistent interest in royal tombs is attested with some frequency, only a handful of potential candidates had their sanctity endorsed by ecclesiastical authorities. The pantheon of English royal saints consisted predominantly of nuns and widows, conversion-era monarchs, and the occasional martyred prince or king; very few acting rulers of the later Anglo-Saxon period were revered as saints after their deaths.⁸ While individuals of royal blood undoubtedly had a better chance at sainthood than most laypeople, sanctity was never guaranteed. Nevertheless, tenth and eleventh-century documentary sources indicate that the remains of many contemporary, non-saintly kings were treated in the same ways as saints' relics. Even if a ruler was never recognized as extraordinarily pious or posthumously identified as a holy intercessor, his corpse still might serve as a church's focal point, be translated and re-buried in a public ceremony, become the object of exonerating or reverential pilgrimage, and generate revenue and status for the religious institution that housed it. Some kings may well have become objects of undocumented, localized, or short-lived saints' cults, but the overall lack of evidence for spiritual devotion suggests that the above-mentioned practices were not simply manifestations of religious piety.⁹ Instead, they reflect a broader understanding of how prestigious corpses were supposed to be treated. Although kings were almost invariably interred in churches, non-religious reverence was usually initiated by secular figures and attested only in incidental remarks; the lack of fuller accounts implies that such activity did not merit full documentation by clerical authors. However, by adopting the superficial indicators of sanctity—replicating the religious

⁸ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 107; Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity," 67.

⁹ There might have been an undocumented saint's cult at the grave of King Edgar at Glastonbury, for example: William of Malmesbury claimed that he was recognized as a saint in the twelfth century, but there is no contemporary evidence for his sanctity. See William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.160.2-3; William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, 134-35.

environment of saints' shrines and the ceremonial aspects of their cults—kings, their followers, and their heirs appropriated a familiar symbolic vocabulary to advance their own political ends, highlighting the extraordinary status of the monarchy by forcing a comparison between the treatment of royal remains and holy relics.

This chapter will consider how these cult-like practices developed in two major religious foundations, each commissioned as a burial church by a late Anglo-Saxon king. The first is Winchester's New Minster, built by Edward the Elder *c.*901 as a mausoleum for his father Alfred and the rest of his immediate family. The second is Westminster Abbey, which Edward the Confessor began building in the 1050s to replace a more modest monastic complex. Both foundations were large, costly, and prominent in the landscape, and both were expressly constructed to house the remains of non-saintly kings. These building projects should be understood as sound spiritual investments in their own right, for the lavish patronage of a church might offset the inevitable sins of ruling a secular kingdom and improve a monarch's chance of salvation in the afterlife. It is also significant that the clergy began to regulate and standardize Christian burial in the tenth century, dictating for the first time where graves should be located and establishing the prerequisites that entitled a person to last rites and a consecrated grave. By sponsoring new churches designed to serve the royal dynasty and its subjects in life and death, both kings signaled their endorsement of this expanding ecclesiastical monopoly over the physical remains of the Christian dead. Yet the two Edwards' construction of expansive, expensive new mausolea reveals that these rulers tailored church burial to their own needs, dictating the terms of royal interment and adopting the pervasive material and ritual vocabulary of saints' cults to convey a more worldly message. Whereas ordinary churches were provided with the relics of a saintly patron at the time of their foundation, these were designed to house not saints, but kings. The centerpiece of each foundation in its first generation was the

grave of a decidedly secular magnate, conspicuous in a setting that contemporaries would normally associate with high-ranking clerical tombs or saintly relics. Despite their surroundings and prominent placement, however, I contend that these royal bodies were not meant to draw religious veneration. On the contrary, the kings' documented requests for intercessory prayer confirm that they sought as much divine help as possible. Each of these new establishments was designed to inspire reverence for its resident dead king, but this reverence was merited by the earthly status of a secular leader instead of the spiritual accomplishments that made a saint. Nevertheless, by appropriating saintly imagery and installing themselves in unambiguously Christian spaces, these kings used their own and their predecessors' remains to reinforce the idea that they had been selected by God to rule.

New Minster, Winchester: 901-924

According to Bede, royal interest in Winchester began in the mid-seventh century, when king Cenwalh founded Old Minster *c.* 648; archaeological evidence confirms that Christian burial around the church began at about this time.¹⁰ Cenwalh may have intended from the outset that Old Minster should serve an adjacent royal residence, but there is little evidence that Winchester had much clout as a secular center before the tenth century.¹¹ Instead, most early administrative activity in the area took place at the nearby royal estate at Southampton (*Hamwih* or *Hamwic*), where there was a flourishing trading center and mint and where several ninth-century royal charters

¹⁰ Bede provided the earliest textual reference to Old Minster in *HE* III.7; the date 648 is provided by ASC F. For early burials around Old Minster, see Kjolbye-Biddle, "Disposal of the Winchester Dead," 22; Kjolbye-Biddle, "Problems in Excavation and Interpretation," 101 and 105.

¹¹ Martin Biddle argues that Winchester was a royal center from the seventh century, while Barbara Yorke contends that it was not especially important to the kings of Wessex before the reign of Alfred. For these differing opinions and for an overview of Winchester's early history, see Biddle, "*Felix Urbs Winthonia*," 289-93; Biddle, "Development of an Early Capital," 237-41; Yorke, "Foundation of the Old Minster." See also Blair, "Minster Churches in the Landscape," 40-50, for evidence that early minsters were set some distance away from royal administrative centers.

were issued.¹² Southampton suffered considerably from Viking raids, however, and its administrative institutions, along with most of its population, were moved to Winchester during the reign of Alfred (871-99).¹³ It was at this time that Winchester began its transformation into a major royal and defensive center. Under Alfred, the town was re-fortified and re-planned, with the creation of substantial defensive structures and a street grid optimal for defense against incursion, and the *burh* developed economically as markets flourished within the city walls; a mint, a royal treasury, and a jail all appear to have been in place by the end of Alfred's reign.¹⁴ There are certainly hints that Winchester's wealth and influence had been growing before Alfred's time. Substantial building works were undertaken in the ninth century, a royal grant of 854 took for granted the regular presence of foreign guests, and the tomb of Bishop Swithun likely attracted pilgrims soon after his death *c.* 862; furthermore, the city probably had adequate fortifications by the time it was attacked by Vikings in 860.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was Alfred's comprehensive restructuring that transformed Winchester into an urban administrative center that could function as a proto-capital for his English kingdom.

The leading ecclesiastic establishment in Winchester from the seventh through ninth centuries was Old Minster. In addition to housing an episcopal see and clerical community, it held a near monopoly on Christian burial in the city, contained the tombs of numerous West Saxon kings, possessed a noteworthy collection of relics, and attracted frequent displays of royal munificence. Yet by the first decade of the tenth century, Old Minster would be joined by two new royal foundations: Nunnaminster, a

¹² See Biddle, "Development of an Early Capital," 246-47; Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester, Kings of Wessex," 113-14.

¹³ See Kjolbye-Biddle, "Disposal of the Winchester Dead," 224.

¹⁴ For the development of Winchester under Alfred, see Biddle, "Development of an Early Capital," 248-52; Biddle, "*Felix Urbs Winthonia*," 293, 298; Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 290-92 and 305-06.

¹⁵ The 854 grant is S 307. For ninth-century Winchester, see Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 108-09 and 112.

women's community founded by Alfred's widow; and New Minster, established by Alfred's son and situated just north of Old Minster. Already ancient by the time of Alfred's reign, Old Minster had not been renovated or expanded since its foundation in the seventh century. Given the ever-increasing population of Winchester and the number of tombs and shrines that crowded its interior, it lacked the resources to fulfill the spiritual needs of the urban community at the turn of the tenth century.¹⁶ New Minster, by comparison, was an enormous structure that would have dwarfed its older neighbor.¹⁷ It resembled newer Continental churches in its size and style, and its architecture would have seemed conspicuously modern when set beside Old Minster, a complex of adjoining buildings that recalled older Carolingian religious houses. Furthermore, where Old Minster's interior was filled with two centuries' worth of tombs and shrines, New Minster was designed to have a spacious, uncluttered nave capable of accommodating large crowds.¹⁸

Despite its grand scale, the details of New Minster's foundation remain sketchy. The few contemporary documents that attest to its construction are royal diplomas confirming the site of the church, which was built on property drawn primarily from Old Minster's possessions and public lands.¹⁹ We must rely on sources produced well after New Minster's foundation for any further information about its

¹⁶ By the end of the century, its interior was labyrinthine: "so that if someone were to walk through the interior of the church with unfamiliar steps, he would not know whence he came, nor how to retrace his steps" [quisquis ut ignotis hec deambulat atria plantis / nesciat unde meat quoque pedem referat]; Wulfstan of Winchester, *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithuno*, edited and translated in Lapidge, *Swithun*, 374-76. Wulfstan composed his text between 994 and 996; see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 336. See also Quirk, "Winchester Cathedral," 44-48.

¹⁷ Old Minster was expanded in the late tenth century, a renovation likely motivated in part by the size of Edward's foundation. On the 980 re-dedication after these improvements, see Sheerin, "Dedication of Old Minster."

¹⁸ For the layout of Old Minster and its subsequent renovations, see Kjolbye-Biddle, "Old Minster"; see also Brooke, "Bishop Walkelin," 3.

¹⁹ S 1443, recording Edward's acquisition of the site for New Minster, is an undated Old English text that survives in later copies; it was probably composed in the latter half of 901. This land was supplemented by two additional estates at Ann, Hampshire (S 365), and Chisledon, Wiltshire (S 366); other supposedly early grants are suspect. These three documents are edited in Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, 12-17, 26-34; S 1443 is edited and translated in Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 50-56. See also Keynes, "West Saxon Charters," 1141-43; Rumble, "Edward the Elder," especially 231-34.

establishment and construction, however. According to later tenth century accounts, Alfred had planned to build a monastery for Grimbald of St. Bertin, a scholar and royal advisor.²⁰ It is uncertain whether Alfred was actually involved with the plan for a new foundation or whether his involvement was a product of later legend. In any event, he did not live to see this house built. The project was taken up by his son Edward, who commissioned the church for the sake of his own soul and for the soul of his father; once completed, Grimbald was to be installed at its head.²¹ Late tenth-century tradition held that New Minster was dedicated in 903: this date was provided in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which stated that it was founded in the same year as Grimbald's death; but the annals in this portion of the Chronicle had been erroneously transposed by two years, so these events should properly be dated to 901, the year of the earliest genuine grants to New Minster.²² Soon after its foundation, Edward arranged to have Alfred's tomb moved to the new church from Old Minster. Several

²⁰ On Grimbald's life, cult, and supposed role in New Minster's foundation, see Grierson, "Grimbald of St. Bertin." For the various accounts of New Minster's foundation, see Quirk, "Winchester New Minster," 17-18.

²¹ S 1443 stated that Edward planned to build a minster "for the salvation of my soul and for that of my honorable father king Alfred" [for mine saule hælo 7 mines ðæs arwyrðan fader Ælfredes cyninges], and S 366 likewise recounted that the king ordered the church to be built "for the redemption of my soul and of my venerable father's soul" [pro remedio anime mee meique uenerabilis patris]; later forgeries, including Edward's supposed foundation charter of New Minster (S 370), employed similar language. The grant of the estate of Ann (S 365) sets the condition that "they offer prayers and intercessions there every day for me and for my venerable father and my ancestors" [ibi pro me et uenerabili patre et auibus meis cotidie orationes fiant et intercessiones]—a less formulaic sentiment than the diplomatic commonplace *pro remedio anime mee*, and one which may attest to Edward's intention that New Minster serve the royal house. See Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, xxvi, editions at 12-13, 31, and 26.

²² New Minster's foundation is recorded in ASC F 903: "In this year, the priest Grimbald died; and in the same year, New Minster was consecrated in Winchester and St. Iudoc arrived" [Her forðferde Grimbaldi þes sacerd, 7 þys ylcan geares was gehalgod Niwemynster on Wincestre; 7 sancte Iudoces tocyme]. The date of 903 is also provided in New Minster's spurious dedication charter, a product of the later tenth century. Martin Biddle concludes that New Minster was indeed founded in 901, after Grimbald's death; it was at this time that construction commenced, continuing over the next two years until the church was dedicated in 903. Both Grimbald and Ealhswith, Alfred's widow, appear to have been buried there before 903, however, so the minster must have already been consecrated and functional, even if building was incomplete. Biddle, "*Felix Urbs Winthonia*," 295-97; Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 313; and n.73 below. For the later adoption of 903 as a foundation date, see Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 114-15. For Grimbald and the early charters, see S 365 and S 366; see Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, xxv and n.5; Grierson, "Grimbald of St. Bertin," 554-57.

more members of the West Saxon royal family were buried there in the following decades, along with the posthumously sainted Grimbald, who did not live to see the minster completed.²³ New Minster also became home to the relics of St. Iudoc, a seventh-century royal Breton saint whose community fled to Winchester from Ponthieu in 901 to escape Viking raids.²⁴

Edward undoubtedly oversaw the construction of New Minster, but his motivations for establishing the church are unclear. Although he may have been realizing an unfulfilled wish of his father, Alfred's involvement is only attested in later sources and there is no contemporaneous evidence that he or Grimbald had made concrete plans for a new foundation. There is no reason to doubt that Edward was at least ostensibly concerned "for the salvation of my soul and for the soul of my honorable father king Alfred."²⁵ The placement of the new foundation is another matter, however. Why did Edward choose to build on the very doorstep of an ancient mother church? It may be that the site of New Minster's construction was intended to evoke Continental monastic complexes, which consisted of multiple churches in close proximity.²⁶ Alternatively, such an arrangement may have resembled the double minsters that are attested with some frequency in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁷ The concentration of ecclesiastical buildings in the southeast sector of the walled city also suggests an attempt to create a spiritual enclave in an increasingly urban space; indeed, later kings and bishops took great care to insulate these monastic complexes

²³ Royal burials continued at New Minster until Edward's death. In addition to Alfred, the early tenth-century royal interments include Edward's mother, Ealhswith (d.902); his son, Ælfweard (d.924); his brother, Æthelweard (d.920 or 922); and Edward himself. Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, xxvi-xxvii; Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 314-15; Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 115.

²⁴ The relics of St. Iudoc reportedly arrived from Brittany in the same year as New Minster's foundation and Grimbald's death: "In this year Grimbald the priest died, and in the same year New Minster was dedicated in Winchester; and St. Iudoc arrived" [Her forðferde Grimbaldi þes sacerd, 7 þys ylcan geares was gehalgod Niwemynster on Wincestre; 7 sancte Iudoces tocyme]; ASC F 903. See also discussion below.

²⁵ "For mine saule hælo 7 mines ðæs arwyrðan fader Ælfredes cyninges"; S 1443.

²⁶ This explanation is proposed by Quirk, "Winchester New Minster," 18.

²⁷ For double minsters, see Blair, "Anglo-Saxon Minsters," 246-58.

from encroaching secular activities.²⁸ But the lack of space between Old and New Minsters—the two were separated by mere feet—eventually caused problems. By the reign of Edgar (r.959-975), property disputes between Winchester’s minsters required royal intervention, and later inhabitants of New Minster recalled that the walls were so close together that “there was scarcely a passage for one man between their foundations.”²⁹

Although Edward may have envisioned a monastic complex reminiscent of Continental houses or other Anglo-Saxon minsters, I would contend that the proximity of these two structures had more immediate symbolic implications. The construction of New Minster should be read as a political statement in its own right, with its style and structure deliberately designed to overshadow the older church. Old Minster looked much the same at the turn of the tenth century as it had in the seventh, having undergone no expansions since it was built. Furthermore, the relative size of the two

²⁸ The effort to isolate monasteries from secular activity peaked during the tenth-century reform movement, when administrative centers were relocated and the lands of Winchester’s three minsters were redistributed, “so that the monks and nuns living therein might serve God more peacefully, removed from the bustle of the citizens” [ut cenobite inibi degentes a ciuium tumultu remoti tranquillius Deo seruirent]; S 807. Text and translation in Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 137; see also S 1449 and S 1376; Biddle, “*Felix Urbs Winthonia*,” 301; Quirk, “Winchester New Minster,” 18.

²⁹ “Vix unius hominis transitus inter ipsorum fundamenta haberetur.” The Latin account known as the “Dugdale Document” was composed between c.1110 and 1125, after New Minster had moved outside the city walls; the text survives in a later copy in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D.ix f. 30v and is edited in Biddle and Quirk, “Excavations Near Winchester Cathedral,” 182, with commentary at 179-80; see also Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 317. The text continues: “The psalms which the brothers chanted in one choir clearly echoed in the other, so that the voices of the singers in one clashed with the voices of the others—and with the sound of bells generating a confusion no less great—so that one could scarcely tell when psalms were being sung in one place and when in the other” [In uno enim choro clare resultabat quod fratres psallebant in alio. Ita quod una voces canentium vocibus constreperint aliorum, classico nihilominus campanarum maximam generante confusionem. Ita quod vix discerni poterat quando in uno loco, et quando in alio, psallebatur]. An abbreviated version of this account is included in William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.124.1 and *GP* ii.78.2. Translations of the Dugdale Document adapted from Biddle and Quirk, “Excavations Near Winchester Cathedral,” 179, and Quirk, “Winchester Cathedral,” 65. See also Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 317.

Edgar’s Old English charter of c.970x975 states that “King Edgar ordered that the monasteries in Winchester should be given privacy by means of a clearance... and that he ordered it to be devised that none of the monasteries within that place should have any dispute with another because of the clearance” [Eadgar cining mid rymette gedihlgean het þa mynstra on Wintancestræ... 7 þet asmeagan het þet nan ðera mynstera þær binnan þurh þet rymet wið oðrum sace næfde]; S 1449. Edited and translated in Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 141; see also Quirk, “Winchester Cathedral,” 64.

buildings would have been jarring, as the older church covered less than half the area of its new neighbor.³⁰ New Minster should be understood as a “*burh* church,” designed expressly to accommodate in life and death the growing urban congregation that Old Minster was no longer equipped to support.³¹

However, Edward’s close—even aggressive—placement of the new building in relation to the existing church hints at further intentions behind its construction. The fact that Old Minster was required to cede a portion of its lands to the site of Edward’s new house surely provoked resentment from the older community. Relations between the two houses were continuously characterized by “a spirit of ostentatious competition,” if not outright antagonism, with rivalry expressed in the competitive expansion and renovation of their buildings, the increasing volume of their chanting and bell-ringing, and the occasional slighting of one another’s saints.³² Edward’s willingness to suffer the discontent of Old Minster’s community and bishop may help explain his establishment of a competing foundation. Whereas earlier Anglo-Saxon rulers typically patronized religious houses by sponsoring the expansion or renovation of their existing buildings, Edward chose not to improve the existing minster, despite its long association with the West Saxon dynasty.³³ His decision to build an enormous new foundation—at Old Minster’s expense, no less—must have been a slight to its episcopal community, whose power had grown along with the city’s population and

³⁰ Old Minster had a total area of 354 square meters; New Minster’s nave alone measured more than 790 meters. See Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 314; see also Biddle, “*Felix Urbs Winthonia*,” 304.

³¹ This is Martin Biddle’s interpretation; see “*Felix Urbs Winthonia*,” 297; *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 314.

³² The quotation is Martin Biddle’s; see “*Felix Urbs Winthonia*,” 303. For competitive building works, see Quirk, “Winchester New Minster,” 21 and 35; Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 317; Kjolbye-Biddle, “Old Minster,” 16-19. Property disputes between the foundations are implicit in Edgar’s charter S 1449, and conflicting songs and bells are attested in the early twelfth century Dugdale Document (both cited above). In Lantfred’s *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni*, composed between 972 and 975, a healing occurred at Swithun’s Old Minster tomb after St. Iudoc failed to provide a cure; for text and translation, see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 278-283.

³³ See Gem, “Resistance to Romanesque Architecture,” 133-34; and see below, n.113.

wealth and whose relations with the monarchy were becoming strained.³⁴

Despite this architectural intrusion, it is important to acknowledge that both minsters were royal foundations and that each continued to receive royal grants and patronage through the Norman Conquest. Furthermore, they were both adjacent to the king's residence, which was a functional royal complex by the late tenth century, if not earlier.³⁵ Even if Old Minster did fall out of favor under Edward, the construction of New Minster should not be interpreted unilaterally as an act of royal hostility. The changing nature of West Saxon leadership at the turn of the tenth century provides a complementary explanation. Beginning with Alfred, the kings of Wessex claimed authority over all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and this change in status is reflected in the functions of the Winchester minsters: while Old Minster was the favored foundation of the kings of Wessex, New Minster was designed to serve kings of the entire Anglo-Saxon people.³⁶ Instead of having themselves entombed at Old Minster, a foundation which housed the remains of kings who were forced to defend a relatively small kingdom from neighboring rulers and other factions of their own family, the new *reges anglorum saxorum* would be interred in New Minster, a burial church created expressly for the new dynastic order.³⁷ Winchester was already a regular stop

³⁴ On Edward's decision to build a new foundation rather than improving Old Minster, see Biddle, "*Felix Urbs Winthonia*," 295. Alexander Rumble has drawn attention to the strained relations between Winchester's bishops and the West Saxon kings at the turn of the tenth century, and Barbara Yorke regards the foundation of New Minster as "a clear rejection of the Old Minster... a deliberate slight to the older foundation and a reaffirmation of the superiority of royal over episcopal power." See Rumble, "Edward the Elder"; Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 115-16. Yorke has also identified earlier periods in which West Saxon kings conspicuously withdrew their support from the bishops of Winchester; see "Foundation of Old Minster." See also Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 251.

³⁵ The first references to a royal palace in Winchester occur in the late tenth century, on a site forty meters west of the Old Minster (before its expansion). Martin Biddle argues that there was a royal residence in the city already, since royal consecrations and burials reportedly occurred there from the ninth century and the royal treasury was housed in the city by the turn of the eleventh century, if not earlier. Barbara Yorke sees considerably less involvement in Winchester by early English kings, concluding that the city was not a site of particular interest for Anglo-Saxon rulers before the ninth century. See Biddle, *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, 289-92; Biddle, "Development of an Early Capital," 237-48; Yorke, "Foundation of the Old Minster."

³⁶ This is proposed by Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 116.

³⁷ See Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 253. Under Alfred, the title "king of the West Saxons" was first changed to "king of the Anglo-Saxons." This trend continued under Edward, who was called

on the royal itinerary, and Edward's prompt translation of his father's remains—the first step in the development of his mausoleum—helped reinforce New Minster's status as a premier church of the kingdom, where festivals were celebrated, where court was held, and where the bodies of kings were publicly entombed.³⁸

Given the rapid creation of New Minster's royal mausoleum and the Anglo-Saxons' interest in royal saints, it is remarkable that none of the royal family buried there were revered as saintly.³⁹ It is also unusual that there were initially so few well-known saints who might inspire pilgrimage to the minster. The foreign St. Iudoc eventually attracted a significant cult, but at the time of his fortuitous arrival in Winchester *c.*901—a result of Viking attack rather than English initiative—it is unclear whether his relics inspired much veneration.⁴⁰ Likewise, it was probably Grimbald's favored status as Alfred's mass-priest (*mæsseprioste*), and perhaps his involvement in the minster's foundation, that ensured his privileged burial place, for there is no indication that he was considered a saint during his lifetime.⁴¹ In neither case does evidence for cultic activity predate Edward's reign: Grimbald was translated

"Anglorum Saxonum rex" in his 901 charter to New Minster (S 366), for instance. See Keynes, "Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons," 57-62; Keynes, "West Saxon Charters," 1147-49; Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, xxvii and n.17. The prologue to New Minster's *Liber Vitae*, first composed in the 980s, maintained that Edward founded the church "for royal purposes" [regalibus usibus]. For the text, see Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, f.9r; Birch, *Liber Vitae*, 4. For the dating of the opening section of the *Liber Vitae*, see Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, 31-32; see also Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 170-71.

³⁸ See Biddle, "Seasonal Festivities"; Keynes, "West Saxon Charters," 1133. Christopher Brooke postulates that the nave of the Norman Winchester Cathedral was used for "councils of the realm" as well as for ecclesiastical functions, since its size and its proximity to the royal residence "made it as suitable as Westminster" for such gatherings; the same might be concluded about New Minster at the time of its construction. See Brooke, "Bishop Walkelin," 9.

³⁹ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 116-21; Thacker, "*Peculiaris Patronus Noster*," 20-22; Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries."

⁴⁰ On Iudoc's cult, see Lapidge, "*Vita S. Iudoci*," 261-64; Quirk, "Winchester New Minster," 19. Iudoc's relics remained at Winchester, although the community at his home foundation of Saint-Josse claimed to have discovered his relics on the Continent in 977. It is possible that the saint's tenth-century Winchester *vita* was composed as a response to this supposed *inventio*. For the *inventio*, see Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 158-59 for text and 366-67 for commentary; Lapidge, "*Vita S. Iudoci*," 267-68.

⁴¹ Alfred refers to Grimbald as his mass-priest in his preface to Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, identifying him as one of the men (along with Asser, Archbishop Plegemund, and John the Priest) who taught him how to translate Latin into English. See Schreiber, *Regula Pastoralis*, 195 for the text and 14-15 for a discussion of Alfred's teachers.

in the 930s and again between 1057 and 1063; each saint had a Latin *vita* composed in his honor in the second half of the tenth century; and both were included in the Old English list of saints' resting places compiled in the early eleventh century.⁴² The popularity of these saints by the end of the tenth century may have contributed to Old Minster's vigorous promotion of St. Swithun, for Lantfred's story of a crippled man being coaxed away from Iudoc's shrine by a vision of Swithun suggests that the two foundations were competing for pilgrims.⁴³ However, the fact that New Minster boasted only two saints of questionable status and popularity at the time of its foundation is striking when compared with Old Minster's high-profile advertisement of its relic cults; or with the Gloucester minster built by Edward's sister to house the newly claimed remains of the saint-king Oswald; or even with the large relic collection painstakingly assembled by Edward's son and successor, Æthelstan.⁴⁴ At the time of New Minster's dedication, its relic count must have been conspicuously meager, including only a serendipitously transplanted foreign saint and a Frankish priest distinguished primarily by his relationship with Alfred.⁴⁵

⁴² Grimbald's two translations are discussed by Grierson, "Grimbald of St. Bertin," 558-59. The two earliest lives of Iudoc were composed in the second half of the tenth century; see Lapidge, "*Vita S. Iudoci*," 265-66; Grierson, "Grimbald of St. Bertin," 539-40. The *Secgan be þam Godes sanctum*, a list of saints' resting places in England, reported that the relics of Iudoc and Grimbald were in New Minster; see Liebermann, *Heiligen Englands*, 15. For a discussion of the Winchester saints in the *Secgan*, see Rollason, "Lists of Saints' Resting-places"; Rollason, "Shrines of Saints," 36; Biddle, "Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints," 11.

⁴³ See above, n.32, for Lantfred's account of this episode. The popularity of Swithun's cult may have similarly encouraged the community at Nunnaminster to find their own patron saint, Eadburg; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 113-14. For the development of Swithun's cult, see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 8-61; Sheerin, "Dedication of Old Minster," 266-70. For Swithun's competition with Iudoc's cult, see Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, 29.

⁴⁴ On the prominence of relic cults in major Anglo-Saxon churches and their political potential for secular rulers, see Rollason, "Shrines of Saints," 36; Rollason, "Relic-cults as Royal Policy." For Æthelflæd's translation of Oswald and the political value of his relics for the rulers of Mercia, see Yorke, "Bishops of Winchester," 116; Hare, "Documentary Evidence for St Oswald's," 35-36; Thacker, "*Membra Disjecta*," 119-23; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 15-18; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 153-54. For Alfred and Edward's apparent disinterest in relic-collecting, and for Æthelstan's considerable collection of relics, see Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 252-54 and 255-57. See also Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 49-52, for the extensive relic collections of Æthelstan and his successors.

⁴⁵ This was no longer the case by the mid-eleventh century, by which time New Minster claimed nearly one hundred fragmentary and secondary relics; see Birch, *Liber Vitae*, 159-63; Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, 105. For the placement of the reliquaries and Grimbald's shrine inside the minster, see Biddle,

It is certainly possible that the initial paucity of relics represented a deliberate departure from the situation at Old Minster. While the older church was “probably crowded with internal fittings, altars and tombs,” New Minster’s nave was designed as an uncluttered, open space.⁴⁶ The absence of other relics would have accentuated Alfred’s grave and the royal burials that would later join it. This may have been Edward’s intention from the beginning, for although Alfred was never revered as a saint and was even remembered as an oppressor by some monastic communities, his tomb became the object of cult-like activity during his son’s reign.⁴⁷ Even if there had already been displays of reverence at Alfred’s Old Minster grave, further activity would have been catalyzed by Edward’s translation of the body into his newly founded church.⁴⁸ New Minster’s *Liber Vitae* provides a description of the event:

And then, after the completion of his monastic foundation, the most powerful king Edward, striving, for just reasons, to accomplish what he had long planned to do, wished to translate with worthy splendor the remains of his father Alfred, who had been committed to burial in the Old Minster, to a shrine in his own building.⁴⁹

Although this text was composed in the 980s, considerably later than the events it described, there is no reason to doubt that Alfred had in fact been translated into a

“Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints,” 11. It is also noteworthy that New Minster’s dedication changed at least once in the century after its foundation, perhaps signifying an initial lack of cultic focus: the church’s spurious foundation charter (S 370, produced in the late tenth century) recorded that New Minster was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, and St. Peter, though the dedication to Mary may have been added after its foundation; furthermore, by the 960s, the St. Savior seems to have replaced the Holy Trinity as a dedicatee, although the Holy Trinity was again attested in later documents. On New Minster’s dedications, see Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 313 and n.8.

⁴⁶ Quotation from Biddle, *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 314. See also Quirk, “Winchester Cathedral,” 58, for the placement of saints’ tombs in the middle of the church.

⁴⁷ For accounts of Alfred’s abuse of monasteries, see Fleming, “Monastic Lands,” 250-51; for his stinginess in grants to churches, see Thacker, “Dynastic Monasteries,” 251-52.

⁴⁸ See below, n.81, for the possibility that pilgrimage to Alfred’s tomb had begun before his translation.

⁴⁹ “Prepollentissimus denique rex . EADUARDUS . post monasterialis sue fundationis perfectionem... diu quod mente conceperat iustis quidem ex causis exequi moliens cineres sui patris . ALFREDI qui sepulturae mancipatus fuerat in ueteri coenobio . dignis cum apparatus transferri uoluit in propriae edificationis sacello”; see Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, fol. 9r; Birch, *Liber Vitae*, 5. See also Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, 31-32 and 81 for an explication and dating of this passage. Thanks to Carin Ruff for her assistance with this translation.

shrine or chapel with which the author was familiar. But the more immediate implication of this passage is that Alfred's original grave was not fit for such a prestigious inhabitant. We are told that Edward had long been dissatisfied with his father's first burial, for Alfred's previous interment lacked the grandeur that a ruler of his magnitude deserved. A public translation with appropriate ceremony (*dignis apparatibus*) into a new prestigious shrine would allow him his rightful place of honor, ensuring that his remains were not lost among the many tombs of saints, bishops, and earlier West Saxon kings.⁵⁰

Based on this passage of the *Liber Vitae*, Alfred's translation was no casual affair. It was presumably a public ceremonial event, attended by secular magnates and clergy and witnessed by a broad segment of the local population.⁵¹ There are no surviving accounts that detail the translation itself, but comparison may be made with descriptions of another near-contemporary royal translation: that of Edmund of East Anglia, who was killed by Vikings in 869 and translated c.915. According to the *vita* composed by Abbo of Fleury, the king was buried hastily during the chaos that followed his death. When the Viking threat finally subsided, miracles began occurring at his grave, and the local population—"not just the common people but the nobles as well"—built a new church for him "on the royal estate, to which they translated him with great glory, as was fitting."⁵² Some parallels may be drawn between the account

⁵⁰ William of Malmesbury, who credited Alfred with the foundation of New Minster, offered a different perspective on the king's translation: according to the "nonsense of the canons" [deliramento canonicorum], Old Minster was haunted by Alfred's ghost until Edward put his remains at rest in the new church. *GR* ii.124.2.

⁵¹ For large gatherings of secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and for the presentation of the king to the wider population, see Biddle, "Seasonal Festivals," 57-63. The crowd at Alfred's translation might have resembled the audience of Edgar's 966 re-foundation of New Minster: according to the re-foundation charter, the high-status attendees (tabulated by Rumble) included the king's family and "two archbishops, ten bishops, five abbots, six ealdormen, and eight leading thegns"; Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 65.

⁵² "Non solum uulgi sed etiam nobilium"; "in uilla regia... ad quam eum ut decebat transtulit cum magna gloria"; Abbo, "Life of Edmund," 84. Abbo composed his *vita* c.987, claiming to have heard the story of the translation from Archbishop Dunstan (d.985), who had heard it from Edmund's sword-bearer. In his Old English rendition of the *life*, Ælfric of Eynsham, writing at the turn of the eleventh

of Edmund's translation and what we know of Alfred's reburial from the *Liber Vitae*, for both kings were interred unworthily soon after their deaths, only to be translated later into large, newly-built churches in royal centers. Still, there were important differences between the two events. First, Alfred's translation was not inspired by his miraculous powers, as Edmund's was. Second, the earliest extant account of Edmund's elevation was composed in the late tenth century, within recent memory of highly publicized translations of saintly bishops which may have influenced contemporary authors' understanding of what a glorious translation ought to look like.⁵³ However, neither king's translation was said to be initiated by ecclesiastical figures.⁵⁴ In Abbo's text, the *uulgi* and *nobiles* came together to translate their long-dead ruler, building a church on their own initiative, and although this popular enthusiasm may constitute a hagiographical trope, it nevertheless implies that it was acceptable—even admirable—for a cult and translation to be initiated by laymen.

Edward's removal of his father's body from Winchester's established mother church may have been intended to tap a comparable degree of public enthusiasm, especially given New Minster's role as a burh church and local burial place.⁵⁵

century, offered a similar account of the king's translation: he had initially been buried "in great haste" [in swylcere hrædinge], but once peace was restored, "that suffering people then came together and honorably built a church for the saint. They then wanted to bear the holy body with public veneration and lay it inside the church" [þam geswenctan folce, þa fengon hi togædere / and worhton ane cyrcan wurðlice þan halgan... Hi woldon þa ferian mid folclicum wurðmynte / þone halgan lichaman, and læcgan innan þære cyrcan]. Ælfric, LS II, 326.166-75.

⁵³ The prototype for high-profile translations would have been Swithun's at Old Minster in 971, a central event of the monastic reform movement and an occasion that would undoubtedly have been familiar to the authors of these accounts. The fullest description of the event (and the only detailed account of an Anglo-Saxon saint's translation) was provided by Wulfstan of Winchester, writing between 994 and 996. After King Edgar granted Bishop Æthelwold permission to translate Swithun's body, the people of Winchester underwent a three-day fast and vigil, followed by processions, chanting, and incense burning; the saint's body was then unearthed and washed, wrapped in a new shroud, and brought into the church where the bishop celebrated mass. See Lapidge, *Swithun*, 16-18 for the translation and its impact, and 450-63 for an edition and translation of Wulfstan's metrical *vita*. See also Sheerin, "Dedication of the Old Minster," 266-70.

⁵⁴ Ælfric's vernacular rendition of the event similarly mentions the importance of "popular veneration" [folclicum wurðmynte] in Edmund's translation; Ælfric, LS II, 326.174. See also Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity," 63-65, for the importance of lay veneration in the development of Edmund's cult.

⁵⁵ New Minster was exempt from Old Minster's near monopoly on burial; inhabitants of Winchester might choose to be buried at the new foundation instead of at the mother church. The earliest reference

Moreover, this appeal to popular sentiment may shed light on Edward's political concerns at the time of the translation. By moving Alfred's remains out of the cathedral and into a royal foundation conspicuously lacking a bishop's seat, Edward effectively reclaimed his father's corpse for the monarchy—a powerful statement that royal bodies were not subject to episcopal control.⁵⁶ Although later Anglo-Saxon authors made much of the cooperative relationship that was supposed to exist between kings and bishops, tensions between secular and ecclesiastical authorities are often evident in tenth and eleventh century texts.⁵⁷ It is surely significant that Edward radically redrew the episcopal boundaries of Wessex early in his reign, creating new dioceses that reduced the jurisdiction of Winchester's bishops.⁵⁸ Such interference with episcopal affairs could have strained Edward's relationship with the community at Old Minster, which later remembered him as a “greedy king.”⁵⁹ This reputation may

to this right occurs at New Minster's relocation in 1110, but, according to Martin Biddle, “this privilege was apparently well established at New Minster before the move, and there is no reason to suppose that it was then a recent introduction.” Quotation from *Winchester In The Early Middle Ages*, 314; see also Biddle, “*Felix Urbs Winthonia*,” 297, 311 n.38.

⁵⁶ Old Minster's interest in and uses for royal burials were never described in any detail, but comparison may be made with the royal necropolis at Saint-Denis. Georgia Sommers Wright has shown that the right to house royal burials was fiercely guarded by the community of Saint-Denis in the thirteenth century: the abbey cultivated its royal mausoleum in order to increase its prestige, to draw attention to grants and privileges bestowed by earlier rulers (regardless of whether these were genuine or fabricated), and to produce an interdependent relationship with the royal house. Although Old Minster's royal mausoleum was not as all-encompassing as Saint-Denis', the bishop and his community may have had similar ambitions for their foundation. See Wright, “Royal Tomb Program,” 224-39; Spiegel, “Cult of Saint Denis,” 53-58. Elizabeth Hallam provides examples of twelfth and thirteenth-century foundations fighting with each other for the possession of royal corpses; “Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship,” 363-64. Also compare Archbishop Dunstan's efforts to claim King Edward's body for Glastonbury in 946; see Yorke, “Anglo-Saxon Royal Burial,” 42; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 114-15. For lay involvement in early medieval funeral rites, see Nelson, “Carolingian Royal Funerals,” 131-36; Bullough, “Burial, Community and Belief,” 198-200.

⁵⁷ Such cooperation was a particular hallmark of the tenth-century monastic reforms, but bishops had long maintained a presence in kings' retinues, witnessed royal charters, sat on shire courts, and participated in the production of royal law codes. For an overview of the relationships between late Anglo-Saxon bishops and secular authorities, including examples of tenth and eleventh-century conflicts, see Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture*, 35-69. For earlier conflicts, see Yorke, “Bishops of Winchester” and “Foundation of the Old Minster”; Rumble, “Edward the Elder.”

⁵⁸ These new boundaries generally corresponded with existing shire divisions; Rumble, “Edward the Elder,” 238-44.

⁵⁹ “Rex... avidus.” This epithet appears in an Old Minster charter produced in the late tenth or early eleventh century. See S 814; Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 118; see also Rumble, “Edward the Elder,” 244.

have been further reinforced by his father's translation. Alfred's will, preserved in New Minster's *Liber Vitae*, earmarked a sum of fifty pounds "to the church in which I shall rest," and it is not inconceivable that his bequest followed his body out of Old Minster.⁶⁰

Given Edward's infringement upon Old Minster's land rights and revenues, it is not surprising that he wished to install his father's body in a foundation that prioritized royal interests instead of leaving the remains of his predecessor in the power of a disenfranchised cathedral community. It is significant, however, that he appropriated a well-established episcopal ritual in order to do so. Before the rise of papal canonization in the twelfth century, the process of elevation and translation—exhuming a saint's body from its grave and placing it in a more prominent tomb or shrine, so that it was easily accessible for veneration—was the principal means of establishing ecclesiastical control of a cult.⁶¹ In addition to validating the sanctity of the person being translated, the public ceremony, often performed in conjunction with a church dedication, would reinforce the authority of its episcopal officiant; from an observer's standpoint, it was the bishop who determined whether an individual was worthy of full-fledged reverence and installed his relics in a new shrine.⁶² Edward appropriated the superficial, spectacular aspects of this process to his own advantage by initiating and presiding over the ceremonial relocation of a dead body in conjunction with the dedication of his new church. Even without identifying his father as a saint, Edward was able to capitalize on the symbolic impact of saintly translations.

⁶⁰ "To þære cyrican þe ic æt reste"; S 1507, and see Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 173-78 and 313. Alfred Smyth regards this as a "generous burial gift" comparable to the king's monetary bequests to his wife and daughters; Alan Thacker, however, sees this grant as "niggardly." See Smyth, *King Alfred*, 512; Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 252.

⁶¹ See Thacker, "Making of a Local Saint," 72; Rollason, "Relic-cults as Royal Policy," 100-101; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 110.

⁶² Alan Thacker notes that translations often accompanied church dedications, which would have required the presence of a bishop. See Alfred 5; Thacker, "Making of a Local Saint," 65-69.

The ramifications of such an event may be clarified by comparison with yet another royal translation: the twelfth-century elevation of Edward the Confessor, which took place in the midst of conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket. The Confessor was the first English saint to receive papal canonization, yet his 1163 elevation in Westminster was marked by the extensive involvement of the king, who physically lifted and moved the corpse with the help of his nobles while the archbishop and clergy stood by.⁶³ This episode placed the tensions between crown and miter in high relief, and it is not impossible that Edward the Elder's translation had a comparable effect. The paucity of early tenth-century sources makes it impossible to assess whether Edward's relationship with the bishop of Winchester was as problematic as Henry's was with Becket. Nevertheless, the similarities between the two events are striking: both kings arranged the public translation of a prominent predecessor, appropriating an episcopal ceremony for political ends and overshadowing the bishop's role in the proceedings. When considered alongside Edward's dealings with Old Minster and its bishop, Alfred's translation looks as though it was carefully orchestrated to assert the dominance of the monarchy over an increasingly powerful episcopal see.

Edward's interest in his father's remains was not based entirely on his relationship with Winchester's bishops, however. The translation also coincided with a challenge to his accession. In 899 or 900, shortly after Alfred's death, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded an uprising by Edward's first cousin, the ætheling (or prince) Æthelwold:

Then Edward [Alfred's] son ascended to the kingdom. And then Æthelwold, [Edward's] father's brother's son, seized the residence at Wimborne and at Twinham, against the will of the king and his councilors. Then the king rode with the army until he camped at Badbury near Wimborne. And Æthelwold

⁶³ See Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 283-84; Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 85, 95, 296 n.14; Scholz, "Canonization of Edward the Confessor," 56-57.

remained inside the residence with the men who were loyal to him. And he had all the gates barricaded against him and said that he would either live there or die there. Then meanwhile Æthelwold stole away from him in the night and sought the Viking army in Northumbria.⁶⁴

Æthelwold was the son of Æthelred, Alfred's brother, with whom Alfred had ruled jointly until Æthelred's death in 871.⁶⁵ Edward's military successes may have made him an appealing candidate for the throne, but it is reasonable that Æthelwold, himself a king's son, would have made a competing bid for the kingdom and gathered some degree of popular support.⁶⁶ He was confident enough to make a stand at Wimborne, which seems to have been home territory for his branch of the family; his ability to give Edward's army the slip there may also attest to his strength in the region. But Wimborne was also distinguished by the fact that Æthelwold's father was buried there,

⁶⁴ “Þa feng Eadweard his sunu to rice. Þa gerad Æðelwald his fædran sunu þone ham æt Winburnan 7 æt Tweoxneam, butan þæs cynges leafe 7 his witenan. Þa rad se cyning mid firde þæt he gewicode æt Baddanbyrig wið Winburnan; 7 Aðelwald sæt binnan þam ham mid þam monnum þe him to gebugon 7 hæfde ealle þa geatu forworht in to him 7 sæde þæt he wolde oððe oððe ðær libban oððe þær licgan. Þa under þam þa bestæl he hine on niht onweg 7 gesohte þone here on Norðhymbrum”; ASC A 900; translation adapted from Whitelock, *EHD* I, 207. ASC A is the earliest version of this episode, as the annal was probably written between c.915 and c.930; see Bately, *MS A*, xxxvi. The version found in ASC BCD 901 gave somewhat more credence to Æthelwold's claim: he was identified twice as *ætheling*, which emphasized his throne-worthiness, and the entry concluded with the Danish army in Northumbria submitting to him and receiving him as king. ASC A, by contrast, reported that “the king (i.e. Edward) commanded to ride after him, and no one was able to overtake him” [se cyng het ridan æfter, 7 þa ne mehte hine mon ofridan]; ASC A 900. A similar variant is found in the entry for 903 (transposed to 904 in MS A and 905 in BCD), which commemorated Æthelwold's death: whereas ASC BCD described him as “Æthelwold the ætheling, whom they (i.e. the Danes) had chosen as their king” [Aþelwold æþeling, þe hi him to cyninge gecurum], ASC A read “Æthelwold the ætheling, who induced them to that conflict” [Æðelwald æðeling ðe hine to þæm unfriðe gespon]. For ASC A's connection with the West Saxon house and the implications of these variants, see Whitelock, *EHD* I, 207 n.10. For Æthelwold's uprising, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 24.

⁶⁵ See Appendix II for the West Saxon genealogy.

⁶⁶ Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge suggest that Æthelwold's relatively small bequest in Alfred's will partially motivated his move against Edward. At least one member of the Mercian royal house had also joined the Danes against Edward and was killed with Æthelwold at the battle of the Holme in 902 or 903. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 173; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 24; Whitelock, *EHD* I, 208 n.5. For Æthelwold's seniority over Edward and the validity of his claim to the throne, see Yorke, “Edward as Ætheling, 29-31. On the political tensions among Edward, his brothers, and his cousins in the final years of Alfred's reign, as well as the possibility that Edward was not Alfred's preferred heir, see Nelson, “Reconstructing a Royal Family,” 62-66; but see Yorke, “Edward as Ætheling,” for an investigation of Alfred's efforts to ensure that Edward was his heir. Edward's own military initiative and accomplishments during Alfred's reign are described in the Latin Chronicle of ealdorman Æthelweard, a layman writing in the third quarter of the tenth century; *Chronicle of Æthelweard*, 49.

a point not mentioned in any of the Chronicle accounts of the uprising.⁶⁷ Æthelwold apparently considered the site of Æthelred's grave a position of particular strength from which to press his claim to the kingdom. Although Anglo-Saxon writings on the topic are scarce, Continental examples attest that candidates for the throne gained a distinct advantage when they possessed control of their predecessor's corpse.⁶⁸ Æthelwold's actions imply that this was the case in tenth-century England as well, although Edward's army defeated and killed Æthelwold the following year.⁶⁹ There were no further challenges for the throne, yet this early threat to Edward's authority provides an additional context for his translation of Alfred's corpse so soon after he gained the kingdom.⁷⁰ By commandeering and lavishly glorifying his predecessor's remains, Edward hoped to prove himself Alfred's rightful successor in spite of challenges from other aspiring kings—especially those with dead fathers of their own. But this action alone was not sufficient to secure Edward's position. Around the same time as the translation, in the wake of his conflict with his cousin, Edward married Æthelwold's niece and consecrated her queen. English queens were rarely anointed in this period, so this exceptional gesture was presumably intended to reconcile the two branches of the West Saxon family and reinforce the legitimacy of any resulting heirs.⁷¹ Taken together, the marriage and the translation seem to have been carefully

⁶⁷ Asser reported that Æthelred was buried at Wimborne Minster at his death in 871, as did ASC ADE 871 and B 872; ASC C 872 said that he was buried at Sherborne Minster, but no other sources made this claim. See Stevenson, *Asser's Life of Alfred*, 31-32; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 80; Whitelock, *EHD* I, 207 n.5; Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 133; Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 250.

⁶⁸ See Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals." See also Halsall, "Childeric's Grave"; Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, 83-84.

⁶⁹ This point is pursued below, Chapter 3.

⁷⁰ Although the date of Alfred's translation is uncertain, it may have occurred as early as 901, after New Minster was founded but before construction was completed. This is not the only example of a church's consecration and a translation or burial taking place before the building was finished. One eleventh-century source claims that Edward the Confessor was installed in Westminster before it was fully constructed, and St. Swithun was translated into Winchester's Norman cathedral when only the east end of the church had been built and consecrated. See Scholz, "Sulcard," 69; Kjolbye-Biddle, "Old Minster," 13.

⁷¹ Æthelwold's niece was Ælflæd. The marriage probably occurred in 900 or 901, before which Edward was joined with—though perhaps not married to—Ecgwyna, the mother of his oldest son and

arranged to prove the legitimacy of Edward's rule, aiming to mitigate tensions within the royal family while reinforcing Edward's own position as the rightful heir to Alfred's undisputed authority.⁷²

A final event should be included in this discussion of Edward's use of Alfred's body: an exonerating pilgrimage to the king's tomb, undertaken by an outlawed thief in order to secure his pardon. The episode is related in the Fonthill Letter, a unique Old English document that detailed two thefts committed by a thegn named Helmstan and the ensuing fate of his property at Fonthill.⁷³ Addressed to Edward, the letter was composed by ealdorman Ordlaaf, Helmstan's sponsor at conformation and his chief advocate in a case that spanned more than two decades.⁷⁴ It opened by recounting the circumstances of the first theft, detailing Ordlaaf's own successful appeal to King Alfred on Helmstan's behalf, some twenty years earlier. Ordlaaf then reviewed the

eventual successor Æthelstan. Despite Ælflæd's probable consecration, her union with Edward appears to have ended before her death, allowing the king to enter into another politically advantageous marriage; it is possible that their marriage was dissolved on the basis of consanguinity, as the two were second cousins. For the political implications of Edward's marriage to Ælflæd, see Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 70; Sharpe, "Dynastic Marriage," 81-82; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 41-42. For the date of their marriage and the likelihood of her consecration as queen, see Nelson, "Second English Ordo," 367; for the status of West Saxon queens and the frequency of their repudiation, see Stafford, "King's Wife in Wessex."

⁷² It is also possible that Edward was not actually involved in Alfred's first funeral at Old Minster. It is conceivable that Edward did not make it to Winchester in time to see his father buried, especially if he had already become embroiled in a succession dispute. Edward's absence at his father's burial could have undermined the solidity of his claim to the throne; if this were the case, it is no wonder that he took considerable pains to forge a relationship with Alfred's remains, demonstrating his visible, fleshly link with his predecessor. For the political ramifications of Louis the Pious' absence at his father Charlemagne's funeral, see Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 146-49; for later Continental parallels, see Hallam, "Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship," 367. For royal funerals as a moment of political crisis, see Buc, *Danger of Ritual*, 83-87; Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 135-36; Binski, *Medieval Death*, 60-61. The relationship between funerals and royal succession is discussed below, Chapter 3.

⁷³ Simon Keynes' work on the Fonthill Letter is indispensable, offering an edition and translation of the text along with extensive commentary. On internal evidence, Keynes dates the letter to c.920, some two decades after the events it described. The events themselves spanned the reigns of Alfred and Edward and probably took place over the course of eighteen months or two years; Keynes dates them to between 897 and 901. See Keynes, "Fonthill Letter," 56 and 94-95. The text is also indexed as S 1445 and listed as numbers 23-26 in Wormald's "Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Lawsuits," 247-81.

⁷⁴ Simon Keynes accepts Ordlaaf as the author. For the possibility that a third party was involved in its composition, see Boynton and Reynolds, "Author of the Fonthill Letter," 91-95; Gretsch, "Fonthill Letter: Language, Law," 668-89.

particulars of the thegn's second offense, committed early in Edward's reign (c.900), in an attempt to ascertain Helmstan's legal standing and confirm the status of his land at Fonthill. We are told that after his second theft, Helmstan was declared an outlaw by the king and had his property confiscated by a royal reeve. At this point in the narrative, Ordlafe recalls an earlier exchange with Edward:

Then Helmstan sought your father's body (*lic*) and brought a seal (*insigle*) to me, and I was with you [Edward] at Chippenham. Then I gave the seal to you, and you removed his outlawry and gave him the estate to which he has withdrawn.⁷⁵

No further context is provided for this episode, but there is evidently a direct correlation between Helmstan's visit to Alfred's body and Edward's reversal of his sentence. An interpretation of this exchange requires some explanation of what the *insigle*, or seal, actually was. Although the word sometimes refers to a wax seal, the Old English *insigle* can also indicate a sealed document, perhaps one which confirmed Helmstan's visit or attested that he had sworn an oath at Alfred's tomb.⁷⁶ This act may be analogous to the legal practice of vouching a dead man to warranty, that is, testifying that a transaction was legitimate after one of its participants had died.⁷⁷ Yet as a repeat offender, Helmstan would not normally have been trustworthy enough to

⁷⁵ "Ða gesahte he ðines fæder lic 7 brohte insigle to me, 7 ic wæs æt Cippanhomme mit te. Ða ageaf ic ðæt insigle ðe. 7 ðu him forgeafe his eard 7 ða are ðe he got on gebogen hæfð." Translation adapted from Keynes, "Fonthill Letter," 88.

⁷⁶ The Old English *insegel* is glossed as *sigillum* or *bullā*, referring to a seal, a seal-ring, or the wax used to create a seal on a document. Late Anglo-Saxon sealed writs were pieces of parchment with wax seals suspended from them, rather than set directly on the page. The earliest surviving sealed writs date from Edward the Confessor's reign, but a similar format may have been used before his reign. See Harmer, *Writs*, 12-13 and 92-93; Bosworth-Toller, 596.

⁷⁷ This possibility is presented by Simon Keynes. Vouching a dead man to warranty occurred in two Old English law codes: Ine 53 (which was appended to Alfred's own laws) and the later tenth-century II Æthelred 9.2. In Ine's law, a person who had acquired a stolen slave from a seller who subsequently died could vouch the dead man to warranty, thus proving that he was not a thief himself: "let him vouch the dead man's grave to warranty for the slave, and let him declare on an oath of sixty hides that the dead hand sold the slave to him" [tieme þonne þone mon to þæs deadan byrgelse... 7 cyðe on þam aðe be LX hida, þæt sio deade hond hine him sealde]. Translation adapted from Attenborough, *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 53-55. See also Keynes, "Fonthill Letter," 88-89.

clear his name with an oath.⁷⁸ Alternatively, the presentation of a royal writ or seal could have simply been an ordinary way to initiate pleas or judgments, for a similar action is attested in a handful of other Anglo-Saxon lawsuits.⁷⁹ However, Helmstan's case is unique in two ways. First, the seal was acquired at the body of a dead ruler; and second, its presentation prompted an immediate judgment by the king rather than further legal action by royal subordinates.

A less troublesome explanation for Helmstan's visit to Winchester is that he was seeking sanctuary. Under Alfred's laws, an offender could be granted a period of respite if he took refuge from his pursuers in any "church which the bishop consecrated," with the peace (*grið*) extended to the church's outlying buildings.⁸⁰ The Fonthill Letter made no explicit mention of a church or consecrated ground, but this episode is centered around Alfred's remains, which were undoubtedly inside a minster.⁸¹ The direct mention of the body (*lic*) must be significant here, for rather than referring euphemistically to the king's tomb or to his burial church, Ordlaaf unambiguously cited a corpse as Helmstan's objective. This choice of vocabulary forces a comparison with saintly relics—dead bodies or body parts which could provide an effective refuge for asylum-seekers.⁸² Given the ever increasing royal interest in sanctuary rights during the tenth century and Edward's enthusiastic

⁷⁸ Furthermore, Ordlaaf was not available to vouch for him after the second theft, as he had been after the first. See Keynes, "Fonthill Letter," 65, 80, and 84-85 for Helmstan's oath-worthiness, and 76 for Ordlaaf's presence at Helmstan's first oath.

⁷⁹ For this use of seals or writs, see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 157-58.

⁸⁰ "Cirican, ðe biscep gehalgode"; Alfred 5. See also Alfred 2; Ine 5-5.1; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 280.

⁸¹ Keynes concludes that Alfred's grave was still at Old Minster when this episode occurred, based on his assessment that the events described here occurred c.900. This dating is based on Ordlaaf's vague recollection of when these events took place relative to his last consultation with Alfred: "I do not know whether it was a year and a half or two years later" [ymban oðer healf gear nat ic hweðer ðe ymb tua]. It is not impossible that a greater amount of time had actually elapsed and that the king's tomb had already been moved to New Minster. In any case, neither scenario is incompatible with my argument here. See Keynes, "Fonthill Letter," 78 and 88 n.143.

⁸² For saintly relics as destinations for seekers of sanctuary, see Hall, "Sanctuary of St Cuthbert," 425; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 94-95.

cultivation of his father's tomb around the year 900, it is conceivable that Edward declared Alfred's body a site of sanctuary.⁸³

This possibility becomes more compelling when Helmstan's case is set beside a series of eleventh and early twelfth-century writs requesting pardon for offenders who had sought the tomb of Edward the Confessor.⁸⁴ In the earliest of these documents, Westminster's abbot and monks request that the sheriff "have mercy on and forgive" an offender who "sought out Christ and Saint Peter and the grave of King Edward."⁸⁵ The earliest Latin writ, composed in the first quarter of the twelfth century, reveals even closer parallels with the Fonthill account:

Abbot Gilbert and the community of Westminster greet all the faithful of the king of the English. Know that this Jordanus has sought the altar of Saint Peter and the body (*corpus*) of King Edward, and therefore we pray that he receive liberty of his body and the king's peace.⁸⁶

This formula mirrors Ordlaf's reference to Alfred's *lic*, expressly stating that the offender sought Edward's *corpus*.⁸⁷ It is not impossible that Helmstan's *insigle* was attached to a writ with a comparable Latin formula, which Ordlaf rendered into Old English with the phrase *gesahte he ðines fæder lic*, "he sought your father's body."⁸⁸ Another mid-twelfth century Westminster example cited the abbey's long tradition of amnesty for outlaws: "the custom and privilege and the dignity were granted to this

⁸³ On royal interest in laws of sanctuary during the Anglo-Saxon period, see Hurnard, *King's Pardon for Homicide*, 3-4; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 95-96; Hall, "Sanctuary of St Cuthbert," 431.

⁸⁴ Most of these writs predate the Confessor's formal canonization in 1161. In addition to those quoted below, the relevant texts are Mason 239 (English, 1085 x 1117), 248 (Latin, 1121 x 1136), 272 (Latin, 1138 x 1154), 274 (Latin, 1138 x 1157), and 279 (Latin, 1158 x 1174).

⁸⁵ "Gemiltsie and forgif"; "gesoht to Criste and Sancte Petre and Eadwardes Kynges rste"; Mason 238 (1086 x c.1104).

⁸⁶ "Gilbertus abbas et conventus Westmonasterii omnibus fidelibus Regis Anglie salutem. Sciatis quod iste Jordanus altare Sancti Petri et corpus [*sic*] Regis Edwardi requisivit, et ideo precamur ut libertatem sui corporis et pacem regis habeat"; Mason 240 (1105 x 1117).

⁸⁷ Examples dating from the 1130s onwards, by contrast, cite *sepulcrum Regis Edwardi* as the outlaws' destination.

⁸⁸ On the Fonthill Letter as evidence for lay literacy, see Gretsch, "Language of 'the Fonthill Letter'" and "Fonthill Letter: Language, Law."

church of St. Peter [Westminster] by the ancient kings of England.”⁸⁹ Such claims of ancient rights should be approached cautiously, for there is no direct evidence that Westminster enjoyed continuous rights of asylum before and after the Conquest. Nevertheless, these writs reveal a process of sanctuary and pardon analogous to Helmstan’s case some two centuries earlier: after his outlawry, an offender sought the grave of a non-saintly king; he received a seal or sealed document confirming that he had visited the body; and the appropriate authorities consequently rescinded his punishment.⁹⁰ Ordlafe’s casual reference to the *insigle* and its presentation to the king hints that this was not a singular event that required further explanation, even though the exchange may have occurred as much as twenty years earlier. Furthermore, Edward’s quick pardon of a repeat offender—reversing his reeve’s judgment, annulling his own pronouncement of outlawry, and forgiving Helmstan’s apparent violation of his requisite loyalty oath—suggests that his decision was based on a policy of conditional forgiveness.⁹¹ This implies that an official procedure for confirming visits to Alfred’s tomb had been established in the opening years of

⁸⁹ “Est consuetudo et privilegium et ab antiquis Anglie regibus dignitas ista ecclesie Sancti Petri donata”; Mason 272 (1138 x 1154).

⁹⁰ Notwithstanding Paul Hyams’ assertion that the Westminster documents “seem to envision trouble coming from victims and their friends, and carry almost no reference to royal justice,” the two English examples (Mason 238 and 239) and two of the five Latin ones (Mason 274 and 279) were addressed to sheriffs alone, while a fifth example was addressed to *Aylwyno vicecomiti et omnibus baronibus de Southsexia* (Mason 272). The remaining Latin writs, earlier than the others but closer in date to the English documents, were addressed to *omnibus fidelibus Regis Anglie* (Mason 240 and 248). Although the phrasing of these writs does not preclude a feud scenario, the documents’ addressees indicate that local officials were involved in these exchanges as well as any wronged parties. See Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 135 and 195.

⁹¹ This anticipates VIII Æthelred 1.1, which allows an offender the opportunity to redeem a *botleas* offense—i.e. an offense that cannot be remedied with compensation—if he “should seek so great a sanctuary that the king grant him life on account of it” [swa deope friðsocne gesece þæt se cyning him þurh þæt feores geunne]. If, as Keynes suggests, Helmstan’s greatest offense was violating his oath to the king (which may have included a promise not to commit theft), the *botleas* offense of treachery was in fact pardoned after his visit to Alfred’s tomb. The reason why he was initially sentenced to outlawry and not outright death like most thieves is, as Keynes notes, unclear, but may hint that he enjoyed a considerable degree of social status. See Keynes, “Fonthill Letter,” 81-84, 87-88; on violation of loyalty oaths as an act of treason, see Wormald, “Charters, Law,” 165. For Anglo-Saxon kings’ right to rescind punishment, see Hurnard, *King’s Pardon for Homicide*, 1-5; for appeals of sanctuary as gestures equivalent to acts of penance, see Olson, “Sanctuary and Penitential Rebirth.”

Edward's reign and that outlawed offenders were one group who might benefit from this system.

Whether or not similar policies had been in place before 899, it is clear that Alfred's body was invested with an array of symbolic meanings in the wake of his son's ascension. Edward's decision to make his father's remains a focal point in his new foundation, removing Alfred's corpse simultaneously from episcopal control and from the traditional burial place of West Saxon rulers, demonstrates how completely a king might dictate the conditions of royal burial. Without declaring his father a saint—even implicitly acknowledging in his charters that Alfred's soul needed whatever help it could get—Edward made his tomb a centerpiece of New Minster, a founder's grave around which a mausoleum for the kings of a new, united Anglo-Saxon kingdom might emerge. It is even possible that the unrestricted burial rights granted by New Minster to the inhabitants of Winchester encouraged burial around the city's royal minster instead of its episcopal church, allowing citizens to be interred *ad potentes* as well as *ad sanctos*.⁹²

But despite Edward's intentions, New Minster's royal necropolis did not endure. Ælfweard, Edward's son and heir, was buried in New Minster less than a month after he came to power upon his father's death. He was succeeded by Edward's eldest son, his half-brother Æthelstan, who was raised in Mercia and whose accession was initially resisted by the West Saxon nobility.⁹³ Although Æthelstan was ultimately accepted as king in Wessex, he chose to be entombed at Malmesbury upon his death in 939, revealing his Mercian loyalties and perhaps a disinclination to be buried

⁹² For analogous examples of burials situated "*ad potentiores*," see Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 211.

⁹³ See Appendix II for the West Saxon genealogy. William of Malmesbury reported that there was an early plot to have Æthelstan blinded at Winchester, and the year-long delay before his consecration suggests that he encountered resistance in Wessex. The favored West Saxon candidate was likely Ælfweard's brother, Eadwine, who would drown in 933. See William of Malmesbury, *GR*, ii.137.1; Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 70-73.

alongside his father's second wife and her children.⁹⁴ His successor, Edmund, likewise rejected the established West Saxon mausolea at Winchester in favor of burial at Glastonbury; and although Eadred, Edmund's brother and heir, was buried at Old Minster, his written will implies that he too had intended to be buried somewhere other than Winchester.⁹⁵ The last Anglo-Saxon king to be buried at New Minster was Eadwig, Edward the Elder's grandson, whose desire to incorporate himself into Edward and Alfred's mausoleum may reflect an attempt to dissociate himself from his father Edmund and his uncle Eadred.⁹⁶ Just as Æthelstan's problems with his father's West Saxon subjects led him to shun burial at New Minster, Eadwig's conflicts with the supporters of his late father and uncle—as well as with his brother Edgar, who would eventually succeed him—inspired him to associate himself in death with an earlier set of legitimizing ancestors. Despite its general failure to attract new royal burials, Edward the Elder's necropolis at New Minster clearly remained a recognizable source of political legitimacy some sixty years after its foundation. Even without professions of sanctity, Edward's careful positioning of Alfred's tomb made it

⁹⁴ Æthelstan emerged as a powerful king who expanded his territory, established tributary relationships with other rulers in the British Isles, and developed solid diplomatic ties with his Continental counterparts. His overall success may have impacted his decision not to be entombed in his father's mausoleum, for by rejecting burial at New Minster, Æthelstan demonstrated that he was not reliant upon his predecessors for political legitimacy. It may also be relevant, however, that there is no record that he had any sons: if he had had children who might challenge the claims of his half-brothers (Edmund and Eadred) upon his death, Æthelstan would perhaps have felt a greater imperative to emphasize his descent from a legitimizing royal line. For Æthelstan's move away from New Minster, see Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 254-56; for his career and influence, see Wood, "King Æthelstan's Empire"; for his unmarried status at the time of his death, see Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 73-74

⁹⁵ Edmund was buried at Glastonbury in 946, and Eadred was entombed at Old Minster in 955. In his will, Eadred's first bequest was made to "that place where he wants his body to rest" [þære stowe þær he wile þæt his lic reste]; this was followed by bequests to Old Minster, New Minster, and Nunnaminster, implying that none of these was meant to be his burial church. Sean Miller contends that his "wish to be buried elsewhere... was apparently overturned in the turmoil of the accession of his nephew Eadwig," who seems to have ignored or reclaimed Eadred's bequests to the Winchester minsters. Eadred's will is S 1515. Quotation from Miller, "Eadred," 150; see also Miller, *Charters of the New Minster*, 78-80. For Edmund's and Eadred's patronage of Glastonbury, and the suggestion that Eadred intended to be buried there with his brother, see Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries," 256.

⁹⁶ For the politics of Eadwig's reign, see Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 74-79.

a focus of cult-like activity that continued to advertise the prestige of the Anglo-Saxon royal line. A similar phenomenon occurred a century and a half later, at Edward the Confessor's Westminster.

Westminster Abbey, London: 1051-1066

The *Vita Æwardi*, the earliest account of the life and death of Edward the Confessor (r.1042-1066), was effusive in its praise of the king's construction of Westminster Abbey during the 1050s and 1060s.⁹⁷ The anonymous author provided a detailed account of its lavish re-foundation under Edward's patronage, including an extensive description of the new Romanesque building. Writing just before the king's death, he attributed Edward's patronage of the church to an exceptional devotion to St. Peter: "especially because of his love of the Prince of the Apostles, whom he worshipped with uncommon and special love, he decided to have his burial place there."⁹⁸ Such a sentiment is characteristic of the *Vita*, which was commissioned by Edward's queen and designed as a tribute to her husband's piety, but other near-contemporary sources also ascribed the king's interest in Westminster to religious sentiment.⁹⁹ A generous gift might improve one's chances of salvation in the next life, and there is no reason to doubt that Edward anticipated a spiritual reward for his endowment of the abbey.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ The first part of the *Vita* (Book I in Barlow's edition) was begun during the king's lifetime and culminated with his death in January 1066; it described Edward's life and reign, and included a description of Westminster. The second part of the *Vita* (Book II) is dated to 1067, after the Battle of Hastings and William the Conqueror's succession to the kingdom; its subject was Edward's piety and miracles. On the dating of the work, see *Vita Æwardi*, xiv-xxx; and above, Chapter 1.

⁹⁸ "Potissimum autem ob amorem principalis apostoli, quem affectu colebat unico et speciali, eligit ibi habere sibi locum sepulchri"; *Vita Æwardi*, 44-45.

⁹⁹ ASC CD 1065 praised Edward's patronage of Westminster, "which he himself built out of love of God and Saint Peter and all God's saints" [þe he sylf getimbrode Gode to lofe 7 Sancte Petre 7 eallum Godes halgum]; quotation from C. The Westminster monk Sulcard provided a unique account of Edward's motivations in his *Prologus de constructione Westmonasterii*, a history of the foundation composed between c.1076 and c.1085: Edward had planned to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome but was dissuaded by his subjects, who feared chaos in his absence; the king honored St. Peter with a new church at Westminster instead. See Scholz, "Sulcard," 68-69 and 90-91.

¹⁰⁰ This logic is implicit in the bequests to churches which appear regularly in Anglo-Saxon wills. In the succinct phrasing of Archbishop Wulfstan (d.1023), "whoever adorns churches for the love of God

Yet mundane concerns are also evident in the king's enthusiastic patronage of Westminster, and its re-foundation is tellingly similar to Edward the Elder's commission of New Minster a century and a half earlier. Like its Winchester counterpart, the Confessor's Westminster was designed from the outset as a royal foundation that would house an entirely new mausoleum, with its patron's tomb as a focal point. Furthermore, it quickly became a locus for political activity and popular worship within the emerging economic and administrative capital of the kingdom, and its large size and sophisticated architecture ensured that it would overshadow the nearby episcopal church. The Confessor, like his early tenth-century namesake, wanted his new church to proclaim the authority, wealth, and prestige of the monarchy, even as it advertised his piety.¹⁰¹

Unlike Edward the Elder, however, the Confessor did not establish an entirely new foundation for his burial church. Westminster was a working monastery with an illustrious history before it attracted the Confessor's attention.¹⁰² According to the abbey's later tradition, the first church on the site was established in the early seventh century at the request of King Æthelberht of Kent, who wished to complement his London see of St. Paul's with a foundation dedicated to St. Peter.¹⁰³ Westminster enjoyed the intermittent patronage of Anglo-Saxon rulers in the following centuries, and King Edgar granted the foundation in the mid-tenth century to Archbishop

benefits himself greatly" [miclum fremed se him sylfum þe Gode to lofe cyrcan gegearwað]; Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 248.

¹⁰¹ For Edward the Elder as the Confessor's namesake, see Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 28-30.

¹⁰² Westminster was a functional monastery by the mid-tenth century; accounts of its earlier history were first produced at the abbey in the late eleventh century. The foundation was located about two miles from London's walls, on Thorney Island. See Harvey, *Westminster and Its Estates*, 20-22 and 372; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 2-3; Scholz, "Sulcard," 65.

¹⁰³ This account originated with Sulcard, who claimed that the original church had been miraculously consecrated by St. Peter; the fifteenth-century Westminster historian John Flete envisioned second-century origins. Bede claimed that the church was conceived by Æthelberht but endowed by the East Saxon king Sæberht and his wife, who were later thought to be buried there. On Westminster's foundation legends, see Scholz, "Sulcard," 64-66 and 72-74; Harvey, *Westminster and Its Estates*, 20-21; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 1-3. See also Bede, *HE* II.3, for Sæberht's predilection for founding major churches.

Dunstan, who installed monks in place of its community of regular clergy.¹⁰⁴ Despite this royal and episcopal attention, Westminster supported only a modest community of a dozen monks by the mid-eleventh century.¹⁰⁵ The reformed monastery had a comfortable endowment, but this did not stop the Confessor's biographer from claiming that its residents could only just feed themselves when Edward began his patronage.¹⁰⁶ It was from this purported poverty that the king rescued St. Peter's, according to the *Vita Ædwardi*:

The king, therefore, being devoted to God, gave his attention to that place, for it neighbored the famous and rich city and was also a sufficiently sunny spot, surrounded with fertile lands and green fields and near the channel of the principal river, which bore abundant merchandise of wares of every kind for sale from the whole world to the town on its banks. . . Accordingly he ordered that out of the tithes of all his revenues, the building of a noble edifice should be started, worthy of the Prince of the Apostles, so that he would make God well-disposed towards him after the transitory course of this life, both for the sake of his piety and for the gift of lands and ornaments with which he intended to ennoble that place.¹⁰⁷

Although the author emphasized Edward's love of God and St. Peter in this passage,

¹⁰⁴ Earlier royal patrons included Offa of Essex (r.694-709), Offa of Mercia (r.757-796), Edgar (r.957-975), Æthelred II (r.978-1016), Cnut (r.1016-1035), and Harold Harefoot (r.1035-1040). The earliest foundation housed a community of secular clerics, and there is no evidence of a monastery before Archbishop Dunstan purchased the church and some of its estates from Edgar. The community later dated its establishment as a monastery to 958, while Dunstan was bishop of London (957-959); but the re-foundation may be more accurately dated to 970, when he was reforming other houses after becoming archbishop of Canterbury. See Mason, *Westminster Charters*, 1; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 4-17; Harvey, *Westminster and Its Estates*, 20 and 22-23; Scholz, "Sulcard," 66-68; Rosser, *Medieval Westminster*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ See Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 9; William of Malmesbury, *GP* ii.81.1.

¹⁰⁶ According to the *Vita Ædwardi*, the monastery was "small in buildings and numbers, for under the abbot only a small community of monks served Christ. Moreover, the endowments from the faithful were slender, and provided no more than their daily bread" [paruo... opere et numero, paucioribus ibi congregatis monachis sub abbate in seruitio Christi; res quoque eorum usibus a fidelibus date tenues et ipse erant in amministrazione uictus cotidiani]; *Vita Ædwardi* 44. Barbara Harvey calculates that in 1042, Westminster was worth about £80 annually: "In comparison with other English monasteries of this period, it was in fact neither poor nor rich"; *Westminster and Its Estates*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ "Intendit ergo deo deuotus rex locum illum, tum uicinum famose et opulente urbi, tum satis apricum ex circumiacentibus fecundis terris et uiridantibus prediis atque proximo decursu principalis fluuii, a toto orbe ferentis uniuersarum uenaliu reru copiosas merces subiecte ciuitati... Precipit deinde ex decimis omnium reddituum suorum initiari opus nobilis edificii, quod deceret apostoloru principem, quatinus propitium sibi pararet deum post huius uite cursum labilem, et pro gratia pietatis sue, et pro oblatione predioru et ornamentorum quibus eundem locum disponit nobilitare"; *Vita Ædwardi*, 44-45.

Westminster's proximity to a thriving economic hub—the “famous and rich city” of London—is also listed as a major advantage. Whether this passage provided genuine insight into the Confessor's professed intentions for the site or whether it simply anticipated the foundation's later importance as a royal center, the author implied that the king's mausoleum was designed from its inception as a prominent landmark in a highly trafficked area. The local population dependent on the Thames, as well as itinerant merchants hocking foreign goods, would pass regularly within sight of the king's burial church.¹⁰⁸

The ensuing building lived up to the promise of this location, for Westminster would become the largest and most architecturally ambitious foundation in the British Isles, on par with the greatest Continental churches of its day. The author of the *Vita Ædwardi* maintained that the king spared no expense in the construction and decoration of the church: “there was no weighing of the costs, past or future, so long as it proved worthy of, and acceptable to, God and St Peter.”¹⁰⁹ The foundation's size alone explains the magnitude of the expense: the building was nearly a hundred meters long, a good deal larger than any contemporary English or Norman church.¹¹⁰ Although its dimensions were rivaled only by the Imperial cathedrals of Mainz and Speyer, its architecture closely resembled the abbey of Jumièges, whose Norman

¹⁰⁸ For the situation of Westminster's estates near major roads and routes around London, see Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 9-10; for London's desirability as a royal center, see Mason, “Site of King-making,” 57. Gervase Rosser credits London's steadily increasing prosperity in later generations to the Confessor's establishment of Westminster as a political and religious center; *Medieval Westminster*, 14-16.

¹⁰⁹ “Nec impensa siui impendenda pensantur, dummodo deo et beato Petro dignum et acceptum probetur”; *Vita Ædwardi*, 45. On Edward's endowment of Westminster, see Harvey, *Westminster and Its Estates*, 24-25; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 16-17.

¹¹⁰ It measured 98.2 meters. For the size of the abbey and its Continental parallels, see Gem, “Romanesque Rebuilding,” 45-46; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 13-14; Mason, “Site of King-making,” 59-60. Christopher Brooke notes that large monastic churches of the late eleventh century allowed a larger portion of the population to worship together with the resident religious community; see “Princes and Kings as Patrons,” 130-32.

abbot was involved in Westminster's construction.¹¹¹ Like Edward the Elder's enormous and modern New Minster, Edward the Confessor's Westminster was unparalleled by local churches and would have stood out among the nearby urban structures.¹¹²

Yet where Edward the Elder established New Minster *ex nihilo*, the Confessor chose to patronize an established monastery instead of founding his own. Instead of simply expanding or renovating the existing monastic complex, however, the Confessor commissioned an entirely new building for the monks of St. Peter's.¹¹³ The *Vita Ædwardi* attributes this decision to Edward's desire not to disturb the prayers of the monks: "the whole complex of this enormous building was started so far to the east of the old church that the brethren dwelling there should not have to cease from Christ's service."¹¹⁴ This is a reasonable consideration, but it is not enough to explain why Edward carefully selected a seventh-century foundation only to abandon its

¹¹¹ The abbot of Jumièges was Robert Champart, whom Edward appointed bishop of London in 1044 and archbishop of Canterbury in 1051. He was involved in rebuilding both Jumièges and Westminster from the 1040s onwards, and Richard Gem convincingly argues that Westminster in fact provided the template for the Norman abbey; "Romanesque Rebuilding," 46-55. The case for the primacy of Jumièges is set forth in Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 230-32; *Vita Ædwardi*, 45-46. It is significant that the large cathedral at Speyer was the necropolis of the Salian emperors between 1024 and 1125; Hallam, "Royal Burial," 367.

¹¹² William of Malmesbury reported that Westminster was "built using for the first time in England the style which almost everyone now tries to rival at great expense" [illo compositionis genere primus in Anglia edificauerat quod nunc pene cuncti sumptuosis emulantur expensis]; *GR* ii.228.6. For the novelty of Westminster's Romanesque architecture in England and for local opposition to the style, see Gem, "Resistance to Romanesque Architecture." For comparable building projects begun in London after Westminster's construction, see Gem, "Romanesque Architecture of St Paul's." See also Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 13.

¹¹³ Richard Gem contends that the complete replacement of an earlier church, rather than a renovation of an existing structure, represented a break from earlier English building practices: through the eleventh century, seventh and eighth-century foundations were preserved amid expansions and renovations in major English churches (including Old Minster, Winchester, and the abbeys at Glastonbury and Canterbury), with the remnants of earlier structures identified as "holy relics of the founders of the church." See "Resistance to Romanesque Architecture," 133-34; "Romanesque Rebuilding," 46.

¹¹⁴ "Hec autem multiplicitas tam uasti operis tanto spatio ab oriente ordita est ueteris templi, ne scilicet interim inibi commorantes fratres uacarent a seruitio Christi"; *Vita Ædwardi*, 46. The original church would later be razed to make room for more expansive building works; this would have been done before Sulcard wrote his account of Westminster's construction in the third quarter of the eleventh century. See Gem, "Romanesque Rebuilding," 37-38.

existing buildings. It is likely that the king had a twofold plan for the site. On the one hand, he wanted to write himself into the prestigious history of a foundation with conversion-era royal roots. On the other hand, he wished to produce a completely new architectural monument that could be attributed entirely to his own initiative. Just as Edward the Elder maintained his dynasty's presence in Winchester while removing his immediate family from the ranks of West Saxon rulers, the Confessor, in adopting Westminster, participated in a tradition of patronage that linked him to the earliest Anglo-Saxon kings while singling himself out among his predecessors as the most extravagantly generous of St. Peter's benefactors.

Although the existing monastery on the site was not threatened by the Confessor's new construction, Westminster nevertheless superseded the heretofore premier church of London: St. Paul's cathedral. Located inside the city walls, St. Paul's claimed an even earlier origin than Westminster, but unlike St. Peter's, it was the site of a bishop's seat and a substantial community of regular clergy.¹¹⁵ It also housed popular saints' cults and, notably, lay adjacent to London's royal palace. Edward soon abandoned this residence, however, designating Westminster the city's royal center and relocating the palace next door to the new St. Peter's.¹¹⁶ Perhaps this move was motivated by a desire for distance from London's episcopal see. Alternatively, an association with the reformed monks of St. Peter's may have brought the monarchy more spiritual prestige than a relationship with the secular clergy of St. Paul's.¹¹⁷ Yet it is surely significant that Edward's father, Æthelred II "the Unready,"

¹¹⁵ As in Winchester, competition between the two establishments soon emerged; the greatest point of contention was Westminster's claim to be independent of St. Paul's episcopal authority. See Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 9 and 260-62.

¹¹⁶ Emma Mason suggests that this shift began under Cnut, since Westminster was recognized as an appropriate site for a royal burial by the time Harold Harefoot died in 1040; *Westminster and Its People*, 11-12 and 14.

¹¹⁷ The monastic reforms of the late tenth century were characterized by the expulsion of secular clergy from cathedral churches. Faulted especially for their lax lifestyles and their tolerance of clerical marriage, many secular communities were replaced by Benedictine monks. These were considered more effective spiritual intercessors than clerics, as their greater isolation from the world let them live

was buried at St. Paul's. Whereas earlier kings—including Edward the Elder and Harthacnut, the Confessor's half-brother and predecessor—were eager to reinforce the solidarity of their dynastic lines by having themselves buried near their fathers, the Confessor chose not to associate himself with his father's tomb.¹¹⁸ Æthelred was remembered by many as an exceptionally poor king, and Edward perhaps believed that burial at St. Paul's would have associated him with a reign that had been widely, if retrospectively, condemned.¹¹⁹

Still, Edward did not opt to be buried with his immediate predecessor either. His half-brother Harthacnut (r.1040-42) was entombed at Old Minster, and although Edward had reigned jointly with Harthacnut and lavished attention upon his brother's remains at the time of his ascension, he was not interested in a Winchester burial of his own. Perhaps this was a rejection of the legitimizing power of his predecessors, comparable to Æthelstan's disinterest in his father's New Minster mausoleum.¹²⁰ It seems more likely, however, that Edward saw no practical advantage in associating himself with his father or brother so late in his reign. Instead, he asserted his authority by setting himself apart from his predecessors' tombs, confirming his royal status with

more purely than their secular counterparts. Although the reforms had a major impact on religious life and thought in the late Anglo-Saxon period, their influence was not universal, as evidenced by the survival of regular communities of secular clergy at major churches like St. Paul's. It is likely, however, that the efficacy of intercessory prayers was a matter of concern for a king choosing a burial church, and Edward's selection of Westminster over St. Paul's may indicate a desire to employ the most religiously rigorous community possible to intercede on his behalf after his death.

¹¹⁸ See Appendix III for the Confessor's genealogy. Catherine Karkov attributes Edward's interest in London to a "desire to associate himself with his father" and distance himself from his mother, Cnut, and the Godwins, who all had strong associations with Winchester. While I agree that the king's patronage of Westminster constitutes a deliberate departure from Winchester's royal center, I can find little evidence that Edward cultivated a relationship with Æthelred's remains. See Karkov, *Ruler Portraits*, 164; and below, Chapter 3.

¹¹⁹ For Æthelred's ever decreasing popularity, see Keynes, "Declining Reputation."

¹²⁰ Emma Mason suggests that Edward was signaling a glorious restoration of the Anglo-Saxon royal line after a long period of rule by a usurping Danish dynasty. This reading seems not to take into account the king's collaborative relationship with his Danish half-brother, Harthacnut: they ruled the kingdom together before the latter's death in 1042, and there is evidence that Edward cultivated an interest in his brother's tomb early in his own reign. It is possible, however, that Edward's attitude towards his Danish predecessors had changed by the 1050s—perhaps after the death of his mother Emma, Cnut's widow. See Mason, "Site of King-making," 59; and below, Chapter 3.

a pious display of wealth rather than by association with a predecessor.¹²¹ Certainly, the Confessor's legitimacy was not in doubt, for he was recognized from the beginning of his reign as a rightful heir to the kingdom, and by the time he began work at Westminster, his authority was well established.¹²² In the 1050s, the major threat to Edward's authority did not come from a royal rival but from Godwin, the immensely powerful earl of Wessex. Godwin had risen to power under Cnut, and by Edward's reign, his family controlled an enormous amount of land and wealth; his daughter, Edith, married the king in 1045, and his son Harold would assume the kingdom at the Confessor's death. Despite these promising connections with the royal house, Godwin rebelled against Edward in 1051 and was exiled with his sons; he nevertheless managed to reclaim his family's English holdings and re-establish their authority the following year.¹²³ Given Godwin's extensive influence in Wessex and his munificent patronage of the Winchester minsters, it seems no coincidence that Edward's investment in Westminster coincided with Godwin's return to England.¹²⁴ A handful of authentic writs attest that royal endowment had begun by 1051, and construction probably commenced around the same time.¹²⁵ Unlike the Winchester minsters, which had profited from Godwin's generosity, Westminster, under Edward's exclusive sponsorship, would unambiguously support royal interests. In the context of the long-term tensions between the king and the Godwins, Edward's ostentatious expenditure,

¹²¹ For an account of the wealth and ornament in Edward's Westminster, see *Vita Ædwardi*, 114-15.

¹²² For potential challenges to his accession in 1042, see below, Chapter 3.

¹²³ This conflict was triggered by Edward's appointment of Robert Champart as archbishop of Canterbury, but the Godwins' ensuing exile surely reflected wider anxieties about the extent of the earl's influence and authority. Edward repudiated Edith when he exiled her father, but she was reinstated as queen the following year. See Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 262-66; and above, n.111.

¹²⁴ The Godwins patronized the Old and New Minsters during and after Godwin's lifetime, while Edward's interest in the Winchester minsters seems to have been limited to the early years of his reign. See Karkov, *Ruler Portraits*, 163-64.

¹²⁵ No contemporary sources specify when building began; documents which date construction to the 1040s are later fabrications. Harmer's writs 73-79, all issued no later than 1051, seem to be the earliest authentic grants to St. Peter's. See Gem, "Romanesque Rebuilding," 33-34; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 13; Harmer, *Writs*, 294.

which simultaneously demonstrated his devotion to God and his vast disposable wealth, should be understood as an attempt to reassert his royal status in the face of an increasingly powerful aristocratic family.

The grand scale of this building project also coincided with the Confessor's cultivation of imperial imagery, which spiked after 1053.¹²⁶ The representations of Edward on coins and seals, modeled increasingly on Imperial and Byzantine royal portraits, diverged markedly from earlier depictions of Anglo-Saxon rulers and were designed to accentuate the king's authority and virility.¹²⁷ This reconception of traditional Anglo-Saxon royal iconography complemented Edward's departure from recent royal burial patterns and his construction of a new imperial church on a Continental scale, located at the new economic and diplomatic heart of his kingdom. If Edward's construction of Westminster was part of a broader program to emphasize the uniqueness of royal authority, however, it is surprising that the new foundation was not designed as a more extensive royal necropolis. Unlike Saint-Denis, Speyer Cathedral, and the minsters of Winchester, Westminster was intended to house the Confessor's tomb alone. No royal kinsmen were translated there, Edward had no children who might eventually join him, and Edith was busy endowing her own burial church at Wilton while her husband was rebuilding St. Peter's.¹²⁸ Instead, the

¹²⁶ It is significant that the change in Edward's portraiture followed the death of his mother Emma in 1052 and Godwin in 1053. Emma Mason sees Edward's use of imperial imagery as an attempt to compensate for his disempowerment during his long exile as a young man. However, if this were the case, one might expect to see this promulgation of imperial iconography at the beginning of his reign, not a decade after he returned to England. See Jones, "*Anglorum Basileus*," 103 and 105; Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 15-16; Mason, "Site of King-making," 58. For Edith's influence on these iconographical changes, Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 268.

¹²⁷ As Catherine Karkov explains, the composite elements of these images—enthronement, sword, scepter—were not new in themselves; rather, "the stress on the attributes of power" distinguished Edward's iconography from his predecessors'. See Karkov, *Ruler Portraits*, 157-60, quotation at 159; Jones, "*Anglorum Basileus*," 99-105.

¹²⁸ Edward's solitary entombment recalls the individual burial churches of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon kings and anticipates twelfth-century royal foundations on the Continent and in England, which typically housed only a single king (and perhaps his immediate family). Edward would later be joined by two royal women, however. Edith, although she had intended to be buried at Wilton, was ultimately interred at Westminster by William the Conqueror in 1075—perhaps in order to pre-empt reverence at the site of her remains. In 1118, Matilda, the wife of Henry I, was buried near the Confessor, perhaps in

Confessor planned to be interred by himself, surrounded by the community's saints—recently supplemented with Edward's own gifts of fragmentary and secondary relics.¹²⁹ When the king died, however, his would be the only complete corpse on the premises, for Westminster did not yet house any other graves or full-body relics to distract attention from Edward's remains.¹³⁰ The Confessor's tomb would have been the focal point of the church.

Yet even if Edward had envisioned his tomb as his abbey's centerpiece, it would not remain so. By the 1080s, the precise location of the king's body seems to have been in doubt.¹³¹ Although he was unquestionably buried near the high altar, a desire to confirm his exact resting place was supposed to have motivated the Confessor's first exhumation in 1102.¹³² No one seems to have expected to encounter Edward's incorrupt body, a widely recognized indicator of saintly chastity, and this

order to emphasize her kinship with Edward. However, it is also possible that Matilda had planned to be buried elsewhere: she had initially designated her foundation at Aldgate, London as her burial church; it is unclear whether her burial at Westminster reflects a later change of heart or simply a more convenient location, since she died at the nearby palace. It was only after Henry III's 1272 burial there that Westminster became the premier necropolis of English kings. See Mason, "Westminster and the Monarchy," 270-71; Mason, "Site of King-making," 61; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 267; Hallam, "Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship," 372.

¹²⁹ The oldest relics were remembered as gifts by seventh-century kings, but the most important cult was St. Peter's. By the twelfth century, an array of cults were recognized at Westminster along with the apostle, including those of the Blessed Virgin, the apostle Paul, and Sts. Agnes, Katherine and Margaret—some of which may have originated before the Conquest. See Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 262-64; *Vita Edwardi*, 46 n.1 and 113; Flete, *History of Westminster*, 68-73; Jones, "Anglorum Basileus," 113.

¹³⁰ At its refoundation, Westminster's relics were all fragmentary or secondary; see *Vita Edwardi*, 46 n.1 and 113. On the comparative worth of fragmentary and full-body relics, see Rollason, "Lists of Saints' Resting-Places," 81-82.

¹³¹ Sulcard, describing Edward's death and burial, writes: "after he had been fortified by the last rites, he died and was buried, it seems, before the very altar of the prince of the apostles" [sacro munitus viatico, extremum clausit diem, sepultusque est, vt videtur, ante ipsum altare principis apostolorum]; see Scholz, "Sulcard," 91; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 263-64. Frankish rulers buried at Saint-Denis were often interred beneath unmarked paving stones, only to be discovered by later medieval grave-diggers. It is possible that Edward was buried in a similar manner, near Westminster's high altar but without a specific grave marker. This type of burial was not universal among Anglo-Saxon kings; some royal burials at Old Minster were in above-ground sarcophagi, for instance. However, the Continental analogues might explain the uncertainty over the exact location of Edward's tomb a mere two decades after his death. For burials at Saint-Denis, see Wright, "Royal Tomb Program," 229; Brown, "Burying and Unburying," 242. For Old Minster's above-ground coffins, see Biddle, "Seventh Interim Report," 319-21.

¹³² This is proposed by Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 263-64.

discovery may have revived rumors at Westminster of the king's holiness.¹³³ Yet the perceived need to pinpoint the exact site of his body suggests that there was persistent fascination with the dead king, most likely concentrated outside the monastic community. I have already discussed the explicit mentions of Edward's body in early Westminster writs of sanctuary, which attest to laymen's contact with the Confessor's remains and the abbot's endorsement of this practice.¹³⁴ Late eleventh-century accounts confirm that Westminster was already a popular site of pilgrimage: Sulcard described the crowds that assembled on St. Peter's feast days, and his contemporary, Goscelin, cited Westminster as a destination for people in search of healing.¹³⁵ Although these descriptions focused on the cult of the apostle, Edward's tomb surely drew attention too. Edith's burial at Westminster in 1075, "with her lord, King Edward," and Queen Matilda's interment there in 1118 would have provided further reminders of the Confessor's presence.¹³⁶ Given that the *Vita Ædwardi* already (if exceptionally) depicted the Confessor as saintly within a year or two of his death, it is

¹³³ An account of the 1102 exhumation was provided by Osbert of Clare in 1138, as part of his attempt to canonize Edward. Frank Barlow contends that Osbert had no reason to exaggerate the skepticism with which many witnesses approached the tomb-opening: since Edward's saint's cult would not gain momentum before the 1130s, few witnesses would have expected a miracle in 1102. Indeed, the fact that there are no contemporary accounts of the exhumation lead Barlow to conclude that the event was considered important only in retrospect. See *Vita Ædwardi*, 113-15; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 267-69. On the process leading to the Confessor's official canonization, see Scholz, "Canonization of Edward." On Westminster's general disinterest in Edward's sanctity, see *Vita Ædwardi*, 13-14; see also Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 266-67; Scholz, "Sulcard," 71-72; Mason, "Site of King-making," 63-64.

¹³⁴ The earliest of these writs date from the abbacy of Gilbert Crispin (c.1085-1117x18), who witnessed the 1102 exhumation and may have encouraged reverence for Edward; Gilbert's earlier promotion of the Confessor may have inspired Henry I to invoke the laws of Edward after his Westminster coronation in 1100. See Mason, "Site of King-making," 65; Mason, "Westminster and the Monarchy," 272-73. For the possibility that the sanctuary formulae were inspired by the discovery of Edward's incorrupt body, see Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 264. See also Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 269.

¹³⁵ Goscelin of St. Bertin twice depicted St. Peter steering pilgrims away from Westminster, directing them instead to Canterbury or Thanet—whichever monastery Goscelin happened to be extolling at the time; see Scholz, "Sulcard," 73-74. The revival of Erkenwald's cult at St. Paul's in the 1130s may also have led to competition for pilgrims; Scholz, "Canonization of Edward," 40-41. Compare with St. Swithun luring pilgrims from Iudoc's shrine, above n.35.

¹³⁶ "Wið Eadward kyng hire hlaforde"; ASC D 1076 (*recte* 1075) and E 1075; quotation from E. See also n.128 above.

not impossible that certain people—notably Edith, as well as the Norman members of Edward’s court, who would have been familiar with contemporary Continental examples of royal sanctity—initiated some cultic activity around his tomb.¹³⁷ It may even have been this type of activity that inspired the designer of the Bayeux Tapestry to depict the hand of God extended over Westminster as the Confessor’s shrouded corpse was carried inside.¹³⁸

It is significant, however, that there was virtually no ecclesiastical acknowledgment of a cult of Edward before the second quarter of the twelfth century. Sulcard’s account described the king with respect but not veneration, and the Westminster sanctuary writs were careful not to call Edward a saint. Before Osbert’s push for his canonization in the 1130s, allusions to the Confessor’s sanctity were limited to works that advanced secular interests: the *Vita Æwardi* was commissioned by Edith in defense of her husband and brothers, while the Bayeux Tapestry was a notorious piece of Norman propaganda in support of William’s rule. A handful of twelfth-century Westminster charters likewise implied that Edward, while remembered and revered, did not initially receive saintly honors. In these documents, grants were given “for the soul of our king Edward,” implying that his salvation was not a foregone conclusion.¹³⁹

Even at the time of his canonization, Edward was remembered as an object of non-saintly veneration by the laity. Ailred of Rievaulx, who composed a *vita* in honor

¹³⁷ Frank Barlow sees a “pious conspiracy” among Edward’s Norman courtiers, who knew of healings performed by Capetian kings and reported on the miraculous cures that Edward had performed in Normandy as a young man; *Vita Æwardi*, lxxiii-lxxiv. For the accounts of the “royal touch” among contemporary Continental kings, see Bloch, *Royal Touch*, 43-48. Such portrayals of Edward’s sanctity may have been suppressed under William; see below.

¹³⁸ It is significant that the king’s funeral bier closely resembles reliquaries depicted in other parts of the Tapestry; see Karkov, *Ruler Portraits*, 169.

¹³⁹ “Pro anima regis nostri Edwardi”; Mason 250. These charters include items issued by Abbots Herbert (1121-c.1136) and Gervase (1138-c.1157); Mason, “Westminster and the Monarchy,” 272-73. Similar formulae appear in three other contemporary charters: Mason 244, 264, and 265. For Edward’s need of intercessory prayer, see Mason, “Westminster and the Monarchy,” 273.

of Edward's 1163 translation, recalled the dead king's popularity among the common people.¹⁴⁰ Drawing upon an anecdote first related by Osbert in the 1130s, Ailred depicts a woman who was unable to decide whether to continue with her work or to go celebrate the feast of Edward the Martyr.¹⁴¹ She consulted her servant, who, mistaking Edward the Martyr for Edward the Confessor, asked, "Is this not the Edward whom the crowd of rustics venerates as king (*ut regem*) at Westminster? Let others find the time and mourn or honor that dead man with their songs."¹⁴² That the servant would describe the population mourning (*plangent*) for Edward is telling, for saints were not to be mourned; unlike ordinary Christians, whose fate would be determined on the day of Judgment, the saints had already earned their salvation and entered God's company immediately after their earthly deaths. Ailred's purpose throughout his *vita* was to confirm Edward's sanctity, revealed here when the irreverent servant came down with a sudden bout of paralysis that could only be cured at the Confessor's tomb. Still, Ailred had the servant depict Edward being venerated *ut regem*, as a king, rather than as a saint. Even for the king's official hagiographer, popular reverence for Edward could be couched in terms of his royal status rather than his saintly abilities.¹⁴³ Although Ailred, no doubt following Osbert, took for granted that the anniversary of Edward's death was being celebrated by the 1130s, the reverence displayed at the tomb should not automatically be categorized as a saint's cult. Indeed, it might have been safer for the monastic community to discourage veneration at Edward's grave: fear of Norman displeasure perhaps motivated Westminster to downplay the sanctity

¹⁴⁰ The account is edited in PL 195 col.783D

¹⁴¹ This story was recorded by Osbert but does not survive in the extant versions of his *Life*; see *Vita Edwardi*, 124-25. King Edward the Martyr began to be revered as a saint almost immediately after his regicide in 978; his cult was heavily promoted in the eleventh century and remained popular through the Norman Conquest. For Edward the Martyr, see below, Chapter 5.

¹⁴² "Istene est Edwardus quem apud Westmonasterium haec rustica multitudo veneratur ut regem?... Vacent alii et suis cantibus vel plangent mortuum vel honorent"; PL 195 col.783D.

¹⁴³ William of Malmesbury had condemned this type of reverence decades earlier, dismissing claims that the Confessor effected cures "from hereditary virtue in the royal blood" [ex regalis prosapiae hereditate fluxisse]; *GR* ii.222.

of a recent king of a newly conquered people.¹⁴⁴ However, the persistent interest in the king suggests that cultic activity—including the chants, mourning, and honors cited by Ailred’s skeptical servant—could indeed continue with only tacit ecclesiastical endorsement.

The Confessor’s reputation during the late eleventh and early twelfth century is largely obscured by later hagiographical rhetoric, which maintained that his sanctity was continuously acknowledged from the time he died. This was not in fact the case, for even Osbert was hard pressed to come up with miracles that had occurred at the king’s tomb since the composition of the *Vita Ædwardi*.¹⁴⁵ Yet despite the absence of early evidence for saintly behavior, and despite the monastic community’s reluctance to acknowledge his sanctity, Edward’s corpse soon became the subject of an exhumation, a destination for seekers of sanctuary, and the object of prayer, song, and mourning by clergy and laymen. A full century before his canonization, the Confessor was undoubtedly recognized as a king worthy of posthumous honors.

Conclusions

The two kings discussed in this chapter aimed to emphasize the extraordinary status of the monarchy by arranging prestigious burials in magnificent churches built expressly for the purpose. The fact that cultic activity was generated at the foundations’ royal tombs suggests that their patrons’ efforts to promote their royal line with funerary display successfully attracted public interest and sympathy. To some degree, these burial churches evoke much earlier examples of elite memorialization. While

¹⁴⁴ See Mason, “Site of King-making,” 63-64. Before Henry III, Norman and Angevin kings had little interest in patronizing Westminster, giving few major grants and favoring new foundations. See Mason, “Westminster and the Monarchy,” 278-87; and below, Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Vita Ædwardi*, 127-28. The *Vita* does credit Edward with miraculous cures during his lifetime, but these were comparable to the thaumaturgical healing powers of contemporary Continental kings and, according to Frank Barlow, may be attributed to the Norman influence at the English court; *Vita Ædwardi*, lxxii-lxxiv.

comparisons with pre-Christian or conversion-era royal interments should be drawn with caution, New Minster and Westminster inevitably recall the seventh-century mounds at Sutton Hoo or even the barrow of *Beowulf*, imposing monuments designed to project royal authority and presence in the surrounding area.¹⁴⁶ Like earlier spectacular burials, the graves of Alfred, Edward the Elder, and the Confessor were placed within ostentatious structures and surrounded by immense material display, all intended to sustain the memories of their entombed inhabitants. By constructing a royal burial church that would dominate the urban landscape, each ruler cemented his own legacy as a local patron while providing his successors with the potential support of a major religious foundation in the kingdom's leading economic center.

The two Edwards' newly constructed churches are the most dramatic examples of this thinking, but parallels may be found in the burial choices of other Anglo-Saxon kings. The individual royal tombs placed in monasteries during the tenth and eleventh centuries would have been surrounded by monastic, episcopal, and saintly burials, with their proximity to the bodies of spiritually prestigious figures drawing attention to the kings' unique secular status. Monastic houses likewise benefited from the presence of secular corpses; with the public attention that kings' bodies attracted, it is natural that Anglo-Saxon monasteries revived the cults of ancient royal saints as well as promoting the tombs of more recent rulers.¹⁴⁷ Given the regular intrusion of these select secular bodies into patently religious environments, it is not impossible that the distinction between revering a saint and honoring a king was becoming increasingly unclear. It might be argued that without firm differentiation between relics and other

¹⁴⁶ *Beowulf*'s barrow, designed as a beacon to be seen on the headland, is described in Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll.3156-68. Martin Carver has extensively discussed the monumental nature of the Sutton Hoo mounds, most recently in the site's full excavation report, *Sutton Hoo: A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground*.

¹⁴⁷ Cnut, for one, prostrated himself at the Glastonbury tomb of Edmund Ironside before providing the monastery with a generous grant. See William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, 132-33; and below, Chapter 3.

prestigious bodies, there was no way to prevent high-status lay burials from drawing cultic activity.¹⁴⁸

I contend, however, that this was not the case. Instead, it appears that two distinct traditions of cultic activity were at work in late Anglo-Saxon England. The more prominent tradition consisted of ecclesiastically sanctioned saints' cults, promoted by churches and monasteries to increase their prestige, attract revenue, and inspire piety among the local population. This category might include cults of sainted royalty, which were often patronized by reigning rulers seeking to enhance their authority through association with a saintly predecessor. Yet such cults were fundamentally controlled by clergy, who regulated access to the relics and oversaw other forms of veneration.

A less well-attested brand of reverence was developed by the rulers themselves, who encouraged tomb-side reverence for dead kings in order to further their own political interests. Such veneration often appropriated the symbolic vocabulary of saints' cults, reproducing their ceremonial displays and worldly benefits—translation, elevation, pilgrimage, sanctuary—but without their spiritual implications. Edward the Elder's treatment of his father's corpse is the archetype for this model: although he never portrayed Alfred as saintly, Edward's spectacular treatment of the body sharply differentiated this corpse from the remains of other Christian laymen and un-sainted clergy. Even without extraordinary piety or intercessory abilities, kings thus constructed their own recognizable category of "very special dead."¹⁴⁹

This is not to suggest that these two modes of reverence were mutually exclusive. The immediate impulse among the Confessor's survivors to describe their

¹⁴⁸ This is an extension of David Rollason's logic as he delineates the potential dangers of popular reverence for the ecclesiastical establishment; "Relic-cults as Royal Policy," 99-100.

¹⁴⁹ This term is Peter Brown's; see *Cult of the Saints*, 70 ff.

king in hagiographical terms suggests that tributes devoid of saintly implications were less palatable in the mid-eleventh century than they seem to have been in Edward the Elder's day. Yet although there is early evidence of interest in the Confessor's tomb and memory, it is only in the anonymous *Vita Ædwardi* that we find any reference to miracles, which were a standard element of popular saints' cults. Furthermore, the fact that it took over sixty years for Westminster to capitalize on claims of their founder's sanctity suggests that there was little external pressure to recognize Edward as a saint. I propose that the consistent fascination with Edward's remains between 1066 and the 1130s resembled the cult-like activity at Alfred's tomb more closely than the veneration that characterized the Confessor's own later saint's cult. Despite the scarcity of documentation in both instances, the reverence attested at the tombs of Alfred and the Confessor demonstrates that even non-saintly kings' bodies had the potential to attract substantial popular attention. Perhaps this interest emerged organically among populations mourning a beloved leader.¹⁵⁰ Certainly, it is unlikely that such sentiment was applied indiscriminately to all dead kings. However, it is clear that living rulers made concerted efforts to harness the symbolic power of royal tombs for their own ends, making them integral elements of Anglo-Saxon political performance.

¹⁵⁰ Compare with Catherine Cubitt's argument that cults of royal martyrs "originated in immediate popular devotion" before being endorsed by the church; a similar phenomenon could have occurred at a king's natural death. See Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity," 54. See also Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 120.

Chapter 3. Funeral, Coronation, and Continuity: Political Corpses and Royal Succession

At the end of the ninth century, Alfred the Great began to identify himself as *rex Anglorum Saxonum*, the king of the Anglo-Saxons.¹ Having gained nominal rule over Mercia, Northumbria, and Wessex, he envisioned a unified English kingdom led by a single Christian ruler.² It would be decades before any king became powerful enough to exert practical control over this extensive territory, and it was only the military and administrative developments of the tenth century that facilitated the eventual subjugation and consolidation of formerly petty kingdoms.³ Alfred's heirs nevertheless continued to employ his unifying rhetoric, depicting England's autonomous regions as parts of a cohesive realm with a West Saxon king at its head. The result was an increasingly well-defined ideology of Christian kingship which identified the king as an exceptional individual, uniquely qualified to undertake the combination of spiritual and earthly responsibilities needed to rule a Christian realm. Ecclesiastical endorsement was fundamental to the cultivation and dissemination of this image of kingship. By the turn of the millennium, clerical authors of legal and political tracts had begun to identify the king as God's vicar on earth; kings presided over Christian festivals and other religious events, like church dedications or saints' translations; and the ritual of royal anointing, by which an episcopal blessing transformed an earthly leader into a divinely recognized king, became an integral

¹ For *rex Anglorum Saxonum*, see Keynes, "Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons," 57-62; and above, Chapter 2.

² The concept of a unified English people dates at least to Bede, but the idea was adopted more forcefully during Alfred's reign. See Keynes, "Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons," 60-62; Wormald, "*Lex Scripta*," 132; Wormald, "*Gens Anglorum*."

³ Military developments include the *burh* system implemented by Alfred and the subjugation of outlying territories under Æthelstan and Edgar; administrative developments include the new shire and episcopal divisions established by Edward the Elder and the more extensive dissemination of written lawcodes during and after Alfred's reign. On shire and episcopal divisions, see Rumble, "Edward the Elder," 238-44 and above, Chapter 2. On the increasing use of written law by tenth-century kings, see Wormald, "*Lex Scripta*," 123-25.

component of a ruler's accession. The production of lavish royal mausolea and burial churches also identified kings as extraordinary individuals, and the scale and expense of Edward the Elder's New Minster and Edward the Confessor's Westminster attest that a king's exceptional status was meant to endure beyond his physical death.

Yet while eleventh-century kings regularly designed burial places to advertise their singular status, accounts of royal funerals are conspicuously absent from the documentary record. Where Continental authors often described and commented on their rulers' last rites, English chroniclers rarely provided details about the posthumous fates of Anglo-Saxon kings, citing at most the date and place of a king's death and the location of his tomb. Although Edward the Confessor was the only pre-Conquest ruler to have his burial recorded in detail, familiar accounts of earlier royal deaths, though sparse, imply that kings' funerals involved moving the body to a designated mausoleum and possibly even displaying the corpse.⁴ But the funeral also would have drawn attention to the power vacuum left in the wake of a ruler's death. Most kings continued to receive royal honors posthumously but could exert no real agency over their own remains; even if they had specified their last wills and burial plans, it was entirely the decision of the living to respect or to ignore the wishes of the dead.⁵ Ideally, a king's survivors would celebrate his status by giving him an elaborate funeral, reinforcing the notion that he was a legitimate ruler worthy of extraordinary mortuary honors. In addition to providing an opportunity to mourn, the funeral allowed potential successors to associate themselves with the memory of an established, legitimate ruler. At a time when royal succession was rarely certain or secure before the reigning monarch died, an aspiring ruler's high-profile interaction with the remains of his predecessor could generate a sense of continuity, improving

⁴ The account of Edward's funeral in the *Vita Ædwardi* is quoted and discussed above, Chapter 1.

⁵ See above, Chapter 2.

his chances of making a successful bid for the kingdom. Whether a candidate's relationship with the dead king was genuine, exaggerated, or altogether fabricated, a prominent appearance at the funeral might help him establish his identity as a legitimate member of the ruling dynasty. Furthermore, a candidate's prolonged contact with his predecessor's earthly remains and his continued evocation of his memory could be construed as a commitment to govern in the same way as the dead king, to preserve his administrative structure, and to perpetuate his political ideals. By ostensibly adopting the previous reign as a model for his own, an aspiring successor might secure the endorsement of those who had benefited under the dead ruler—especially powerful magnates whose support was vital to an aspiring ruler's success and whose interests were most vulnerable during a change of regime.

Interaction with a royal corpse was not enough to make a king, of course. A candidate with enough military strength and political support to gain practical power would still need to undergo a process of election and consecration; even if a candidate already exercised some degree of *de facto* control, it was his recognition by the kingdom's lay and ecclesiastical elites that confirmed his royal status and his authority over the realm.⁶ Royal elections, in which a new king was acclaimed by the realm's leading magnates, were usually held soon after the death of the previous monarch.⁷ Though mentioned regularly in the documentary record, elections were rarely described in any detail, suggesting that these were events spearheaded by laymen

⁶ For elections, the terms used most often in the contemporary sources are Old English *ceosan* and Latin *elegi*, both meaning "to choose." These terms almost always appear in conjunction with a description of an assembly or popular consensus (Old English *witan*, *eall folc*; Latin *omni populo*, *universi*, *civis*), though these gatherings were not universal, nor was their choice of king always unanimous. For consecrations, which nearly always cite the involvement of an archbishop, the terms used most frequently are Old English *halgian*, "to hallow," and Latin *consecrare*, "to consecrate." Other, more ambiguous terms of ascension include the Old English phrases *feng to rice*, "ascended to the kingdom," and *wæs full cyng*, "was full king"; and the Latin *suscepi*, "receive (i.e. the kingdom or royal scepter)," and *in regem levare*, "raise to the kingdom."

⁷ For an overview of the nature of Anglo-Saxon royal elections, see Brooke, *Saxon and Norman Kings*, 29-31.

rather than by the clergy.⁸ Consecration, by contrast, was an ecclesiastical ritual in which a new king was anointed and received an episcopal blessing; he would swear to uphold the tenets of Christian rulership, which were explicated in detail by the officiant.⁹ According to tenth and eleventh-century political theory, it was this latter rite of anointing that qualified a candidate to rule a Christian nation, making him God's instrument on earth.¹⁰ Through the tenth century, this indispensable ritual was performed at the royal center of Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey, often after an election had been conducted some time earlier at a different locale.¹¹ Between 1016 and 1066, however, there is little indication that any ruler received or was even interested in a Kingston consecration. Instead, six of the seven kings who reigned in the half-century

⁸ This explanation is proposed by Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 287.

⁹ There was often a period of time between election and anointing, perhaps so that consecrations would coincide with a major feast day or so that a sufficiently elaborate ceremony could be arranged; it is also possible that anointing was delayed so that a new king could firmly establish his power and overcome any rivals for the throne. Pauline Stafford maintains that in the ASC, the phrase *feng to rice* [ascended to the kingdom] signaled a royal consecration during the late Anglo-Saxon period, but this conclusion may not always apply in eleventh-century cases (as discussed below). It is possible that the Scandinavian kings of England were never anointed, since there were never any explicit references to their consecrations: some earlier Continental kings, including the Ottonian Henry I and Charlemagne, may have feared that royal anointing would have ostracized their followers, and it is not impossible that England's Scandinavian kings held similar views. It should be emphasized, however, that references to Anglo-Saxon royal inaugurations were invariably brief when they appeared at all, and the lack of an explicit description does not necessarily mean that an event never occurred. For Henry and Charlemagne, see Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, 139-40; Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 282 and 298. On *feng to rice*, see Stafford, "Royal Promises," 182. On royal anointing in general, see the work of Janet Nelson, especially: "National Synods," "Symbols in Context," "Inauguration Rituals," "Ritual and Reality," "Earliest Royal *Ordo*," and "Second English *Ordo*."

¹⁰ In Janet Nelson's words, royal anointing "performed a specific function, making the *electus* into a *rex*"; "Symbols in Context," 270. See also Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 288-89, on the distinction between an elected and an anointed king. This distinction was articulated by Ælfric of Eynsham at the turn of the millennium: "No man can make himself king; rather the people have the choice to choose the one that they like as king for themselves. But after he is consecrated king, then he has power over the people, and they cannot shake his yoke from their neck" [Ne mæg nan man hine sylfne to cyngge gedon ac þæt folc hæfð cyre to ceosenne þone to cyninge þe him sylfum licað; Ac syððan he to cyninge gehalgod bið. þonne hæfð he anweald ofer þam folce. 7 hi ne magon his geoc. of heora swyran ascecan]; CH I.14.111-15. Although Ælfric was drawing on a Continental homily in this passage and making a larger point about sin and free will, this description of anointed kingship must have been familiar and accessible to his audience. For sources of and interpretations of this passage, see Godden, "Ælfric and Anglo-Saxon Kingship"; Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 115.

¹¹ According to early sources, Æthelstan (925), Eadred (946), and Æthelred II (979) were all consecrated at Kingston; according to sources from the twelfth century and later, Edward the Elder (900), Edmund (939), Eadwig (956), Edgar (960), and Edward the Martyr (975) were consecrated there as well. See Keynes, "Kingston-Upon-Thames," 272; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 270-71; Swanton, *Chronicles*, 104 n.10.

leading up to the Norman Conquest—Edmund Ironside, Cnut, Harold Harefoot, Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson, and William the Conqueror—had themselves elected in the immediate aftermath of their predecessor’s funeral or consecrated at the site of his tomb.¹² Whereas a Kingston consecration provided a sense of continuity for earlier generations of kings, it appears that by the eleventh century, it was a new ruler’s public association with his predecessor’s remains that counterbalanced the political uncertainty of an interregnum. In this chapter, I will consider how aspiring kings used royal bodies to evoke the legacies of their predecessors, orchestrating displays to confirm their own legitimacy and strengthen their claims to the kingdom. By analyzing the convergence of royal funerals, elections, and consecrations between 1016 and 1066, I will assess the perceived symbolic value of kings’ corpses and ascertain how they contributed to the politics of succession.

Edmund Ironside and Cnut

Then it happened that King Æthelred died. He ended his days on the feast of St. George after great toil and hardships in his life.¹³

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s pithy account of the death of Æthelred II (r.978-1016) appears in the midst of a long entry detailing the military and political crisis of 1016, the culmination of the disastrous final decade of his reign.¹⁴ After years of Viking

¹² The seventh, Harthacnut, was out of the country when his predecessor died but still managed a spectacular interaction with the corpse upon his return. This episode is discussed briefly below and treated fully in Chapter 4.

¹³ “Þa gelamp hit þæt se cyning Æþelred forðferde... he geendode his dagas on Sancte Georius mæssedæig, 7 he geheold his rice mid myclum geswince 7 earfoðnessum þa hwile ðe his lif wæs”; ASC CDEF 1016. Unless otherwise noted, all ASC quotations in this section are from C, the earliest of the extant manuscripts for this period. St. George’s day was 23 April; see Swanton, *Chronicles*, 148 n.4.

¹⁴ These annals, which are common to ASC CDEF, were part of a self-contained account of the period from 983 through 1022, covering most of Æthelred’s reign and the beginning of Cnut’s. Simon Keynes argues that they were composed retrospectively by a single author, writing in London between late 1016 and 1023; “Declining Reputation,” 229-32. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe proposes a Canterbury provenance for these annals; see *MS C*, lxviii; and see also the introductions to the volumes in the Collaborative Edition of the ASC.

incursions, Æthelred was driven into exile in 1013 by the Danish king Svein Forkbeard, who promptly claimed the English throne. When Svein died the next year, Æthelred returned home after promising his subjects to be a better king than he had been before. He spent his final two years resisting the advances of Cnut, Svein's son, and died in London shortly before Cnut launched an attack on the city. He was buried at St. Paul's Cathedral as the citizens were preparing for a siege.¹⁵

There were now two contenders for the English throne, each of whom claimed the kingdom as his paternal inheritance. Svein's supporters considered Cnut the rightful heir to his father's conquered kingdom, and in 1016, he pressed his claim by heading an assault on London. Æthelred's son, Edmund Ironside, was the senior member of the West Saxon royal dynasty and was regarded by his partisans as the natural successor to the English throne; he was leading the city's defense when his father died. Although control of the kingdom ultimately depended on a military victory, Æthelred's memory was integral to both candidates' claims of legitimacy. For Cnut, Æthelred was remembered as a conquered king who submitted to Svein and forfeited his family's right to rule.¹⁶ For Edmund, Æthelred was a lawful king with an ancient pedigree, who, despite his oppression by foreign invaders, had not abdicated his throne and had been welcomed back from exile by his grateful subjects.¹⁷ The

¹⁵ Æthelred's death in London was recorded in ASC CDEF. According to John of Worcester, "His body was honorably buried in the church of St. Paul the Apostle" [Corpus autem illius in ecclesia sancti Pauli apostoli honorifice sepultum est]; JW 484-85. This information was also provided by William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.180.3. The *Encomium* agreed that Æthelred received an honorable burial; *Encomium*, 22-23 and see quotation below, n.32.

¹⁶ This idea was articulated in the Old Norse poetry produced at Cnut's court, but it did not appear in texts intended for his new English subjects. For the skaldic poetry, see Whitelock, *EHD* I, 334-41; Frank, "King Cnut in the Verse of his Skalds"; Townend, "Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*."

¹⁷ This view was evident in the ASC's description of Æthelred's return from exile and his reconciliation with his subjects. According to this account, the English sent word to Æthelred after Svein's death in 1014: "They said that there was no lord more dear to them than their lawful lord, if he would rule them more justly than he did before. Then the king sent his son Edward hither with his errand, and he commanded him to greet all his people and say that he wanted to be a loyal lord to them and would remedy each of the things which they all hated, and each of those things that were done or said against him should be forgiven, provided that they all resolutely and without treachery turned to him, and then full friendship was confirmed with word and with oath on both sides" [Cwædon þæt him nan hlaford leofra nære þonne hiora gecynda hlaford, gif he hi rihtlicor healdan wolde þonne he ær dyde. Þa sende

candidates' evocation of their predecessor was not limited to claims of kinship and conquest, however; they also attempted to appropriate Æthelred's administrative landscape. Although both men angled for control of Wessex, the home territory of West Saxon kings, the most important prize was London. As Æthelred's chief administrative center, his primary residence, and the place where he had died and been buried, London was a well-established staging point for royal ceremonial and the repository for the memory of Æthelred's thirty-eight year reign. Edmund and Cnut each recognized that possession of the city's royal center, in addition to providing military and economic advantages, would help bestow legitimacy on their claims to the kingdom.

At the beginning of 1016, Æthelred and Edmund were in London while Cnut was planning a large-scale attack on the city; by the end of the year, Æthelred and Edmund were both dead and Cnut had established himself as the sole king of England. The earliest surviving sources for these events are the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, and the Chronicle of John of Worcester, but there are substantial discrepancies between these three texts.¹⁸ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle annals for this period were composed contemporaneously, probably by a Londoner who had supported Edmund's candidacy and encountered the siege and its aftermath first-hand.¹⁹ He wrote that immediately after Æthelred's death, "all the *witan*

se cyning his sunu Eadweard hider mid his ærendracum 7 het gretan ealne his leodscype 7 cwæð þæt he him hold hlaford beon wolde 7 ælc þæra ðinga betan þe hi ealle ascunodon, 7 ælc þære ðinga forgyfen beon sceolde þe him gedon oþþe gecweden wære, wið þam ðe hi ealle anrædlice butan swicdome to him gecyrdon; 7 man þa fulne freondscipe gefæstnode mid worde 7 mid wedde on ægþre healfe]; ASC CDE 1014. Patrick Wormald suggests that this agreement was also preserved in a (now lost) lawcode of 1014, which was later incorporated into Cnut's laws. See Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 59; Stafford "Royal Promises," 181.

¹⁸ William of Malmesbury also provided a version of these events, but for the episodes discussed here, he followed the known versions of the ASC very closely—unlike John of Worcester, whose accounts often differed significantly from the earlier sources. Accordingly, William will not be included in the present discussion of these texts and their historiographical problems, except when his work provides a unique interpretation of the events.

¹⁹ For the possible author of these annals, see Keynes, "Declining Reputation," 229-32; and above, n.14.

[councilors] who were in London and the *burh*-guard chose Edmund as king.”²⁰ Cnut’s fleet, which had been heading towards London, arrived a few weeks later, but Edmund had left the city before the siege began and “rode into Wessex, and all the people submitted to him.”²¹ He then engaged in a series of battles with the Danes, reclaiming London but suffering a major defeat in October at the battle of Assandun. Afterwards, the two claimants agreed to divide the kingdom, with Cnut ruling the north and Edmund ruling Wessex; they exchanged hostages, and the English army paid a tribute.²² The arrangement did not last, however: Edmund died on St. Andrew’s day (30 November) and was buried in Glastonbury with his grandfather, King Edgar.²³ In 1017, the Chronicle continued, “Cnut ascended to the entire kingdom of the English,” dividing the realm into four earldoms and exiling or killing a number of his English opponents.²⁴ The annal concluded by noting Cnut’s marriage to Emma, Æthelred’s Norman widow.

Emma would be responsible for a second interpretation of these events when she commissioned the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* some twenty-five years later.²⁵ The work was composed soon after Harthacnut, her son by Cnut, became king in 1040, and its anonymous author had the dual task of glorifying Emma and emphasizing the

²⁰ “Þa æfter his ende ealle ða witan þa on Lundene wæron 7 seo burhwaru gecuron Eadmund to cyninge”; ASC CDEF 1016. William of Malmesbury interpreted this group as the citizens of London (*oppidani*); GR ii.80.4.

²¹ “Gerad þa Westsexon, 7 him beah eal folc to”; ASC CDE 1016. Æthelred died on 23 April and Cnut’s ships, which had assembled after Easter (April 1), finally arrived in London after stopping in Greenwich during the Rogation Days, 7-9 May. For these dates, see Swanton, *Chronicles*, 148-49; and the ecclesiastical feast calculator at McInnes, *English Calendar*.

²² The Danish army made a separate peace with the Londoners, exacting tribute from them and spending the winter in the city; see ASC CDEF 1016.

²³ Some later authors, including William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, claim that Edmund was murdered, but there is no indication of foul play in the earliest accounts of his death. See William of Malmesbury, GR ii.180.9; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, vi.14.

²⁴ “Her on þissum geare feng Cnut kyning to eallon Angelcynnes ryce”; ASC CDEF 1017.

²⁵ The *Encomium* was composed between 1041 and 1042 by a monk of Flanders who may have been part of Queen Emma’s household; the work was commissioned by Emma after the accession of Harthacnut, her son by Cnut. On the authorship, date, manuscript, style, and purpose of the *Encomium*, see Keynes, “Introduction to the Reprint,” xxxix-liii and lxvi-lxxi; Campbell, “Introduction,” xi-xl [xciii-cxxii]; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 28-40; John, *Reassessing*, 151-53.

righteous inevitability of her son's accession. The *Encomium's* account of the 1016 succession accordingly stressed the legitimacy and primacy of Cnut's claim to the kingdom, minimizing any references to Emma's first husband, Æthelred, and depicting Edmund as a factional leader who unknowingly violated God's will by pursuing his claim to the throne. After Æthelred's death, according to the *Encomiast*, the citizens of London provided their ruler with an honorable burial and immediately sent messengers to Cnut, asking him to be their king and take charge of the city. Some of the garrison rejected the citizens' decision, however, and smuggled Edmund out so that he could gather an army in Wessex. Meanwhile, "Cnut entered the city and sat on the throne of the kingdom," but, suspicious of the Londoners' intentions, he quickly left again.²⁶ Edmund had amassed a large force by this time and re-entered London, where the citizens and the crowd which had followed him from Wessex declared their allegiance to him and repudiated Cnut. After a series of battles, the two men agreed to share power, but God was unwilling to see the kingdom divided and caused Edmund to die; "he was buried in a kingly tomb" and mourned by his subjects.²⁷ Cnut was now the sole king, and the entire population voluntarily submitted to him and recognized him as their ruler.

A third account of the succession was provided by John of Worcester, who compiled his *Chronicle* in the early twelfth century.²⁸ John generally followed the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* version of events, but he employed other pre-Conquest sources as well and occasionally diverged from the *Chronicle's* narrative. The first major digression in his account of 1016 was his assertion that Edward and Cnut were both elected king, each by a different faction:

After [Æthelred's] death, the bishops, abbots, ealdormen and all the nobles of

²⁶ "Cnuto autem ciuitatem intrauit, et in solio regni resedit"; *Encomium*, 22-23.

²⁷ "Regio tumulatur sepulchro"; *Encomium*, 30-31.

²⁸ For John of Worcester, see above, Chapter 1.

England, assembled together and by general agreement, elected Cnut as their lord and king, and, coming to him at Southampton, renounced and repudiated in his presence all the descendants of King Æthelred and made peace with him and swore fidelity to him, and he swore to them that he would be a faithful lord to them, both before God and before the world. But the London citizens and those of the nobles who were at that time at London by unanimous agreement raised the ætheling Edmund to the throne. And he, raised to the height of the royal throne, undauntedly approached Wessex without delay and was received with great joy by the whole population, whom he very swiftly subjected to his rule. When they heard this many of the English hastily committed themselves to him.²⁹

John expanded on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's accounts of the ensuing events, providing detailed descriptions of Edmund's journey into Wessex, Cnut's siege of London, the clashes between the two armies, the truce after the battle of Assandun, and the division of the kingdom.³⁰ John then departed again from the Chronicle. Soon after Edmund's death, Cnut ordered all the English magnates to gather in London, where they falsely attested that Edmund had wanted Cnut to rule the kingdom instead of his own brothers and sons; they then swore their loyalty to Cnut and repudiated Edmund's kin. In 1017, John reported, Cnut "undertook the government of the whole of England," divided the realm into four earldoms, and exiled Edmund's kinsmen; he also "concluded a treaty with the magnates and the whole people, and they with him, and they confirmed a firm friendship between them with oaths, and laid aside and set at rest all their old animosities."³¹ John's account of 1017 concluded with Cnut's

²⁹ "Cuius post mortem episcopi, abbates, duces et quique nobiliores Anglie in unum congregati, pari consensu, in dominum et regem sibi Canutum elegere, et, ad eum in Suthamtoniam uenientes, omnemque progeniem regis Agelredi coram illo abnegando repudiantes, pacem cum eo composuere, et fidelitatem illi iurauere, quibus et ille iurauit quod et secundum Deum et secundum seculum fidelis esse uellet eis dominus. At ciues Lundonienses et pars nobilium qui eo tempore consistebant Lundonie clitonem Eadmundum unanimes consensu in regem leuauere. Qui solii regalis sullimatus culmine intrepidus Westsaxoniam adiit sine cunctatione, et ab omni populo magna susceptus gratulatione, sue ditioni subegit eam citissime. Quibus auditis, multi Anglorum populi magna cum festinatione illi se dederunt uoluntarie"; JW 484-85.

³⁰ Unlike the ASC, John maintained that Cnut took control of Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, and London, while "to Edmund remained the realm" [regni Eadmundo remansit]. The most recent editors of the text attribute the discrepancy to John's use of a corrupt source; see JW 492-93 n.9.

³¹ "Totius Anglie suscepit imperium"; "Foedus etiam cum principibus et omni populo ipse et illi cum ipso percusserunt, et amicitiam firmam inter se iuramentis stabilierunt, omnesque ueteres inimicitias postponentes sedauerunt"; JW 502-03.

marriage to Emma in July and the execution of a handful of English nobles at Christmas.

In all three texts, Æthelred's death served as the catalyst for Cnut and Edmund's succession dispute, and the accounts of the candidates' acclamations were consistently conflated with references to the dead king. Each author introduced his description of the royal election by noting that the assembly took place after Æthelred had died, implying that the magnates who gathered to choose a new ruler had also witnessed the funeral of his predecessor.³² The scale and status of these king-making assemblies varied from source to source, however: John described two comparably prestigious companies; the *Encomium* depicted the most impressive magnates electing Cnut and dismissed Edmund's partisans as a minority faction of soldiers; and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle did not mention Cnut's acclamation at all.³³ Yet these accounts reflect their authors' certainty that a legitimate royal election ought to be attended by the realm's most important individuals, including the citizens of London, and all three descriptions imply that the funeral at St. Paul's and the subsequent election formed a single continuous event.

London's importance in the election dispute is a consistent element of these three accounts. In subsequent centuries, Londoners played a prominent role in royal elections, and the fact that the citizens' involvement was emphasized in the sources for

³² In ASC CDEF 1016, the English magnates designated Edmund their king "then, after Æthelred's end" [þa æfter his ende]. In the *Encomium*, the London citizens made peace with Cnut "after having given their prince an honorable burial" [suo honorifice sepulto principe]; *Encomium* 22-23. John of Worcester reported that two separate councils were held "after Æthelred's death" [cuius post mortem]; JW 484-85.

³³ John of Worcester maintained that Cnut was chosen by "the bishops, abbots, ealdormen and all the nobles of England" [episcopi, abbates, duces et quique nobiliores Anglie] and that Edmund was declared king by "the London citizens and those of the nobles who were at that time at London" [ciues Londonienses et pars nobilium qui eo tempore consistebant Lundonie]; JW 484-85. The *Encomiast* stated that London's "citizens" [ciues] elected Cnut and that only "part of the garrison" [pars interioris exercitus] supported Edmund; *Encomium*, 22-23. ASC CDE 1016 reported that Edmund was chosen by "all the councilors that were in London, and the burh-guards" [ealle ða witan þa on Lundene wæron 7 seo burhwaru]; ASC F 1016 stated that he was chosen by "all the councilors of the English" [ealle Angelcynnes witan].

1016 suggest that the city's endorsement was already integral at the beginning of the eleventh century.³⁴ Yet there should have been no question about whom the Londoners would support in the contest between Edmund and Cnut. The city had been a particular target for Scandinavian attacks since the ninth century, and it had been Æthelred's most reliable source of political and military support in his later years; even after their king's death, the Londoners continued to resist Cnut's forces. In this context, the *Encomium's* claim that the citizens chose Cnut as their king is problematic. Would the Londoners have submitted so easily to a Danish invader in the aftermath of their own king's funeral, especially when there was a West Saxon candidate standing by? John's statement that Cnut and Edmund were elected by two different groups seems a more plausible explanation. Although his language could indicate that two separate councils took place at different locations, he more likely meant that two factions emerged in a single London assembly which followed Æthelred's burial: while the Londoners pledged their allegiance to Edmund, the outsiders who had come to London for the funeral opted for Cnut and made him a separate offer of fidelity.³⁵ This interpretation would help explain the *Encomium's* unique claim that all but a few of the London *ciues* supported Cnut, for if the author conflated the visiting magnates with the citizens, he would have retrospectively given the impression that London endorsed Danish rule.

The *Encomiast's* conclusion, though strained, implies that London's support in royal elections was considered vital by the time he was writing in the 1040s. Yet Cnut's delayed attack on the city suggests that its endorsement may have been crucial

³⁴ The crisis of 1016 was the first time that the city of London was said to have had such a significant impact on royal elections; in the following centuries, London claimed a special role in electing new kings—a role which would have been recognized by the time the *Encomiast* was writing in the 1040s. On the beginning of Londoners' involvement in king-making, see Nightingale, "Origins of the Court of Husting," 566.

³⁵ The "councilors who were then in London" [ðā witan þa on Lundene wæron] should be understood as supporters of Æthelred and Edmund, who were part of the force defending the city from Cnut; ASC CDE 1016.

in 1016 as well. The Danish ships had assembled at the beginning of April and were *en route* to London when Æthelred died on the 23rd, but the fleet arrived more than a fortnight later—after Æthelred’s funeral and the royal elections had taken place.³⁶ John took for granted that some sort of cease-fire had been called, allowing the kingdom’s magnates to assemble and decide the fate of the realm.³⁷ If Cnut actually suspended his army’s advance to allow an election to take place, he must have expected his partisans to advocate his claim and perhaps persuade the Londoners to acclaim him without further fighting. Whereas Svein had been content to seize control in a military *coup d’état*, Cnut apparently saw an opportunity to be elected by the leading English magnates, just like earlier, legitimate Anglo-Saxon monarchs.³⁸ His status as Svein’s son and his military success must have made him an appealing candidate to many, but Cnut also buttressed his claim by marrying into an influential English family. Perhaps as early as 1013, he wed Ælfgifu of Northampton, an English noblewoman of Scandinavian descent, whose brothers and father had been blinded and killed under Æthelred.³⁹ By integrating himself into a network of Æthelred’s Anglo-Scandinavian opponents, Cnut would have been well situated to win the allegiance of other magnates who might legitimately declare him king. With the Danish fleet threatening London, Cnut’s English supporters likely made a convincing case for his candidacy.

Yet the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle did not even acknowledge Cnut’s election in

³⁶ For these dates, see above, n.21.

³⁷ See JW 484-85, in which Cnut remained at Southampton while the English were meeting in London. William of Malmesbury offered a similar interpretation, saying that although Cnut had planned to attack London after Easter, “Æthelred’s death forestalled his attempt” [preuenit conatum eius mors Egelredi], implying that the king’s passing was important enough to delay even the battle plans of a foreign invader; *GR* ii.180.3.

³⁸ The language of the ASC implies that Svein took control of England without a ceremonial inauguration; see Campbell, “Introduction,” liii [cxxxv] and lxiii [cxlv]; and see below n.84.

³⁹ For the blinding and execution, see ASC CDEF 1006; Stafford, “Limitations on Royal Policy,” 35-37; Keynes, “Alfred and Æthelred,” 214-15. See below, n.77 for Ælfgifu’s family.

1016, mentioning only that Edmund was chosen king after his father's death.⁴⁰ This lacuna is not exceptional, as the Chronicle often glossed over succession debates.⁴¹ And, strictly speaking, only Edmund was actually acclaimed in London after Æthelred's death: Cnut may have received the allegiance of English magnates after the assembly, but he was not in London for the election as Edmund was.⁴² By omitting any reference to Cnut's claim or the magnates' debate, the Chronicler made Edmund's election seem unanimous and inevitable. Yet Edmund's political position may actually have been tenuous when his father died.⁴³ Although he was recognized as an effective war leader, his military and political positions were weakened significantly by the Danish advance.⁴⁴ Edmund's support in the north, where his power had been concentrated in 1014 and 1015, was diminished with Cnut's military success and marriage alliance in the region; Cnut's 1015 conquest of Wessex, the home territory of the West Saxon kings, would have further reduced Edmund's resources.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Edmund had moved against his father's interests in 1014, attempting to overthrow his chief advisor and possibly making his own bid for the crown after

⁴⁰ Cnut was referred to as "king Cnut" [Cnut cyning] in ASC CDEF 1016, even before his election is recounted in the annal for 1017. This does not mean that he was recognized as king by the Londoners immediately upon Æthelred's death, however, as the entry was probably written retrospectively, once he had become king after Edmund had died.

⁴¹ The accessions of Edward the Martyr (975), Harold Harefoot (1035), and Edward the Confessor (1042) were all contested by other candidates, but these conflicts were never explicitly cited in the ASC.

⁴² John and the Encomiast each reported that Cnut's partisans met him outside the city to give him news of their allegiance, implying that however popular he may have been among the northern magnates, the Londoners were not willing to welcome him at Æthelred's funeral after his attacks against the king and the city. On London's importance in the final years of Æthelred's reign, see Hill, "Development of Towns," 217; Hill, "Urban Policy," 103; Brooke and Keir, *London*, 21-23; Nightingale, "Origin of the Court of Husting," 560 and 566. For Scandinavian attacks on the city in the decades leading up to 1016, see Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 35-37; Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Policy," 35.

⁴³ For Edmund's uncertain status at Æthelred's death, see Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Policy," 35-37.

⁴⁴ For Edmund's military successes leading up to 1016, see Keynes, "Alfred and Æthelred," 216.

⁴⁵ For Edmund's position in the north, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 71. Cnut's conquest of Wessex is detailed in the ASC: "The West Saxons submitted and gave hostages and provided [Cnut's] army with horses and the army was there until midwinter" [Westsexe bugon 7 gislodon 7 horsodon pone here, 7 he wæs þær ða oþ midne winter]; ASC CDE 1015.

Svein's death.⁴⁶ By the time Edmund reconciled with Æthelred in 1015, he may have damaged his relations with at least some of his father's magnates, whose endorsement would be vital in a contested royal election.

The solution, for Edmund and his supporters, was to evoke the primacy of the West Saxon dynasty and emphasize Edmund's close kinship with Æthelred, a lawful, consecrated Anglo-Saxon king. The relationship between father and son was surely evident in 1015, when "prince Edmund went to London, to his father" as he was suffering his last illness.⁴⁷ He was probably with him as he died, and Æthelred may even have willed his son the kingdom in his final days.⁴⁸ Edmund undoubtedly accompanied his father's body the short distance from the royal residence to St. Paul's, and as the dead king's oldest living son, he would have drawn considerable attention at the funeral. While Cnut was absent during Æthelred's burial and the subsequent council, Edmund must have assumed a prominent place at both events, and his presence would have made it all but impossible for the assembled company to deny his status as Æthelred's heir.

Not only would Edmund's physical proximity to the dead king have helped

⁴⁶ This advisor was the infamous Eadric Streona, who was Æthelred's son-in-law and foremost councilor in the final decade of his reign. Eadric was blamed for the scandalous death in 1015 of the Northumbrian earls Sigeferth and Morcar, Edmund's close allies who controlled much of the Danelaw; they were described in ASC CDEF 1015 as "the foremost thegns in the Seven Boroughs" [*þa yldestan þægenas into Seofonburgum*], which included Lincoln, Stamford, Leicester, Nottingham and Derby, and possibly York and Torksey, Lincolnshire. Their killing motivated Edmund to move against Eadric and Æthelred in 1015, marrying Sigeferth's widow against Æthelred's wishes (*ofer ðæs cynges gewil*) and rallying considerable support in the north: "he immediately rode over all the property of Sigeferth and Morcar, and all that folk submitted to him" [*gerad sona ealle Sigeferðes are 7 Morcores, 7 þæt folc eal him tobeah*]. Pauline Stafford suggests that the earls' assassinations were a response to Edmund's bid for the kingdom during Æthelred's exile. See Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Power," 35-37; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 225; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 211-14; Keynes, "Alfred and Æthelred," 213-17; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 388 n.2.

⁴⁷ "Se æþeling Eadmund gewende to Lundene to his fæder"; ASC CDE 1016. On Æthelred's illness in the year leading up to his death, see ASC CDE 1015; Keynes, "Alfred and Æthelred," 216.

⁴⁸ Deathbed bequests were not uncommon in Anglo-Saxon England, and Edmund may have actually expected his father to grant him the kingdom before he died. Compare with Edward the Confessor, who reportedly granted the kingdom on his deathbed to Harold Godwinson. On oral and deathbed wills, see Hazeltine, "General Preface," viii-xiii; see below for the Confessor's bequest and the royal succession of 1066.

him present himself as the natural successor to his father's realm, Æthelred's burial would have been orchestrated to emphasize the legitimacy of West Saxon kings: a well-attended ceremonial funeral would have confirmed Æthelred's royal status among detractors who claimed that he had forfeited his throne. But his funeral and tomb may also have been used in an effort to turn public sentiment away from Cnut. In particular, the king's burial at St. Paul's would have drawn attention to the offenses perpetrated against the English by Scandinavian invaders. Æthelred may not have intended to be buried in London; no king had been buried in St. Paul's for more than three centuries, and Æthelred had probably expected to be entombed in Winchester with his eldest son, who had died in 1014.⁴⁹ The military circumstances of 1016 made this a risky journey, however, as the body would need to be carried through territories that were now under Cnut's control. Furthermore, the bishop and clergy may have made a concerted effort to keep Æthelred's body in the cathedral.⁵⁰ St. Paul's had enjoyed a long and profitable relationship with Anglo-Saxon kings, facilitated by its proximity to London's royal palace.⁵¹ In 1016, it was the premier church in London,

⁴⁹ This was Æthelstan, who was buried at Old Minster. From the tenth century, most kings were interred in monasteries, where royal priorities would not be forced to compete with or be subject to episcopal interests; St. Paul's and Old Minster were notable exceptions to this trend. For Æthelstan's burial, see Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xx-xxi. For royal burials in monasteries instead of in episcopal churches, see Thacker, "Dynastic Monasteries." For St. Paul's status as a cathedral church rather than a minster, see Taylor, "Foundation and Endowment," 9-10.

⁵⁰ Compare, for example, the West Saxon king Edmund's burial at Glastonbury in 946: though not previously a royal mausoleum, Glastonbury was the home monastery of Archbishop Dunstan, who was present at the king's sudden death and managed to win control of the corpse. See Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Burial," 41-42; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.144.2-3. For the value of royal corpses to religious communities, see Wright, "Royal Tomb Program," 224-39; Spiegel, "Cult of Saint Denis," 53-58; Hallam, "Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship," 363-64.

⁵¹ Bede attributed St. Paul's foundation to Æthelberht of Kent and dated its foundation to 604, during the reign of Sæberht of the East Saxons, who ruled London under Æthelberht. It is possible that a royal residence was already established at the time of its foundation; in any case, St. Paul's royal connections are evident in its earliest attestations. The emphasis in the ASC upon London's support of Edmund may indicate that the annals for this period were composed by a cleric of St. Paul's. Bede's account appears in *HE* II.3. For the Anglo-Saxon history and endowment of St. Paul's, see Taylor, "Foundation and Endowment"; Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 1-46; Biddle, "City in Transition," 22 and 28; Brooke, "The Earliest Times," 2-15. On the location of the pre-Conquest palace, see Keene, "Conquest to Capital," 18-20; Kelley, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 8-9; Biddle, "City in Transition," 22-23 and 28. For an inmate of St. Paul's as the possible author of the ASC account of these years, see Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 35; Keynes, "Declining Reputation," 232 and 246 n.27.

and its possession of Æthelred's body would have reinforced its prestige in a city which continued to support the increasingly unpopular king in his later years. St. Paul's already boasted the remains of the East Saxon king Sæbbi (d.694) and the popular bishop St. Erkenwald (d.693), along with relics of the apostle Paul.⁵² Yet the grave of Ælfheah, archbishop of Canterbury, must have been more immediately noteworthy.⁵³ After he was killed by Vikings in 1012, Ælfheah's miracle-working relics provided a cultic focus for anti-Danish sentiment—so much so that Cnut had the body translated to Canterbury, possibly by force, early in his reign.⁵⁴ Furthermore, a few years before Ælfheah's martyrdom, the remains of Edmund the Martyr were temporarily installed next door to St. Paul's.⁵⁵ This king of East Anglia was notoriously beheaded by Vikings in 869, and when his church at Bury was threatened

⁵² Sæbbi (r.664-694) renounced his throne and became a monk shortly before he died; Bede reported that wonders occurred at his tomb, but there is little evidence of a later saint's cult. Erkenwald was bishop of London from 675 to 693 and reestablished St. Paul's influence after a period of royal apostasy. His cult endured after the Norman Conquest and he became St. Paul's premier saint; he was translated and enshrined in the Cathedral's new crypt in 1107, and a second translation in 1148 may have been accompanied by the translation of Sæbbi and Æthelred into new marble sarcophagi. The church's dedication to St. Paul suggests that it possessed secondary relics of the apostle at the time of its foundation; these would likely have been supplemented by other secondary relics of prominent Roman and Gallic saints. See Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 113-16; Taylor, "Foundation and Endowment," 8-9; Cragoe, "Fabric, Tombs, and Precinct," 132.

⁵³ See Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 115. For Osbern's account of Ælfheah's burial at St. Paul's, see Rumble, "*Translatio*," 283-84. For the possibility that Svein, Cnut's father, was involved in Ælfheah's death, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 25-26.

⁵⁴ The ASC does not mention force or hostility, but Osbern's late eleventh-century version of the translation claims that Cnut's soldiers snuck into St. Paul's to snatch the incorrupt body, fearing resistance and retaliation from the Londoners. Although Alexander Rumble warns of this episode's rhetorical similarity to other contemporary accounts of relic translations, the intimations of violence in Osbern's version present a very different picture of the event than do the ASC's descriptions—a discrepancy that should perhaps not be entirely attributed to rhetoric. M.K. Lawson also notes the generic hagiographical conventions in Osbern's account, but argues that this version is not irreconcilable with the ASC account and that Cnut may have expected a violent response to the translation. See Rumble, "*Translatio*," 286-88 and 294-315 for an edition of Osbern's account; Lawson, *Cnut*, 181-83; Nightingale, "Origin of the Court of Husting," 566-67; ASC DEF 1023. See also Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 115.

⁵⁵ His relics were placed in the church of St. Gregory, which adjoined St. Paul's. The account of the relics' sojourn in London appears in the *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, a late eleventh-century text derived from a source (now lost) composed late in Æthelred's reign. The *De Miraculis* is edited in Arnold, *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, 26-92; on the text's sources, author, and historicity, see Gransden, "Composition and Authorship," especially 26-29. For Edmund the Martyr's tenure in London, see Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 115. On St. Gregory's church and its relation to St. Paul's, see Brooke, "Central Middle Ages," 35.

by further Viking attacks in 1009, his relics were brought to London for safe keeping. The body was returned to Bury three years later, despite the bishop's efforts to enshrine the saint permanently in London's cathedral.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in Æthelred's final years, the presence of Sts. Edmund and Ælfheah would have established St. Paul's as a cult center for victims of Viking brutality. By the time Æthelred died, he too may have been regarded locally as a victim of Scandinavian aggression: his reign had been plagued by attacks and invasions, and he had been forced into exile by Svein just a year after Ælfheah's killing. The proximity of the king's grave to Ælfheah's tomb would have evoked the circumstances surrounding the archbishop's martyrdom, perhaps imbuing Æthelred's funeral with pious anti-Danish fervor. Four years after Ælfheah's death and the departure of Edmund the Martyr's relics, another high-profile funeral would have situated the cathedral as a center of ideological resistance to Danish rule.⁵⁷ Æthelred's burial there would have reminded the populace of the offences that Cnut's ancestors had perpetrated against the English, leaving Edmund Ironside as the preferable alternative to a Danish king.

Although this message may have been lost on Cnut's supporters, it would surely have resonated among Londoners who had borne the brunt of his attacks. Cnut's siege of the city in May 1016 was surely directed in part at the citizens who continued to resist him and claim Edmund as their king. But London was also a valuable conquest in itself: the populous urban center provided strategic advantage and material support to whomever controlled its resources, and it had consequently been a

⁵⁶ According to the *De Miraculis*, the bishop of London was miraculously unable to move Edmund's body; the men from Bury, by contrast, could easily lift the relics and carry them home. See Arnold, *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, 44-46.

⁵⁷ On St. Paul's as a center of resistance to Scandinavian rule, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 181-82. For the effect of ninth-century Viking attacks on St. Paul's, see Taylor, "Foundation and Endowment," 11-12; Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 24-26. For Cnut's interest in the cults of Ælfheah and Edmund the Martyr and the political implications of his patronage, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 140-43; Gransden, "Cult of St Mary," 629-37; Gransden, "Origins of Bury," 10-13; Nightingale, "Court of Husting," 566-67; and below, Chapter 6.

regular object of Viking aggression.⁵⁸ Additionally, London provided a stage for royal ritual, and it seems that Cnut was interested in the city's ceremonial potential. After his partisans had declared him king and while Edmund was busy rallying support in Wessex, Cnut apparently attempted to confirm his newfound authority with a demonstration of royal ritual inside the city. According to the *Encomium*, the magnates who pledged their allegiance to Cnut scheduled a time for him to enter the city.⁵⁹ When the day arrived,

Cnut entered the city and sat on the throne of the kingdom. Nevertheless, he did not believe that the Londoners were loyal to him yet. Accordingly, he had the equipment of his ships renewed that summer, so that if the army of his enemies happened to besiege the city, he should not be delivered by the enemies within to the enemies without and perish. Guarding against this, he withdrew again for the moment like a wise man, and having boarded the ships and left the city, he went to the island called Sheppey with his followers.⁶⁰

No other source mentioned this episode, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and John of Worcester both maintained that the Danish army could not overcome the city's defenses after the 1016 election.⁶¹ It may be that this sole account of Cnut's enthronement was exaggerated or invented some twenty-five years after the fact by an author committed to establishing his royal legitimacy.⁶² Yet the author's measured

⁵⁸ On London's wealth and population in the Anglo-Saxon period, see Brooke, "Central Middle Ages"; Biddle, "City in Transition." See also Nightingale, "Origin of the Court of Husting," 577-78. On London's importance in the final years of Æthelred's reign, see Hill, "Development of Towns," 217; Hill, "Urban Policy," 103; Brooke and Keir, *London*, 21-23; Nightingale, "Origin of the Court of Husting," 560 and 566. For Scandinavian attacks on the city in the decades leading up to 1016, see Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 35-37; Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Policy," 35.

⁵⁹ "A treaty was made, with a day set for his entry" [faedus firmatum est, ingressui eius die constituto]; *Encomium*, 22-23.

⁶⁰ "Cnuto autem ciuitatem intrauit, et in solio regni resedit. Sed tamen Londonienses non sibi adhuc esse fideles credidit: unde et nauium stipendia illa aestate restaurare fecit, ne, si forte exercitus aduersariorum ciuitatem oppugnaret, ipse ab interioribus hostibus exterioribus traditus interiret. Quod cauens rursus ad tempus ut prudens cessit, et ascensis ratibus ac ciuitate relicta insulam Scepei dictam cum suis petiit"; *Encomium*, 22-25.

⁶¹ The ASC and John of Worcester each described Cnut's unsuccessful siege of the city soon after Æthelred died, and neither depicted Cnut entering London until after Edmund's death, when he held a council there. See JW 484-494; ASC DEF 1016.

⁶² Enthronement was a well-established element of royal coronations. In the coronation *ordo* used in England from the mid-tenth century, the king's authority was confirmed upon his installation "on the

praise of Cnut's hasty exit—it was a savvy tactical move by a wise leader, not a retreat from imminent danger—could also be a justification of a botched entry that his audience still remembered in the 1040s.⁶³ The *Encomiast* was clear that Cnut could not enter London with a military force strong enough to subdue his opponents, implying that he entered the city with a relatively small entourage. If this was in fact the case, Cnut's desire to enter an enemy stronghold despite his considerable distrust of its citizens indicates that a London enthronement held some ideological advantage. Why not have himself enthroned in the north, where he enjoyed considerable political support, or in Winchester, where he had subdued the surrounding population? Cnut's English supporters apparently recognized London as the requisite staging point for such an important ceremonial event, and the royal center's association with lawful authority would have undoubtedly appealed to a foreign ruler craving legitimacy.

But if this entry and enthronement was intended to persuade the citizens of his legitimacy, the endeavor failed. Rather than inspiring the Londoners' loyalty, Cnut may have exacerbated hostilities, necessitating a quick withdrawal to his ships. By contrast, Edmund's subsequent *adventus* into the city was a success. After he had rallied an army in Wessex (and after Cnut had left London, according to the *Encomium*), Edmund,

coming with an army not insignificant but innumerable, entered the city in state. Soon everyone followed, obeyed, and favored him, and urged him to be a

throne of the kingdom" [in hoc regni solio]; afterwards, he would have been acclaimed by the assembled crowd and anointed by the archbishop. The *Encomiast's* description of the *solio regni* seems designed to evoke the rhetoric of this coronation rite, especially its reference to the king's inheritance of the realm. In the *ordo*, the act of enthronement was accompanied by the instruction to hold the kingdom "which until now, by paternal suggestion, you held by hereditary right" [quem huc usque paterna sugetione tenuisti hereditario iure]; the *Encomium's* allusion to the rite seems to reiterate that Cnut was claiming his lawful inheritance, the kingdom that Svein had won from Æthelred. The *ordo* is edited by Ward, "Anglo-Saxon Coronation Ceremony," quotation at 357; and compare *Encomium*, 22-23. For the process of enthronement, see Nelson, "Ritual and Reality, 334-35. For the removal of the phrase "by paternal suggestion" from the *ordo* after the Norman Conquest, see Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 119-21.

⁶³ For discussions of royal ritual gone awry, see Koziol, "Problem of Sacrality," 137-41; Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, 8-10.

strong man, declaring that they chose him rather than the leader of the Danes.⁶⁴

His procession would have culminated at the city's royal center, which included the royal palace and St. Paul's, and Edmund was likely acclaimed in one (or both) of these places.⁶⁵ Like Cnut, who insisted on being enthroned at the site of Æthelred's death and burial, Edmund publicly appropriated the administrative and ecclesiastical heart of his father's kingdom. But whereas the *Encomiast* regarded Edmund's stay in London as an opportunity for him to rally support and have his succession confirmed, Cnut's visit may have represented a failed attempt to broadcast his victory over his rival—a victory which he had not yet achieved. Circumstances changed once Edmund died in November 1016, and Cnut quickly made a public show of his authority in the place that had most strongly resisted his succession. Cnut's first priority was to secure oaths of loyalty from the citizens and assembled magnates, convincing them to accept him as king and abandon their allegiance to Edmund's kin. His appropriation of the royal center would have unambiguously signaled his deposition of the previous dynasty: the English nobility was required to renounce the West Saxon kings in their own stronghold, probably in the very palace in which Æthelred and Edmund had organized their resistance against the Danes. Such a display would have left no doubt that the old

⁶⁴ “Cum populo non mediocri sed innumerabili ueniens ciuitatem pompatice ingreditur, et mox eum uniuersi sequuntur, obtemperant, et fauent, et uirum fortem fieri suadent, dicentes quod eum magis quam Danorum principem eligerent”; *Encomium*, 24-25. By recognizing this as the moment of Edmund's election, rather than his early nomination by the faction of Londoners who smuggled him out of the city, the *Encomiast* established Cnut's primacy as a lawfully elected king—an important part of his defense of the Danish king and his heirs.

⁶⁵ The ASC did not mention a ceremonial aspect of Edmund's re-entry into London, focusing instead on his defeat of the Danes who had taken the city: “And then he made a third trip to gather the army and went to London and saved the city-guards and then made the Viking army flee to their ships” [7 þa gegaderade he þryddan siðe fyrde 7 ferde to Lundenne... 7 þa buruhwaru ahredde 7 þæne here geflymde to hiora scypon]; ASC CDE 1016. This account does not preclude a more formal *adventus*, however, especially if the Danes left London before Edmund's arrival—as the *Encomiast*, John of Worcester, and William of Malmesbury each recorded. See *Encomium*, 24-25; JW 484-87; GR ii.180.5. William of Malmesbury's assertion that further attacks on the city occurred “while Edmund was taking something of a holiday and regrouping his forces” [Edmundo aliquantum feriato et partes suas componente] also suggests that this reentry into London was more than just a military operation. See GR ii.180.5.

regime had been overthrown and that London's resistant population had been subjugated to the will of their new ruler.

Yet even though Cnut was able to compel the English magnates to repudiate Edmund's kin, his claim to legitimate rulership remained tenuous; he would have been regarded by at least some of his new English subjects as a conqueror rather than the rightful heir to the realm.⁶⁶ In response to such concerns, Cnut did not simply maintain that the kingdom was his paternal inheritance but now founded his claim on his treaty with Edmund as well as on Svein's victory over Æthelred. According to this logic, it was imperative that Cnut recognize Edmund as a rightful king while simultaneously asserting that he—not Edmund's brothers or sons—was his lawful heir and successor to the realm.⁶⁷ To this end, Cnut portrayed himself as Edmund's honorary kinsman for the duration of his reign. According to William of Malmesbury, the king was accustomed to calling Edmund his brother and, upon a visit to his grave at Glastonbury, re-confirmed the abbey's privileges for "the remission of my sins and for the soul of my brother king Edmund."⁶⁸ This grant, dated to the early 1030s, was accompanied by a public display of reverence at Edmund's tomb:

When Cnut came there in the course of a journey on the feast of St. Andrew, honoring the fraternal remains with pious lamentations, he placed upon the sepulcher his cloak, which seemed to be woven with multicolored peacock

⁶⁶ See Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 282-83; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 72-73.

⁶⁷ According to John of Worcester, Cnut "shrewdly" [sagacissime] asked the English magnates who had witnessed the treaty whether Edmund had made provisions for his brothers or sons in the case of his death. The nobles replied that Edmund had bequeathed nothing to his brothers and had entrusted his sons to Cnut's care until they came of age, but John maintained that they "gave false testimony and deceitfully lied" [falsum perhibuerunt testimonium et fraudulenter mentiti sunt] in order to advance their own standing with the new king; JW 494-95. See also ASC CDEF 1016, JW 492-93, and *Encomium*, 28-31 for descriptions of the treaty.

⁶⁸ "Peccaminum meorum remissionem et animam fratris mei regis Edmundi"; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.184.2. According to William, Cnut began referring to Edmund as his brother soon after the latter's death: when Eadric Streona boasted of murdering Edmund in order to please his new king, Cnut accused him of treachery against "a brother who was in alliance with me" [fratrem michi federatum]; *GR* ii.181.2. The alleged murder was not corroborated by earlier sources, but it appears that William, writing a century after the fact, assumed that Cnut had publicly identified Edmund as a brother from the outset.

feathers.⁶⁹

William's claim that this episode occurred on St. Andrew's day, the anniversary of Edmund's death, suggests that a cultic sensibility motivated the visit. This episode occurred some fifteen years into the king's reign, however, at a point when Cnut would have had little need to confirm his own royal status; the display was more likely intended to emphasize his son's legitimacy and facilitate his eventual succession to the kingdom. Yet this visit was probably not his first display of tomb-side mourning for his predecessor. The earliest sources for the 1016 succession juxtapose their accounts of Edmund's death with Cnut's accession, just as they had done with Æthelred's death.⁷⁰ Edmund died in London but was entombed in Glastonbury, and Cnut was elected in London after Edmund had been buried. It is remarkable, given the exceptionally long distance that the body had to travel, that Cnut waited to convene his inaugural council in London. Rather than securing the peoples' allegiance before Edmund's burial or meeting with the nation's magnates in Glastonbury immediately afterwards, Cnut did not confirm his rule until Edmund's remains were entombed far outside of London. The choice of such a distant burial church was a strategic decision on Cnut's part, for instead of having the king buried with his father at St. Paul's or with his older brother at Winchester's Old Minster, Edmund's body was moved out of Wessex entirely, well away from the heartland of the West Saxon dynasty. Although Glastonbury was a prestigious foundation that had long attracted royal patronage, its mausoleum was located at what was now the political periphery of the kingdom. Cnut took similar action with a politically charged corpse later in his reign, when he removed Archbishop Ælfheah's relics from St. Paul's and installed them in

⁶⁹ "Quo cum Cnuto uie occasione in festo sancti Andree uenisset, pia querela fraternos manes honorans, super sepulcrum eius pallium misit, uersicoloribus pennis pauonum, ut uidetur, intextum"; William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, 132-33. This episode is also related in *GR* ii.184.2.

⁷⁰ See ASC CDEF 1016-17; JW 492-93.

Canterbury, where they would be safely out of the way of the Londoners' anti-Danish cultic ambitions.⁷¹ Viewed in this context, Edmund's burial in Glastonbury seems like an attempt to neutralize a political cult before it had begun, for at such far remove from London and Wessex, there would be little chance that Edmund's body would become a rallying point for a discontented West Saxon population.

The distance between the realm's political heartland and Edmund's grave does not imply that Cnut relinquished control over the funeral, however, for it is unlikely that he would have entrusted the event to Edmund's kin or supporters at such a sensitive transitional moment. Certainly, Cnut's own status would have benefited from a reverential presence at Edmund's grave, which, like his later visit to the tomb, would visually reinforce the collaborative nature of the two kings' joint rule and the resultant legitimacy of his succession. By arranging a long funeral procession and an honorable tomb, Cnut would be perceived as Edmund's chief mourner and natural successor—not as a pretender scrambling for power at the very moment his predecessor died. But perhaps more importantly, this would have prevented any of Edmund's surviving kinsmen from using the funeral as an opportunity to make their own bid for the crown. The most serious threat to Cnut's authority at this time was Eadwig, Edmund's brother, who was promptly exiled upon the latter's death.⁷² It would have been disastrous for Cnut's image as the lawful heir to the kingdom if another son of Æthelred were to publicly claim the realm at the funeral, where he might find support from mourners sympathetic to the interests of the West Saxon royal house. By taking charge of the funeral himself, Cnut would have been able to prevent any other claimant from taking political advantage of Edmund's remains.

Cnut's return to London, like his involvement in Edmund's funeral, would

⁷¹ See above, n.54 and below, Chapter 6.

⁷² See ASC CDE 1017; JW 494-97 and 502-05.

have accentuated the completeness of his conquest while at least superficially encouraging reconciliation. Although Cnut had given his predecessor a worthy burial, he deprived Edmund's supporters of convenient access to the body and entirely disinherited his sons. Upon his assumption of power in London, Cnut allowed most English nobles and high-ranking ecclesiastics to retain their property and positions, yet his final triumphant appropriation of Æthelred's palace signaled the unequivocal defeat of the West Saxon dynasty—a triumph that would have been further reinforced by his marriage to Emma, Æthelred's widow, in 1017.⁷³ But whether Cnut was flaunting his victory by returning to London, or whether he simply saw the city as the natural place to assert his claim to the kingdom, it is noteworthy that he chose to confirm his rule at the site where the most recent king had been elected, where the king before him was entombed, and where the last two West Saxon monarchs had died. Although the city would never become the bastion of political support that it had been for Æthelred and Edmund, Cnut immediately recognized London as the appropriate place to establish his authority, notwithstanding its inhabitants' initial hostility to his rule and the strained relations with the city that he would persist throughout his reign.⁷⁴ I would conclude that it was the city's inescapable association with the ceremonial, military, and administrative activity of West Saxon kings in the preceding generation that induced Cnut to assume power there. Although the vagueness of the earliest accounts of his accession do not preclude the possibility that he received a Kingston consecration, there is no evidence that he was interested in one. The early sources more clearly imply, however, that Cnut carefully evoked his immediate predecessor's memory to his own advantage—taking charge of his funeral, honoring his tomb, installing himself in his London residence, and identifying him as

⁷³ On the continuity of royal appointments, see Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Policy," 24-26; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 69. But also see Fleming, *Kings and Lords*, 39-52 for the gradual replacement of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy under Æthelred and Cnut.

⁷⁴ For Cnut's strained relations with London and its citizens, see below, Chapter 6.

a brother through the end of his reign. It was Cnut's constant public identification with Edmund and Æthelred that reinforced his claims to legitimacy, and this approach to royal continuity would manifest itself in royal burials and inaugurations through the Norman Conquest.

Harold Harefoot, Harthacnut, and Edward the Confessor

Cnut died at Shaftesbury in 1035 and was interred in Old Minster, Winchester—a final attempt to reinforce his legitimacy as a royal progenitor through corporeal proximity to the tombs of earlier English kings.⁷⁵ According to the *Encomium*, he intended the realm to pass directly to Harthacnut, his son by Emma, who was ruling Cnut's Danish kingdom in 1035.⁷⁶ In Harthacnut's absence, Harold Harefoot, Cnut's son by a previous union, pushed his own claim.⁷⁷ Despite his apparent lack of popularity among Cnut's West Saxon subjects, Harold won enough support among northern magnates to gain control over part of the kingdom at a council in Oxford in 1035. He was not fully recognized as king until 1037, however, and his brief reign ended with

⁷⁵ Cnut was likely entombed in the memorial court that housed St. Swithun's shrine in the Anglo-Saxon minster; his remains were later translated into the Norman Cathedral, near Swithun's new reliquary behind the high altar. There is also a later tradition that Cnut's heart was buried in Shaftesbury while the rest of his body was brought to Winchester. See Crook, "Cnut's Bones," 169-76.

⁷⁶ Emma, known in England as Ælfgifu, was the daughter of Duke Richard I of Normandy and the sister of Richard II. In 1002, she married Æthelred, with whom she had two sons: Edward (later "the Confessor") and Alfred (killed during the reign of Harold Harefoot). In 1017, she married Cnut, with whom she had Harthacnut. She was driven into exile by Harold Harefoot but returned to England in 1040 when Harthacnut came to the throne. As an anointed queen, she was an influential figure at the courts of Æthelred, Cnut, and Harthacnut. She enjoyed less favor under Edward but still maintained her own household in Winchester until her death in 1052, when she was buried beside Cnut in Old Minster. On her life and influence, see especially Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 209-54; see also Stafford, "Emma: Powers of the Queen,"; Stafford, "King's Wife in Wessex"; Campbell, "Introduction," xl-l [cxxxii-cxxxii]; and Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xiii-xxxviii and lxxi-lxxx.

⁷⁷ Before he married Emma, Cnut's wife (or possibly his concubine) was Ælfgifu of Northampton, the daughter of a noble family of Scandinavian descent. Her brothers, Ulfgeat and Wulfheah, were blinded under Æthelred in 1006; and her father, Ælfhelm, was allegedly murdered by Eadric Streona during Æthelred's reign. Cnut had two sons with Ælfgifu: Svein, who would later rule Norway with his mother as regent; and Harold Harefoot, who would claim the English throne at Cnut's death. See ASC CDEF 1006; Campbell, "Emma and Ælfgifu," especially 68-70; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 24-25 and 233-34; Stafford, "King's Wife in Wessex," 14-15; Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxxii-xxxiii; Lawson, *Cnut*, 131-32; Stevenson, "Alleged Son of Harold Harefoot," 115-16; John, *Reassessing*, 157. On Ælfgifu's extended family, see Sawyer, *Burton Abbey*, xxxviii-xliii.

his death at Oxford in 1040 and subsequent burial at Westminster.

Contemporary sources for Harold's tenure were largely unflattering. The most extensive account of his reign was provided in the *Encomium*, which vilified Harold at every opportunity.⁷⁸ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and John of Worcester, though less eloquent in their censure than the *Encomiast*, were also unsympathetic to Harold's reign, questioning his parentage and elaborating on his misdeeds. All three texts agreed that Harold's accession was contested; that he oppressed Emma, seized her treasure, and drove her into exile; and that he oversaw the infamous murder and mutilation of Emma and Æthelred's son, the ætheling Alfred, in 1036.⁷⁹ In addition, all three accounts were vague in their assessment of Harold's royal status and implied that he only came to power because Harthacnut was not present to claim the realm in person. Both the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the *Encomium* stated that Harold had won enough popular support—specifically from the northern thegns and the members of London's fleet—to assume practical control of the realm in spite of the objections of the West Saxon magnates, but he was apparently not made king at this time.⁸⁰ The E-text of the Chronicle provided the fullest vernacular account of Harold's accession, reporting that the 1036 Oxford assembly “chose Harold to hold all of England” but not calling him king (*cyng*) until the end of the annal, once additional time had passed.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The *Encomium* was a paean to Emma composed shortly after Harthacnut reclaimed the kingdom upon Harold's death; see above, n.25.

⁷⁹ See *Encomium* 38-50; ASC CD 1035-40; ASC EF 1036-39 (*recte* 1035-40); JW 520-25. The dates of ASC EF are one year ahead in 1035 and one year behind from 1040-1044, due to scribal errors: in both cases, annals were mistakenly copied under years that should have remained blank. See Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles* II, 208 and 217; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 161 n.16.

⁸⁰ ASC E 1036 reported that “Earl Leofric and almost all the thegns north of the Thames and the fleet in London chose Harold to hold all of England for himself and for his brother Harthacnut, who was in Denmark” [Leofric eorl 7 mæst ealle þa þegenas be norðan Temese 7 þa liðsmen on Lunden gecuron Harold to healdes ealles Englelandes him 7 his broðer Hardacnute þe wæs on Denemearcon]; an abbreviated account was included in ASC F 1036. By this time, London housed a considerable Scandinavian population as well as a Danish garrison. See Nightingale, “Origin of the Court of Husting,” 559-69; Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 40-42; Lawson, *Cnut*, 206.

⁸¹ “Gecuron Harold to healdes ealles Engalandes”; ASC EF 1036, quotation from E. The accounts of Harold's accession and reign in ASC CD are closely related to each other but are considerably different from the northern recension represented by E and the abbreviated F. CD's interest in the activity at

This phrasing—marked especially by the lack of the formula *feng to rice*, which was typically used in the Chronicle to describe royal accessions—implies that an election had occurred but that Harold was chosen to rule only as regent, presumably until Harthacnut returned.⁸² He shared the regency with Emma, who stayed in Winchester surrounded by “the housecarls of her son, the king [Harthacnut], and held all Wessex in hand for him.”⁸³ Yet Harthacnut was still abroad in 1037, and despite the efforts of Emma and members of the West Saxon nobility, Harold finally succeeded in having himself designated “full king over all England.”⁸⁴

Even after he had secured the kingdom, however, the legitimacy of Harold’s royal status remained suspect; questions about his parentage were raised in all the English sources for his reign.⁸⁵ Although he was Cnut’s son by his first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton, the Chronicle asserted bluntly that Harold’s claim to that effect “was

Winchester (discussed below) and support of Emma may reflect its southern provenance and bias; the northern thegns and the Oxford meeting receive more attention in E. Compare JW 520-29.

⁸² ASC D 1035 was the only version that said that Harold *feng to rice*; yet two years later in its annal for 1037, it reported that “here Harold was chosen as king over all” [her man geceas Harold ofer eall to kyninge]—suggesting that his accession progressed in two distinct phases. On the phrase *feng to rice*, see n.9 above. On Harold and Emma’s regencies, see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 236-46; Keynes, “Introduction to the Reprint,” xxix-xxx; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 43-44.

⁸³ “Pæs cynges huscarlum hyra suna, 7 heoldan ealle Westseaxan him to handa”; ASC E 1036. John of Worcester maintained that after Cnut’s death, the northern part of the kingdom was granted to Harold and the southern part to Harthacnut, but since Harthacnut did not return from Denmark, Harold won control of the entire kingdom: “Harold, king of the Mercians and the Northumbrians, was elected by the magnates and the whole people to rule all England as king. But Harthacnut, since he wasted his time in Denmark and delayed coming to England as he was invited, was completely deposed” [Haroldus rex Merciorum et Northymbrorum, ut per totam regnaret Angliam, a principibus et omni populo rex eligitur. Heardecanutus uero, quia in Denemarcia moras innexuit et ad Angliam, ut rogabatur, uenire distulit, penitus abicitur]; JW 520-25, quotation at 525. See also Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 237-38, and 6-12, for Emma’s depiction in the ASC.

⁸⁴ “Full cyng ofer eall Englalund”; ASC EF 1036. Earlier in the same annal, ASC E asserted that “Earl Godwin and all the eldest men in Wessex opposed Harold as long as they could, but they were unable to do anything against it” [Godwine eorl 7 ealle þa yldestan menn on Westseaxon lagon ongean swa hi lengost mihton, ac hi ne mihton nan þing ongean wealcen]. The phrase *full cyng* was also used of Svein Forkbeard when he gained control over the entire realm: “the entire kingdom had him as full king” [eall þeodscipe hine heafde for fullne cyning]; ASC E 1013. According to Alastair Campbell, the phrase *full cyng* “regularly implies kingly power without perfect constitutional standing”—an assessment that may easily be applied to the reigns of both Svein and Harold. Eric John takes *full cyng* to mean that Harold was consecrated by the archbishop, although this seems not to be supported by the use of the phrase elsewhere in the ASC. See Campbell, “Introduction,” liii and lxiii n.3; John, *Reassessing*, 165; Stafford, “Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises,” 182. On Harold’s consecration, see below.

⁸⁵ Simon Keynes regards questions about Harold’s parentage as contemporary with his attempt to gain the kingdom and not a later development; “Introduction to the Reprint,” xxix.

not true”; more elaborate accounts maintained that he was the son of a cobbler or a servant whom Ælfgifu passed off as Cnut’s.⁸⁶ Such skepticism about his paternity would have motivated Harold to emphasize as firmly as possible his kinship with Cnut in order to present himself as the dead king’s legitimate heir. The funeral would have been the natural place to advertise this relationship, yet the Chronicle reported that “immediately after Cnut’s death, there was a meeting of all the *witan* in Oxford,” where Harold was appointed to hold the kingdom.⁸⁷ Despite the urgency implied in this language, there must have been some delay to allow the kingdom’s magnates to make the fifty-mile journey to Oxford, and it is remarkable that the council was not simply held at Winchester in the aftermath of the funeral. Unlike Edmund Ironside, Harold did not use his father’s burial to publicly advertise his own legitimacy and have himself crowned king. Furthermore, unlike any royal election in living memory, the assembly was held on the border between English and Scandinavian territories rather than in the West Saxon heartland. This choice of location may reflect the political clout of the northern magnates after Cnut’s death, or it may signal Oxford’s increasing prominence as a royal center.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ “Hit na soð nære”; ASC CD 1035, quotation from C. ASC E 1036 said that this parentage “seemed very unbelievable to many people” [þuhte swiðe ungeleaflic manegum mannum]. For more damning accounts of Harold’s lineage see, *Encomium* 40; JW 520-21. For the persistence of stories of Ælfgifu’s deception of Cnut, see McNulty, “Lady Aelgyva in the Bayeux Tapestry.” The Scandinavian sources do not question that Ælfgifu’s sons were Cnut’s, however; see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 24-25.

⁸⁷ “Sona æfter his forsiðe wæs ealra witenas gemot on Oxnaforda”; ASC E 1036. ASC CDF did not mention the Oxford meeting.

⁸⁸ Despite its accessible location at the intersection of Wessex, Mercia, and the Danelaw, Oxford was not necessarily a neutral location. It was an established royal center which hosted important assemblies, including Æthelred’s 1015 council (after which Sigeforth and Morcar were killed) and Cnut’s 1018 renewal of Edgar’s laws; yet Oxford housed a Danish garrison under Cnut, and the city boasted a significant Danish population through the late tenth and eleventh century. Oxford was also the site of the 1002 St. Brice’s Day massacre, in which Æthelred had ordered the slaughter of the Danish population—an episode later used to justify Svein’s 1013 invasion of England. For councils held and laws issued at Oxford under Æthelred and Cnut, see ASC CDE 1015, 1018; Cnut 1020 13; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 131, 346. For St. Brice’s day and its implications, see ASC CDEF 1002; S 909; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.177.1; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 203-5; Wilcox, “St. Brice’s Day,” 79-85; Innes, “Danelaw Identities,” 65-67. For Oxford’s status, situation, and accessibility, see Blair, *Oxfordshire*, 106, 158-59, and 167-70; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 43; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 438; Innes, “Danelaw Identities,” 73.

More importantly, however, Harold may have taken control of the realm at Oxford because he was unable to do so at Winchester. At least three other eleventh-century kings were elected before or immediately after their predecessor's funerals, but it is unclear whether Harold attempted to have himself acclaimed in the presence of Cnut's body or tomb.⁸⁹ The somewhat opaque description of the occasion in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle suggests that the funerary activity at Winchester was integral to the political debate that followed. The C-text, written c.1044, is the earliest witness to Cnut's funeral and its aftermath:

In this year King Cnut died at Shaftesbury and he was carried thence to Winchester and buried there. And Ælfgifu Emma, the queen, stayed inside there. And Harold, who said that he was the son of Cnut and the other Ælfgifu, although it was not true. He sent and had taken from her all the best treasure which King Cnut possessed—which she could not hold on to. And she remained there afterwards as long as she could.⁹⁰

This account intimates that Harold was in Winchester along with Emma when he claimed to be Cnut's son and that his paternity was openly challenged at this moment.⁹¹ Perhaps Harold first asserted his hereditary right to the kingdom during or shortly after Cnut's funeral, only to have his ambitions undermined by publicly articulated concerns about his parentage.⁹² The greatest obstacle to Harold's claim must have been Emma, who kept a residence in Winchester and remained there with

⁸⁹ Edmund Ironside and Harold Godwinson were both elected in the aftermath of their predecessors' funerals; Edward the Confessor was elected before his predecessor was even buried. These successions are discussed below.

⁹⁰ "Her forðferde cnut cing... æt sceftesbyrig . 7 hine man feroðe þanon to winceastre 7 hine þær bebyrigde . 7 ælfgifu seo hlæfdie sæt þa ðærbinnan . 7 harold þe sæde þæt he cnutes sunnu wære 7 þære oðre ælfgife þeh hit na soð nare . he sende to 7 let numan of hyre ealle þa betstan gærsuma ðe heo ofhealdan ne mihte þe cnut cing ahte . 7 heo sæt þeh forð þærbinnan ða hwile þe heo moste"; ASC C 1035. I have transcribed this passage from the manuscript facsimile to avoid the different readings implicit in the punctuation of the printed editions; I have translated the text as literally as possible. For the text, see O'Brien O'Keefe, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile* 10, Cotton Tiberius B.i fols.155v-156r.

⁹¹ I translated this passage literally above, but the Old English "7 harold þe sæde þæt he cnutes sunnu wære" might be rendered, "and Harold was there, who said that he was the son of Cnut."

⁹² This in contrast to Pauline Stafford's suggestion that concerns about Harold's paternity first surfaced at Oxford; *Emma and Edith*, 238. See also Keynes "Introduction to the Reprint," xxix; and above, n.85.

Harthacnut's retinue after Cnut died.⁹³ In Harthacnut's absence, Emma surely used her husband's funeral as an opportunity to declare her own son the legitimate heir to the realm, publicly professing that Cnut had named Harthacnut as his successor.⁹⁴ Even though Harold had been a recognized member of his father's household, it was Cnut's queen—not his son—who ultimately managed to take control of his memory and deploy it for political ends at the time of his death.⁹⁵ As Cnut's wife for nearly two decades, Emma enjoyed a degree of influence unprecedented among most earlier Anglo-Saxon royal consorts; as an anointed queen, her status and the status of her offspring would theoretically trump those of any previous wives or children.⁹⁶ She may well have been responsible for arranging her husband's burial and would have assumed a prominent position at the funeral, thus ensuring that she was as closely identified with Cnut in death as she had been during his life.⁹⁷ Furthermore, she commanded the allegiance of "Earl Godwin and the eldest men of Wessex" as well as Harthacnut's retinue, and her patronage of the Winchester minsters would have assured her ecclesiastical support in the city.⁹⁸ In the company of the West Saxon

⁹³ ASC CD 1035, E 1036 (*recte* 1035). The *Encomium* reported that "When King Cnut was dead and honorably buried, the lady, Queen Emma, remained alone in the kingdom, grieving for the bitter death of her lord" [Mortuo Cnutone rege honorificeque sepulto... domina regina Emma sola remansit in regno dolens de domini sui morte amara]; *Encomium* 38-39. See also ASC CD 1035, discussed below.

⁹⁴ See John, *Reassessing*, 165. The *Encomium* reported that Cnut promised Emma that only his children by her would succeed to the kingdom: "She refused ever to become Cnut's wife, unless he would affirm to her by oath that he would never cause the son of any wife other than herself to rule after him, if it happened that God should give her a son by him" [Abnegat illa, se unquam Cnutonis sponsam fieri, nisi illi iusiurando affirmaret, quod numquam alterius coniugis filium post se regnare faceret nisi eius, si forte illi Deus ex eo filium dedisset]; *Encomium* 32-33. A similar commitment was made to Matilda of Flanders when she married William the Bastard c.1052, and Frank Barlow postulates that this may have been a standard element of high-ranking Norman marriage contracts. Furthermore, since Emma was an anointed queen, her son would have been considered more throne-worthy than the sons of an unanointed wife. See Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 31-32; Stafford, "King's Wife in Wessex," 18; and below, n.96. For Emma's defamation of Harold, see Stafford, "Powers of the Queen," 6.

⁹⁵ For Harold and Ælfgifu's continued presence in the public eye after Cnut's marriage to Emma, see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 233; Lawson, *Cnut*, 131-32.

⁹⁶ See Stafford, "Emma: Powers of the Queen," 13-16; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 162-64 and 174-83; Stafford, "King's Wife in Wessex," 16-18.

⁹⁷ For a comparable example of a king's female survivors taking charge of burial arrangements and succession politics, see Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 146-49; and above, Chapter 1 n.30.

⁹⁸ "Godwine eorl 7 ealle þa yldestan menn on Westseaxon"; ASC E 1036 (*recte* 1035). ASC F 1036 (*recte* 1035) rendered this as "all the best men" [ealle ða betstan men].

magnates assembled in the very heart of Wessex, Emma would have been a force to be reckoned with. Harold's own claim to the kingdom would have been strained, his royal paternity notwithstanding.

Yet the assertion that Harold had to send people to take Emma's treasure could indicate that he was not in Winchester at the time, and it is possible that he did not attend Cnut's funeral at all. If the king was buried relatively quickly, Harold may not have arrived in Winchester in time to see his father buried—perhaps a deliberate calculation on Emma's part, if Harold was far away in the north when Cnut died.⁹⁹ Alternatively, the queen and her supporters may have forcibly prevented him from entering Winchester. The C-text of the Chronicle stated twice that the queen *sæt ðærbinnan* ("sat therein"), a phrase typically applied to people who remained at home or sat in state; but the only time it is used in the Chronicle to describe anyone other than Emma, the phrase has clear military implications.¹⁰⁰ Harold moved against the queen at Winchester on at least two occasions, when he seized her treasure in 1035 and drove her into exile in 1037, and Emma may have anticipated these incursions and fortified Winchester against her step-son as early as the funeral.

Even if her precautions were ultimately insufficient, they were enough to prevent Harold from gaining control of the kingdom at Winchester. By leaving Emma in Wessex and meeting at Oxford, an enclave of political strength for Harold, however, the council could proceed without the queen's direct interference. This

⁹⁹ Compare Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 146-49.

¹⁰⁰ The phrase is also used twice in ASC D 1036 (*recte* 1035). This construction might imply that Emma was forcibly kept in Winchester while the council was held in Oxford, but ASC E 1036 (*recte* 1035), which asserts that the queen continued to exert authority in Wessex, does not support this reading; see above, n.93. It is possible that this instance of the phrase *sæt binnan* refers to a prolonged wake or state of mourning, though this use does not seem to be attested elsewhere. For other uses of *sæt binnan* in the ASC, see A 900, CD 901, and D 1043 (which describes Emma being deprived of her treasure a second time); and the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*. For Emma's possible military ambitions, see Stafford, "Powers of the Queen," 6; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 44. William of Malmesbury understood Emma to be under attack in Winchester: "at length, outclassed in power and in numbers, she yielded to force" [tandem, ui et numero impar, cessit uiolentiae]; *GR* ii.188.1.

relocation evokes the sequence of events which followed Cnut's own accession in 1016, when the new king buried Edmund Ironside far away in Glastonbury before returning to London to formally establish his rule. Perhaps Harold too sought to downplay the importance of his father's body after failing to identify himself as the natural heir to the kingdom: just as Edmund Ironside's tomb might have proved a dangerous distraction at the time of Cnut's accession, Cnut's body might have served as a reminder for the assembled *witan* that Harold's paternity was in doubt and that (by Emma's reckoning) Cnut had designated another successor. By distancing the assembly from the tomb, Harold might have neutralized the impact of Cnut's memory on the proceedings. Yet Cnut, at the time of his accession, had been operating from a position of military strength, without any substantial challenges to his accession; he had kept control over Edmund's funeral and then confirmed his rule at the most defiant site in his new kingdom.¹⁰¹ Harold's election, by contrast, was vigorously opposed. Although he apparently had enough clout to convene the assembly in a region that generally supported his candidacy, the relocation of the election outside of Wessex suggests that Harold knew he would be unable to muster enough support in the south to be elected.¹⁰² His inability to use Cnut's funeral to his advantage—especially if Emma had publicly thwarted his attempt to portray himself as the legitimate heir to the kingdom—may have exacerbated factional sympathies, galvanizing Wessex against Harold and undermining any plan to be acclaimed outright after his father's burial.

Although the move away from Cnut and Emma may have helped Harold establish himself as regent, Harthacnut's absence remained the determining factor in

¹⁰¹ Other contenders may have posed a threat to his rule, but there is no record of serious opposition in London. See above for the 1017 election.

¹⁰² Oxford may have already been a favored location of Harold's, for he died there a few years later. The town was certainly closer to his mother's familial estates in Northampton. For Harold's family lands, see Campbell, "Emma and Ælfgifu," 76; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 43.

the succession dispute of the 1030s. Even if Harold could not gather enough West Saxon support to become “full king over all England” while Harthacnut’s prompt return was still expected, it was logistically impossible for the West Saxons’ favored candidate to assume practical power while abroad.¹⁰³ Accordingly, once Harold’s regency in the north was confirmed at Oxford, he began angling for control of Wessex as well. His success hinged largely on his ability to minimize Emma’s influence, since she still commanded loyalty among her husband’s allies and worked continuously to bring Harthacnut, and later her sons by Æthelred, back to England to reclaim the throne. After his election, Harold made his first move against the queen by seizing her treasure: “He sent and had taken from her all the best treasure which King Cnut possessed.”¹⁰⁴ While the primary objective was surely to deprive his rivals’ mother of the means to economically support her sons’ bids for the kingdom, the specific reference to treasures “that king Cnut possessed” implies that Harold was claiming these items as the heir to Cnut’s kingdom and property.¹⁰⁵ Although Harold was competing directly with Harthacnut and with Æthelred’s sons for possession of the kingdom, it is again evident that Emma herself posed the greatest risk to Harold’s rule, as she wielded both the political influence and the financial means to undermine his status as the kingdom’s ruler. In the following two years, however, Harold established

¹⁰³ “Full cyng ofer eall Englalund”; ASC EF 1036.

¹⁰⁴ “He sende to 7 let niman of hyre ealle þa betstan gærsuma... þe Cnut cing ahte”; ASC CD 1035, quotation from C. Edward the Confessor also deprived Emma, his mother, of her treasure soon after his consecration in 1043. This move was perhaps intended to punish her lukewarm support of his candidacy, or perhaps to undermine her political and economic autonomy; in any case, she came back into favor a few years later. See ASC CD 1043, EF 1042 (*recte* 1043); Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 249-53; Keynes, “Introduction to the Reprint,” lxxii-lxxiii. On the relationship between Edward and Emma, see Campbell, “Emma and Ælfgifu,” 67-68; Barlow, “Cnut’s Pilgrimage and Emma’s Disgrace,” 651-55.

¹⁰⁵ It is possible that these items included a crown or other regalia—as attested in later accounts of royal treasuries—which would help confirm his claim to the royal office; see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 237; Keynes, “Introduction to the Reprint,” xiii; Campbell, “Emma and Ælfgifu,” 77. Acquisition of treasure was integral to the possession of a kingdom, as evidenced in Carolingian Francia and late eleventh-century England; for this, and for the need for queens to keep hold of treasure to secure their role in succession politics, see Stafford, “Queens and Treasure,” 65-66 and 72-79. See also *Vita Ædwardi*, 115-17, for the ideological importance of the Confessor’s regalia after the Conquest.

his own political foothold and cultivated sufficient support among the West Saxon magnates to move with confidence against Emma. With Harthacnut still in Denmark, Harold orchestrated the lethal mutilation of Emma's son Alfred and drove the queen out of the country, claiming the entire kingdom as his own.¹⁰⁶

Yet before moving so drastically against Emma and her sons, Harold tried to strengthen his authority by once again identifying his reign with Cnut's. According to the *Encomium*, Harold was concerned about the security of his reign and so summoned Archbishop Æthelnoth of Canterbury (r.1020-38) to provide him with a royal consecration:

He commanded and prayed to be consecrated king, and that the royal crown and the scepter, which was committed to the archbishop's custody, should be given to him, and that he should be led by the archbishop to the high throne of the kingdom, since it was not legal that this should be done by another.¹⁰⁷

The archbishop, exceedingly loyal to Cnut and Emma, refused to consecrate him and prohibited all other bishops from doing so. This outcome enraged Harold so much, according to the *Encomiast*, that he shunned Christianity for the rest of his life. Given the *Encomium's* ideological objectives, this episode was intended to demonstrate how Cnut's true subjects supported Emma and refused to acknowledge Harold's rule as legitimate or divinely endorsed; Æthelnoth, who had been a close advisor of Cnut's, was exemplary in this regard.¹⁰⁸ No other contemporary source attests that Harold

¹⁰⁶ Alfred was captured and blinded, and his men were subjected to a variety of punishments; the ætheling was left to die at Ely. The earliest accounts of this episode appear in *Encomium*, 44-47 and ASC CD 1036. The mutilation is discussed below, Chapter 4; and see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 239-46; Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxii-lxv and lxx; Campbell, "Introduction," cxlvi-cxlix [lxiv-lxvii]; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law," 212-15; Kries, "Mutilation of Alfred," 42-53. For a Norman interpretation of the event, see William of Poitiers, *GG*, 2-7.

¹⁰⁷ "Imperat... et orat se benedici in regem, sibique tradi cum corona regale suae custodiae commissum sceptrum, et se duci ab eodem, quia ab alio non fas fuerat, in sublime regni solium"; *Encomium*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁸ William of Malmesbury described Æthelnoth's relationship with Cnut as follows: "with the authority of his holiness, he could compliment the king himself for his good deeds and put the fear of God into him for his errors" [regem ipsum auctoritate sanctitudinis in bonis actibus mulcens, in excessibus terrenis]; *GR* ii.184.1.

sought or was denied a consecration, however, and even the *Encomium* does not preclude the possibility that he was anointed later, once he had finally become *full cyng*.¹⁰⁹ The Encomiast's vivid language suggests that the confrontation with the archbishop was exaggerated or embellished in order to illustrate Harold's illegitimacy and immorality. Nevertheless, the Encomiast took for granted that his audience knew that Harold had not been consecrated at the beginning of his reign, and behind this stylized account lies the real possibility that Harold approached Æthelnoth for support, hoping that his father's chief spiritual advisor might endorse his claim to be Cnut's legitimate heir.¹¹⁰ The Encomiast situates this exchange soon after the Oxford election, and the episode must have occurred before the archbishop's death in 1038.¹¹¹ Soon after he came to power, Harold launched a campaign to draw influential figures away from Emma and her sons—an effort that had proved effective by 1037. The most significant individual to change allegiance was Earl Godwin, who withdrew his support for the queen in time to play a role in the blinding Alfred the ætheling; the episcopal appointments of Cnut's chaplains and partisans also indicate Harold's success in establishing relationships with those who had originally opposed him.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ For Harold becoming full king, see ASC E 1036. The ASC distinguished between the authority with which Harold was initially invested and his later recognition as king, but it never described a consecration. However, the fact that an anointing was never explicitly mentioned does not mean that one never took place. The *Encomium* reported that after the exchange with the archbishop, the people finally decided to have Harold as their king: despite their distress at his un-Christian behavior, "because they had elected him to be their king, they were ashamed to reject him, and they thus established that he should be their king to the end" [quia hunc sibi regem elegerant, hunc erubuerunt deicere, ideoque disposuerunt hunc sibi regem fine tenus esse]. It may be that Harold was no longer interested in a royal anointing after he had secured his position as ruler, but the phrasing of this passage allows for the possibility that a consecration did in fact take place; *Encomium*, 40-41.

¹¹⁰ *Encomium*, 40-41. Notwithstanding Alistair Campbell's conclusion that this episode has no historical basis, Pauline Stafford regards Æthelnoth's resistance as probable, given the early uncertainty of Harold's royal status and the archbishop's support of Harthacnut's candidacy, and Simon Keynes postulates that Æthelnoth conceded and consecrated Harold in 1037. See Campbell, "Introduction," lxiii-lxiv [cxlv-cxlv]; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 237 and 239; Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxiii n.2

¹¹¹ *Encomium*, 40-41. Pauline Stafford places the attempted consecration after Harold's seizure of Emma's treasure, which may have included Cnut's crown; *Emma and Edith*, 237.

¹¹² Simon Keynes sees Godwin's change of allegiance motivated by Emma's new interest in bringing Edward back to England during Harthacnut's prolonged absence. The episcopal appointments were all made after Æthelnoth's death in 1038, but may reflect earlier changes of allegiance: Eadsige, Cnut's

Harold's interest in Æthelnoth was surely part of this strategy, and the archbishop's prominence at Cnut's court would have made his support all the more appealing after a political humiliation at the funeral.

When considered alongside his attempts to portray himself as Cnut's son and heir, Harold's desire to reproduce the administrative hierarchy of the previous regime by courting Cnut's allies indicates the importance of continuity in his campaign for the kingdom.¹¹³ Although he soon became powerful enough to openly attack Emma and her sons, the beginning of Harold's reign was characterized by attempts to appropriate Cnut's legacy: he asserted his hereditary right to the kingdom, seized Cnut's treasure, and began courting the dead king's closest advisors, all while emphasizing the fact that he was Cnut's son. None of these efforts was particularly successful at first, almost certainly because of Emma's political strength. In addition to retaining the support of Cnut's most powerful ealdormen and bishops, her well-established association with the dead king allowed her to effectively wield her husband's memory to promote their son's candidacy. Because Harold initially aimed to use Cnut's memory to his own advantage, he could not immediately strike out against Emma. Although he deprived the queen of her wealth as soon as he had gained nominal control of the realm, she remained unharmed, keeping a retinue in Winchester and

chaplain, succeeded to Canterbury; Stigand, another chaplain of Cnut's and Emma's close ally, received the East Anglian see; and Lyfing, a close ally of Godwin, was appointed to Worcester. Ælfgifu of Northampton reportedly contributed to her son's ambitions by feasting powerful individuals and urging them to pledge their support to Harold. For Godwin's change of allegiance, see Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxix-xxx; Barlow, *The Godwins*, 37-46. For episcopal appointments, see ASC EF 1038; JW 526-27; Freeman, *Norman Conquest* I, 563-64. For Ælfgifu of Northampton's involvement, see Stevenson, "Alleged Son of Harold Harefoot," 115-16; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 238; Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxxii-xxxiii.

¹¹³ A similar administrative continuity is evident upon Cnut's ascension, for most of the kingdom's leading magnates kept their lands and status. A model for Harold's interest in Æthelnoth may be found in Cnut's collaboration with Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, who had been an advisor and law-writer for Æthelred but who soon began to work with the new regime. For the continuity of appointments at the time of Æthelred's and Cnut's accessions, see Stafford, "Limitations on Royal Policy," 24-26; and above, n.73. For an account of those who were divested of land and status, see Fleming, *Kings and Lords*, 39-52.

retaining her political prominence near her husband's grave, all while ruling Wessex as regent for Harthacnut. Even though Cnut's widow had proved a major threat and his tomb a liability, Harold's initial caution in his dealings with Emma and her West Saxon supporters suggests that it would have been politically imprudent to openly confront the people most firmly associated with Cnut's memory before he had secured his own authority. Things had changed by 1037, once he finally established himself as full king. Perhaps Cnut's posthumous influence had faded by this time; certainly Harold's practical power increased enough so that his ambitions were no longer hindered by the shadow of the previous ruler. Once it was clear that Harthacnut was not returning to claim his father's kingdom, the ideological obstacles that complicated Harold's initial ascension lost their weight; he could now move with impunity against Emma and her other sons.

Despite his efforts to maintain continuity with Cnut's reign, Harold was remembered almost universally as having gained his power unrighteously—not least by Harthacnut, who finally succeeded to the kingdom at his half-brother's death in 1040. By all accounts, Harthacnut had neglected his duties in England after his father died, remaining in his kingdom in Denmark instead of claiming his inheritance in the British Isles. After a few years, even Emma gave up on his return and began encouraging her sons by Æthelred to end their exile and seize the realm from Harold, a move which likely precipitated the ætheling Alfred's assassination and the queen's own exile.¹¹⁴ Towards the end of Harold's reign, however, Harthacnut reunited with his mother in Flanders, where they arranged an invasion of England.¹¹⁵ Harold died at Oxford in March 1040, before they could put their plan into action, and he was buried at Westminster—at this time, a small but prestigious monastery of reformed monks.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ See Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxxiii-xxxiv and n.106 above.

¹¹⁵ This plan is detailed in the *Encomium*, 48-51.

¹¹⁶ The place of Harold's death and burial are provided in ASC E 1039 (*recte* 1040). John of Worcester maintained that Harold died in London, not Oxford; but a charter from Harold's reign seems to confirm

Harthacnut did not return to England until midsummer and did not attend the funeral.¹¹⁷ Despite his prolonged absence and the months-long gap between Harold's death and arrival in the kingdom, Emma's son was welcomed warmly by the population when he finally appeared with his fleet at Sandwich: "he was immediately received as king both by the English and by the Danes."¹¹⁸

By the time the Chronicle entries for his reign were written, however, Harthacnut was recognized as a poor ruler who "never did anything worthy of a king as long as he ruled."¹¹⁹ The chief complaint against him was his imposition of exorbitant taxes, but his reputation was also damaged by his spectacular exhumation and maltreatment of Harold's buried corpse: according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "he commanded that the dead Harold be pulled up and thrown into a fen."¹²⁰ This episode is treated at length in a later chapter. Yet it is pertinent to note here that Harthacnut, despite having missed his predecessor's funeral, headed to his tomb very soon after returning to England. Although Harthacnut intended to identify Harold retrospectively as an illegitimate ruler with this display, his impulse to engage with Harold's corpse as part of his effort to establish his authority suggests that some kind

that the king succumbed to his final illness in Oxford: "the king was then very ill at Oxford, so that he lay despairing of his life" [wæs se king þa binnan Oxanaforde swyþe geseocled . swa þæt he læg orwene his lifes]; S 1467. See also JW 528-29 n.11. On Westminster's status in the early eleventh century, see Mason, *Westminster Abbey and Its People*, 11-12; and above, Chapter 2.

¹¹⁷ Harold died on 17 March and Harthacnut arrived a week before midsummer; ASC EF 1039 (*recte* 1040); see also CD 1040. William of Malmesbury stated that Harthacnut arrived in England in August; *GR* ii.188.3.

¹¹⁸ "He wæs sona underfangen ge fram Anglum ge from Denum"; ASC EF 1039 (*recte* 1040), quotation from E. This annal also described the high taxes that Harthacnut imposed. ASC CD 1040 made a similar complaint, saying that when Harthacnut was first sent for at Harold's death, "it was thought that they did well" [wende þæt man wel dyde] but this judgment was soon proved wrong; quotation from C. The *Encomium* described Harthacnut's accession in overwhelmingly positive terms: "he was most gloriously received by all the inhabitants of that country, and thus by the gift of divine favor the realm which ought to be his was restored" [a cunctis incolis eiusdem terrae gloriosissime recipitur, sicque diuini muneris gratia regnum sibi debitum redditur]; *Encomium*, 52-53.

¹¹⁹ "Ne gefremede ec naht cynelices þa hwile ðe he rixode"; ASC CD 1040, quotation from C. See also JW 528-31.

¹²⁰ "He let dragan up þæne deadan Harald 7 hine on fen sceotan"; ASC CD 1040, quotation from C. According to John of Worcester, this episode occurred "as soon as he began to rule" [mox ut regnare cepit]; JW 530-31.

of posthumous interaction with the previous king would have been natural, if not expected. Moreover, Harthacnut's complete departure from the typical use of a royal tomb—he desecrated his predecessor's body whereas other kings would have revered it—suggests that he was attempting to invert this normative behavior, designating Harold as a false king by posthumously denying him the honors that the remains of a legitimate ruler would have merited.

Discrediting Harold was not enough to save Harthacnut's reputation, however, and his brief reign was not remembered much more favorably than his predecessor's: the only compliment that William of Malmesbury could muster was a reference to his “outstandingly affectionate disposition towards his brother and sister.”¹²¹ Indeed, according to most chroniclers, the only thing Harthacnut seemed to do right during his short tenure was receive his exiled half-brother Edward (later “the Confessor”) at court.¹²² As related in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's annal for 1041,

And quickly in that year Edward, the son of King Æthelred, Harthacnut's brother by his mother, came from beyond the sea; and he was previously exiled from his country for many years, and nevertheless, he was sworn as king, and he thus dwelt in his brother's household as long as Harthacnut lived.¹²³

This account implies that Harthacnut had taken pains to establish Edward as his successor, even going so far as sharing nominal control of the kingdom during his own lifetime. Harthacnut, who had no children of his own, may have wanted to do everything possible to ensure that a close kinsman succeeded him—a prescient

¹²¹ “Egregiam pietatem animi in fratrem et sororem”; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.188.3.

¹²² The *Encomium* said that Harthacnut, “being gripped by brotherly love, sent messengers to Edward, asking that he come and hold the kingdom with him” [fraterno correptus amore nuntios mittit ad Eduardum, rogans ut ueniens secum optineret regnum]; *Encomium*, 52-53.

¹²³ “7 þæs geres sona com Eadward his broðor on medren fram begeondan sæ Æþelrædes sunu cinges, ðe wæs ær for fela gearon of his earde adrifen, 7 ðeh wæs to cinge gesworen, 7 he wunode þa swa on his broðor hirede þa hwile ðe he leofode”; ASC CD 1041, quotation from C. ASC EF 1040 (*recte* 1041) reads: “In this same year Edward, the son of King Æthelred, came hither from Normandy. He was King Harthacnut's brother, they were both Ælfgifu's sons. She was the daughter of Duke Richard” [On ðis ilcan gearo com Eadward Æðelredes sunu cinges hider to lande of Weallande, se wæs Harthacnutes cinges broðor; hi wæron begen Ælfgiues suna, seo wæs Ricardes dohtor eorles]; quotation from E.

concern, since Edward's accession was apparently contested after his brother's death.¹²⁴ Such a thorough endorsement of a half-brother so early in his reign may indicate that Harthacnut did not anticipate a long life, perhaps on account of some illness that caused his sudden death in 1042.¹²⁵ After collapsing at a wedding feast in Lambeth, outside London, the king lingered a few days and then died on 8 June.¹²⁶ He was buried with his father in Old Minster, Winchester.

Edward succeeded his brother, and his inauguration consisted of three distinct stages, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. In 1041, while Harthacnut was still alive, he was "sworn as king"; at his death the following year, "all the people chose Edward as king"; and in 1043, he was finally "consecrated king" in an ecclesiastical ceremony.¹²⁷ This three-part accession finds no parallel in earlier annals, which only occasionally distinguish between a new king's election and consecration. In further contrast to the vague brevity of other Chronicle accounts, the description of Edward's consecration in 1043 comprised about half of the year's entry:

In this year, Edward was consecrated king in Winchester on Easter Day with great honor; and Easter fell on 3 April that year. Archbishop Eadsige consecrated him, and before all the people he taught him well and admonished

¹²⁴ See below, n.136.

¹²⁵ This is suggested by William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, 6-7. There is no reference to an illness in the English chronicles, however, and Frank Barlow does not find the rumors of Harthacnut's ill health credible. See Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 49; Campbell, "Introduction," lxxviii [cl].

¹²⁶ ASC CD 1042 reads: "Here Harthacnut died as he stood at his drink, and he suddenly fell to the ground with a terrible attack, and those who were nearby caught him, and afterwards he spoke no word, and he died on 8 June" [Her gefor Harðacnut swa þæt he æt his drince stod, 7 he færinga feoll to þære eorðan mid egeslicum anginne, 7 hine gelæhton ðe þar neh wæron, 7 he syððan nan word ne gecwæð, 7 he forðferde on .vi. Idus Iunius]; quotation from C. John of Worcester said that this occurred at a wedding feast: Harthacnut, "happy, in good health, and cheerful, stood drinking with the aforementioned bride and certain men when he suddenly crashed to the ground in a wretched fall while drinking. He remained mute until his death on Tuesday, 8 June" [letus, sospes et hilaris, cum sponsa predicta et quibusdam uiris bibens staret, repente inter bibendum miserabilit casu ad terram corruit et sic mutus permanens, .vi. idus Iunii, feria .iii., expirauit]; JW 532-35.

¹²⁷ "To cinge gesworen," ASC CD 1041; "eall folc gecease Eadward to cynge," ASC EF 1041 (*recte* 1042); "gehalgod to cinge," ASC ACD 1043, EF 1042 (*recte* 1043). ASC C 1042 reads: "all the people then received Edward as king, as was lawful for him" [eall folc underfeng ða Eadward to cinge swa him gecynde wæs]. ASC D 1042 reads: "all the people then chose Edward, and received him as king as was well lawful for him" [eall folc geceas þa Eadward, 7 underfengon hine to kyninge eallswa him wel gecynde wæs].

him well as to his own need and to the need of all the people.¹²⁸

This degree of specificity did not accompany an overall increase in narrative detail in the Chronicle, for the entries for the years between 1041 and 1043 are only scarcely longer than the entries for the previous decades. It is noteworthy, however, that this was the first explicit reference to a king being consecrated (*gehalgod*) since Æthelred's summarily noted consecration in 979.¹²⁹ This long silence does not preclude the possibility that earlier eleventh-century rulers were in fact anointed. However, the amount of detail with which the 1043 consecration was described was unprecedented in the Chronicle, and the passage carefully depicted a key element of the Anglo-Saxon coronation *ordo*: the officiant's admonition to the king, in which he listed the responsibilities of a Christian ruler before the assembled crowd.¹³⁰ The Chronicler's focus on this particular moment may indicate that an exceptional amount of ecclesiastical involvement had characterized the proceedings, and his entire description seems designed to advertise the legitimacy and lawfulness of Edward's accession. Indeed, a spectacular ceremonial display would have helped reinforce the royal identity of a candidate who had lived in exile for nearly thirty years and whose father's legacy had been attacked by his Danish successors.

But the textual emphasis on the three-fold inauguration seems to confirm that

¹²⁸ "Her wæs Æðward gehalgod to cyng on Winceastre on Æsterdæg mid mycclum wurðscipe, 7 þa wæron Eastron on .iiii. nonas Aprilis. Eadsige arcebiscop hine halgode 7 toforan eallum folce hine well lærde, 7 to his agenre neode 7 ealles folces well monude"; ASC EF 1042 (*recte* 1043), quotation from E. See also ASC C 1043.

¹²⁹ ASC E 979 recorded: "And in this year Æthelred ascended to the kingdom, and he was very quickly after that consecrated king at Kingston with great joy among the councilors of the English" [And her feng Æðelred to rice, 7 he wæs æfter þam swiðe hrædlice mid mycclum gefean Angelcynnes witon gehalgod to cyninge æt Cyningestun]. ASC C placed Æthelred's election in 978 and his consecration in 979, and noted that there were two bishops and ten archbishops in attendance; ASC ADE placed both events in 979; and ASC F placed the consecration in 980. For the problems in dating Edward's death and Æthelred's accession, see below, Chapter 5.

¹³⁰ The admonition would then be followed by the king's coronation oath. The admonition that opens the tenth century *ordo* is edited in Ward, "Anglo-Saxon Coronation Ceremony," 350-51. Dunstan's Old English sermon for Edgar's consecration is edited in Stubbs, *Memorials of Dunstan*, 356-67. See also Nelson, "Ritual and Reality," 337-38; Stafford, "Royal Promises," 180-86.

Harthacnut's endorsement was not enough to guarantee Edward's succession; he still had to win enough support to be acclaimed and anointed king. This need for popular recognition is reflected in Edward's repeated interactions with his predecessor's remains, for the new king closely identified himself with his dead half-brother in the earliest years of his reign. Harthacnut died about ten miles outside of London and was buried approximately fifty miles away, in Winchester, and the Chronicle notes that Edward was elected before the body was brought to its final resting place: "before he was buried, all the people chose Edward as king in London."¹³¹ The precise chronology of this account confirms that the election occurred shortly after Harthacnut's death; perhaps the body was lying in state in London after the initial stage of the funerary journey. In any case, the author's reference to the yet unburied corpse has no precedent in earlier annals detailing royal deaths and accessions, and it was likely the exceptionality of this sequence of events that merited an explicit mention in the Chronicle. Unlike Cnut and Harold Harefoot, who formally assumed power after their predecessors had been buried, it appears that Edward prolonged his contact with his half-brother's corpse, conflating a royal election with an initial stage of funerary activity.¹³² Whereas Cnut and Harold held their elections far from their predecessor's tombs, hoping to downplay the fragility of their claims to dynastic continuity, Edward used his predecessor's body to garner support as he negotiated two distinct hereditary claims to the kingdom. Although the legitimacy of his father, Æthelred, had been called into question during the previous two decades, Edward's descent from the West Saxon royal line seems to have proved a considerable asset.

¹³¹ "Ear þan þe he bebyrged wære. eall folc geceas Eadward to cyng on Lundene"; ASC EF 1041 (*recte* 1042); quotation from E. Given Harthacnut's sudden death, it is possible that his burial place was chosen by Emma, who maintained her household at Winchester and who may have been attempting to create a mausoleum for the family of her second marriage; she was buried beside Cnut when she died in 1052. The ætheling Alfred was not interred at Winchester, however, but at Ely, where he died.

¹³² This chronology would also allow Edward to be elected as soon as possible, perhaps before any other candidates had time to make a bid for the kingdom.

According to John of Worcester,

In London, mainly by the exertions of Earl Godwin and Bishop Lyfing of Worcester, Edward was raised to the kingdom, whose father was Æthelred, whose father was Edgar, whose father was Edmund, whose father was Edward the Elder, whose father was Alfred.¹³³

The need for Godwin and Lyfing's influence implies that Edward's accession was no sure thing, and when conflated with this hint of a succession dispute, the recitation of his royal pedigree at this moment suggests that strength of his paternal lineage contributed to the success of his election.¹³⁴

Yet the West Saxon dynasty had been supplanted in 1017 by Cnut, who required his new subjects to renounce their allegiance to Æthelred's sons and grandsons.¹³⁵ Given the kingdom's sizable Scandinavian population and the substantial possibility that Danish and Norwegian rulers might lay claim to the English throne, Edward recognized the need to emphasize his kinship with a member of Cnut's dynasty in order to effectively secure his succession.¹³⁶ Holding an election near

¹³³ "Eduuardus, annitentibus maxime comite Goduino et Wigornensi presule Liuingo, Lundonie leuatur in regem, cuius pater Agelredus, cuius pater Eadgarus, cuius pater Eadmundus, cuius pater Eaduardus Senior, cuius pater Alfredus"; JW 534-35. The ASC CD 1041 and EF 1040 (*recte* 1041) also mention that Edward was Æthelred's son when describing his return from exile.

¹³⁴ The *Vita Edwardi* emphasized Godwin's influence at Edward's election, and William of Malmesbury credited Godwin with convincing Edward to make a bid for the throne. John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury implied that Godwin and Lyfing were accused of orchestrating Alfred's death during Harthacnut's reign; their loyalty to Edward at this juncture was perhaps a way to secure the new king's good graces. See *Vita Edwardi*, 9; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.196-97.1 and ii.188.6; JW 530-31; Cooper, *Anglo-Saxon Archbishops of York*, 15. For the importance of Edward's genealogy at this juncture, see JW 534-35 n.2.

¹³⁵ John of Worcester wrote that at Cnut's command, the English nobles "repudiated Edmund's sons and brothers altogether and denied that they were kings" [fratres et filios Eadmundi omnino despexerunt eosque reges esse negauerunt]; JW 294-95. Both of Edmund's sons died in 1057 after a lifetime in exile: the elder, Edmund died abroad, whereas Edward the Exile died almost immediately after he returned (with his wife and children) to England at the Confessor's request. On Edmund Ironside's children, see Keynes, "Crowland Psalter," 361-66.

¹³⁶ Even Emma may have opposed his accession: Edward deprived his mother of her property as soon as he came to power, because "she was previously very hard to her son the king, so that she did less for him than he wanted before he was king and also afterwards" [heo wæs æror þam cyng hire suna swiðe heard, þæt heo him læsse dyde þonne he wolde, ær þam þe he cyng wære 7 eac syððan]; ASC D 1043. ASC C 1043 and EF 1042 (*recte* 1043) justified Edward's seizure of Emma's treasure "because earlier, she held the treasure too firmly against him" [forðam heo hit heold ær to fæste wið hine]; quotation from C. Later sources claimed that the queen was backing a bid for the kingdom by King Magnus of

Harthacnut's remains would have visually reinforced the relationship between the two brothers and signified the continuity between their two reigns—a particularly pressing concern for a candidate who had spent most of his adult life in exile; Edward was scarcely more familiar to the English population than the Scandinavian claimants who were simultaneously angling for the kingdom. Furthermore, this arrangement would have demonstrated a melding of the West Saxon and Danish dynasties in Edward's person. His initial election probably took place in London's royal center, so some activity must have occurred at St. Paul's, where Æthelred was entombed. Edward's acclamation, undertaken within sight of both Harthacnut's body and Æthelred's grave, would have produced a powerful image of dynastic solidarity. A comparable tableau would have been arranged the following year, when Edward was consecrated in Winchester's Old Minster. It was surely no accident that the new king chose to be anointed at the site of his half-brother's tomb, less than a year after his death.

Harthacnut's burial beside his father was an attempt to reinforce the legitimacy of his dynasty by means of posthumous proximity to a distinguished royal predecessor; and Cnut's own interment in the traditional West Saxon royal necropolis was intended to demonstrate his integration into the line of legitimate English kings. Edward, by having himself consecrated in the heart of Wessex, near the remains of his West Saxon ancestors and his immediate Danish predecessors, could effectively illustrate his inclusion in two royal dynastic lines.¹³⁷ No other Anglo-Saxon consecrations are

Norway; and Svein Esthrithson, a nephew of both Cnut and Earl Godwin, may also have issued a competing claim to the throne. The long delay between Edward's election and consecration may reflect the initial uncertainty of the succession. See Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxxii-lxxiii; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 54-60; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 249 and 251; Campbell, "Emma and Ælfgifu," 67-68. A delayed consecration did not necessarily indicate a succession dispute, however: see Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda," 92-93; Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 298.

¹³⁷ The most recent West Saxon grave in Old Minster belonged to Edward's half-brother Æthelstan (d.1014), the son of Æthelred and his first wife; see above, n.49. Frank Barlow sees the choice of Winchester as an effort to emphasize royal continuity, since "Winchester was the true heart of the kingdom." Although I would agree that Edward was stressing his West Saxon royal heritage by choosing Winchester, the remarkable point is that he was drawing upon the traditional site of royal

attested at Winchester, and the fact that Edward chose this site—rather than Kingston, where his father was consecrated, or London, where he was buried, or the sites of more recent West-Saxon royal coronations and tombs—suggests that a major goal of the event was to advertise his unification of two heretofore incompatible dynasties.¹³⁸

Harold Godwinson and William the Conqueror

The death of Edward the Confessor in January of 1066 was recognized by later chroniclers as the beginning of the end for Anglo-Saxon England.¹³⁹ After a twenty-two year reign and a twenty-one year marriage to Edith, Earl Godwin's daughter, Edward died in his palace at Westminster without any sons to inherit the kingdom. He was succeeded by Edith's brother, Harold Godwinson, whose claim to the throne did not go uncontested. His authority was soon threatened by his brother, Tostig Godwinson, who had allied with the Norwegian Harald Hardrada to invade northern England; and by Duke William of Normandy, who asserted that Edward bequeathed him the kingdom years earlier—and that Harold had sworn to endorse William's accession.¹⁴⁰ The English army defeated Tostig's Scandinavian forces but was overcome by William at Hastings, in a battle that Harold did not survive. On Christmas Day 1066, William was consecrated king in Westminster.¹⁴¹

tombs—rather than the site of royal coronations—in order to express this continuity. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 62.

¹³⁸ Although it is not impossible that Cnut and his sons were anointed at Winchester, there is no extant record of this. Ralph de Diceto and Gervase of Canterbury, each writing in the twelfth century, cited London as the site of these consecrations: Ralph situated Cnut's and Harthacnut's consecrations there, while Gervase maintained that all three kings were consecrated there; no earlier extant sources mentioned these consecrations. See Stubbs, *Ralph de Diceto*, 169 and 186; Stubbs, *Gervase of Canterbury*, 55-57.

¹³⁹ See Otter, "1066," 565-68.

¹⁴⁰ The Norwegian invasion was not Harold's first conflict with Tostig; see *Vita Ædwardi*, 52-53.

¹⁴¹ The earliest sources for the events of 1066 include ASC DE (and ASC C, which stops abruptly halfway through the battle of Stamford Bridge); William of Jumièges' brief account in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, completed in 1070; William of Poitiers' extensive account in the *Gesta Guillelmi*, composed between 1071-1077; the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, a poetic paean to the Norman victory composed by Bishop Guy of Amiens between 1068 and 1070; and the Bayeux Tapestry, probably commissioned by bishop Odo of Bayeux and executed in England in the 1070s or early 1080s. Also relevant are the Chronicle of John of Worcester and the *Vita Ædwardi* (both

Writing retrospectively, Norman chroniclers made much of Harold's broken oath and his illicit seizure of the kingdom. William of Poitiers, the Conqueror's chaplain and apologist, made a strong case in his *Gesta Guillelmi* that the Confessor had formally designated William to succeed him.¹⁴² In his account, Edward made William his heir soon after he became king, sending hostages to Normandy to seal the agreement; he later renewed this understanding by sending Harold Godwinson "to confirm the pledge with an oath."¹⁴³ These exchanges were never mentioned in the earliest English accounts of the succession, however, which stated simply that Edward willed the kingdom to Harold as he was dying.¹⁴⁴ This deathbed bequest was acknowledged by Norman chroniclers as well, but they unequivocally dismissed its validity: William's claim predated Harold's; his inheritance had been promised with oaths and hostages; he was Edward's kinsman by blood, not marriage; and, most significantly, Harold had reneged on his oath not to challenge William's accession—

discussed above), as well as William of Malmesbury's works, including the *Vita Wulfstani*, which was adapted from a late eleventh-century Old English life and provides some information about the transition from Anglo-Saxon to Norman rule. Other relevant accounts include Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica* (composed c.1123-1137), Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* (composed c.1123-1154), the Waltham Chronicle (composed shortly after 1177), and the Chronicle of Battle Abbey (composed in the 1180s). For the dates of these sources, see: William of Jumièges, *GND* I, xxxii; William of Poitiers, *GG*, xx; Guy, *Carmen*, xl-xli; William of Malmesbury, *Saints' Lives*, xiv-xv; Otter, "1066," 569-79; William of Malmesbury, *GR* xxii-xxiii; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* I, 31-34; Greenway, *Henry of Huntingdon: History*, xviii-xix; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, xxxiii; Searle, *Battle Chronicle*, 8 and 17; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 29-30; Gameson, "Bayeux Tapestry," 161-74.

¹⁴² William of Poitiers served as the Conqueror's chaplain and was archdeacon of Lisieux by 1075; he spent some time in England after 1066. Though consistent with the version of events presented slightly earlier by William of Jumièges, William of Poitiers' account was more extensive, and his interpretations of the Conquest would be adopted by later authors, including (notably) Orderic Vitalis. See William of Poitiers, *GG*, xvi, xix, 18-21, and 70-71; William of Jumièges, *GND* II, 159-61; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 134-49.

¹⁴³ "Fidem sacramento confirmaturum"; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 68-69; see also 18-21 and 120-21. Compare William of Jumièges, *GND* II, 158-61.

¹⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury referenced these conflicting interpretations, maintaining that Harold "seized the crown, though the English say that it was granted to him by the king" [arripuit diadema, quanuis Angli dicant a rege concessum]; *GR* ii.228.7, and compare also William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, 56-57. The ASC, *Vita Edwardi*, and John of Worcester do not report that Edward designated William as his heir or that Harold swore not to challenge William's succession. For the deathbed bequest, see for example *Vita Edwardi*, 79 and William of Poitiers, *GG*, 118-21 and 140-41; ASC CD 1065, ASC E 1066, and JW 600-601 maintain that Harold succeeded to the kingdom just as Edward had wanted. For the validity of deathbed bequests, see Hazeltine, "General Preface," viii-xiii; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 118 n.3.

an act of treachery that undermined his throne-worthiness.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, at least one bystander speculated that Edward was not of sound mind in his final hours, a state which would have undermined the legitimacy of his final will.¹⁴⁶ Notwithstanding these objections (voiced almost entirely in retrospect), Harold was acclaimed and consecrated king at Westminster on 6 January 1066, the same day as the Confessor's funeral.¹⁴⁷

Harold's accession was the only reported instance in which an Anglo-Saxon king's election and consecration occurred on the same day, and post-Conquest commentators condemned the haste with which he was inaugurated.¹⁴⁸ William of Poitiers concluded that Harold "could not endure to await the decision of a public election" but took possession of (*occupavit*) the royal throne while the population was still in mourning; William of Malmesbury stated that he seized (*arripuit*) the crown while "grief for the king's death was still fresh"; and Orderic Vitalis reported that Harold had himself "consecrated without the common consent" and "stole by stealth the glory of the crown" before Edward's funeral had even finished.¹⁴⁹ Yet Harold's

¹⁴⁵ William of Poitiers, *GG*, 70-71, 76-79, 100-01, 118-23, 150-51. These objections to Harold's succession were adopted by later chroniclers, including Orderic Vitalis, who added that Harold deceived Edward on his deathbed by claiming that William forfeited his right to England; Orderic Vitalis, *HE II*, 136-37.

¹⁴⁶ This opinion was reportedly voiced by Archbishop Stigand at the king's deathbed. The *Vita Edwardi* (followed by William of Malmesbury) said that Archbishop Stigand whispered that the king, "broken with age and disease, knew not what he said" [*senio confectum et morbo, quid diceret nescire*]; *Vita Edwardi*, 76-77. See also William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.227; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 248-49.

¹⁴⁷ "Earl Harold succeeded to the English kingdom, just as the king granted it to him; and men also chose him to the kingdom, and he was consecrated king" [Harold eorl feng to Englalandes cynerice swa swa se cyng hit him geuðe 7 eac men hine þarto gecuron, 7 wæs gebletsod to cyng]; ASC E 1066. ASC CD 1065 reported simply that Harold was "consecrated king" [to kyngge gehalgod] after Edward's death; quotation from C. The Norman recognition of Harold's consecration is discussed below.

¹⁴⁸ As evidenced above, royal elections might be held as soon as possible after the previous king's funeral. However, although a quick coronation was not unprecedented, Harold's immediate consecration would surely have been recognized as unusual. See Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 299 and n.99; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 254-55.

¹⁴⁹ "Nec sustinuit... quid electio publica statueret consulere"; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 100-101. "Recenti adhuc regalis funeris luctu"; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.228.7. "Sine communi consensu... consecratus, furtim præripuit diadematis... decus"; Orderic Vitalis, *HE II*, 136-39. See also William of Jumièges, *GND II*, 160-61.

quick ascension was facilitated by a number of factors beyond his own eagerness to assume royal power, for the timing and location of Edward's death would have permitted an immediate end to the ensuing interregnum. The proximity of the royal residence to the king's burial church at Westminster obviated the need for a long funeral procession, and the realm's leading magnates would have already been gathered in London for Edward's Christmas assembly and the consecration of Westminster on 28 December.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the king's death would have been expected at least since Christmas, when he withdrew from court too ill to make any further public appearances; funeral arrangements could have begun some ten days in advance of the event, if not earlier, so that there would have been no need to delay the burial.¹⁵¹ Harold's accession may also have been anticipated among those at Westminster, and preparations for his acclamation and coronation could have been made at this time by his supporters, including Archbishops Ealdred and Stigand, who presided over his consecration.¹⁵²

Although the quick sequence of ritual events was permitted by a confluence of practical factors, this conflated schedule also lent Harold a significant political advantage: he was the only potential successor present at Westminster upon the king's death. William was in Normandy, where he received an "unexpected report" that

¹⁵⁰ William of Poitiers asserted that Harold had himself consecrated "by the connivance of a few wicked men" [quibusdam iniquis fauentibus]; *GG*, 100-01. Yet Sulcard noted that multitudes came to attend the double festival: "they were assembled there from all of Britain; they were assembled, I say, just as at Christmas for a royal court or for consecrating a famous church to Christ" [conuenitur eo a tota Britannia, conuenitur, inquam, ut in natali domini sicut ad regis curiam vel ad celebrem Christo consecrandam ecclesiam]; Scholz, "Sulcard," 91; and see also *Vita Edwardi*, 71. For a list of possible attendees, see Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 244-46. For the date of Westminster's consecration, see *Vita Edwardi* 72 n.3. See also Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda," 93.

¹⁵¹ According to early accounts, Edward fell ill on Christmas Eve, briefly attended court on Christmas day, and took to his bed the following day; he died on 5 January, the eve of Epiphany. It is significant that Edward died in winter: the corpse could have lasted some time before it began to decay, so there was no urgent need for an immediate burial. The quick funeral thus suggests that preparations had been made in advance of the event. See ASC CD 1065, E 1066; JW 598-601; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.228.6; *Vita Edwardi*, 71-73; Scholz, "Sulcard," 91.

¹⁵² See William of Poitiers, *GG*, 100 n.2; Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 124 and 127-28. For Stigand, see below, n.161. Ealdred's loyalty to the Godwins is implied in ASC D 1052.

Edward had died and Harold had been crowned; and Tostig was in exile in Flanders, having been driven out of his earldom of Northumbria in the wake of an uprising in 1065.¹⁵³ The number of influential Normans at Edward's court might have tipped the balance towards William's claim, had their candidate been present, whereas Tostig might have drawn support away from Harold if he had had the opportunity to capitalize on his own status as the Confessor's brother-in-law.¹⁵⁴ A prompt consecration cemented Harold's royal standing before either of these candidates was able to assert a claim in person, and this advantage would have been further strengthened by his attentive proximity to Edward both before and after the king's death. Harold's presence at the Confessor's deathbed was recorded in English and Norman accounts of the succession, and according to the *Vita Ædwardi*, Edward entrusted his brother-in-law with the protection of his kingdom and his wife just before he died.¹⁵⁵ Although Harold was already the kingdom's most powerful ealdorman before the king's bequest, he was now able to present himself as the Confessor's designated heir—a position bolstered by his kinship with Edward's widow.¹⁵⁶ His consecration at Westminster's high altar, shortly after the funeral mass

¹⁵³ "Rumor insperato"; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 100-01. See also ASC CD 1065, E 1064; *Vita Ædwardi*, 50-54; JW 598-99. Frank Barlow notes that William of Poitiers did not account for William's absence at Edward's Christmas court: "if the duke was really heir-designate, his absence needs explaining"; *Edward the Confessor*, 246.

¹⁵⁴ According to the *Vita Ædwardi*, Edward returned from his exile accompanied by a retinue of Normans, whom he kept as close advisors. William of Poitiers, by contrast, remarks that Edward was accompanied by only a small entourage, since the English did not want a force of Normans to overpower them. *Vita Ædwardi*, 17 and n.1; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 18-19. On the nationalities of the members of Edward's Christmas court, see Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 245.

¹⁵⁵ For early accounts of the deathbed request, see *Vita Ædwardi*, 79; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 118-19; and see above, n.145. As he was dying, Edward reportedly praised Edith's devotion before turning to Harold: "And with his hand outstretched towards the aforesaid governor, her brother Harold, he said, 'I entrust her and all the kingdom into your protection; as your lady and your sister, serve and honor her with faithful deference'" [Porrectaque manu ad predictum nutricium suum fratrem Haroldum, "Hanc," inquit, "cum omni regno tutandam tibi commendo, ut pro domina et sorore ut est fidei serues et honores obsequio"]. *Vita Ædwardi*, 79 (including n.4 for the translation of *nutricium*).

¹⁵⁶ William of Poitiers maintained that Edith supported William's candidacy, but this claim seems to rely on her later reconciliation with the Conqueror. The *Vita Ædwardi*, undertaken as a tribute to Edith and her family, nowhere implied that the queen did not support her brother's bid for the throne—even in the portion of the work composed after Harold's death. See William of Poitiers, *GG*, 114-15 and n.3; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 275.

and within feet of his predecessor's fresh grave, would have reinforced his close association with the dead king.¹⁵⁷ Harold's immediate accession, conceived in concert with Edward's dying wishes and approved by the leading English magnates, seems a calculated response to an imminent and potentially protracted succession crisis, in which at least three contenders had sufficient wealth and military resources to make serious bids for the throne. The Confessor himself, confronted with the threat of Scandinavian claimants, had been elected before his predecessor was even buried, and Harold's royal inauguration similarly seems timed to preempt any other bids for the kingdom. Like Edward's election, Harold's consecration capitalized on his predecessor's memory while preventing other contenders from doing so, maintaining a constant presence around the dying king and, later, his corpse. The rapid sequence of funeral, election, and consecration allowed the entire process of royal succession to be conflated into one continuous event, dominated by Harold's presence from start to finish.

The new king's association with Edward was not enough to stop the foreign threats to the kingdom, however. By October of 1066, Harold had stopped the Scandinavian invasion but had been defeated by William's army at Hastings. As the first English king in generations to die on the battlefield, Harold's death was remarkable, and the effective disappearance of his corpse—he received no public funeral or memorialization after Hastings—must have amplified the uncertainty of the interregnum.¹⁵⁸ Although some of Harold's supporters tried to designate the Confessor's nephew, Edgar, their new ruler, William's military advances ultimately forced the English to abandon their candidate and submit to Norman rule.¹⁵⁹ It was the alleged illegality of Harold's accession that justified William's conquest, however,

¹⁵⁷ For Edward's funeral mass and the location of the grave in relation to the high altar, see *Vita Ædwardi*, 81; quotation above, Chapter 1, n.1.

¹⁵⁸ For the impact of Harold's death and missing body, see below, Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁹ ASC D 1066; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 146-47; JW 604-07.

and the new king's royal status hinged on his ability to portray his immediate predecessor's reign as illegitimate.¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, Norman sources insisted that Harold had sworn not to oppose William's accession and that his violation of this oath undermined his throneworthiness. Furthermore, Harold's very consecration was deemed invalid because its officiant was identified (inaccurately) as Archbishop Stigand, who was under papal anathema in January 1066.¹⁶¹ Unlike Cnut, who presented himself as Edmund Ironside's lawful heir after the latter's death despite their history of military confrontation, William aimed to deny the validity of Harold's reign altogether—in part by refusing to publicly bury Harold's remains. By contrast, Edward's tomb and memory were central to the new king's attempts to present himself as the Confessor's kinsman and lawful heir. William's identification with Edward's reign began with his coronation at Westminster on Christmas Day 1066, some two months after his victory at Hastings. William waited until the end of the year to have himself consecrated, even though the English had tried to acclaim him king on at least two earlier occasions: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle said that England's most influential magnates (including the ætheling Edgar) submitted to William and declared him their king soon after Hastings, and William of Poitiers added that when the Conqueror first

¹⁶⁰ This impulse is evident in William of Poitiers' contention that "it is just and glorious and praiseworthy to kill a tyrant" [tyrannum occidere sit pulchrum, fama gloriosum, beneficio gratum]; *GG* 138-39, and see also 156-57.

¹⁶¹ Stigand had been Emma's close advisor and was made bishop soon after Edward's coronation in 1043; when the king seized Emma's property later that year, Stigand was also deprived of his bishopric. Nevertheless, Stigand became bishop of Winchester in 1047 and archbishop of Canterbury in 1052, when the Norman archbishop of Canterbury, Robert of Jumièges, was driven into exile. Contrary to canonical procedure, however, Stigand had assumed this office while Robert was still alive and was thus excommunicated by the pope. He nevertheless retained his position as archbishop in England and attended Edward on his deathbed in January 1066. Although Ealdred of York almost certainly consecrated Harold in 1066, Stigand was surely present at the event. He was identified in later Norman sources as the officiant, likely because his dubious episcopal status at the time was reasoned to have made Harold's consecration void. In 1069, despite Stigand's loyalty to the new regime, William finally requested that the pope depose him, and this was done by papal legates in 1070. See ASC C 1043; *Vita Edwardi*, 76-77; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 100-101 and n.2, 150-51, 160-61; JW 600-607. Ealdred's officiation is also attested in the mid-twelfth century *Chronica Pontificum Ecclesiae Eboracensis*, edited in Raine, *Historians of the Church of York* II, 348. See also Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 112-13; Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 248-49; Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda," 107-08; Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 127-28; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 464-66 and 659-61.

approached London, “the bishops and other leading men begged him to take the crown, saying that they were accustomed to obeying a king and wished to have a king as their lord.”¹⁶² William reportedly tried to postpone the coronation, citing his disinclination to rush into a royal consecration and his desire to have his wife anointed with him, but even after his retinue convinced him not to delay any longer, there was still a space of time between his arrival in London and his formal accession to the kingdom.¹⁶³ It may be that the organizers of the ritual wanted the consecration to coincide with the next major feast day, as a number of earlier English coronations had.¹⁶⁴ Yet it was surely no coincidence that William was crowned on the first anniversary of the Confessor’s last public appearance.¹⁶⁵ Like Harold, he chose not to have himself consecrated at Winchester, the site of the Confessor’s own accession, but

¹⁶² “Orant post haec ut coronam sumat una pontifices atque caeteri summates, se quidem solitos esse regi seruire, regem dominum habere uelle”; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 146-49. ASC D 1066 reported that: “They gave hostages and swore oaths to him, and he promised them that he would be a loyal lord to them, and in spite of this, they meanwhile harried everywhere they rode” [Gysledan 7 sworon him aðas, 7 he heom behet þæt he wolde heom hold hlaford beon, 7 þeah onmang þisan hi hergedan eall þæt hi oferforon]; ASC D 1066. This encounter is described by William of Poitiers as well, although he places the meeting at Wallingford instead of the ASC’s Berkhamsted. George Garnett suggests that William did not see his the exchange of oaths with the English magnates as an act of king-making, as the English themselves surely did; following Norman ideas about royal inauguration, he would have regarded his consecration—not his acclamation by the English—as the moment where he stopped being an invader and began being a king. See William of Poitiers, *GG*, 146-47; JW 604-07; Garnett, “Coronation and Propaganda,” 91-95; Nelson, “Rites of the Conqueror,” 117-18.

¹⁶³ William of Poitiers reported that: “He therefore sent men ahead to London to build a fortress in the city and make the many preparations necessary for royal dignity, while he remained nearby. All opposition was so remote that he could, if he wished, safely spend his time in hunting and falconry” [Praemisit ergo Lundoniam qui munitionem in ipsa construerent urbe, et pleraque competentia regiae magnificentiae praeparent, moraturus interim per uicina. Aduersitas omnis procul fuit, adeo ut uenatui et auium ludo, si forte libuit, secure uacaret]; *GG*, 148-49.

¹⁶⁴ This is implied by John of Worcester: “As the Christmas festival was approaching, he came to London with his whole army, so that he might be raised to the kingdom there” [Appropinquante igitur dominice Natiuitatis festiuitate, cum omni exercitu Lundoniam, ut ibi in regem sullimaretur, adiit]; JW 606-07. Edward the Confessor was consecrated on Easter 1043, for instance, and Edgar on Pentecost 973. A major festival was not a requirement, however, as Æthelred II was consecrated on 4 May 979, “on the Sunday a fortnight after Easter” [on þone Sunnandæg feowertyne niht ofer Eastron]; ASC C 979. On the date of Æthelred’s accession, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 233 n.7.

¹⁶⁵ Edward made an appearance at his Christmas court but retired soon after; he was too ill to attend Westminster’s consecration on 28 December; see *Vita Edwardi* 72-73. A generation later, William of Malmesbury asserted that it was Edward’s tomb that made Westminster the site of future royal consecrations: “So the custom has been established among [William’s] successors that, in memory of Edward’s burial place, kings should receive their crowns there” [Consuetudo igitur apud posteros equaluit ut propter Eduardi inibi sepulti memoriam regiam regnaturi accipiant coronam]; *GP* ii.73.6.

“in the basilica of St. Peter the apostle, which rejoiced in the tomb of King Edward.”¹⁶⁶ William became king at Westminster’s high altar, in close proximity to his predecessor’s grave, and it may have been from this vantage point that he pledged to hold the law of England as it had been held in Edward’s day.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, William of Poitiers’ offered a precise explanation of the Conqueror’s blood kinship with Edward in his account of the consecration: its inclusion in the text was intended to dispel any doubts about the legitimacy of his succession, and it is not impossible that this genealogy was also cited during the coronation to reinforce the continuity between the two kings’ reigns.¹⁶⁸

As a ceremonial display, however, William’s consecration appears to have fallen short. According to William of Poitiers, the Norman soldiers outside Westminster mistook the acclamation inside the church for an uprising and immediately set fire to the surrounding buildings.¹⁶⁹ Orderic Vitalis expanded on this account:

With the fire spreading rapidly among the houses, the crowd which had been

¹⁶⁶ “In basilica sancti Petri apostoli, quae regis Edwardi sepulchro gaudebat”; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 150-51.

¹⁶⁷ Edward’s law may have been cited as part of William’s coronation oath, which was an integral part of the consecration ritual and included a promise to retain existing laws. A direct reference was made to Edward’s law in William’s first piece of written legislation, issued as a writ in London soon—perhaps just weeks—after his consecration (*post conquestionem Angliae*): “I also decree and desire that everyone hold and keep King Edward’s law in matters of land and in all things, with those items added which I have constituted for the benefit of the English people” [Hoc quoque praecipio et volo, ut omnes habeant et teneant legem Eadwardi regis in terris et in omnibus rebus, adactis iis quae constitui ad utilitatem populi Anglorum]. William’s legislation is edited by Robertson, *Laws of Kings of England II*, 239-41. For the coronation oath, see Stafford, “Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises,” 186-87; and ASC D 1066. For the form and timing of William’s legislative writ, see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 398-99; Garnett, *Conquered England*, 12-13. See also William of Poitiers’ account of the Conqueror’s early legislation in *GG*, 158-59.

¹⁶⁸ “If anyone asks the reason for this blood claim, it is well known that he was related to King Edward by close ties of blood, being the son of Duke Robert, whose aunt, Emma, the sister of Richard II and daughter of Richard I, was Edward’s mother” [Si ratio sanguinis poscitur, pernotum est quam proxima consanguinitate regem Edwardum attigerit filius ducis Rodberti, cuius amita Ricardi secundi soror, filia primi, Emma, genitrix fuit Edwardi]; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 150-51. This blood kinship may have been emphasized in order to draw a greater contrast with Harold, who was related to the Confessor by marriage only. Compare with the citation of the Confessor’s pedigree in the ASC accounts of his election in 1043; see above, n.133.

¹⁶⁹ William of Poitiers, *GG*, 150-51.

rejoicing in the church took fright, and the multitude of men and women of every rank and condition rushed out of the church in frantic haste. Only the bishops and a few clergy and monks remained, terrified, before the altar, and with difficulty completed the consecration of the king who was trembling from head to foot. And almost all the rest made for the scene of conflagration, some to fight the flames and many others hoping to find loot for themselves in the general confusion.¹⁷⁰

As a ceremony designed to emphasize the continuity of Anglo-Saxon and Norman rule, the consecration's symbolic impact would have been undermined by the riot that drew observers away from William's inauguration in Edward's church. The ritual continuity with Edward's reign may have been reiterated on later occasions, however, as the Conqueror's English itinerary in the early years of his reign often mirrored the movements of the Confessor's court. William spent at least four of his first six Easters as king at Winchester, where Edward had been crowned on Easter Day 1043, and this became the regular site of post-Conquest Easter celebrations.¹⁷¹ The king's early Pentecost and Christmas gatherings also appear to replicate the itinerary of the closing years of Edward's reign.¹⁷² Yet William's interest in Westminster, the site most

¹⁷⁰ "Currente festinanter per domos incendio plebs quæ in æcclesia lætabatur perturbata est; et multitudo uirorum ac mulierum diuersæ dignitatis et qualitatis infortunio perurgente celeriter basilicam egressa est. Soli præsules et pauci clerici cum monachis nimium trepidantes ante aram perstiterunt, et officium consecrationis super regem uehementer trementem uix peregerunt; aliique pene omnes ad ignem nimis furentem cucurrerunt, quidam ut uim foci uiriliter ocaent; et plures ut in tanta perturbatione sibi prædas diriperent"; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 184-85. See also Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 122-23; Koziol, "Problem of Sacrality," 137.

¹⁷¹ William spent Easter in Winchester for all five years in which his exact location was recorded: 1068, 1069, 1070, 1072, and 1086. Edward is known to have celebrated Easter at Winchester in 1043 and 1053; he also celebrated at Gloucester in 1058 and possibly in 1062, and at Westminster in 1066. Between William's accession and 1104, only one Easter celebration was recorded to have taken place outside of Winchester: in 1097, William Rufus celebrated at Windsor after being delayed at sea; he was unable to travel to Winchester as he had planned. Whereas the locations of post-Conquest Pentecost and Christmas celebrations often varied, as Martin Biddle has noted, the static use of Winchester at Easter stands in contrast to the varying locales of pre-Conquest celebrations. See Biddle, "Seasonal Festivals," 54-55, 64-72.

¹⁷² In the final five years of Edward's reign, only two Pentecost festivals are attested, in (probably) 1061 and 1065, and both took place at Windsor. William was in Normandy during Pentecost in 1067 and probably in England, at unspecified locations, in 1069 and 1071; but in 1070 and 1072, his Pentecost court was held in Windsor (in 1068, William was at Westminster for his wife's coronation; see below, n.173). William's first two Christmases were spent at Westminster, where Edward the Confessor had celebrated his final Christmas, and he returned there for the holiday in 1075 and 1081; only four other Christmas locations are attested—three in Gloucester and one in York. See Biddle, "Seasonal Festivals," 54-55, 64-72.

integrally associated with the Confessor's memory, was short-lived. It remained a regular stop on the royal itinerary throughout the Conqueror's reign, and he had his wife Matilda crowned there in 1068.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, Westminster did not attract significant royal patronage under William and his successors, perhaps because the Abbey's prominent association with the last king of the old Anglo-Saxon regime could be regarded as a threat to the new Norman ruler.¹⁷⁴ The Conqueror's ambivalence towards the Confessor's burial church later in his reign places his initial activity at the site into sharper relief: his early use of Westminster as a stage for demonstrations of royal continuity seems a deliberate attempt to adopt the ritual geography of Edward's final years at a time when his own royal authority was still insecure.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the various ways that aspiring kings made use of earlier monarchs' corpses and funerals in order to cement their own royal status. In each of the case studies presented here, a dead ruler's body functioned as a metonymic representation of his reign and legacy, which could be manipulated by his survivors in their attempts to gain the kingdom. There was no uniform way to treat a royal corpse, but three general trends may be identified in the fifty years before the Norman Conquest. First was a candidate's establishment of a close, even reverential association with the body or tomb of his predecessor. This approach, epitomized a

¹⁷³ Matilda's coronation was performed by Ealdred at Pentecost, 1068. William is known to have celebrated Pentecost at Westminster three times (1068, 1084, and 1086) and Christmas four times (1066, 1067, 1075, and 1081). See Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, 213; Biddle, "Seasonal Festivals," 64.

¹⁷⁴ For William's lukewarm interest in Westminster, see Mason, "Westminster Abbey and the Monarchy," 279-80. See also the previous chapter for Westminster's own reluctance to promote Edward's tomb and sanctity in the decades after the Conquest. William of Malmesbury offered a different perspective: "King William did no less [than Edward the Confessor], indeed much more, to exalt the place, lavishing on it revenues from estates; for it was here that he was crowned" [Nec minus sed multo etiam maius rex Willelmus extulit locum magnis redivibus prediorum quod ibi regni susceperit insignia]; *GP* ii.73.6.

century earlier by Edward the Elder's identification with Alfred's remains, was employed successfully in the eleventh century by Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson, William of Normandy, and Edmund Ironside.¹⁷⁵ These kings all strengthened their claims to the throne by forging visible connections with the remains of their legitimizing predecessor, often as part of a display of royal ceremonial. By linking themselves with an acknowledged ruler, these men presented themselves as the natural heirs to the kingdom: as prominent mourners, they would be in an ideal position to portray themselves as the dead kings' chosen successors, regardless of whether they had actually been so designated. Additionally, identification with their predecessors' reigns signaled their desire for administrative continuity, an important consideration for candidates eager to secure the support of magnates whose wealth and status might be threatened by a change in regime. But just as importantly, candidates who sustained high-profile proximity to royal remains could prevent other claimants from laying claim to the king's corpse and the political cachet that accrued to it.

Although potential successors aimed to be publicly identified with the remains of a legitimizing royal body, such attempts were not always successful. For Harold Harefoot in particular, a failed attempt to forge an association with his father's corpse forced him to distance himself from Cnut's tomb. During this period of political vulnerability, in which his very kinship with Cnut was called into question, his predecessor's memory became a liability rather than an asset. Harold's subsequent retreat from the tomb represents a second way in which royal corpses might be handled by potential successors: though recognized as potent symbolic objects, these bodies were kept a good distance away from political deliberations so that they would not influence the outcome of succession debates. Whatever William did with Harold

¹⁷⁵ It was also used by Emma, who successfully took control of Cnut's body and memory during Harthacnut's absence—even if she was not able to maintain the authority she gained as a result.

Godwinson's mangled body, he certainly did not bury it in London, where it might have reminded the population of the circumstances surrounding their ruler's death and drawn attention from William's own acclamation and consecration. Cnut's entombment of Edmund Ironside's body in Glastonbury likewise removed his rival's tomb from London: not only would the distance eliminate a potential focus of anti-Danish sentiment from the site of the new king's accession, but the absence of Edmund's remains would surely have made it easier for his former allies to publicly renounce their loyalty to his sons. All three of these rulers were condemned by some contemporaries as usurpers, and their questionable claims of hereditary right meant that attempts to identify with a legitimizing predecessor could backfire; a volatile political body might endanger an already insecure claim to the kingdom.

Despite any anxiety they may have harbored about the influence of these royal bodies, Cnut and Harold Harefoot each recognized the importance of royal tombs, appreciating that deference to a predecessor's memory would serve a candidate well during an uncertain interregnum. Cnut did not abuse the body of his dead rival but allowed it to be buried in a prestigious monastery; and Harold apparently continued trying to forge a connection with his father's memory, even after his initial attempts had failed. Respectful treatment of a dead king's remains was not guaranteed, however, and the posthumous degradation of a royal body was a real, if relatively rare, possibility in eleventh century England. Harthacnut openly desecrated the honorably buried remains of his predecessor, exhuming the body, mutilating it, removing it from its consecrated grave, and exposing it to the elements. William, although he stopped short of publicly defiling Harold Godwinson's remains, appears to have had his predecessor buried secretly, without the funeral rites that his royal status should have merited. In these two instances, the new kings' objective was to deny the royal status of their immediate predecessors by inverting the expected norms of royal burial.

William was cautious with this tactic, perhaps fearing that a spectacular desecration would inspire an uprising; if there was any outcry about the maltreatment of Harold's body, it did not merit mention in the surviving sources for the Conqueror's reign. By contrast, Harthacnut's willingness to brave public outrage by digging up his half-brother's rotting corpse seems to indicate his confidence in Harold's unpopularity and in his own royal status. But Harthacnut's utter disregard for the conventions of Christian burial was exceptional, and, judging from the negative reaction to his exhumation in our extant sources, the denial of an honorable royal burial would have shocked contemporaries.

All of the rulers discussed in this chapter recognized that burying and memorializing kings was a matter of public concern, and I would conclude that in most of these cases, their carefully orchestrated interactions with their predecessors' bodies did in fact help them establish and secure their rule. This is not to say that the treatment of royal remains was the dominant factor in pre-Conquest succession politics. Although the savvy manipulation of a previous king's mortal remains and posthumous memory might help a candidate secure his place in an established royal dynasty, aspiring monarchs relied chiefly on their military resources and political supporters to get them on the throne. Edward the Confessor's identification with his half-brother's corpse may have lent additional weight to his hereditary claim in the face of Scandinavian challengers, but his success should surely be attributed to the efforts of the immensely powerful Earl Godwin. Conversely, Harold Harefoot's early inability to harness the ideological power of his father's tomb did not prevent him from eventually becoming full king. Yet the fact that every ruler who came to power between 1016 and 1066 interacted in some way with the earthly remains of his predecessor (or predecessors) suggests that the evocation of dynastic memory was an accepted and expected element of royal transitions. Six of the seven kings considered

in this chapter—Edmund Ironside, Cnut, Harold Harefoot, Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson, and William—appear to have asserted their right to the kingdom at the site of a predecessor’s remains. By the 1040s, when Edward was crowned, there was no objection to the new king being elected with an unburied royal corpse and consecrated near a recent royal grave; by the time William ascended to the realm, it seemed only natural for him to be inaugurated at the site of the Confessor’s tomb. While royal mausolea may have long been recognized as particularly apt places to issue claims to the throne, the previous centuries had seen West Saxon kings crowned at Kingston, with coronations held some distance from the remains of the previous king. Between the death of Æthelred and the Norman Conquest, however, royal accessions became regularly linked with burial sites. Dynastic memory was now enshrined in tombs, and legitimacy was linked to royal remains, not to static ceremonial locations.

It is difficult to ascertain how long after a king’s reign his tomb might be evoked for political purposes. Some enjoyed prolonged after-lives: the kings buried at Old Minster were eventually translated into Winchester’s Norman cathedral; the tombs of Edgar and Edmund Ironside were still prominent at Glastonbury when William of Malmesbury was writing his histories; the monks of Waltham claimed to have translated Harold Godwinson’s body three times before the 1170s; and even Æthelred was translated into a new marble tomb in St. Paul’s during the mid-twelfth century.¹⁷⁶ The most prominent eleventh-century royal corpse was Edward the Confessor’s, whose tomb and incorrupt body eventually became the focus of a full-fledged saint’s cult. After 1066, the Confessor was recognized as the royal link to the Anglo-Saxon past, and Norman and Angevin kings consistently claimed him as an

¹⁷⁶ See Thacker, “Harold at Chester,” 159-60 and 163-64; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 54-57.

ancestor. Yet in the century following the Conquest, although Westminster regularly hosted royal consecrations, the abbey did not attract an exceptional degree of patronage from rulers who claimed descent from Edward's stock.¹⁷⁷ If his tomb was evoked in the coronation ritual or attracted royal attention in other contexts, there is no evidence of it before the thirteenth century.¹⁷⁸ It may be that after the accession of William I, Westminster was valued simply as a site of ritual continuity, as Kingston had been in the tenth century: it was ceremonial history, not a royal tomb, that now imbued the abbey with ideological importance.

I would conclude that the same was true of the other eleventh-century royal bodies discussed in this chapter. Even if their tombs continued to draw interest and respect, bringing prestige to the institutions that housed them, their impact was most significant during interregna and succession debates. Given the emphasis on dynastic and administrative continuity, the political shelf life of a king's remains was necessarily short. The rulers discussed above never sought legitimizing corpses at more than one generation's remove, focusing their efforts on the remains of biological or surrogate fathers and brothers. Once a recent kinsman could be evoked in support of a candidate's succession, more distant ancestors fell by the wayside. Thus, interest in Æthelred's body as a legitimizing object may have been momentarily revived at his son's 1042 accession, but it seems not to have been sustained after the Confessor's

¹⁷⁷ Henry II was instrumental in securing Edward's canonization in 1161 and participated in his translation in 1163, and during the reign of his successors, the Westminster palace became the kingdom's premier administrative center. However, it was not until Henry III came of age in 1228 that Edward's cult found a genuine royal patron, under whom Edward's shrine was constructed and Westminster renovated. When Henry died in 1272, he became the first monarch since the Confessor to be buried in the abbey; Westminster subsequently became a royal necropolis. For the lack of early royal patronage, see Mason, "Westminster and the Monarchy," 278-87. For Angevin interest in Edward and Westminster, see Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 1-7 and 52-53.

¹⁷⁸ If there was an effort to downplay the importance of Edward's tomb in the generations following the Conquest, new kings might not have wanted to draw explicit attention to the site of the king's grave. This was no longer the case by 1220, when the royal regalia began to be identified as having belonged to the Confessor during coronations; from 1308, the coronation oath specifically included a promise to uphold Edward's law. See Mason, "Site of King-making," 63-64; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 134-35; and previous chapter.

reign; similarly, despite Edmund Ironside's impeccable royal pedigree, no later West Saxon candidates are said to have used his tomb to support claims to the kingdom.¹⁷⁹ And although the Confessor's corpse would later be recast as a saintly body, it lost its cachet as a symbolically charged political object soon after Harold and William's accessions. Although these rulers' individual legacies endured in the legal and historical writings that helped shape contemporary perceptions of the royal office, memory of the king's reign was no longer tethered to his tomb.

¹⁷⁹ A tentative exception may be found in the *Vita Ædwardi*: while Edward the Confessor was still in exile, Bishop Brihtwald was keeping vigil in Glastonbury and had a vision of Edward being consecrated king by St. Peter. See *Vita Ædwardi*, 8-9 and 85; Lawson, *Cnut*, 156.

Chapter 4. Royal Body as Executed Body: Physical Propaganda in the Reigns of Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut

So far, this study has investigated how rulers' bodies, tombs, and funerals were used to promote the idea of royal continuity—a persistent ideal, despite the fact that regular patrilineal succession was rare in late Anglo-Saxon England. The fragility of royal claims, external threats to the kingdom, and an increasingly powerful class of elite nobility made legitimizing rituals especially appealing for those attempting to establish themselves as kings. Even when candidates had an impeccable royal pedigree, like Edmund Ironside and Edward the Confessor, or had secured their authority with decisive military action, like Cnut and William, respectful attention was still rendered to the remains of a legitimizing predecessor. The consistency of these interactions indicates that this was an established ritual response to royal death, marking the close of one reign and mitigating the transition to the new regime. Even if a king had been challenged or opposed during his lifetime, honorable interment was the default response to his death; digression from this standard would have represented a perceptible departure from the status quo.

It is against this backdrop of prestigious burial practices that I approach the handful of instances in which royal bodies were deprived of normative royal funeral rites. Where honorable, public burial perpetuated the ideal (or illusion) of dynastic continuity, the desecration or obliteration of royal bodies signaled a desire for discontinuity with the previous regime. In these cases, royal bodies were not identified as legitimizing predecessors but as criminals—tyrants or usurpers whose actions caused them to forfeit the posthumous respect that rightful rulers merited. Condemnations of tyranny were familiar elements of classical and medieval texts and

occasionally appeared in propagandistic writings in Anglo-Saxon England.¹ Yet the immediate, visceral impact of an abused or neglected royal body would have been more dramatic than written discussions of tyranny and had the potential to reach a wider audience. The two most extreme examples of this trend occurred during the succession debates that followed Cnut's death in 1035: Alfred the Ætheling, the son King Æthelred II and Emma, and Harold Harefoot, the son of Cnut and his first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton, were each subjected to physical punishments that were ordinarily reserved for the worst offenders in Christian society. In 1036, Alfred returned from his lifelong exile only to be captured by Harold, the reigning king; the Ætheling was mutilated and died soon afterwards. In 1040, Alfred's half-brother, the newly crowned king Harthacnut, had Harold ejected from his monastic tomb and thrown in a swamp. Unlike honorable royal burial, which drew visual parallels with saints' shrines, the treatment of these bodies evoked the penalties inflicted on the bodies of secular offenders and excommunicants. Where royal bodies were displayed in funeral processions, criminal bodies were exhibited on gallows or spikes; where royal bodies were entombed in monasteries and offered intercessory prayer, criminal bodies were denied consecrated graves and burial *ad sanctos*; and where a king's burial would reinforce the glory of his dynastic line, a criminal's burial sullied his posthumous memory and brought shame on his kin.² By implication, if a royal body suffered the same fate as a criminal corpse, its owner must have violated earthly or divine law and deserved posthumous ignominy—just like any ordinary offender.

This interpretation was not cited by early commentators, however, who

¹ For tyranny, see Baraz, "Violence or Cruelty," 166 and 181-82. I discuss accusations of tyranny in late Anglo-Saxon texts below.

² The systematic exclusion of offenders from consecrated or honorable burial begins to appear in Old English law codes in the tenth century; II Æthelstan 26 is the earliest example. On the deliberate denial of consecrated or honorable burial to deviants, see Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology"; Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls"; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 170-80. The exclusion of offenders is discussed further below.

generally regarded the maltreatment of these royal bodies as the result of cruelty or poor leadership. This may indicate that contemporaries were unable to grasp the symbolic significance of Alfred's mutilation and Harold's exhumation. I do not think this is the case. Instead, I argue that medieval authors' broad condemnations demonstrate how completely these events backfired on their instigators. Within about five years of Alfred's death, his grave had become a site of popular reverence and his ordeal was lamented in Latin and vernacular texts, which invariably portrayed Harold as the villain of the episode. Furthermore, Alfred's humiliation galvanized his mother and half-brother to strike back against Harold. The latter's early death saved him from military retaliation, but he was nevertheless remembered in contemporary sources as a brutal, even maniacal king. Harthacnut did not fare much better after his exhumation of Harold. The desecration was quickly cited as evidence of Harthacnut's poor rulership, and a number of his subjects directly defied their new king by retrieving the disinterred body and reburying it in an appropriate, consecrated grave. Neither ruler successfully replaced his enemy's royal identity with a new, deviant identity by manipulating his body. Yet both men apparently believed that such abuse would improve their own political standing, and this chapter will explore why. In the following pages, I investigate what Harold and Harthacnut were trying to accomplish when they denied their rivals the trappings of a royal death and why contemporaries were not convinced by the shameful treatment of the royal bodies. Whereas medieval chroniclers offered little background for these two episodes, flatly condemning the kings' behavior without analyzing their motivations or objectives, the following discussion attempts to place Alfred's mutilation and Harold's exhumation in their proper context. Though widely regarded as shocking and exceptional, these incidents should not be dismissed as irrational or isolated acts. Rather, I show that they each exploited contemporary attitudes towards royal bodies and Christian burial, conveying

deliberate propagandistic message which were understood—if ultimately rejected—by contemporaries.

The Mutilation of Alfred the Ætheling

The blinding of the ætheling Alfred was perhaps the most scandalous element of the succession dispute that followed Cnut's death in 1035.³ The presumptive heir to the kingdom was Harthacnut, Cnut's son by Emma, but he was in Denmark when his father died and did not return to England to claim his inheritance. In Harthacnut's absence, his half-brother made a bid for the throne: Harold Harefoot, Cnut's son by his earlier union with Ælfgifu of Northampton, was strong enough to gain practical control over the kingdom, but he initially lacked the political support to be made king. From 1035 to 1037, he ruled as regent in the north while Emma held Wessex in her son's name. Harthacnut remained in Scandinavia, however, and Harold increased his efforts to become king, drawing powerful English magnates away from his brother's camp. This shift in popular support likely prompted the children of Emma's first marriage to return from a lifetime in exile. Alfred and his brother Edward (later "the Confessor") were the sons of Emma and Æthelred II, whose West Saxon dynasty had been supplanted by Cnut in 1017.⁴ Harthacnut's extended stay in Denmark and Harold's increasing political cachet may have prompted Emma to send for her older sons; alternatively, the æthelings may have decided to take advantage of the political turbulence and stake their own claim to the kingdom; or, as one contemporary source claimed, Harold may have lured them from Normandy with the intention of eliminating them altogether.⁵ In any case, early commentators agreed that Alfred

³ The 1035 succession is discussed above, Chapter 3.

⁴ For Edward and Alfred's lives in exile, see Keynes, "Æthelings in Normandy." For the scandal that surrounded Alfred's mutilation, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law."

⁵ These various possibilities are laid out in Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxx-xxxii and xxxiii-xxxiv; Keynes, "Æthelings in Normandy," 195-96.

returned to his father's kingdom towards the end of 1036, that he was waylaid and blinded by a force of Harold's men under Earl Godwin's command, and that he died soon afterwards and was buried at the monastery of Ely.⁶

The two earliest sources for this episode are the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The *Encomium*, composed within five years of the ætheling's death, depicted the assassination as a martyrdom and portrayed Alfred as an innocent saint.⁷ According to this account, Earl Godwin met Alfred when he arrived in England and gave him and his companions hospitality for the night. Unbeknownst to Godwin, Harold had ordered his own men to take Alfred and his party captive, and the ætheling's retinue was disarmed as they slept and bound in chains. Most of the prisoners were executed the next morning without a hearing, but some were kept or sold as slaves. Alfred, however, was spared for the moment and taken to the island of Ely:

And then the most contemptible people were chosen to judge the lamented youth in their madness. Once these men had been set as judges, they decreed that he should first have both eyes put out as a sign of contempt. And so he was held by the impious men, and once his eyes had been dug out, he was most wickedly slain. Once this killing was accomplished, they left the lifeless body, which the servants of Christ (namely the monks of that very island of Ely) stole and honorably buried.⁸

The *Encomium*, commissioned by and written in praise of Emma, blamed the incident entirely on the cruel and tyrannical Harold. Not only did the king treacherously kill the innocent prince and his followers, he wronged his own earl by betraying Godwin's guests to their deaths. Furthermore, Harold was accused of bringing Alfred to England

⁶ Edward also came to England with a fleet at this time, making it as far as Southampton before encountering English forces and retreating to Normandy. See Keynes, "Æthelings in Normandy," 195.

⁷ On the date, authorship, and objectives of the *Encomium*, see above, Chapter 3.

⁸ "Deinde contemptibiliores eliguntur, ut horum ab insania flendus iuuenis diiudicaretur. Qui iudices constituti decreuerunt, illi debere oculi utriusque ad contemptum primum erui... Namque est ab impiis tentus, effossis etiam luminibus impiissime est occisus. Qua nece perfecta reliquunt corpus exanime, quod fideles Christi, monachi scilicet eiusdem insulae Haeli, rapientes sepelierunt honorifice"; *Encomium*, 44-47.

in the first place, forging a letter from Emma in order to lure her son into a trap. The story of the forged letter, in conjunction with the unequivocal condemnation of Harold for the killing, seems expressly designed to dispel rumors that the queen was in any way involved in her son's death.⁹ The insistent assertion that Godwin had only good intentions toward Alfred suggests that the earl also had been implicated in the act; the author seems determined to clear the name of a powerful magnate who had reaffirmed his allegiance to Emma by the time the *Encomium* was composed.¹⁰ Finally, the Encomiast absolved Alfred himself of any wrongdoing by claiming that the ætheling was a saint:

There are many miracles at the site of his tomb, as certain people report, who say that they have seen them very often. And deservedly so: for he was martyred in innocence, and therefore it is fitting that the power of the innocent be exercised through him. Therefore, let Queen Emma rejoice in such an intercessor, since the one she once had as a son on earth she now has as a patron in heaven.¹¹

By identifying Alfred as a martyr, the Encomiast retroactively demonstrated the ætheling's innocence, implying that a saint could never have been corrupt during his time on earth. Alfred's alleged sanctity also underscored Harold's own transgression, for the king did not simply violate earthly law by killing an innocent man; he violated divine law by persecuting God's chosen saint.¹²

A briefer account of Alfred's mutilation and death was included in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which, like the *Encomium*, was sympathetic to the ætheling's plight

⁹ See Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 36. Simon Keynes regards the story of the letter as "an elaborate fiction"; "Introduction to the Reprint," lxiii. For Emma's probable involvement in the æthelings' return to England, see Keynes, "Æthelings in Normandy," 196.

¹⁰ Godwin was explicitly implicated in ASC C 1036; see below. For Godwin's role in the mutilation and later allegiance to Emma, see Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxiii-lxv.

¹¹ "In loco autem sepulcri eius multa fiunt miracula, ut quidam aiunt, qui etiam se haec uidisse saepissime dicunt. Et merito: innocenter enim fuit martyrizatus, ideoque dignum est ut per eum innocencium exerceatur uirtus. Gaudeat igitur Emma regina de tanto intercessore, quia quem quondam in terris habuit filium nunc habet in caelis patronum"; *Encomium*, 46-47.

¹² For political uses of royal martyrdom, see Rollason, "Cults of Murdered Royal Saints," 16-20.

and condemned Harold's actions towards him. Written within a decade of the events described, the C-text's annal for 1036 began as a prose entry but then shifted into verse:

In this year, the innocent ætheling Alfred, the son of King Æthelred, came hither and wanted to go to his mother, who was in Winchester; but Earl Godwin would not let him, nor would other men who wielded great power, because opinion was then moving very much in Harold's favor, although this was not right.

But Godwin then stopped him and placed him in bonds,
And divided up his companions and killed some in various ways.
Some were sold for money, some were cruelly killed,
Some were bound, some were blinded,
Some were mutilated, some were scalped.
There was no worse deed done in this country
Since the Danes came and made peace here.
Now we should trust in beloved God,
That they are rejoicing happily with Christ—
Those who were so wretchedly killed without being guilty.
Then the ætheling was still alive. He was beset with every evil,
Until it was decided that he should be led
To Ely, thus bound.
As soon as he came onto the ship he was blinded
And thus blind he was brought to the monks,
And he dwelt there as long as he lived.¹³

There are a number of inconsistencies between this account and the *Encomium*: the Chronicle did not explicitly describe Alfred as saintly, it clearly implicated Godwin in the mutilation, and it provided a fuller list of punishments endured by the ætheling's

¹³ "Her com Ælfred se unsceððiga æþeling Æþelrædes sunu cinges hider inn 7 wolde to his meder þe on Wincestre sæt, ac hit him ne geþafode Godwine eorl ne ec oþre men þe mycel mihton wealdan, forðan hit hleoðrode þa swiðe toward Haraldes, þeh hit unriht wære. Ac Godwine hine þa gelette 7 hine on hæft sette / 7 his geferan he todraf 7 sume mislice ofsloh. / Sume hi man wið feo sealde, sume hreowlice acwealde. / Sume hi man bende, sume hi man blende, / sume hamelode, sume hættode. / Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd gedon on þison earde / syþþan Dene comon 7 her frið namon. / Nu is to gelyfenne to ðan leofan Gode / þæt he blission bliðe mid Criste / þe wæron butan scylde swa earmlice acwealde. / Se æþeling lyfode þa gyt; ælc yfel man him gehet, / oð þæt man gerædde þæt man hine lædde / to Eligbyrig swa gebundenne. / Sona swa he lende on scype man hine blende / 7 hine swa blindne brohte to ðam munecon, / 7 he þar wunode ða hwile þe he lyfode"; ASC C 1036. ASC D 1036 adapted the poem to eliminate any reference to Godwin's involvement, disrupting the meter and rhyme evident in ASC C. The poem's meter, rhyme, and context are described in O'Brien O'Keefe, *MS C*, lxix; O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song*, 135; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 110-11; Bredehoft, *Early English Metre*, 92-93; Kries, "Mutilation of Alfred." For the dating of ASC C, see above, Chapter 1 and below, n.72.

retinue.¹⁴ Yet the most significant discrepancies concerned the mode of Alfred's death and the fate of his body. Where the *Encomium* asserted that he was blinded and then slain and that his corpse was abandoned by the killers, the Chronicle maintained that the ætheling survived his blinding and was handed over to the monks of Ely while he was still alive.

Later accounts of the mutilation followed the Chronicle's chronology for this episode, maintaining that Alfred was blinded but still very much alive when he was delivered to the monks, and an early Ely calendar recorded the ætheling's death as 5 February 1037.¹⁵ This would indicate that some months elapsed between his mutilation at the end of 1036 and his death. The *Encomium* was the only source which stated that Alfred was killed (*occisus*) by his oppressors, claiming that the ætheling was already dead by the time the monks found him. This discrepancy is best explained by the propagandistic objectives of the *Encomium*, which motivated the author to emphasize or even exaggerate Harold's abuse of justice and his cruel treatment of Alfred while minimizing any implication that the ætheling's sufferings were in any way warranted. Yet the *Encomium's* vigorous defense of Emma and thorough condemnation of Harold suggest that this propagandistic message was deployed in the

¹⁴ According to the *Encomium*, only one out of every ten of Alfred's men were spared, to be kept or sold as slaves; a few were kept in chains to be humiliated, but there was no description of the mutilations listed in the ASC. See *Encomium*, 42-45.

¹⁵ For the date of Alfred's death, see Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," xxxi-xxxii. Ely's version of Alfred's death was represented in the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*, book II chapter 90. MS E of the *Liber Eliensis* (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.1), which was written in the late twelfth century and based on John of Worcester, stated that "as the boat reached land, his eyes were most bloodily gouged out, in the boat, and so he was led to the monastery and given to the custody of the monks. After living there for a little while, he passed away from this light" [ut ad terram navis applicuit in ipsa mox eruti sunt oculi eius cruentissime et sic ad monasterium ductus monachis traditur custodiendus. Ubi brevi post tempore vivens, de hac migravit luce]. MS F (Ely, Dean and Chapter, MS (Liber Eliensis)), which was written in the early thirteenth century and based on William of Poitiers, maintained that Alfred was blinded in London and then placed naked on a horse which carried him, still alive, to Ely: "he could not survive for long afterwards, since when his eyes were gouged out by the knife, its point injured his brain" [nec supervivere potuit diu, cui, dum oculi effoderentur cultro, cerebrum violavit mucro]. Both quotations from *Liber Eliensis*, 159; translations adapted from Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, 189-90 and n.411. See also JW 522-25; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 4-5; William of Malmesbury *GR* ii.188.5; and *Liber Eliensis*, xxiii-xxiv.

1040s to counter existing notions that Emma, Godwin, or even Alfred ought to be blamed for the mutilation. The work may also have been intended to quash residual sympathy for Harold's reign, especially at a time when Harthacnut's own popularity was faltering. The *Encomium's* account may thus be read as a point by point response to critics who blamed Emma and her allies for Alfred's fate or who thought Harold's actions towards his rival were just.

Alfred's return from Normandy in 1036 coincided with Harold's attempts to consolidate his royal authority; although he was not yet recognized as full king, he had by this time secured the allegiance of a number of powerful magnates, including Earl Godwin.¹⁶ The ætheling's appearance in England at this moment could only have exacerbated the tension between Harold's supporters and Emma's, especially if he arrived with a military escort, as the sources indicate. The *Encomiast* initially maintained that the ætheling was traveling only with his companions and a small force from Boulogne (*Bononiensium paucos*), but he later stated that lodging was needed for scores of men once they reached England; he further declared that nine out of every ten were killed by Harold's agents, who "condemned the worthy bodies of so many soldiers."¹⁷ John of Worcester, the earliest chronicler to comment on the number of dead, reported that six hundred of Alfred's men were killed and that many others were mutilated, tortured, or sold.¹⁸ Given that it took only thirty-five men to make an army, according to an Old English law compiled just over a century earlier, Alfred's retinue was surely perceived as a credible military threat—especially if the ætheling had openly declared that he would make a bid for the throne.¹⁹ While Emma must have

¹⁶ In the *Encomium*, Alfred arrives just after Archbishop Æthelnoth refused to consecrate Harold; see *Encomium*, 40-41. This episode is discussed further below.

¹⁷ "Tot militum honesta dampnauerunt corpora"; *Encomium* 42-43. In the same passage, the *Encomiast* claimed that Alfred had declined a large force offered by Count Baldwin of Flanders. See also Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 240.

¹⁸ JW 522-23.

¹⁹ According to Ine's code, which was incorporated into the laws of Alfred in the late ninth century, "Groups of up to seven men we call thieves; from seven to thirty-five men is a band; any more than that

seen Alfred's arrival as an opportunity to cleanse the realm of a false king and restore her own royal authority, Harold would have regarded the ætheling as a usurper who wanted to seize the royal power that he had so painstakingly acquired. From this perspective, Alfred and his men were traitors who posed a significant military threat to the existing regime.

The spectacular dispatch of enemy fighters was not unprecedented at this time, and the punishments suffered by Alfred's men might well have been considered appropriate for members of a rebel army.²⁰ But there is no record of a military encounter, and all the early sources agree that Alfred's retinue was captured rather than defeated.²¹ It is also telling that the Chronicle's list of indignities were all attested judicial sentences under Anglo-Saxon law. The men who were killed outright shared a fate with criminals convicted of *bot*-less, or unforgivable offences; those who were blinded, mutilated, or scalped suffered punishments which were explicitly prescribed for repeat offenders in the laws of Cnut; and those who escaped immediate physical afflictions were sold into penal slavery, an alternative to corporal penalties in the tenth and eleventh centuries.²² Alfred's mutilation was also consistent with contemporary

is an army" [Ðeofas we hatað oð VII men; from VII hloð oð XXXV; siððan bið here]; Ine 13.1. The *Vita Edwardi* implied that the bid for the throne was an express purpose of the expedition, stating that Alfred "recklessly moved towards acquiring the paternal kingdom" [patrio regno adipiscendo cum ageret incautus]; *Vita Edwardi*, 20. See also William of Poitiers, *Gesta*, 2-5. The size of Alfred's military retinue may have been less important than the fact that the ætheling could muster support once he arrived in the country. A decade earlier, Edmund Ironside had rallied the population of Wessex after they had submitted to Cnut, assembling an army that was able to move decisively against the Danish forces. Harold may have feared that Alfred, like Edmund, would attract the military support of regions that had nominally submitted to him. For Edmund Ironside, see above, Chapter 3.

²⁰ For the purportedly just killings of rebels after Hastings, see Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda," 95-99.

²¹ The *Encomium* is explicit on this point: Alfred's men were captured and killed "not by military force but by their [enemies'] deceitful traps" [non milicie uiolentia sed fraudium suarum insidiis]; *Encomium*, 44-45.

²² II Cnut 30.4-30.5 prescribed the following punishment for a repeat offender: "Let his hands, or feet, or both, be cut off depending on what the deed was. And if he has committed further offenses, let his eyes be put out and his nose and ears and upper lip cut off, or let him be scalped" [man ceorfe him ða handa oððe þa fet oððe ægþer, be þam ðe seo dæd sig. 7 gif he þonne gyt mare wurc geworht hæbbe, þonne do man ut his eagan, 7 ceorfan of his nosu 7 his earan 7 þa uferan lippan oððon hine hættian]. Penal slavery (*witeðow*) is mentioned occasionally in the Old English laws: II Edward 6 declared that anyone found guilty of stealing should forfeit his freedom (*freat forwyrce*), and Edward and Guthrum

penal practice: blinding had long been regarded as an apt punishment for rebels, and it had recently been employed against leaders of a domestic revolt during the reign of King Æthelred.²³ Ordinarily, however, treason against the king or one's lord merited a death sentence.²⁴ King Alfred's late ninth-century law code established treason as a capital offense, decreeing that whoever "plots against the life of the king shall forfeit his life and all he possesses."²⁵ This sentiment was reiterated nearly a century later by Edgar, who legislated that anyone who betrayed his lord would forfeit his life, and in the 1020s, Cnut ruled that "betrayal of a lord cannot be compensated according to earthly law."²⁶

7.1 decreed that anyone who worked on Sunday would forfeit his freedom (*þolie his freotes*). Penal slaves were mentioned in Ine 24, 48, and 54.2 and in Æthelstan's ordinance on Alms 1, but slavery was not expressly prescribed in response to particular offenses in these codes. Penal slaves were also mentioned in four wills (S 1485, S 1491, S 1492, S 1539) and in a lease of land (S 1285). For the judicial nature of the mutilations in the ASC account of Alfred's death, see O'Brien O'Keefe, "Body and Law," 214-15.

²³ ASC CDEF 1006 noted the blinding of two nobles, Ulfheah and Wulfgeat, and Simon Keynes regards this mutilation as a response to "something approaching a palace revolution amongst the principal lay associates of King Æthelred." See Keynes, *Diplomas*, 211-13, quotation at 211-12; Boyle, "Anglo-Saxon Political Mutilation." For blinding as an appropriate punishment for treason, see Bühner-Thierry, "Blinding in the Early Medieval West," 80-88. For attitudes towards the mutilation of aristocrats in the early Middle Ages, see van Eickels, "Castration and Blinding," 592-93. By the end of the twelfth century, it was rare for high-status English individuals to suffer physical punishment, even for offenses as grave as treason; see Gillingham, "Killing and Mutilating Political Enemies," 119; and see also Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry," 213-16 for acts of royal violence in Anglo-Saxon England.

²⁴ On treason and theft as violations of a requisite loyalty oath in Anglo-Saxon England, see Wormald, "Charters, Laws, and the Settlement of Dispute," 307. Julia Barrow contrasts the severity of English responses to rebellion with the more lenient stance taken by Continental kings: while Ottonian rulers regarded rebellion "as a sign of dissatisfaction rather than as disloyalty," English kings treated treachery (and even theft) as a violation of the requisite loyalty oath. See Barrow, "Demonstrative Behavior," 136. See also Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry," 221.

²⁵ "Gif hwa ymb cyninges feorh sierwe... sie he his feores scyldig 7 ealles þæs ðe he age"; Alfred 4.

²⁶ "Hlafordswice æfter woroldlage is botleas"; II Cnut 64. Edgar's law against treason is III Edgar 7.3: "whatever [sanctuary] a proven thief should seek, or one who is discovered to be a lord-betrayer, he should never have his life spared" [7 gesece se æbæra þeof þæt þæt he gesece, oððe se þe on hlafordsearwe gemet sy, þæt hi næfre feorh ne gesecean]. One version of III Edgar, compiled with other law codes and homilies in the Wulfstianian MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201, adds "unless the king grants him life" [buton se cyninge him feorhgeneres unne] at the end of clause 7.3. I expect that this was Wulfstan's own correction and reflects his interest in non-lethal judicial sentences, but although the rest of this clause was reiterated verbatim in II Cnut 26, the king's option to pardon a traitor was not included in Cnut's laws. For Wulfstan's adaptation of III Edgar in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201, see Whitelock, "Wulfstan and the Laws of Cnut," 439; Whitelock argues that the compilation of this MS predated the composition of I and II Cnut. See also II Æthelstan 4 and II Cnut 57, which set the guidelines for the ordeal for accused traitors; these are discussed further in Chapter 5.

But although treason was normally a *bot*-less offense, which surely explains why so many of Alfred's men were reportedly executed, early eleventh-century legislation increasingly prescribed non-lethal sentences for even serious offenders. This shift was largely due to the influence of Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who authored the laws of Æthelred and Cnut. His policy of merciful punishment was articulated in his first code for Æthelred:

It is the decree of our lord and his council that Christian men not be condemned to death for too little. But rather, let mild punishments be decreed, for the people's need. Do not destroy God's handiwork and his own purchase, which he dearly bought, on account of little things.²⁷

“God's handiwork,” namely an offender's life and soul, were not to be frivolously destroyed by human agents according to this statute, and Wulfstan's primary concern was that all offenders should have the opportunity to repent of their sins and attain salvation—an opportunity that would be lost if they were summarily executed.²⁸ Though the worst deviants might still refuse to make amends for their misdeeds, non-lethal sentences would allow contrite offenders to live long enough to atone for their misdeeds and save their souls. Furthermore, the pain of corporal penalties might assume a penitential function, motivating even recalcitrant sinners to appeal to God for relief. In this context, Alfred's blinding and the non-lethal corporal penalties suffered by his men should be interpreted as acts of merciful justice, which waived the death sentence traitors deserved and allowed the offenders the opportunity to repent before they died.²⁹

²⁷ “Ures hlaforðes gerædnes 7 his witena is, þæt man Cristene men for ealles to lytlum to deaðe ne fordeme. Ac elles geræde man friðlice steora folce to þearfe. Ne forspille for lytlum Godes handgeweorc 7 his agenne ceap, þe he deore gebohte”; V Æthelred 3-3.1.

²⁸ For Wulfstan's attitude towards capital and corporal punishment, see Marafioti, “Punishing Bodies and Saving Souls”; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 180-84; Whitelock, “Wulfstan Cantor,” 85-86.

²⁹ For judicial blinding as an act of royal mercy, see Bühner-Thierry, “Blinding in the Early Medieval West,” 79-81; van Eickels, “Castration and Blinding,” 590. Compare with the mercy attributed to post-Conquest kings: see Gillingham, “1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry,” 217-22.

In Alfred's case, a non-lethal punishment may also have been politically expedient. Killing a prince might be interpreted as a political assassination instead of a righteous exercise of justice, and Harold accordingly ensured that Alfred was tried and sentenced before his punishment was carried out. The only witness to the legal process that preceded Alfred's blinding is the *Encomium*, which depicted the ætheling's trial as an illegitimate farce: although judges were chosen to try and sentence the captive, the author was clear that these individuals were not merely contemptible but insane.³⁰ Yet the fact that the *Encomiast* included this episode at all implies that some sort of trial had in fact taken place. His insistence that the judgment was the act of madmen was probably designed to counter an existing impression among his readers that Alfred had been lawfully condemned. If contemporaries regarded Alfred's trial as legitimate, the ætheling's relatively mild sentence might likewise have been understood as evidence of Harold's mercy towards his enemies and his respect for the West Saxon royal dynasty—in spite of the fact that one of its members attempted to depose him.³¹ Harold must have justified his actions against Alfred as a necessary but relatively lenient exercise of justice against an individual who had wrongfully tried to subvert royal authority.

The *Encomium*'s version of this narrative seems designed to counteract any characterization of Harold as a just or magnanimous ruler: Alfred had been tricked into coming to England by a power-hungry royal pretender; he refused to bring an army with him but arrived with a small group of companions; his only intention was to visit his mother, who was being oppressed by a ruler who had stolen her son's crown.³² Neither Emma nor Alfred was guilty of any wrongdoing that might have

³⁰ The judges were *contemptibiliores* who condemned Alfred in madness (*ab insania*); see *Encomium*, 44-45 and quotation above.

³¹ Compare with analogous Carolingian examples discussed by de Jong, "Political Coersion and Honour," 296-97.

³² For Alfred's alleged refusal to travel with an army, see above, n.17.

justified Harold's unlawful and inordinate abuse of royal power, and the *Encomium's* account of the ætheling's execution and abandoned corpse was meant to confirm this final point. If Alfred was both blinded and killed by Harold's men, there could be no claim that the ætheling had been treated leniently. Eleventh-century legal discourse designated mutilation a merciful punishment because it was an alternative to immediate death and damnation, but non-lethal penalties were nevertheless intended to be painful and humiliating.³³ Such treatment was mild only insofar as it provided the opportunity for an offender's soul to be saved; the punishment was mild according to spiritual, not earthly standards.³⁴ As portrayed in the *Encomium*, however, the blinding provided no spiritual benefit: Alfred was killed immediately after his eyes were put out, giving him no time to atone for his sins. Read in this light, Alfred's mutilation was not mercy but torture.³⁵

The pain and humiliation associated with mutilation were designed to be preventative as well as punitive, however, and would function, in the words of one

³³ See O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law," 216-17; and compare with Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 3-69.

³⁴ This is evident in one of Wulfstan's laws for Cnut, which justified a variety of mutilations by explaining: "Thus one can punish and also save the soul" [Swa man mæg styran 7 eac þære sawle beorgan]; II Cnut 30.4-30.5, and see quotation above.

³⁵ The brutality of Harold's henchmen was evident at various point in the narrative. In his description of the abuse of Alfred's retinue, the Encomiast provided the following commentary on their captors: "But these, though they were in name Christians, were nevertheless in their actions totally pagan, and butchered the innocent heroes with blows from their spears bound as they were, like swine. Henceforth, all ages will rightfully call such torturers worse than dogs, since they brought to condemnation the worthy persons of so many soldiers not by soldierly force but by their treacherous snares" [At isti, licet nomine Christiani, actu tamen paganissimi, lanceolarum suarum ictibus non merentes heroas catenatos mactabant ut sues. Unde huiusmodi tortores canibus deteriores digne omnia dicunt secula, qui non milicie uiolentia sed fraudium suarum insidiis tot militum honesta dampnauerunt corpora]. Similarly, in the description of Alfred's capture: "The royal youth, then, was captured secretly in his lodging, and having been taken to the island called Ely, was first of all mocked by the most wicked soldiery. And then the most contemptible people were chosen to condemn the lamented youth in their madness. After they prepared to [put his eyes out], two men were placed on his arms to hold them in the meantime, and one was placed on his chest and one upon his legs, so that the punishment might be inflicted upon him more easily" [Captus est igitur regius iuuenis clam suo in hospicio, eductusque in insula Heli dicta a milite primum inrisus est iniquissimo. Deinde contemptibiliores eliguntur, ut horum ab insania flendus iuuenis diiudicetur... Quod postquam parant perficere, duo illi super brachia ponuntur, qui interim tenerent illa, et unus super pectus unusque super crura, ut sic facilius illi inferretur paena]; *Encomium* 44-45.

tenth-century author, “as a deterrent for all kinds of offenses.”³⁶ Gruesome mutilations made offenders into living spectacles and offered an example of the consequences for disrupting the peace, thus discouraging others from replicating criminal behavior.³⁷ Additionally, however, a maimed body would permanently identify a convicted individual as a deviant, distinguishing him physically from law-abiding members of his community, and, in some cases, proclaiming the very nature of his crime.³⁸ Judicial mutilation transformed a body into a signifying “text,” through which an individual’s transgressions could be clearly read.³⁹ For Emma, this would have been among the most detrimental aspects of Alfred’s blinding. Not only would this new deformity prevent her son from becoming king, but his alleged offense would now be indelibly inscribed on his body, marking him as a deviant for the remainder of his life.⁴⁰ Although withdrawal to a monastery might limit the exposure of his signifying disfigurement, the symbolic impact of Alfred’s mutilation would only be fully neutralized once his body was concealed in a grave.

Accordingly, the *Encomiast* did not linger over Alfred’s disfigured form. Although he introduced his narrative by imagining how distressing his description of the mutilation and murder must be for his patroness, he provided a thorough account of the circumstances that brought Alfred to England and a graphic description of his companions’ deaths. By contrast, he offered only a brief summary of the *ætheling*’s sufferings. After mentioning that Alfred was held down by four men as others

³⁶ “Ad deterrendos quosque malos.” This was Lantfred in his life of Swithun; see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 310-11.

³⁷ See O’Brien O’Keefe, “Body and Law,” 224-28; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 3-69.

³⁸ See O’Brien O’Keefe, “Body and Law,” 226-28. Some penalties stopped people from repeating a particular transgression by removing the offending member. See for example IV *Æthelred* 5.3, Alfred 25.1; and Whitelock, “Wulfstan Cantor,” 85

³⁹ For the mutilated body as a text, see O’Brien O’Keefe, “Body and Law,” especially 228. For the possibility that wounded bodies might be mistaken for and read as punished bodies, see Richards, “Body as Text,” especially 105-06.

⁴⁰ For Alfred’s ineligibility for the throne, see O’Brien O’Keefe, “Body and Law,” 214. For the political and religious implications of blinding as a punishment, see Bühner-Thierry, “Blinding in the Early Medieval West”; van Eickels, “Castration and Blinding,” 591; Bernstein “Blinding of Harold,” 54-58.

prepared to blind him, the Encomiast shifted his gaze away from his subject:

Why do I linger over this in sorrow? My pen trembles as I write, as I am horrified at what the most blessed youth suffered. Therefore, I would sooner avoid the misery of such a great calamity, and touch upon the conclusion of this martyrdom until its end.⁴¹

Following this digression, his return to Alfred's body was brief and anti-climactic: "he was held fast by the impious men, and after his eyes had been dug out was most wickedly slain."⁴² The remainder of the episode was devoted to a description of how the monks of Ely recovered Alfred's corpse, how they gave him an honorable tomb, and how the innocent Ætheling was now a martyr. By telescoping the narrative and conflating his subject's mutilation, death, and burial, the Encomiast ensured that no image of Alfred's broken body would appear in his text. His audience was presented with an unblemished living prince and the entombed relics of a martyr; the mutilated body, which might have advertised the Ætheling's supposed crimes, was repressed.⁴³

Alfred's "lifeless body" (*corpus exanime*) did make a brief appearance in the *Encomium*, however: it was left by his captors at the site of his execution until it was retrieved by the monks. This posthumous abandonment added further insult to the Ætheling's considerable injury, for only the most incorrigible members of Christian society were denied burial. Executed criminals, though typically excluded from consecrated cemeteries, were often given some crude form of interment.⁴⁴

Excommunicants, by contrast, were to be refused any kind of grave. Medieval anathema formulae instructed that excommunicated bodies be deposited on dung-

⁴¹ "Quid hoc in dolore detineor? Mihi ipsi scribenti tremit calamus, dum horreo quae iuuenis passus est beatissimus. Euadam ergo breuius tantae calamitatis miseriam, finemque huius martyrii fine tenus perstringam"; *Encomium*, 44-45.

⁴² "Namque est ab impiis tentus, effossis etiam luminibus impiissime est occisus"; *Encomium*, 44-47.

⁴³ *Encomium*, 46-47. This was not the case with Alfred's companions, whose *corpora* are mentioned explicitly; see above, n.17.

⁴⁴ For irregular interment in execution cemeteries, see Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology," 37; Hayman and Reynolds, "42-54 London Road, Staines," 237-38.

heaps or left as food for birds and beasts, and an Old English homiletic account clarified that “no one may bury an excommunicant within a consecrated minster, nor even bring him to a heathen burial pit; rather, drag him out without a coffin unless he repents.”⁴⁵ The Encomiast’s claim that Alfred’s corpse was abandoned was not a statement about the ætheling’s spiritual state, however, but his captors’. According to this interpretation, Harold’s men wanted the innocent Alfred to be equated with the worst Christian deviants—evidence of their own moral corruption. It is also possible that the Encomiast imagined the killers deliberately trying to prevent their victim’s salvation by depriving him of last rites and a consecrated grave, particularly serious punishments at a time when reconciliation with the Church and consecrated burial were understood as important prerequisites for salvation.⁴⁶ For an audience familiar with eleventh-century penal practice, the speedy completion of Alfred’s sentence and his executioners’ abandonment of the corpse implied that Harold was not simply eliminating a political threat; he was going after his enemy’s soul.

This attempt obviously failed, according to the Encomiast, because the martyred ætheling went straight to heaven.⁴⁷ But as long as the body was unburied, any observer would have assumed that Alfred was a deviant with little hope of salvation. It was left to the monks to remedy the situation, and their provision of an honorable, consecrated grave restored Alfred’s earthly reputation and ensured that his tomb reflected the actual status of his soul. If the executioners deliberately denied their

⁴⁵ “Ne hi nan man ne burge binnan gehalgodan mynstre, ne furpum to hæpenum pytte ne bere, ac drage butan cyste butan hi geswicon.” This homily was committed to writing in the second half of the eleventh century; it is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 115 and edited in Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 161. Comparable prescriptions were included in the earliest collection of excommunication formulae, compiled by Regino of Prüm c.906, and in the widely disseminated Romano-Germanic Pontifical, compiled c.960. For Regino of Prüm, see *PL* 132 col.362 BC; for the Romano-Germanic Pontifical, see Vogel and Elze, *Pontifical Romano-Germanique*, 316. See also Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 36-39 and 257; Hamilton, “Penance and Excommunication,” 93-94; Treharne, “Unique Old English Formula,” 197-98; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 171-72.

⁴⁶ See Marafioti, “Punishing Bodies and Saving Souls.”

⁴⁷ See quotation above.

victim an appropriate burial, as the *Encomium* asserted, it would follow that the monks recovered the corpse in direct defiance of Harold. By providing the body with a prestigious burial in hallowed ground, the monks undermined the killers' intentions to make a visual statement about the ætheling's criminal activity and damage his spiritual well-being. Although the *Encomiast* did not explicitly remark on the monastic community's political loyalties, this intervention indicated that the monks of Ely, like Emma herself, were opposed to Harold's persecution of Alfred and willingly thwarted his plans to denigrate the ætheling's body and memory.

Yet in reality, the monks may have been acting in concert with the king's wishes when they provided an honorable tomb for the remains. It is surely significant that Harold's men brought Alfred to a monastery instead of simply leaving him, dead or alive, at the first convenient locale, and the specific choice of Ely, a community which had been patronized by Emma and Cnut, suggests that Harold wanted to ensure humane treatment for Alfred.⁴⁸ This scenario does not recall violent acts of royal martyrdom, as the *Encomium* would have it, but instances of problematic royalty being confined to monasteries by their political enemies.⁴⁹ When read in this context, it seems as though Alfred's captors intended him to survive his mutilation—at least for a time. Blinded, Alfred was no longer a threat to Harold's royal authority and could safely be left alive to atone for his sins, serving simultaneously as a demonstration of royal magnanimity and proof that Harold had the power to thoroughly dominate his enemies.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ All the early sources agreed that the ætheling was brought to Ely around the time of his blinding and that he was buried in the monastery after his death, and every account but the *Encomium* maintained that he lived with the monks during the interim; see note above. On Emma and Cnut's patronage of Ely, see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 143, 157, and 244; Lawson, *Cnut*, 152-53; Heslop, "De Luxe Manuscripts," 185.

⁴⁹ For the confinement of early medieval kings in monasteries, see Ridyard, "Monk-Kings," 22-23; de Jong, "Political Coersion and Honour," especially 291-97; and compare Stancliffe, "Kings who Opted Out."

⁵⁰ For analogous examples, see de Jong, "Political Coercion and Honour," 297-98.

Unfortunately for Harold, his mutilation of Alfred was not interpreted by contemporary commentators as the commensurate justice of a good king. Emma's personal and political priorities guaranteed that there would be no reference to Harold's mercy or righteousness in the *Encomium*, and the author's claim that a martyr's cult emerged around Alfred's remains served to further vilify Harold.⁵¹ The *Encomium* was the only source to explicitly identify the ætheling as saintly, however, and modern commentators have assumed that his cult was short-lived, if it ever existed at all.⁵² Yet I would contend that Alfred's tomb attracted contemporary reverence, not necessarily because it was a saint's shrine but because it was the burial place of a prince whose extraordinary mutilation and death sparked popular interest. The fact that a vernacular, rhyming poem about Alfred's ordeal was deemed worthy of inclusion in the Chronicle suggests that the text's compiler considered the episode a pivotal moment in English history, or at least the history of the West Saxon dynasty.⁵³ The concluding lines of the poem are particularly revealing: "he was buried as was fitting to him, completely honorably, as he deserved, at the west end near the steeple, in the south portico."⁵⁴ The author made it clear that Alfred's tomb was no ordinary grave but was fully worthy of its royal inhabitant, reiterating three times how suitable and prestigious the burial was. Even more remarkably, the poem described the exact

⁵¹ See Rollason, "Cults of Murdered Royal Saints," 16-20 (though Rollason does not include Alfred in his roster of murdered royal saints; see below, n.52).

⁵² David Rollason dismisses the *Encomium*'s claim that the ætheling was a saint, concluding in his monograph that "Alfred's cult seems never to have taken off" and was not even celebrated at Ely; Alfred is also excluded from his article on murdered Anglo-Saxon saints. Susan Ridyard similarly omits Alfred from her comprehensive study of East Anglian and West Saxon saints, and he does not appear in Catherine Cubitt's study of murdered and martyred Anglo-Saxon royalty. See Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 141; Rollason, "Cults of Murdered Royal Saints"; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints."

⁵³ I follow Thomas Bredehoft's view that all the ASC poems demonstrate "a concern with English nationalism [and] an explicit focus on the royal succession in the West Saxon line"; *Textual Histories*, 72-118 with quotation at 100. For the ASC poems in general, see O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song*, 108-37; Thormann, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Poems."

⁵⁴ "Syððan hine man byrigde swa him wel gebyrede, / ful wurðlice, swa he wyrðe wæs, / æt þam westende þam styppe ful gehende, / on þam suðportice"; ASC C 1036.

location of Alfred's remains. The precision of this information recalls the eleventh-century Old English list of saints' resting places, which provided the geographical locations of dozens of saints' shrines in England, and it is not impossible that the end of the poem functioned as something of a pilgrim's guide.⁵⁵ The fact that the piece included such detailed information about Alfred's tomb suggests that the ætheling's grave had attracted popular interest and reverence by the time the entry was committed to writing in the early 1040s, some five years after his death.

Beyond its interest in Alfred's body, this annal is quite different from the Chronicle's other poetic laments for dead rulers and seems not to be modeled after contemporary praise poetry. Instead, its structure and content recall hagiographical works. No other royal death in the Chronicle was detailed as fully as Alfred's, and the extensive focus on physical afflictions in these twenty lines distinguishes the poem from other metrical entries, which provided almost no information about the cause or circumstances of their subject's death.⁵⁶ The poem's concise description of its subjects' suffering and detailed interest in Alfred's tomb recalls the Old English Martyrology, whose entries were structured in a similar manner, summarizing each saint's persecution and death and often concluding with information about the location of his or her relics.⁵⁷ The graphic list of judicial punishments inflicted on Alfred's

⁵⁵ The text known as the "*Secgan be þam Godes sanctum, þe on Engla lande ærost reston*" listed the shrines of eighty-nine saints, all but one of which were located in England. David Rollason notes that lists of shrines "possessed potential as pilgrim guides," even if their composition was not motivated by such practical considerations. The text is edited in Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands*, 9-20; it is analyzed in Rollason, "Lists of Saints' Resting-Places."

⁵⁶ The poems of the ASC contained in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record* include: *The Battle of Brunanburh* (ABCD 937), *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (ABCD 942), *The Coronation of Edgar* (ABC 973), *The Death of Edgar* (ABC 975), *The Death of Alfred* (CD 1036), and *The Death of Edward* (CD 1065). In addition to these texts, which have now achieved canonical status as poetry, the following annals contain verse: DE 959, DE 975, D 975, DE 979, CDE 1011, D 1057, D 1067, E 1075/D 1076, E 1086, and E 1104. These poems generally celebrated rulers' leadership and accomplishments, but the 1036 entry described a group of brutal deaths. The nearest analog is the poem on Edward the Martyr in ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), but even this account focused on its subject's kingly and saintly qualities rather than the mode of his death. For the ASC poetry, see Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 73-77 and 192-93 n.4; O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song*, 108-09. Edward the Martyr is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵⁷ On this structure, see Rollason, "Saints' Resting-Places," 74.

innocent men also evoked contemporary hagiographical works: by emphasizing the number and scope of corporal penalties, the poet contrasted the brutality of the retinue's earthly treatment with the spiritual glory they received after their death.⁵⁸ It was this final point which forced the clearest comparison between Harold's victims and well-established martyrs, for while ordinary Christians would have to wait for the Last Judgment before gaining admittance to heaven, Alfred and his men were already "rejoicing happily with Christ"—a privilege reserved for saints.⁵⁹ Given the unambiguously hagiographical tone of this poem, the words "saint" and "martyr" seem to be carefully, deliberately omitted.⁶⁰ Although the poet wanted to depict Alfred's death as a crime against both human and divine authority, and although he may have been willing to see Harold and Godwin identified as persecutors of Christian innocents, he stopped short of crediting the ætheling (or his companions) with miraculous or intercessory powers. Similarly, while Alfred's grave certainly seems to have become a site of pilgrimage and reverence, it does not automatically follow that

⁵⁸ A comparable example appears in Lantfred's late tenth-century *Life of St. Swithun*, when the saint healed a man who had been wrongfully punished for a theft he had not committed. This anecdote began with a list of judicial punishments a convicted offender would suffer: "If any thief or robber were found anywhere in the country, he would be tortured at length by having his eyes put out, his hands cut off, his ears torn off, his nostrils carved open and his feet removed; and finally, with the skin and hair of his head flayed off, he would be abandoned in the open fields, dead in respect of nearly all his limbs, to be devoured by wild beasts and birds and hounds of the night" [Ut si quispiam cleptes in tota uel predo inueniretur patria, caecatis luminibus, truncatis manibus, auulsis auribus, incisus naribus, et subtractis pedibus excrucietur diutius; et sic demum decoriata pelle capitis cum crinibus, per omnia pene membra mortuus relinqueretur in agris, deuorandus a feris et auibus atque nocturnicanibus]. Lantfred reported that all but two of these punishments were inflicted on the wrongly accused man, who was allowed to keep his feet and his scalp. Whereas Swithun restored the innocent's sight and hearing, however, Alfred's men were to find no such physical relief; the mode of their deaths earned them only spiritual salvation. This episode was adapted in later accounts of Swithun, including Wulfstan of Worcester's Latin account and Ælfric of Eynsham's Old English version; the promulgation of this story (or others like it) may have made this set-up a familiar hagiographical trope. See Lapidge, *Swithun*, 310-13. For more on Swithun, see O'Keefe, "Body and law," 225-26. A biblical example can be found in 2 Maccabees 7, which was adapted into Old English by Ælfric; see LS II.74-81.108-204.

⁵⁹ See for example Revelations 20:4-5; Augustine, *City of God*, XX.9. For the ASC quotation, see above.

⁶⁰ Compare with the poetic account of the death of Edward in 978, in which the dead king was explicitly called a saint (*sanct*), and the corresponding prose entry which stated that he was martyred (*gemartyrad*). See ASC E 979 (*recte* 978) and C 978; the sources for Edward's death are treated in Chapter 5.

he was recognized as saintly. His tomb must have held an appeal similar to the royal mausolea constructed by Edward the Elder and Edward the Confessor, which also drew pilgrims and expressions of reverence without saintly foci.⁶¹ Just as the two Edwards appropriated the symbolic vocabulary of saints' cults in their construction of royal necropolises, the poet drew upon familiar hagiographic motifs to accentuate the exceptional glory of his royal subject. Even if the Chronicle poet did not second the Encomiast's claim of sanctity—a claim which was surely encouraged, if not instigated by Emma—these two sources attest that even a condemned royal body could be re-invented as a worthy object of reverence.

Despite his appeal to the universal Christian theme of martyrdom, however, the Chronicle poet firmly situated this episode within the course of English history, stating unequivocally that “there was no worse deed done in this country since the Danes came and made peace here.”⁶² Similar rhetorical formulae appear elsewhere in Old English literature: the Chronicle's account of King Edward's martyrdom in 978 claimed that no worse deed had been done since the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain, and *Genesis B* maintained that no worse deed was known to mankind than Eve's temptation.⁶³ But while the Chronicle poet singled out Edward's martyrdom from the entire scope of English history and the *Genesis* poet identified Eve's transgression as the worst moment of human existence, Alfred's poet limited his narrative scope to the

⁶¹ These royal tombs are discussed above, Chapter 2.

⁶² “Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd gedon on þison earde / syþþan Dene comon 7 her frið namon”; ASC C 1036.

⁶³ The account of Edward's death reads: “There was no worse deed done among the English since they first sought the land of Britain” [Ne wearð Angelecynne nan wærsa dæd gedon / þonne þeos wæs syððon hi ærest Brytonland gesohton]; ASC E 979 (*recte* 978). *Genesis B* reads: “There was no worse deed marked among men” [Ne wearð wyrse dæd / monnum gemearcod]; Krapp, *Junius Manuscript*, 21 at lines 594-95. The conclusion of *Brunanburh* includes a similar passage, which claimed that the island had never seen such a great slaughter “since the Angles and Saxons came hither from the east, sought Britain over the broad sea” [siþþan eastan hider / Engle 7 Seaxe up becoman, / ofer brad brimu Brytene sohtan]; ASC A 937. For a comparison of these exclamations in the accounts of Alfred and Edward the Martyr, see Kries, “Mutilation of Alfred,” 47-48; for comparisons of Alfred with Edward, *Brunanburh*, and the entry for 1011, see Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 110. See also O’Gorman, “Death of Alfred Ætheling.”

very recent past—the time after the Danes made peace in England. His historical retrospective may have gone back as far as Alfred the Great, who was credited with establishing peace with the Vikings in the late ninth century, but raiding had resumed again a century later, and the poet was more likely referring to events in living memory when he mentioned the Danes.⁶⁴ Descriptions of Viking brutality were rife around the turn of the millennium: the Chronicle was full of accounts of burning, pillaging, and extortion, while Archbishop Wulfstan of York lamented that churches were regularly plundered, Christians were sold to heathens, and pagan worship was sweeping the nation; furthermore, the martyrdom of Archbishop Ælfheah in 1012 and Svein's deposition of King Æthelred in 1013 confirmed that no one at any level of society was safe from Scandinavian aggression.⁶⁵ In theory, Cnut's accession to the English throne in 1016 should have stopped all such atrocities (whether real or imagined), and this policy ought to have extended to his sons' reigns as well. By alluding to the Danish peace, the poet depicted Alfred's death as an egregious violation of this implicit truce, associating Alfred's mutilation with earlier Viking violence by drawing explicit attention to Harold's Danish heritage.⁶⁶ Where Cnut ostensibly promoted peaceful coexistence between Danish and English populations,

⁶⁴ Thomas Bredehoft likewise sees this phrase as a reference to the eleventh-century Danish raids and the accession of Cnut; *Textual Histories*, 110-11.

⁶⁵ For descriptions of Viking aggression, see ASC CDEF 981-1016. Wulfstan's concerns about the causes and results of the Danish incursions were articulated most forcefully in his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos Quando Dani Maxime Persecuti Sunt*, edited in Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 255-75. Ælfheah's martyrdom and Æthelred's deposition are discussed above, Chapter 3.

⁶⁶ Kries argues that the change in reference from the advent of the Anglo-Saxons to the advent of the Danes "draws our attention to a break in continuity and suppresses former Anglo-Saxon rule... The new reference system seems to suggest a change in identity." Bredehoft identifies this reference to the Danes as a condemnation of English vice: "By invoking the eleventh-century Danish conquest in terms designed to recall the *adventus Saxonum*, the 1036 poem implicitly lays the blame for the Danish conquest at the feet of the English and their moral decline." Both of these explanations seem overly complex; this shift of scope may simply be intended to draw attention to Alfred's West Saxon identity and Harold's Danish descent. See Kries, "Mutilation of Alfred," 48; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 111. For the importance of ethnic designations during times of political crisis, see Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct," 24-26.

Harold was implicitly identified as a successor to heathen Scandinavian raiders.⁶⁷

Certainly, this was not the interpretation Harold had in mind when he sent his underlings to dispose of the Ætheling. The king surely construed his actions against Alfred as a necessary exercise of justice against an individual who had intended to subvert royal power—provoking the Ætheling’s survivors and supporters to refute this view. Accordingly, the Chronicle stressed the severity of the physical torments endured by Alfred and his men and implicitly linked Harold’s actions with Viking atrocities and the persecution of Christian martyrs, while the *Encomium* aimed to clear Emma’s family of any wrongdoing and turn contemporary opinion against Harold by detailing the outrageous treatment of a royal innocent. By the time these two texts were committed to writing in the early 1040s, the claim that Alfred and his companions were groundlessly persecuted seems to have gained considerable currency. If the Ætheling’s grave attracted reverence and his blinding remained a source of scandal in the years following 1036, the mutilation undoubtedly did lasting damage to Harold’s reputation and may even have generated sympathy for the disenfranchised Emma. Such a shift in public sympathy could help explain why the English magnates were so eager to acclaim Harthacnut in 1040, despite the fact that he had neglected his English kingdom for a full five years after his father’s death.⁶⁸ Yet the elimination of Alfred served Harold well in the short term and initially strengthened his political position: in 1037, Emma was driven into exile and Harold was finally acclaimed full king over the English.⁶⁹ It was not until later that his mistreatment of Alfred really came back to haunt him. Luckily for Harold, he was

⁶⁷ The *Vita Ædwardi* explicitly associated Harold’s accession with Danish power in a way that the ASC did not: “At the instigation of the Danes, who had a faction and power in the kingdom at that time, one of Cnut’s sons, Harold—who, they say, was not born of his blood—succeeded to the kingdom, an arrogant man (it is said) and not of good character” [Agentibus Danis qui tunc temporis in regno potentes et factiosi habebantur, quidam filiorum eius Haroldus, obliquo ut aiunt sanguine ei natus, successisset in regnum, homo ut fertur insolens et non bonarum artium]; *Vita Ædwardi*, 20.

⁶⁸ For Harthacnut’s accession, see above, Chapter 3.

⁶⁹ Harold’s accession and the events leading up to it are discussed at length above, Chapter 3.

already dead by the time it did.

The Exhumation of Harold Harefoot

In 1040, the newly crowned King Harthacnut was nursing a grudge against a corpse. The previous year, he had reunited with his mother in Flanders and was planning an invasion to overthrow his half-brother. Harold died before their plans were implemented, however, and the English magnates invited Harthacnut to be their king. He arrived around midsummer (with his mother in tow) and his succession proceeded quickly. Yet a new kingdom was apparently not satisfaction enough for the wrongs Harold had committed against Emma's family. Soon after his accession, Harthacnut ordered that Harold's corpse be dragged out of its Westminster grave and thrown in a swamp; according to later sources, he then commanded that the body be retrieved, beheaded, and dumped in the Thames, where it was retrieved by a fisherman and re-buried in London's Danish cemetery.

Like Alfred's mutilation, Harold's ejection from his Westminster grave inverted normative burial practice and signified that he was unworthy of royal honors. Yet while Alfred's mutilated body elicited grief and sympathy, allowing him to be re-identified as a martyr, exhumation did little to improve Harold's posthumous popularity. Moreover, Harold Harefoot is the only pre-Conquest ruler known to have been exhumed from his grave, and the spectacle must have inspired shock and disgust: not only had the cadaver been decaying in the ground for months, the image of the king's rotting body would have presented a sharp contrast with the idealized image of a royal body. In contemporary political discourse, royal bodies were extraordinary bodies: they were anointed agents of Christ, represented the undying body politic, and

constituted physical manifestations of dynastic lines.⁷⁰ Though individual kings were mortal, the office of kingship exalted the royal body and set it apart from those of other Christians. However, when Harold was exhumed, in the middle of summer after spending several months in the grave, his body would have been far from kingly. The remains were probably in an advanced state of decay, and the sight and smell of rotting flesh would have clearly demonstrated that this body was ordinary, mortal, and corrupt. The public memory of Harold's royal funeral, in which the dead ruler was borne in state to his monastic resting place and entombed amid ecclesiastical ritual, would now be replaced with the memory of a stinking, disintegrating corpse.

The earliest record of Harold's exhumation appears in the C-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, penned *c.* 1045, in an annal that detailed the succession of 1040 and critiqued the first year of Harthacnut's reign:

In this year King Harold died. Then men sent to Bruges for Harthacnut—they thought that they did well—and then he came here with sixty ships before midsummer and established such a heavy tax that men came to it uneasily: that tax was eight marks for every oar [of Harthacnut's fleet], and all those who supported him before were then disloyal to him, and he never did anything kingly as long as he reigned. He ordered the dead Harold to be dragged up and to be thrown into a fen.⁷¹

It is significant that the exhumation merited an explicit mention in this fairly brief annal, and although the report was phrased dispassionately, a condemnation is evident in its placement at the end of the Chronicler's list of grievances against the king; Harthacnut's maltreatment of Harold's remains evidently contributed to the author's

⁷⁰ An Old English law of the early eleventh century identified the king as "Christ's vicar in a Christian nation" [Cristes gespelia on Cristenre þeode]; VIII Æthelred 2.1. Compare Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, especially 42-48; Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 136; Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals."

⁷¹ "Her swealt Harald cing. þa sende man æfter Harðacnute to Bricege—wende þæt man wel dyde—7 he com ða hider mid .lx. scipum foran to middan sumera 7 astealde þa swiðe strang gyld þæt man hit uneaðe acom; þæt wæs .viii. marc æt hamelan. 7 him wæs þa unhold eall þæt his ær gyrnde, 7 he ne gefremede ec naht cynelices þa hwile ðe he ricxode. He let dragan up þæne deadan Harald 7 hine on fen sceotan"; ASC CD 1040, quotation from C. ASC AF 1040 and ASC E 1039 (*recte* 1040) mentioned Harthacnut's accession but not the exhumation.

low opinion of him. Although this account was composed within just a few years of the exhumation, we are dependent upon later sources for fuller descriptions and interpretations of the event.⁷² John of Worcester offered considerably more detail:

As soon as Harthacnut began to rule, not unmindful of the injuries which his predecessor King Harold, who was thought to be his brother, had perpetrated against either him or his mother, he sent Archbishop Ælfric of York, Earl Godwin, Storr the master of his household, Eadric his steward, Thronð his executioner, and other men of great rank to London, and ordered them to dig up Harold's body and throw it into a marsh. When it had been thrown there, he commanded it to be pulled out and thrown into the River Thames. However, a short time later, it was retrieved by a certain fisherman and carried in haste to the Danes, and was honorably buried by them in the cemetery they had in London.⁷³

William of Malmesbury provided the following variation:

Harthacnut, immature in other respects, ordered through the agency of Bishop Ælfric of York and others whom I would rather not name that Harold's corpse be exhumed and beheaded, and his head (a pitiable spectacle to men) thrown into the Thames. The head was pulled up by a fisherman in his net and buried in the Danish cemetery in London.⁷⁴

Both of these texts were composed in the first half of the twelfth century by authors who based their work closely on earlier accounts.⁷⁵ Unlike the Anglo-Saxon Chronicler, both John and William situated the exhumation before Harthacnut's

⁷² Manuscript C of the ASC was written by seven eleventh-century scribes: the first copied annals for the years up to 490 AD; the second penned the annals for 491 through 1048. The entries for 1045, 1046-47, and 1048 were all written at different times, indicating that the ASC was updated annually during this period. See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *MS C*, xxvi-xxxviii.

⁷³ "Mox ut regnare cepit, iniuriarum quas uel sibi uel sue genitrici suis antecessor fecerat rex Haroldus, qui frater suus putabatur, non immemor, Alfricum Eboracensem archiepiscopum, Goduinum comitem, Styr maiorem domus, Edricum dispensatorem, Thronð suum carnificem et alios magne dignitatis uiros Lundoniam misit, et ipsius Haroldi corpus effodere et in gronnam proicere iussit. Quod cum proiectum fuisset, id extrahere et in flumen Tamense mandauit proicere. Breui autem post tempore, a quodam captum est piscatore, et ad Danos allatum sub festinatione, in cimiterio, quod habuerunt Lundonie, sepultum est ab ipsis cum honore"; JW 530-31.

⁷⁴ "Veruntamen immaturus in ceteris, per Elfricum Eboracensem episcopum et alios quos nominare piget Haroldi cadauere defosso caput truncari et miserando mortalibus exemplo in Tamensem proici iussit. Id a quodam piscatore exceptum sagena in cimiterio Danorum Lundoniae tumulatur"; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.188.4. For William's different interpretation of the event in the *GP*, see below, n.108.

⁷⁵ For the sources used by John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, see above, Chapter 1.

imposition of excessive taxes, and John directly stated that the event took place as soon as the new king had secured his power. Both authors also maintained that the exhumation was a high-profile event, enacted and witnessed by leading secular and ecclesiastical magnates. Finally, both agreed with the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's stance that this episode demonstrated Harthacnut's poor rulership.⁷⁶

All three of these accounts were written safely in retrospect, but they nevertheless shed some light on contemporary reactions to the exhumation. Although the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle did not present a flattering portrait of Harold during his five-year reign, the author of the C-text was clearly not impressed with Harthacnut's decision to dig up his brother's corpse. A condemnation is also implicit in the silence of the *Encomium*. Emma commissioned the text after Harthacnut became king, probably between 1041 and 1042, and the conspicuous absence of any mention of the exhumation suggests that the deed was nothing for a mother to boast about.⁷⁷ Furthermore, if the corpse was in fact retrieved and reburied after its desecration, as John and William each asserted, some segment of the population must have been willing to directly defy Harthacnut by restoring Harold's body to a consecrated grave.

In light of these negative reactions to Harold's exhumation, it is remarkable that so many high-ranking individuals reportedly participated in the event. In addition to members of the royal household and various unnamed London dignitaries, the operation was spearheaded by Ælfric, Archbishop of York, a figure whose ecclesiastical status would have bestowed credibility upon the exhumation. Also instrumental was Earl Godwin, who had risen to prominence under Cnut and quickly

⁷⁶ The differences between John and William's accounts—especially the mention of Harold's decapitation—suggest that more than one version of the episode was circulating in the twelfth century; perhaps the story was still a source of scandal and entertainment. Alternatively, one or both of these chroniclers may have consolidated or embellished existing narratives. For the authors' possible attempts to reconcile multiple accounts, see Freeman, *Norman Conquest* I, 788-90.

⁷⁷ This silence is also characteristic of later sources sympathetic to Harthacnut. Henry of Huntingdon, for instance, who depicted Harthacnut as an honorable, generous, and well-liked king, made no mention of Harold's exhumation. See Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, 370-71.

became one of the most influential men in the kingdom. It is possible that the individuals who carried out the exhumation felt they had little choice but to comply with the king's wishes; the distaste with which later commentators related the incident suggests that there was not much honor to be gained by unearthing a corpse, no matter how prestigious a company did the digging. Yet the sheer number of magnates involved in the event suggests that disinterring a dead king seemed like a perfectly good idea at the time. Could Harthacnut and his minions possibly have anticipated such a negative reaction? If so, why did they follow through with their plan? If not, why did later commentators find this episode so problematic? I propose that the whole episode was designed as a piece of spectacular propaganda that backfired on its instigator. Like the *Encomium*, which cast serious aspersions on the legitimacy of Harold's accession and reign, the exhumation was intended to reinforce the allegation that Harold was a usurper and a false king by denying him the signifying trappings of a royal death. Despite early chroniclers' dismissal of the event as a bizarre anomaly, the exhumation was intended to exploit contemporary attitudes towards royal bodies and Christian burial, conveying a specific propagandistic message which was fully understood—if ultimately rejected—by Harthacnut's subjects.

In itself, the exposure of a rotting corpse would not have been particularly shocking for an eleventh-century population that was used to encountering bodies in various stages of decay. Old English homilies offered graphic descriptions of disintegrating corpses: depictions of maggot-ridden, liquefying flesh illustrated the ultimate futility of the current life, and the impact of such imagery depended on a convincingly realistic portrayal of decomposition.⁷⁸ Chronicle and narrative texts of

⁷⁸ For example, an anonymous Old English homily recalls the experience of encountering human remains: "We have often observed those things that we must turn into after we are dead. When someone digs a grave in a minster and finds bones inside, we can see what we must become. Their bodies will lie in the earth and be turned to dust, and the flesh will become foul and will surge with worms and will flow down into the earth" [Oft wæ habbað gescawod, to hwilcum þingum we sculan gewurðan, syððan we deade beoð. We magan geseon, þonne man binnan mynster byrgene delfeð and þa þan þæron findeð,

the period were also replete with bodies, recounting royal funerals, the ritualized movement of saints' relics, the public mutilation and execution of offenders, and bloody deaths in private conflict or sanctioned battle. For most people, however, encounters with the dead would have been close to home. Ordinary Christians were typically buried locally by their own relatives, who would have been in contact with the body during or after the moment of death.⁷⁹ But the grave was not always the end for a corpse, for bodies were disinterred and reburied with considerable frequency. Sometimes, this was deliberate. Bodies were moved to more prestigious locations (beside a shrine or church wall, for instance), they were cleared out of valuable sarcophagi to make way for new occupants, and they were relocated to make room for new graves and buildings.⁸⁰ At other times, exhumation was accidental: remains were often disturbed as new graves were cut, with bones and body parts being disinterred and integrated into the refilled soil of neighboring burials.⁸¹

However unsettling the sight of a partially rotted corpse might have been, Harold's royal status would have made the spectacle of his decomposing body uniquely problematic; when compared with the standard treatment of other prominent corpses or even the disarticulated remains of the ordinary Christian dead, Harold's

hwilce we beon scylan... Heora lichaman licgað on eorðan and beoð to duste geworden and þæt flæsc afulað and wirmum awealleð and nyðer afloweð in þa eorðan]; Assmann XIV 165.32-42, and see also Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 102-03. Other particularly graphic examples include Vercelli 4.288-94, which described the various hues of rotting corpses; and "Soul and Body II," which detailed the violent disintegration of a body in the grave. See Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 279 at ll.103-20.

⁷⁹ See Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 147.

⁸⁰ For the careful transfer of bodies to preferable locations, see Rodwell and Rodwell, "St. Peter's church, Barton-Upon-Humber," 294; Adams, "Addingham, West Yorkshire," 163-65, 183-84; Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, 27-28, 49-50. For the reuse of sarcophagi, see Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 186-87; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 135; Adams, "Addingham, West Yorkshire," 167; Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, 27-28, 49-50. For the movement of bodies to make room for new structures, see Rodwell and Rodwell, "St. Peter's church, Barton-Upon-Humber," 294.

⁸¹ For the relocation of disarticulated bones, see Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, 28; Gilmour and Stocker, *St Mark's Church and Cemetery*, 20. For disarticulated bones and limbs in grave-fill, see Kjolbye-Biddle, "Disposal of the Winchester Dead," 226; Hall and Whyman, "Settlement and Monasticism at Ripon," 122; Henderson and Bidwell, "Saxon Minster at Exeter," 155. Compare the homiletic account of digging in churchyards, n.78 above.

exhumation was exceptional. The prototype for the posthumous movement of high-status individuals was the saintly translation, in which a saint's bodily relics were ritually exhumed and deposited in a shrine, usually under the direction of a bishop before a large audience.⁸² Many translation accounts remarked upon the miraculous integrity of the corpse, with incorruptibility and a pleasant odor providing an irrefutable testament to the saint's purity and piety.⁸³ In other instances, bodies were reduced to bone by the time they were exhumed—clean relics of the saint's tenure on earth.⁸⁴ Although the officiants of ritual translations must have come into contact with the occasional decrepit corpse, I have not encountered any early translation account that commented directly on the decomposition of its subject's body. Whereas homilists reveled in visceral descriptions of rotting flesh, hagiographers, if they had nothing nice to say, said nothing at all.

Royal corpses were also moved between graves, and although this is less frequently attested in contemporary texts and may not always have entailed the same degree of ecclesiastical ritual that accompanied saintly elevations, royal translations were undoubtedly accompanied by considerable ceremony. Kings' bodies were moved to more prestigious tombs within their original burial churches, they accompanied their clerical guardians into newly constructed monastic buildings, and they were

⁸² See Thacker, "Making of a Local Saint."

⁸³ St. Cuthbert (d. 687) is the prototype for incorruptibility, but later Anglo-Saxon examples include royal saints like Edward the Martyr and Edward the Confessor. For Cuthbert, see Camp, "Incorruptibility of Cuthbert."

⁸⁴ Such depictions may well have been idealized or euphemistic. The remains of St. Swithun (d.862), for example, translated in 971, were typically referred to as his "body" (*corpus*) by tenth-century hagiographers, but the corpse had evidently lost its integrity by the time it was exhumed. Wulfstan of Worcester described how only "part of the saint's body" [*corpore de sancti partem*] was placed in his new intramural shrine; Lantfred similarly referenced the "shrine where the bones of the holy bishop lay" [*sacello quo quiescebant ossa pontificis almi*]. Yet Wulfstan's note that each of the bishop's limbs (*membra*) had to be individually washed suggests that there was ample evidence of decay in his tomb. For Wulfstan and Lantfred's texts, see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 492, 258-59, and 458. For Swithun's Anglo-Saxon reliquary, see Crook, "Edgar's Reliquary of Swithun," 197-202.

translated into entirely new foundations.⁸⁵ Additionally, funeral processions necessarily followed the deaths of most kings in the late Anglo-Saxon period, with rulers being transported up to one hundred miles to their designated burial place.⁸⁶ These bodies may have been embalmed for the journey, and it seems likely that they were displayed at certain points along the way.⁸⁷ But while ritualized funerals and funerary processions may have fixed a final image of the dead king in the public memory and inspired demonstrations of respect from the population at large, they would have inevitably drawn attention to the mortality of individual rulers. Kings' bodies were different from other Christians': with the standardization of royal anointing in the tenth century, the king's body was increasingly recognized as God's instrument, the earthly manifestation of the undying body politic, invested with the authority to govern a Christian nation.⁸⁸ There was little doubt that all but the most

⁸⁵ For example, Edmund the Martyr (d.869) was translated from a hastily constructed grave to a new church built in his honor once the threat of Viking attacks had subsided; Alfred the Great (d.899) was moved from his tomb in Old Minster, Winchester, to the newly founded New Minster in 901; Edward the Martyr (d.978) was exhumed from the dishonorable grave his assassins had buried him in and given a royal burial at Shaftesbury in 979. In the post-Conquest period, Edward the Confessor (d.1066) was moved into increasingly elaborate shrines in Westminster Abbey in the centuries following his death; Æthelred II (d.1016) and Sæbbi (d.694), both buried at St. Paul's, London, were moved into new marble sarcophagi in the mid-twelfth century, but their remains may also been moved after fires in 962 (before Æthelred's death) and 1087; and the various kings entombed at the Winchester minsters were brought to the foundations' new buildings after the Conquest, with the bodies from Old Minster transferred to Winchester Cathedral and the bodies from New Minster transferred to Hyde Abbey. For Edmund the Martyr, see Abbo, "Life of Edmund," 84. For Alfred, see Birch, *Liber Vitae*, 5; Keynes, *Liber Vitae*, 31-32 and 81. For Edward the Martyr, see ASC CDE 978-979; and Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 450. For Edward the Confessor, see Binski, *Westminster and the Plantagenets*, 93-94; for Æthelred and Sæbbi, see Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 113-16; for post-Conquest translations out of Westminster's Old Minster, see Crook, "Movement of Cnut's Bones," 176-82.

⁸⁶ See above, Chapter 3.

⁸⁷ Compare with the funeral processions of Continental kings. For example, the Carolingian Charles the Bald (d.877) was embalmed for the journey from the Alps to Saint-Denis (with disastrous results—see below, n.90); and the German Otto III (d.1002) had at least nine stops on the way to his final resting place at Aachen. For Charles' funeral, see Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 163. For Otto's funeral, see Thietmar, *Chronik*, 166-70; Warner, *Ottoman Germany*, 187-90; Bernhardt, "Henry II of Germany," 44-46; and above, Chapter 1 n.44.

⁸⁸ See Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, especially 13-14 and 42-48; and Thompson, "Kingship in Death," for an application of Kantorowicz to late Anglo-Saxon England. On royal anointing in the early Middle Ages, see the works of Janet Nelson, especially: "National Synods," "Symbols in Context," "Inauguration Rituals," "Ritual and Reality," "Earliest Royal *Ordo*," and "Second English *Ordo*." See also above, n.70.

saintly royal corpses would eventually be subject to decay, but ideally, a king would be safely entombed by the time decomposition set in, sparing his subjects the spectacle of an undeniably mortal royal corpse.⁸⁹ However, there were notorious instances in which kings' bodies did not survive their funeral procession intact. The remains of the Carolingian Charles the Bald (d.877), for instance, disintegrated so quickly that his custodians were overwhelmed by the smell, burying the stinking corpse en route instead of completing the journey to the royal necropolis at Saint-Denis.⁹⁰ Some two centuries later, the funeral of William the Conqueror (d.1087) at Caen was completely disrupted by the stench of the king's body, which forced all but the most steadfast clergymen to evacuate the church.⁹¹ These two Continental examples, described disparagingly by contemporary chroniclers, demonstrate how thoroughly a royal funeral could be undermined by inconveniently rotting royal flesh. The exhumation of Harold Harefoot may well have effected a similar reaction among witnesses. Having only been in the grave for a few months, the body would not yet have been reduced to bone. In its partially decomposed state, brought into the open air in the middle of summer, the sight and smell of decay would have been unavoidable.⁹²

The exposure of Harold's decayed flesh was compounded by another humiliating act: the removal of his remains from consecrated ground. From at least the tenth century, churchyard burial was expected for Christians in good standing with the

⁸⁹ This idea is discussed above. Except in the case of incorrupt corpses, like those of Edmund the Martyr and Edward the Confessor, pre-Conquest authors rarely commented on the physical state of royal corpses (the same was not true of their Continental counterparts; see below, nn.90-91). Embalming might have been used; see Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 165; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 21; Camp, "Incorruptibility of Cuthbert"; and above, Chapter 1 n.45.

⁹⁰ The funeral procession is described in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, translated and discussed by Nelson, "Carolingian Royal Funerals," 163-65; see also Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, 85-87.

⁹¹ The episode is related by Orderic Vitalis, *HE IV*, 102-07 and discussed by Koziol, "Problem of Sacrality," 137.

⁹² For an overview of the process of bodily decay in the year following a person's death, see Iserson, "Rigor Mortis," 723.

Church.⁹³ Whereas there had been virtually no ecclesiastical regulation of burial sites in earlier centuries, graveyards were now redefined as bounded sacred space, with delineated borders preventing burials from extending beyond the limits of consecrated ground.⁹⁴ Yet with this increasing interest in demonstrably hallowed burial came the threat of exclusion from a consecrated grave. Once churchyard burial had become normative, rather than one of various acceptable interment options, burials outside of consecrated bounds would have been regarded as exceptional or deviant.⁹⁵ In the tenth and eleventh centuries, consecrated burial was thought to have a direct impact on the fate of an individual's soul: although the bodies of most Christians were expected to decay and turn to dust, burial in hallowed ground—close to saintly relics and the prayers of the pious—was perceived as a preliminary step towards salvation.⁹⁶

According to these standards, Harold Harefoot's original interment in the monastery at Westminster would have given him a hefty leg up in the afterlife. As a king, he was

⁹³ New cemeteries rarely appeared independently of churches in this period, and it was at this time that rites for the consecration of churchyards began to appear regularly in Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts. By the early eleventh century, churches were legally classified by whether or not they possessed a graveyard, and churches with adjoining cemeteries were usually the more prestigious and prosperous foundations. See Gittos, "Anglo-Saxon Rites," 195-201; Zadora-Rio, "Making of Churchyards," 12-13; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, 178-81; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 122-23 and 126-27; Morris, *Church in British Archaeology*, 64-65; II Edgar 1-2 and VIII Æthelred 5.

⁹⁴ Until the tenth century, Christians continued to be buried in pagan-era cemeteries; graves might be arranged around topographical features, like hills or man-made barrows; high-status corpses might be covered by prominent mounds; bodies could be interred inside settlements or on territorial boundaries; or the dead might be buried *ad sanctos* in monastic or ecclesiastical graveyards. In addition, there were no explicit prohibitions of characteristically pagan burial practices, like cremation and burial with grave goods, in canon law or early royal legislation; Charlemagne's ban on cremation, issued in the 790s, had no parallel Anglo-Saxon regulation. See Bullough, "Burial, Community and Belief," 183-84; Effros, "Monuments and Memory"; Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls," 5-6, 20-21; Hadley, "Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw"; Biddle, "Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints"; Zadora-Rio, "Making of Churchyards," 11-12; Freke and Thacker, "Southworth Hall Farm, Winwick."

⁹⁵ Occasionally burials occur just outside cemetery bounds, which suggests that their occupants were meant to be excluded from the privilege of a consecrated grave. Alternatively, churchyard boundaries might have been established after burial had begun, so that some graves were excluded from the demarcated space—perhaps not intentionally. Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 127 and 130; Gittos, "Anglo-Saxon Rites," 202-04; Zadora-Rio, "Making of Churchyards," 12-13. For examples of delineated boundaries, see Adams, "Addingham, West Yorkshire," 171; Stroud and Kemp, *St. Andrew, Fishergate*, 134; Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, 11, 14.

⁹⁶ See Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 173; Marafioti, "Punishing Bodies and Saving Souls."

presumably buried inside the consecrated church, where a community of reformed monks would have improved his chances of salvation with their intercessory prayers.⁹⁷ By removing Harold's body from its intramural grave, Harthacnut would have deprived his soul of the spiritual advantages that accompanied royal burial.

Yet Harthacnut did not simply deny his half-brother a royal tomb; he denied him Christian burial altogether. By depositing his remains in a swamp (and later a river, according to John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury), the king signaled that Harold was utterly unworthy of a hallowed grave—thus equating him with excommunicants and criminals, the only members of Christian society systematically denied consecrated burial. For excommunicated sinners, the threatened denial of last rites and Christian burial was intended to encourage their repentance and reconciliation with the Church, and unconsecrated graves were prescribed for the most subversive moral offenders: those who had sex with a nun, those who practiced polygamy, those who swore false oaths before God, and those who were not pious enough to have learned their Pater Noster and Creed.⁹⁸ Yet while excommunication was designed in the earliest generations of Christianity to exclude irrevocable sinners from the Church, the denial of a hallowed grave was not restricted to ecclesiastical offenders by the time Harthacnut came to power, for from the early tenth century, unconsecrated burial became a regular component of laws issued by secular rulers.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ This privilege of intramural burial was to be reserved for royalty and the exceptional pious; as Archbishop Wulfstan noted in the early eleventh century, “it is right that one should not bury any man inside a church unless it is known that he pleased God well in life, to the end that one may thereby concede that he is worthy of that grave” [And riht is þæt man innan cyrican ænine man ne byrige butan man wite þæt he on life Gode to ðam wel gecwemde þæt man þurh þæt læte þæt he sy þæs legeres wyrðe]; Fowler, *Canons of Edgar*, 9. For Harold's specific interest in a Westminster tomb, see Mason, *Westminster and its People*, 11-12.

⁹⁸ These regulations spanned secular and canon law. For sex with nuns, see I Edmund 4; Northumbrian Priests' Laws 63.1. For polygamy, see Northumbrian Priest's Laws 62. For false oaths, see II Æthelstan 26. For the requirements for Christian communion and burial, see Fowler, *Canons of Edgar*, 22. For proscriptions against consecrated burial for excommunicants, see above, n.45.

⁹⁹ The systematic exclusion of offenders from consecrated or honorable burial begins to appear in the Anglo-Saxon law codes in the tenth century: II Æthelstan 26 is the earliest example. On the deliberate denial of consecrated or honorable burial to deviants, see Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 170–80;

Furthermore, capital criminals executed for offenses like murder or theft would typically be denied a hallowed grave, even when this punishment was not explicitly stipulated in the written laws; excommunication was implicit in death sentences.¹⁰⁰

By moving Harold's body out of his Westminster grave and relegating it to unconsecrated ground, Harthacnut clearly inverted the norms of Christian burial, identifying his predecessor's body as a sinful criminal instead of an anointed king.¹⁰¹ Such a characterization was entirely consistent with the portrait presented in the *Encomium*, whose author and patroness were committed to demonstrating the unlawfulness of Harold's reign and Harthacnut's rightful claim to the kingdom. Writing within a year or two of the exhumation, the Encomiast leveled three major accusations against Harold. The first was that he had come to the throne illegitimately, disregarding Cnut's declaration that Harthacnut should succeed him and allowing himself to be elected by traitorous Englishmen; furthermore, he was not really Cnut's son but a low-born impostor.¹⁰² The author explicitly labeled Harold a tyrant (*tyrannus*) and a usurper (*inuasor*), and throughout the work, the unlawfulness of his

Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology"; Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls," 1–23; Gittos, "Anglo-Saxon Rites," 201; Hadley and Buckberry, "Caring for the Dead," 122–23.

¹⁰⁰ Lantfred, for instance, in his *Life of St. Swithun*, assumes that a man condemned for theft would be terribly mutilated and then left alone to die; see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 312–13 and above, n.58. For the idea that excommunication was implicit in secular sentences, see Treharne, "Unique Old English Formula," 195.

¹⁰¹ Note that the Encomiast depicted Alfred's killers treating the ætheling's body in the same way; see above.

¹⁰² According to the *Encomium*, Emma agreed to marry Cnut on the condition that their son—not any of Cnut's sons by earlier unions— would succeed to the kingdom. Upon Cnut's death, however, his subjects did not adhere to this agreement: "Thus it happened that certain Englishmen, forgetful of the piety of their now deceased king, preferred to disgrace rather than ornament the kingdom, abandoning the noble sons of the illustrious Queen Emma and choosing a certain Harold as their king, who is declared—by a false estimation—to be a son of a certain concubine of that same King Cnut" [Unde factum est, ut quidam Anglorum pietatem regis sui iam defuncti obliti mallent regnum suum dedecorare quam ornare, relinquentes nobiles filios insignis reginae Emmae et eligentes sibi in regem quendam Haroldum, quem esse filium falsa aestimatione asseritur cuiusdam eiusdem regis Cnutonis concubinae]. The author went on to explain that Harold was a servant's son, whom Ælfgifu passed off as her own. See *Encomium* 32–33 and 38–41. For the persistence of stories of Ælfgifu's deception of Cnut, see McNulty, "Lady Aelfgyva in the Bayeux Tapestry." The Scandinavian sources do not question that Ælfgifu's sons were Cnut's, however; see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 24–25.

accession was recognized by those who righteously remained loyal to Cnut.¹⁰³ Chief among these was Æthelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, who refused Harold's request to be consecrated and prohibited all other clergymen from anointing him.¹⁰⁴ This exchange provided the context for the second accusation against Harold: that he was an astoundingly bad Christian. When the archbishop refused to crown and anoint him,

He made threats and achieved nothing; he promised gifts and sorrowed to gain nothing, for the apostolic man could not be dislodged by threats or diverted by gifts. At length he left in despair, and he despised the episcopal benediction so much that he hated not only the benediction itself, but indeed even fled from the whole Christian religion. For when others entered church to hear mass according to Christian custom, he either surrounded the glades with dogs for hunting or occupied himself with any other completely worthless matters, so that he would be able to avoid what he hated so much.¹⁰⁵

If the archbishop's refusal to consecrate him was not enough to prove Harold's unworthiness, this shockingly impious behavior would have left no doubt that he was unfit to rule a Christian nation. This point was confirmed by Harold's final offense: the mutilation and unrighteous execution of the ætheling Alfred.

Though not necessarily fabricated, the *Encomium's* accusations were part of a propagandistic defense of Emma and Harthacnut and should thus be approached cautiously. Taken at face value, however, they would have justified the posthumous characterization of Harold as a murderer, a usurping tyrant, and a man who probably could not recite his Pater Noster and Creed—in short, a violator of secular and ecclesiastical law. Would such a person deserve to remain in an ordinary hallowed

¹⁰³ See *Encomium*, 42 and 48.

¹⁰⁴ “The archbishop refused, declaring by oath that while the sons of queen Emma were alive he would approve or consecrate no other man as king” [Abnegat archiepiscopus, sub iureiurando asserens se neminem alium in regem filiis reginae Emmae uiuentibus laudare uel benedicere]; *Encomium*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁵ “Intentabat minas et nihil profecit, spondebat munera et nil lucratus doluit, quoniam uir apostolicus nec ualebat minis deici nec muneribus flecti. Tandem desperatus abcessit, et episcopalem benedictionem adeo spreuit, ut non solum ipsam odiret benedictionem, uerum etiam uniuersam fugeret Christianitatis religionem. Namque, dum alii aecclesiam Christiano more missam audire subintrarent, ipse aut saltus canibus ad uenandum cinxit, aut quibuslibet aliis uilissimis rebus sese occupauit, ut tantum declinare posset quod odiuit”; *Encomium*, 40-41.

grave, much less a royal tomb in a prestigious monastery? Harold's alleged usurpation and offenses against Harthacnut's family would have been enough to condemn him for theft or treachery, either of which would have precluded his burial in consecrated ground. Furthermore, John of Worcester's statement that the king's executioner was present and William of Malmesbury's assertion that the exhumed body was decapitated suggest that a capital sentence was being retroactively inflicted upon the corpse.¹⁰⁶

Yet the prominent involvement of Archbishop Ælfric of York in the exhumation suggests that particular emphasis was placed on Harold's spiritual condemnation.¹⁰⁷ Ælfric was the only participant explicitly named by William of Malmesbury, and he headed the list of dignitaries provided by John of Worcester; the fact that he was singled out so prominently by both authors suggests that he played a crucial role in the proceedings.¹⁰⁸ As archbishop, Ælfric would have been familiar with the process of excommunication and its spiritual implications, and he would likely have witnessed the exclusion of criminal offenders from hallowed graves during his episcopal tenure. He would also have been acquainted with penitentials which mandated the removal of non-Christian corpses from consecrated churches. One such text maintained that the corpses of *infideles* should be ejected if they were discovered

¹⁰⁶ See quotations above. William's unique account of the decapitation may be a later development, yet it is significant that he (or his sources) depicted Harthacnut posthumously inscribing Harold's body as a beheaded criminal. The presence of head spikes at Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries attests that decapitation and the display of severed heads were recognizable punishments for capital offenders; see Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology," 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ælfric was archbishop from 1023-1051, spanning the reigns of Cnut, Harold, Harthacnut, and Edward the Confessor. For his career, see Cooper, *Anglo-Saxon Archbishops of York*, 14-18.

¹⁰⁸ William of Malmesbury even asserted in the *GP* that the exhumation was entirely the archbishop's idea, a claim that did not appear in his other works: "Ælfric was [archbishop] during the time of Cnut and Harthacnut, and he was involved in this detestable thing, so that by his advice Harthacnut ordered the body of his brother Harold to be exhumed and its head cut off, and—as an infamous example to men—thrown in the Thames" [Elfricus tempore Cnuti et Hardacnuti fuit, habeturque in hoc detestabilis quod Hardacnutus eius consilio fratris sui Haroldi cadauere defosso caput truncari et infami mortalibus exemplo in Tamensem proici iussit]; *GP* iii.115.11. I follow David Prest's translation here, in which the *infami exemplo* (infamous example) appears to refer to the severed head; Michael Winterbottom, by contrast, renders Ælfric's actions as the bad example: "an example from which mortal men may learn how far disgraceful behavior can go."

inside a consecrated church; another stated bluntly that “dead gentiles should be thrown out of the places of the saints.”¹⁰⁹ Although these canons were composed in response to conversion-era questions about the purity of churches among a newly Christianized people, it is certainly possible that the pagan *infideles* of the early penitentials were re-imagined in the eleventh century as the impious or excommunicated.¹¹⁰

Ælfric’s presence would have contributed more than a theological perspective on the spiritual implications of Harold’s exhumation, however. Witnesses may have been reminded of royal or shire courts, where bishops worked alongside secular magnates to judge cases and issue sentences against offenders.¹¹¹ But Ælfric’s participation in the king’s exhumation would also have evoked the most important ritualized interaction between archbishop and king: royal consecration, which was the unique prerogative of archbishops during this period. Despite the *Encomium*’s insistence that Æthelnoth refused to anoint Harold when he came to power in 1035, Harold was probably consecrated in 1037, when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle stated that he became full king; Ælfric, if he did not perform the anointing himself, may well

¹⁰⁹ “Gentiles mortui de locis sanctorum ejiciendi sunt.” These canons were included in the seventh-century penitential compiled under the direction of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury (668-690): widely disseminated in England and on the Continent, the earliest extant manuscripts date from the tenth century. The quotation cited above was a contemporary (seventh-century) addition to Theodore’s text. The archbishop’s own instructions decreed that “it is not permitted to sanctify the altar in a church in which the bodies of dead infidels are buried” [in *æcclesia in qua mortuorum cadavera infidelium sepeliuntur, sanctificare altare non licet*] and added that if a pagan corpse should be discovered in a consecrated church, “it is better if the church is cleaned and the corpse thrown outside” [si vero paganus sit, mundari et jactari foras melius est]. Quotations from Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents* III, 211 and 190-191. For the penitential texts and their contexts, see Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, 62-69; Bullough, “Burial, Community and Belief,” 189-90; Morris, *Church in British Archaeology*, 50; McNeill and Gamer, *Handbooks of Penance*, 199 and 216.

¹¹⁰ It is also possible that clauses concerning *infideles* or *gentiles* assumed a new significance with the influx of Scandinavian settlers in England during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

¹¹¹ For example, such activity was recognized by Ælfric of Eynsham (not to be confused with Archbishop Ælfric of York), who cautioned clergymen against issuing lethal sentences against offenders. See especially Ælfric’s pastoral letters, edited in Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 66-70, 140-41, 91, 226. See also Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 184-87; Marafioti, “Punishing Bodies and Saving Souls.”

have been present at the consecration.¹¹² To an observer, the exhumation may have represented not only the inversion of a royal funeral but the very reversal of Harold's royal anointing. Some thirty-five years later, when Pope Gregory VII excommunicated the anointed emperor Henry IV, he absolved Henry's supporters of their oath of loyalty to their ruler, threatening that they too would be excommunicated if they persisted in their fidelity to him.¹¹³ It may be that Ælfric and Harthacnut hoped to convey a similar message with their exhumation of Harold. If the dead king were successfully redefined as a criminal and excommunicant, those who continued to profess loyalty to him—or, significantly, to his heirs and surviving partisans—would themselves be outlawed from law-abiding, Christian society.¹¹⁴

Although there is no mention in contemporary sources of a disputed succession in 1040, many of Harold's supporters survived him and may have wanted to see one of his living kinsmen or a Scandinavian candidate succeed to the English throne.¹¹⁵ Others were in the awkward position of having abandoned their allegiance to Harthacnut during his prolonged absence in the 1030s. Preeminent among these was Earl Godwin, who had remained loyal to Emma immediately following Cnut's death but allied with Harold by 1037, when he played a leading role in Alfred's murder. Given his betrayal of Emma and his involvement in Alfred's mutilation, Godwin made an immense effort to reconcile with his new king: he gave him a magnificent ship manned by eighty soldiers, each of whom was richly armed and adorned.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Simon Keynes postulates that Æthelnoth of Canterbury conceded and consecrated Harold in 1037. Although royal consecrations were normally officiated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is not impossible that the Archbishop of York did the honors in Harold's case. Compare with the 1066 royal consecration of Harold Godwinson, at which the archbishop of York officiated, although the archbishop of Canterbury was also present. See Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxiii n.2; see also John, *Reassessing*, 165; Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 182.

¹¹³ See Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*, 20-23.

¹¹⁴ For contagious excommunication, see Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*, 8 and 20-24; Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 31; Treharne, "Unique Old English Formula," 195-97.

¹¹⁵ For possible challenges to Harthacnut's accession and the possibility that Harold had children of his own, see Keynes, "Introduction to the Reprint," lxxix-lxxx; Stevenson, "Alleged Son of Harold Harefoot."

¹¹⁶ See JW 530-33; Barrow, "Demonstrative Behaviour," 137.

Additionally, he publicly swore to Harthacnut that “it had not been by his advice or at his wish that his brother was blinded, but that his lord King Harold had ordered him to do what he did.”¹¹⁷ Harold’s exhumation, in this context, seems like yet another opportunity for Godwin to demonstrate his renewed fidelity to Harthacnut, for he was prominently named as the first layman in John of Worcester’s list of participants in the operation.¹¹⁸ Together with other unnamed English dignitaries, Godwin publicly renounced his loyalty to his previous lord, not by simply forswearing his allegiance to him but by openly violating his grave and body.¹¹⁹

Harold’s ejection from Westminster, then, was not the act of a single power-crazed individual. The complex political, legal, and theological considerations that informed this event indicate that Harthacnut and his magnates fully understood the implications of the exhumation: the operation was motivated by precise ideological objectives that would have been readily understood by contemporaries. Though later dismissed as an immature and futile act of revenge against a dead enemy, the exhumation and desecration of Harold’s corpse was not unprecedented—especially in the Norse world. Loose analogues can be found in Icelandic literature: some sagas described corpses being exhumed and held hostage by enemies; others described dead bodies being relocated so that they would stop haunting the local populace.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ “Non sui consilii nec sue uoluntatis fuisse quod frater eius cecatus fuisset, sed dominum suum regem Haroldum illum facere quod fecit iussisse”; JW 530-33. See also William of Malmesbury’s account of Godwin’s compensation and oath, *GR* ii.188.5-6.

¹¹⁸ John of Worcester maintained that Godwin gave his gift and oath to Harthacnut after the exhumation had taken place; he also noted that Archbishop Ælfric was instrumental in implicating Godwin in Alfred’s death. See JW 530-31; Cooper, *Anglo-Saxon Archbishops of York*, 15.

¹¹⁹ It was not unprecedented for a new king to require his subjects to forswear the previous dynasty. For instance, when Cnut came to power after the death of Æthelred’s son Edmund Ironside, in 1017, he called an assembly in which the English nobles “completely repudiated Edmund’s sons and brothers and denied that they were kings” [fratres et filios Eadmundi omnino despexerunt eosque reges esse negauerunt]; JW 294-95. It is not impossible that Harthacnut required a similar declaration from his new subjects.

¹²⁰ For maltreatment of enemy corpses, see Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 353 n.25. For haunting, see for example Kunz, *Laxdæla saga*, 419; Pálsson and Edwards, *Eyrbyggja saga*, 95. William of Malmesbury reported that the ghost of Alfred the Great was such a nuisance to the monks of Winchester that his son had to move his tomb to a brand new church; see above, Chapter 2.

However, a closer parallel may be found in examples of Vikings desecrating Christian graves. A clear-cut instance of such behavior in the British Isles comes from the Isle of Man, where, around the turn of the tenth century, some sixteen Christian graves were obliterated in order to make room for a rich Norse ship burial.¹²¹ While the reuse of desirable grave sites by future generations was by no means unusual at this time, in this particular instance, the existing graves were still fresh, and it appears that the appropriation of the site was part of a power struggle between an existing Christian community and a new Scandinavian population.¹²² Comparable acts of desecration are attested in Norway and Denmark, where there is evidence of rich burials being vandalized soon after they were created: in these cases, grave goods were left behind but the tombs' inhabitants were exhumed and their remains scattered.¹²³ While this type of activity has been interpreted by at least one modern scholar as a precaution against haunting, I would be more inclined to see this sort of desecration as part of a larger scale turf war, in which high-status tombs had considerable political significance.¹²⁴

Harold's exhumation fits nicely into this trend of political desecrations, and it may be that Harthacnut had witnessed similar activity during his years in Denmark.¹²⁵ But whatever political message Harthacnut had hoped to send by denigrating his half-brother's corpse, it seems to have been largely ineffective.¹²⁶ Although contemporaries

¹²¹ The site is discussed by Tarlow, "Violation and Desecration."

¹²² See Tarlow, "Violation and Desecration," 134-40.

¹²³ See Tarlow, "Violation and Desecration," 137-38; Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, 286.

¹²⁴ For precautions against haunting, see Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, 286. For the political significance of monumental burials, see Carver, "Early Medieval Monumentality," 1-10. See also Williams, *Death and Memory*, 174.

¹²⁵ William of Malmesbury, however, maintained that the exhumation was Archbishop Ælfric's idea, not Harthacnut's; see above, n.108.

¹²⁶ A heavy penance for the desecration of graves must not have helped matters: a clause in the canon law collection associated with Archbishop Wulfstan decreed that "if a cleric should be caught destroying graves, he is to be banished from the rank of cleric for sacrilege. If anyone has violated a grave, he is to do penance for seven years, three of them on bread and water" [si clericus in demoliendis sepulchris fuerit deprehensus, a clericatus ordine pro sacrilegio submouetur. Si quis sepulchrum uiolauerit septem annos peniteat, tres ex his in pane et aqua]. This is Clause 44 of Recension A

must have understood the earthly and spiritual implications of Harold's ejection from Westminster, chroniclers were consistently critical of this display. Furthermore, the magnates' dramatic renunciation of their loyalty to Harold was evidently not universal, for John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury both reported that Harold's body was retrieved by a fisherman and interred respectfully in a Danish cemetery in London.¹²⁷ The quick, respectful reburial of Harold's body not only reaffirmed his status as a Christian king among his London supporters but provided an opportunity for Harthacnut's detractors to express dissatisfaction with their new ruler's behavior. It is not impossible that cultic honors were generated at Harold's new grave, with the abuse of his body by a cruel successor standing in for a violent martyrdom and inspiring reverence for his remains.¹²⁸ At the very least, the retrieval and reburial of the corpse—whether motivated by loyalty to Harold, opposition to his successor, or revulsion at the disgraceful treatment of a royal body—proved that at least some of Harthacnut's subjects were willing to defy his wishes and continue to honor their dead ruler.

Moreover, the defiant reaction to the exhumation may also reveal something about contemporary perceptions of kingship. The distaste evident in the early sources implies that Harold, however unpopular he had been during his lifetime, did not deserve posthumous denigration; any king should have merited an honorable royal grave. Physical desecration might have been an acceptable fate for offenders at all other levels of society, but royalty should have been immune from such shameful

(represented by Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 265 and Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale MS. 1382 (U.109)); see, Cross and Hamer, *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*, 84-85.

¹²⁷ Ralph de Diceto, a twelfth-century canon of St. Paul's, identified the new cemetery as St. Clemens, a Danish garrison church located just outside the city walls in an area of Scandinavian settlement. See Stubbs, *Ralph de Diceto*, 186. On St. Clemens, see Brooke, "Central Middle Ages," 35-36; Blair, *Oxfordshire*, 170.

¹²⁸ This is speculation, as there is no evidence for a cult at Harold Harefoot's tomb. But for the spontaneous emergence of cults for royalty who suffered violent deaths, see Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints"; and see above for the supposed cultic honors at the ætheling Alfred's tomb.

treatment.¹²⁹ Harold himself evidently adhered to this principle, for he appears to have delivered Alfred to Ely after his blinding and allowed him to be buried in an intramural monastic tomb. Indeed, the *Encomium*'s claim that Harold's soldiers abandoned Alfred's corpse is more reminiscent of Harthacnut's actions than Harold's: Harthacnut ordered his men to desecrate his enemy's dead body; Harthacnut denied his rival a royal tomb and consecrated burial; and Harthacnut used a corpse as spectacular propaganda to undermine a challenger's claim to legitimate rulership. Yet Harthacnut misjudged the political impact of the exhumation. His subversion of normal royal burial practice did not make Harold any less of a king or obliterate the memory of his five-year reign. This may explain the Londoners' impulse to re-inter the corpse in an appropriate grave—and the chroniclers' impulse to write about this restoration. The twelfth-century authors' apparent disgust with Harthacnut and their emphasis on the corpse's recovery suggest that such a blatant inversion of funerary custom could not simply be ignored or dismissed; it had to be addressed, condemned, and remedied. Although the exhumation was intended to cast aspersions on Harold's reign and thereby strengthen his successor's claims to royal authority, it ultimately revealed Harthacnut's inability to control or manipulate his predecessor's posthumous legacy.

Harthacnut's attempt to re-identify his brother's corpse as a deviant body

¹²⁹ A case in point was Cnut's execution of Eadric Streona, Æthelred's treacherous ealdorman, after he came to power in 1017. The earliest written sources endorsed Eadric's punishment, despite his extraordinarily high status. ASC CDEF 1017 reported "in this year Ealdorman Eadric was killed" [on þisum gear wæs Eadric ealdorman ofslagen], quotation from C; MS F added "in London, very justly" [on Lundene swiðe rihtlice]. The Worcester monk Hemming, writing in the second half of the eleventh century, provided additional detail: Eadric "was killed at the order of king Cnut, and he was ignobly thrown outside the walls of London. And with God rendering him worthy vengeance, he was not even judged worthy of a sepulcher. Thus, the one who was the destroyer of many monasteries and the oppressor of nearly everything that had existed, was denied everything—even a tomb" [jubente Cnut rege, occisus, atque extra murum Lundonie ignominiose projectus, nec etiam sepulture iudicatus est dignus, Deo sibi dignam ultionem reddente, ut, qui multorum monasteriorum destructor, et cunctorum fere extiterat oppressor, à cunctis etiam ad sepulturam sperneretur]; Hearne, *Hemingi Chartularium*, 281. For Hemming's Cartulary, see Keynes, "Hemming," 231-32.

apparently failed, and if anything, the exhumation may have exacerbated a growing dissatisfaction with the new king. Instead of providing evidence of Harold's impiety and criminality, the spectacular exposure of his decaying body demonstrated that Harthacnut was a poor leader who would not hesitate to violate the graves of the Christian dead and wreak spectacular vengeance upon a defenseless corpse. For magnates like Archbishop Ælfric and Earl Godwin, whose political survival depended on their ability to stay in the king's good graces, the exhumation would have been a necessary evil; indeed, their blatant disregard for public disapproval may actually have improved their chances of convincing Harthacnut of their devotion. Those who were not directly invested in impressing the king, however, could more openly express their outrage and disdain for such a callous inversion of royal burial practices. I would conclude that although the ideological implications of the 1040 exhumation were fully understood by Harthacnut's subjects, the abuse of the royal corpse was ultimately judged to be a dishonorable act—even by Harthacnut's supporters, if the silence of the *Encomium* may be taken as evidence. No matter how unpopular a king Harold had been or how badly he had wronged his successor, desecrating his body was an inappropriate course of action. Harthacnut's ideological message was lost in translation; he was now the villain, not Harold. In the end, Harthacnut's exhumation of Harold was not remembered as a manifestation of divine will or an assertion of royal prerogative but as one of various offenses committed by a ruler who "never did anything kingly as long as he reigned."¹³⁰

Conclusions

Compared with the ways in which other pre-Conquest kings treated the bodies of their predecessors and rivals, Harold and Harthacnut were exceptional in their physical

¹³⁰ ASC C 1040; see quotation above, n.71.

denigration of their antagonists. Certainly, violence against royal persons was not unusual during this period, especially at times of political crisis. The process of succession might be bloody, as it was for Edward the Elder in 901 and William of Normandy in 1066; it might inspire deadly political factionalism, as it did when the half-brothers Æthelred and Edward (later the Martyr) fought over Edgar's throne in 975; or it might be characterized by suspicious deaths, as when Edmund of Wessex was stabbed to death in his own hall in 946, or when the ætheling Edward "the exile," next in line to Edward the Confessor's throne, died mysteriously within days of his arrival in London in 1057.¹³¹ Yet none of these crises involved anything like the physical humiliation inflicted upon Alfred and Harold. Edward the Elder and William killed their royal rivals on the battlefield, publicly eliminating claimants to the throne by ostensibly legitimate military force. Edmund's stabbing was dismissed as an unforeseeable accident, and the ætheling Edward's death scarcely received any attention at all in extant texts; if these were assassinations, they were never explicitly recorded as premeditated political acts. Even Edward the Martyr's 978 assassination was done secretly, and his body was hidden—not displayed or desecrated as the corpse of a conquered king.¹³²

So why did Harold and Harthacnut do things so differently? One explanation might be their Danish background. The disfigurement of living enemies is attested in saga literature, the desecration of high-status burials is attested in Denmark and Norway, and the obliteration of Christian graves by Vikings was not unknown.¹³³ If

¹³¹ All of these examples are discussed elsewhere in this study. For the suspicious deaths of tenth-century royalty, see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 87. For Edward the Exile, the son of Edmund Ironside, see Keynes, "Crowland Psalter," 363-64.

¹³² Edward the Martyr is discussed below, Chapter 5.

¹³³ For mutilation in saga literature, see Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, 196-97 and 352-53 nn.22-25. For examples of political blinding in the Norse world, see van Eickels, "Castration and Blinding," 594. For the desecration of graves in Scandinavia, see Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, 286; and for Viking desecration of graves in the British Isles, see Tarlow, "Violation and Desecration." The fear that Viking raiders would desecrate the tombs of the saints is articulated in Ermentarius' account of the relics of St. Philibert: the monks of Philibert's community worried "that the

mutilation and desecration were acceptable ways to defuse political or military threats in the Norse world, it is conceivable that these kings employed similar methods in their English realm. Certainly, ethnicity seems to have informed contemporary English interpretations of the maltreatment royal bodies, for the Chronicle poet was acutely aware of Harold's Danish identity and used it to critique the king in his account of Alfred's mutilation. Yet there was no comparable ethnic reference point in the Chronicle account of Harold's exhumation. This may be explained by the form and style of the two accounts: while the poetic lament on Alfred's death all but invited hyperbolic analysis, the laconic prose entry on the exhumation employed straightforward rhetoric, offering clear but understated critiques of Harthacnut. In this context, a comment on the king's Danish ancestry would have been out of place. But Harold and Harthacnut's shared Scandinavian heritage must also have made ethnicity a moot point in the 1040 annal. Whereas the earlier incident pitted the son of a Danish conqueror against an exiled West Saxon prince, the conflict between Harold and Harthacnut was not based on nationality: it was the legitimate and (purportedly) illegitimate sons of a single father who were fighting over the throne, not rival members of native and foreign dynasties.

Yet Harold and Harthacnut's Danishness in itself would not have been sufficient justification for their behavior, for Cnut treated the bodies of his royal antagonists quite differently. When he gained full control of England in 1017, Cnut had little compunction about executing some of the kingdom's highest-ranking magnates, but he conspicuously refrained from taking similar action against the West

faithless men would dig up the grave of the blessed Philibert and scatter whatever they found in it hither and yon, or rather throw it into the sea. This was known to have happened in the region of Brittany to the remains of certain holy men"; see Ermentarius, "St-Philibert," 469. The Viking threat also motivated the removal of St. Cuthbert's relics from Lindisfarne in the late ninth century; see Bonner, "Chester-le-Street," 388-89.

Saxon æthelings, driving them into exile instead.¹³⁴ Even as he required his new subjects to renounce their loyalty to the surviving members of the West Saxon dynasty, he publicly honored a member of the displaced royal line by taking control of Edmund Ironside's funeral.¹³⁵ Neither Harold nor Harthacnut followed Cnut's example in their dealings with royal rivals, directly attacking the bodies of their enemies instead of using them to their own political advantage. Where their father had tried to mitigate tensions between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian populations, Harold and Harthacnut seem to have caused factionalism, firmly asserting their royal authority but ostracizing at least some of their subjects in the process.¹³⁶

Perhaps Cnut's sons lacked their father's political instincts, or perhaps they were simply not worried that their power would be threatened by their actions. Harthacnut, who had spent most of his life in Denmark, may have had little interest in English cultural or religious taboos against violating graves, and the initial support he received from the Anglo-Danish magnates may have caused him to act recklessly from a political standpoint.¹³⁷ If Harthacnut believed from the outset that his royal authority was secure and unchallenged, he would have been more willing than Cnut to push the limits of acceptable practice. Yet there must have been objections to his exhumation of Harold. Even if his nobles and his archbishop egged him on, the community at

¹³⁴ For the exile of Edmund Ironside's sons, see above, Chapter 3. For Cnut's relative lenience towards the West Saxon æthelings, see Keynes, "Æthelings in Normandy," 174. Even if Cnut had intended the æthelings to be killed abroad, as asserted by John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, it is significant that he did not have the deed done in England. See William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.180.10; *JW* 402-05. For his execution and displacement of Æthelred's lay magnates, see Keynes, "Cnut's Earls," 79-80; Mack, "Cnut's Conquest," 378-80. But compare with Æthelred's own treatment of his nobles in the latter part of his reign, described in Stafford, "Royal Policy and Action," 30-31. For physical violence against royalty and nobility from the late tenth century, see Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry," 215-16.

¹³⁵ See Chapters 3 and 6 for more on Cnut's treatment of West Saxon royal bodies.

¹³⁶ For Cnut's attempts to assimilate into English legal and religious culture, see Stafford, "Royal Promises"; Gerchow, "Liturgical Commemoration of Cnut." For the turmoil of the transition, however, see Mack, "Cnut's Conquest"; Lawson, *Cnut*, 133-60.

¹³⁷ Harthacnut was born in the early 1020s and had been sent to Denmark by 1026-28; see Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 245.

Westminster surely resisted the exhumation, for a king's tomb would have brought prestige and financial support to a monastery which, in the 1040s, was still a modest foundation with limited means.¹³⁸ Although Harthacnut was not accused of encroaching on monastic property in the extant sources, the violation of consecrated space could have contributed to his poor reputation and may even have elicited negative comparisons with Cnut's reign: where Cnut patronized churches and gave them gifts of relics, Harthacnut destroyed monastic tombs and desecrated the bodies they contained.¹³⁹ Yet Cnut was an invading conqueror, while Harthacnut had been welcomed as a legitimate member of an established dynasty. His father's precarious political position had required him to emphasize even tenuous claims of continuity with the previous dynasty, but Harthacnut's pedigree was secure enough that he could risk advertising his dominion over a rival hereditary line by publicly abusing his predecessor's corpse.¹⁴⁰ Aggravated monks may have been a small price to pay for the symbolic and sensory impact of such a display.

Harold, by contrast, struggled to establish his legitimacy and secure royal authority, exercising considerably more political savvy than Harthacnut during his reign. He successfully wrested a regency from Emma in 1035 and eventually won enough support to become full king; even his thwarted attempt to manipulate Cnut's tomb to his own advantage reveals an understanding of the nuances of English succession politics.¹⁴¹ Harold probably considered his treatment of Alfred well within the scope of acceptable English judicial punishment. But the king made two miscalculations. The first was the application of a standard corporal penalty to a

¹³⁸ For the early history of Westminster, see above, Chapter 2.

¹³⁹ For Cnut's patronage of Westminster, see Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 10-12.

¹⁴⁰ For Danishness as a qualification for kingship in the second quarter of the eleventh century, see Howard, "Harold II," 37.

¹⁴¹ Harold's mother was a member of the Anglo-Danish aristocracy, whose family had lived in England for generations, and although she and her sons had ties to Scandinavia during Cnut's lifetime, there is no reason to believe that Harold was in any way unfamiliar with English political culture. See above, Chapter 3, for more on Harold's ancestry and accession.

prince, who would not normally have been subjected to physical punishment. Given the frequency with which West Saxon æthelings were exiled during Cnut's reign, there may well have been an implicit understanding that royal bodies ought to be immune from corporal sentences.¹⁴² Harold's second mistake was to condemn so many of Alfred's men. Both the Chronicle and *Encomium* expressed outrage over the sheer number of lives and bodies destroyed, and while such casualties may have been acceptable on a battlefield, both sources implied that it was inappropriate to inflict such extensive punishments upon individuals captured in an ambush. Harold's treatment of Alfred and his men was inordinate, and it was the lack of royal restraint that inspired indignation, not the nature of the punishments themselves.¹⁴³

Yet neither Harold nor Harthacnut was given a fair trial in the early sources. Chroniclers depicted Harold's mutilation of Alfred as an act of tyrannical cruelty against an innocent, and they attributed Harthacnut's exhumation of Harold to the king's poor leadership and his character flaws. In both cases, we are provided with decontextualized condemnations that did not acknowledge the complex symbolic implications of these acts or the considerations that motivated them.¹⁴⁴ A chronicler writing in support of Harold might have produced a damning account of Alfred's invasion and his righteous punishment at the hands of Cnut's eldest son; and an author less wary than the *Encomiast* might have described the desecration of Harold's corpse and deemed it too mild a punishment for such an impious and illegitimate ruler. Yet the *Encomium's* silence concerning the exhumation suggests that its audience would not have been sympathetic to Harthacnut's abuse of his predecessor's remains: the author must have expected that he would damage his own case for Harthacnut's kingliness by mentioning that his hero had recently dug up a rotting corpse.

¹⁴² See above, n.134.

¹⁴³ For excessive royal violence, see Baraz, "Violence or Cruelty," 166.

¹⁴⁴ For the "one-dimensional representation" of Harthacnut in contemporary chronicles, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 80-81.

Conversely, Harold must have been esteemed by a significant portion of the population, including those who helped him become king and those who restored his desecrated body to an honorable grave; textual condemnations of his reign provide only one side of the story. Nevertheless, although the scope and intentions of our sources severely limit our understanding of these episodes, it is clear that both Harold and Harthacnut understood that royal bodies could be used as objects of political expression and believed that they were advancing their own best political interests with these acts of desecration. However, they both went too far, pushing the limits of acceptable practice when they neglected to pay at least superficial respect to royal bodies, preferring to advertise their discontinuity with deposed dynasties rather than ease the transitions between regimes.

Chapter 5. Body and Memory: The Elusive Corpse of King Edward the Martyr

Some sixty years before the mutilation of the ætheling Alfred, the English had endured another scandalous royal death: the assassination of King Edward, later called “the Martyr.” by partisans of his younger half-brother, Æthelred. When their father Edgar died in 975, Edward was no more than eleven years old and Æthelred was about nine; but although Edward was Edgar’s oldest son, Æthelred was the child of his only consecrated queen—making him, according to his supporters, the more throne-worthy candidate.¹ After a heated succession dispute, Edward was elected and anointed with the help and endorsement of Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury. Yet Æthelred’s faction did not give up on their candidate. On 18 March 978, when Edward was visiting his brother and stepmother at a royal residence, the king was ambushed and killed by Æthelred’s supporters. The assassins hid the body, and it was not until 15 February 979 that Edward’s corpse was retrieved. It was first brought to Wareham and then translated to a consecrated grave outside the royal nunnery at Shaftesbury; in 1001, the remains were installed in a shrine inside the monastery. In the meantime, Æthelred was elected king, but it was not until three months after Edward’s translation

¹ Edgar was married two or three times: Edward was the product of his first marriage to Æthelflæd; his second union (possibly a marriage) with Wulfhryth produced a daughter, Edith, who became a nun at Wilton and was later revered as a saint; and his final marriage to Ælfhryth produced two sons, Edmund, who died in infancy in 971, and Æthelred. Ælfhryth’s consecration was the key to attacks on Edward’s legitimacy: Ælfhryth had received a royal consecration while Æthelflæd had not, making the sons of Edgar’s final marriage arguably more throne-worthy than those of his first. During Edgar’s later reign, Ælfhryth’s sons appeared before Edward in charters and witness lists; and whereas Æthelflæd did not witness any of Edgar’s charters, Ælfhryth attested several, in which she was specifically described as the king’s legitimate wife (*legitima prefati regis conjuncx*; S 745). Later commentators postulated that Edgar had never actually married Æthelflæd, but this argument for Edward’s illegitimacy does not seem to have been posed in the 970s. See Keynes, *Diplomas*, 163-65; Stafford, *Edith and Emma*, 62-63, n.38; Stafford, “King’s Wife in Wessex,” 23-24; Nelson, “Inauguration Rituals,” 300; Nelson, “Second English Ordo,” 374; Dumville, “The ætheling,” 30-31; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 42-45. For Edward and Æthelred’s ages at the time of Edgar’s death, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 164. For the polarized political situation in the years leading up to and following Edgar’s death, see Yorke, “Edward, King and Martyr,” 102-07; Williams, “Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia,” 160-70; Stafford, “Royal Policy and Action,” 21-24; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 57-59; Fisher, “Anti-Monastic Reaction,” 261-70.

to Shaftesbury that he finally received a royal consecration on 14 May 979.²

The assassination of an anointed king inspired dramatic reactions among contemporaries, and Edward's untimely death provoked outpourings of reverence; by the end of the century, he was widely recognized as a martyr. When set beside accounts of the ætheling Alfred's mutilation, expressions of shock and acts of veneration seem to have been standard responses to the violent deaths of West Saxon royalty. Where the earliest accounts of Alfred's death were produced shortly after the fact, however, all the substantial sources for Edward's reign were composed more than a decade after the regicide, well after his saint's cult had emerged. In contrast to the *Encomium Emmae*, which offered a relatively prompt political explanation for Emma's alleged involvement in her son's death with only incidental references to Alfred's saintly status, the accounts of Edward's life and reign were hagiographical tributes designed to promote his sanctity. Accordingly, recent studies of Edward have focused extensively on his identity as a royal martyr and the political uses of his posthumous cult; discussions of his tenure as a living ruler have typically concentrated on the circumstances which led to his accession and eventual assassination.³ These approaches have helped contextualize Edward's reign and legacy, but they have created a firm distinction between the living king and the dead saint—a division

² The exact dating of these events is problematic, with some sources placing the assassination in 978 and others in 979. Simon Keynes dates the regicide to 978 and the translation and Æthelred's consecration to 979, based on the regnal years supplied in Æthelred's charters and the unlikelihood of a royal consecration taking place before a royal funeral; I follow this dating throughout this chapter. David Dumville offers an alternative chronology, suggesting that the regicide and Æthelred's anointing occurred in 979 and the translation in 980, based on tenth and eleventh-century claims that Edward reigned for three and a half years (i.e. from Edgar's death in 975 through 979). See Keynes, *Diplomas*, 173-74 and 233 n.7; Keynes, "Shaftesbury Abbey," 48-49; Keynes, "Cult of Edward"; Dumville, "Death of Edward the Martyr."

³ For Edward's cult and its political uses, see: Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 154-71; Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints"; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 142-44; Fell, *Edward, King and Martyr*, xvii-xxv; Fell, "Anglo-Saxon Hagiographic Tradition"; Keynes, "Shaftesbury Abbey," 48-55; Dumville, "Edward the Martyr"; Thacker, "Oswald and His Communities," 248-56; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 67, 72-74, and 82-83. For discussions of Edward's accession, his assassination, and the political aftermath of the regicide, see: Keynes, *Diplomas*, 163-76; Stafford, "Royal Policy and Action," 21-24; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr"; Fisher, "Anti-Monastic Reaction"; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 372-74.

likewise evident in the tenth and eleventh-century sources, which insisted that Edward's lot had improved with his transformation from earthly king to heavenly martyr.⁴ Yet the medieval texts also conflated his saintly and royal identities in order to explain his newfound sanctity. It was Edward's status as a king, not the manner of his life and death, which allowed his murder to be understood as a martyrdom, for he had not died defending Christianity, nor had he been considered saintly during his lifetime.⁵ Rumors of sanctity seem to have emerged quite soon after the regicide, but although hagiographers would later identify his death as the moment when he was changed from an ordinary king to a royal martyr, it would be at least a decade before his cult gained widespread recognition. Edward's new saintly identity would not have been immediately evident to a contemporary observer, for in the aftermath of the regicide, he would still have been regarded as an earthly ruler whose reign required ceremonial closure.

Under ordinary circumstances, Edward, like his West Saxon predecessors, would have received a public royal funeral. Yet according to the earliest sources for the regicide, his killers hid the corpse, thus preventing the sequence of events that would normally have followed the death of an anointed ruler. Instead of a public funeral and royal tomb, which would have helped facilitate the transition between kings, Edward's body remained concealed near the site of his death for almost a year after the assassination. The fact that the royal corpse—or at least something that passed for it—was eventually retrieved and honorably interred gives the impression that Edward's subjects spent the intervening months trying to locate and identify the hidden body.⁶ This impression was promulgated through the early sources, which

⁴ This contrast is articulated most concisely in the ASC; see quotation below.

⁵ See Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 1-2; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 77; Nelson, "Royal Saints," 72.

⁶ It is entirely possible—even probable—that the recovered corpse was not actually Edward's. Bones found in a reliquary at Shaftesbury Abbey have been dated to the late tenth century, but they belonged to a man considerably older than the teenaged Edward and showed evidence of post-mortem trauma; it is possible that this body was substituted for Edward's at the time of the translation. For my present

skipped directly from descriptions of the assassination to accounts of the relics' recovery. It is more likely, however, that Edward's delayed burial prolonged and exacerbated the political tensions of the interregnum. Although later hagiography would claim that the body was miraculously revealed, there must have been people—certainly the perpetrators, possibly others—who knew where the corpse was hidden and could conceivably have helped recover it soon after the regicide.⁷ Nearly a full year passed before the body resurfaced, however, which suggests that there was some debate over what should be done with Edward's corpse. If the plan to move the remains had been uncontested, the translation could have occurred relatively quickly; instead, the royal body was left where it was for eleven months. The interval between the regicide and burial must have seen a dispute over the fate of Edward's corpse, with one faction advocating its honorable burial and another resisting this course of action.

Although Edward ultimately received a royal grave, a prolonged debate would have kept the regicide fresh in the public consciousness, and this persistent interest in the dead king must have been a key factor in the formation of his cult. A number of Anglo-Saxon royals had suffered violent or suspicious deaths in the preceding century, but Edward was the only one of these to be regarded as saintly, and I suggest that the events of the year following his assassination caused him to be regarded as the victim of ideological persecution—a scenario which allowed him to be identified with Christian martyrs rather than with other casualties of mundane political struggles. In the void between March 978 and February 979, his death and body were left open to interpretation: those who kept the corpse out of sight intended to remember him as an illegitimate or disgraced king; those who advocated a royal burial wanted to celebrate

purposes, however, it is irrelevant whether the corpse in question was actually the king's, as long as contemporaries identified it as Edward's. For the body's identity and the bones recovered in the early twentieth century, see Keynes, "Shaftesbury Abbey," 54-55; Keynes, "Cult of Edward"; see also Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 112.

⁷ The *Passio Edwardi* was the only early source to explicitly name these individuals; see below.

him as an honorable ruler; and there may have been some at this early date who wished to revere his remains as saintly relics. Edward's legacy depended on the fate of this physical memento, for his body was vital to the construction of his posthumous identity as a king and a saint—or as something else entirely. In the following pages, I will approach the relationship between Edward's body and memory by considering the killers' possible motivations for hiding the remains and the earliest commentators' attempts to make sense of their king's missing corpse. By exploring how each faction attempted to inscribe the royal remains with a particular identity, I will show that Edward's body was integral to the construction of his posthumous memory, especially during the period between the regicide and his translation to Shaftesbury.

Edward's death and its aftermath were discussed in a handful of Latin and vernacular commentaries during Æthelred's reign. The earliest of these was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which included a poetic account of the assassination composed before the end of the tenth century.⁸ The entry for 978 (quoted in full) reads:

Here King Edward was slain in the evening at Corfesgeate on the 18th of March, and he was buried at Wareham without any kingly honor.

There was no worse deed than this done among the English
since they first sought the land of Britain.
Men murdered him, but God glorified him.
He was in life an earthly king;
he is now after death a heavenly saint.
His earthly kin did not wish to avenge him,
but his heavenly father has avenged him greatly.
Those earthly killers wanted to blot out his memory on earth,
but the heavenly avenger has widely spread his memory in the heavens and
on earth.
Those who did not want to bow to his living body before,

⁸ For the dating of this entry, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 167; for its place in ASC, see Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 79 and 106. The following medieval accounts of Edward's death and translation are reviewed in Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 44-50; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 165-69; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xvi-xxi; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 99-102; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 72-74; Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 2.

they now humbly bow on their knees to his dead bones.
Now we can perceive that the wisdom of men
and their intrigues and their counsels
are nothing against God's intention.

And here Æthelred ascended to the kingdom, and very soon after that, with great joy among the counselors of the English, he was consecrated king at Kingston.⁹

The next year, the Chronicle reported, ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia “fetched the holy king's body from Wareham and bore it to Shaftesbury with much honor.”¹⁰

Edward's assassination was next treated in Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita Oswaldi*, composed between 997 and 1002.¹¹ After detailing the succession crisis that followed Edgar's death and the severity of Edward's rule, Byrhtferth provided an extensive description of the ambush. In this account, Edward went to visit his brother and step-mother. When he arrived, the “zealous thegns of his brother” surrounded Edward as the Jews surrounded Christ; they assaulted and killed the king before he had dismounted his horse.¹² Afterwards,

The martyr of God was lifted up by the thegns and brought to the house of a certain lowly person, where no Gregorian chant and no funeral lament was

⁹ “Her wæs Eadweard cyning ofslægen on æfentide æt Corfesgeate on .xv. kalendas Aprilis, 7 hine mon þa gebyrigde on Werhamme, butan ælcum cynelicum wurðscipe. Ne wearð Angelcynne nan wyrse dæd gedon, / þonne þeos wæs, syþþon hi ærest Britenland gesohton. / Menn hine ofmyrþredon, ac God hine mærsode. / He wæs on life eorðlic cyning; / he is nu æfter deaðe heofonlic sanct. / Hyne noldon his eorðlican magas wrecan, / ac hine hafað his heofonlic fæder swyðe gewrecen. / Þa eorþlican banan woldon his gemynd on eorðan adilgian, / ac se uplica wrecend hafað his gemynd on heofonum 7 on eorþan tobræd. / Þa ðe noldon ær to his libbendan lichaman onbugan, / þa nu eadmodlice on cneowum gebugað to his deada banum. / Nu we magan ongytan ðæt manna wisdom / 7 heora smeagunga 7 heore rædas / syndon nahtlice ongean Godes geðeaht. Her feng Æþelred to rice, 7 he wæs æfter þæm swyðe hrædlice mid micclum gefean Angelcynnes witan gehalgod to cyninge æt Cyngestun”; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D. This entry is not written as verse in either manuscript and may be, as Thomas Bredehoft suggests, understood simply as “heightened prose”; however, I have followed Irvine's line breaks in her edition of ASC E. See Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 86-88, quotation at 86; Irvine, *MS E*, 60 and n.979.1; and compare the line breaks in Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles I*, 123. Shorter accounts of Edward's death and Æthelred's accession appear in ASC A 978, C 978-979, and F 979.

¹⁰ “Gefette þæs halgan cyninges lichaman æt Werhamme, 7 geferede hine mid micclum weorðscipe to Scaftesbyrig”; ASC DE 980 (*recte* 979), quotation from D.

¹¹ For Byrhtferth's authorship and the dating of the work, see Lapidge, *Byrhtferth of Ramsey*, xxxvi-xxxviii and lxvii-lxviii; Lapidge, “Hermeneutic Style,” 90-95. In addition to Michael Lapidge's translation in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey*, I have consulted Dorothy Whitelock's translation in *EHD I*, 914-15.

¹² “Sui fratris zelantes... ministri”; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 138-39.

heard; rather, this illustrious king of the whole nation lay covered with a mean covering, waiting for the light of day. The king of kings, discerning such wicked deeds of wretched men, did not wish to permanently desert his soldier, who had been appointed and pre-elected as his vice-regent on earth, and to abandon him as if he were shameful and villainous; but he permitted him to be buried, not so worthily at that time as he deigned to permit him to be later.¹³

This later burial was undertaken by ealdorman Ælfhere, who unearthed the body, discovered it to be incorrupt, and translated it into a shrine with full Christian honors.¹⁴ Byrhtferth also mentioned the killers' lack of punishment: they were allowed to live and thought they had gotten away with their crime, but they would soon be punished by God; indeed, one of the killers had already been struck blind in retribution for the regicide.¹⁵

Byrhtferth's hagiographical tribute was generally compatible with the Chronicle's account, and both texts implied that the identities of Edward's killers were known, although they did not suffer appropriate consequences for their actions. Byrhtferth's assertion that Edward's body was incorrupt was not corroborated elsewhere, however, and was directly contradicted by a third early reference to the assassination: a brief mention by Archbishop Wulfstan of York in his 1014 *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*.¹⁶ In the midst of his catalogue of sins perpetrated by the English, which incurred God's wrath in the form of Viking raiders, Wulfstan stated:

And there is also very great lord-betrayal in the world, so that a man betrays his lord's life or drives him living from the land, and both have happened in this country: Edward was betrayed and afterwards killed and after that

¹³ "Sublatus est a ministris martir Dei, et ad domum cuiusdam impotentis perductus est, quo non Gregorianus concentus nec epichidion auditus est; sed tam inclitus rex totius patrie iacuit uili tegmine coopertus, exspectans lucem diei. Cernens talia miserorum hominum iniqua acta, rex regum non suum militem (et uice sui regiminis in terris constitutum et preelectum) uoluit continue dimittere et uelunt probosum et facinosum relinquere; sed permisit eum sepelire, non tam digniter tunc sicut postea fieri concedere dignatus est"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 140-41.

¹⁴ Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 140-43.

¹⁵ See Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 142-43.

¹⁶ Alan Thacker regards Byrhtferth's reference to incorruptibility as a reflection of local interest in incorrupt saints; see "Oswald and His Communities," 250-51.

completely burned.¹⁷

Writing more than three decades after the event, Wulfstan alluded only casually to Edward's death, expecting that his audience would understand the context and implications of his statement without further details. Although this reference to the burned corpse was unique, Wulfstan apparently assumed that his audience knew that Edward's body had been desecrated.¹⁸

A final early description of the assassination was provided in the anonymous Latin *Passio Sancti Eadwardi Regis et Martyris*, whose earliest manuscripts date from the twelfth century. In its current form, the *Passio* has been attributed to the hagiographer Gocelin, who may have compiled the text between 1070 and 1080.¹⁹ However, the opening portion of the extant *Passio*, which the author claimed to have derived from an existing written source, stopped with Edward's second translation in 1001; the first recorded miracle occurred some fifty years later, implying that the *miracula* section was composed at a later date.²⁰ Despite some later interpolations, the *Passio*'s account of Edward's martyrdom was probably derived from a text commissioned by the community at Shaftesbury in honor of the 1001 translation and should be tentatively included among the early sources for the assassination.²¹ The *Passio*'s most striking feature is that it named Ælfthryth, Æthelred's mother, as the chief conspirator. According to this account, Edward was accidentally separated from his retinue while on the way to visit his younger brother. When he arrived alone at the

¹⁷ “And ful micel hlaforðswice eac bið on worlde þæt man his hlaforð of life forræde oððe of lande lifiende drife, 7 ægðer is geworden on ðisum earde: Eadweard man forrædde 7 siððan acwealde 7 æfter þam forbærnde”; Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 263. This passage went on to cite Æthelred's exile in 1014 as a further example of treachery.

¹⁸ Dorothy Whitelock understands Wulfstan's comment to be representative of “general opinion,” while ascribing Byrhtferth's claim of incorruptibility to hagiographic convention. See Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 56-57 n.78; and also Cubitt, “Murdered and Martyred Saints,” 82-83.

¹⁹ See Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xx.

²⁰ See Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xix.

²¹ In addition to the *miracula*, Christine Fell has identified the historical introduction to Edward's reign as a later creation. She has also identified interpolations in the older texts, including a reference to a castle that had been built at Corfe after the martyrdom. See Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xix-xx.

royal residence, his stepmother had a drink brought to him, and as the king lifted the cup to his lips, the cupbearer, acting on the queen's order, stabbed him to death with a knife. Fearing that this deed would be discovered, Ælfthryth commanded that the body

be thrown into the house of a certain person which was nearby, so that what she had done should not be revealed. Obeying her order, her most impious ministers hastened there, dragged away the aforesaid holy body by the feet like a beast, and—as she had ordered—covered the body, which had been thrown into that rather contemptible house, with vile straw.²²

Afterwards, to prevent the corpse from being discovered, the queen had it buried “in hidden and marshy places,” but it was miraculously revealed to the local people who retrieved it, brought it to Wareham, and buried it to the east of their church.²³

Ealdorman Ælfhere, distressed by the ordinary burial Edward received at Wareham, translated the body to Shaftesbury soon after.²⁴

Despite these sources' hints and accusations, the identities of the killers are uncertain. The *Passio* was the only text to explicitly identify a guilty party, yet its incrimination of Edward's step-mother has been regarded more as hagiographical convention than historical witness.²⁵ The fact that the king was killed at her estate, however, could implicate her at least indirectly in the assassination; it may also be relevant that Edward's body was not translated to an intramural tomb inside

²² “In domicilium quoddam quod iuxta erat proici, ne palam fieret quod fecerat. Cuius imperio ministri parentes nefandissimi ilico accurrunt, praedictum sacrum corpus more beluino per pedes abstrahunt, et in domicilium contemptibiliter ut iusserat proiectum uilibus stramentis cooperiunt”; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 6.

²³ “In locis abditis et palustribus”; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 7.

²⁴ Another early source is a Latin poem commemorating Edward's translation from Wareham to Shaftesbury; it appears in a Canterbury MS of c.1000. The poet maintained that Edward was slain by his own people (*propria gente*) out of envy (*invidia*) but gave no specific details about the mode of his death or the treatment of his corpse before it was exhumed from the grave at Wareham. The piece is edited and translated by Dumville, “Edward the Martyr,” 280-81.

²⁵ Ælfthryth was regularly implicated in post-Conquest accounts of the regicide. On Ælfthryth, see Fell, “Edward and the Anglo-Saxon Hagiographic Tradition,” 10-11; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 171-73; Yorke, “Edward, King and Martyr,” 100-01; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 162-63; Cubitt, “Murdered and Martyred Saints,” 74.

Shaftesbury Abbey until after her death in 1001.²⁶ Another suspect was Ealdorman Ælfhere, the kingdom's most powerful magnate during the 970s.²⁷ As a close ally of Ælfhryth and a vocal supporter of Æthelred's candidacy, he could certainly be characterized one of Æthelred's "zealous thanes," and like the queen, Ælfhere would have had much to gain if his young protégé ascended to the kingdom; his translation of the body in 979 has been interpreted as compensation for his role in the assassination.²⁸ It is also possible, of course, that neither Ælfhryth nor Ælfhere instigated the killing and that the perpetrators were not explicitly mentioned in the extant texts.²⁹

While none of the early accounts of Edward's death reliably identified his killers, all four of the abovementioned sources agreed that the assassins intentionally withheld the posthumous recognition and reverence normally due to a royal corpse. It is significant, however, that all these texts stated that the body was buried. In the Chronicle, Edward was deprived of kingly honors but was nevertheless interred at the royal estate of Wareham; in Byrhtferth's account, the corpse received no funeral rites but "lay covered with a mean covering"; and in the *Passio*, the queen's men dragged and dumped the body but took care to cover it afterwards.³⁰ Unlike Harold Harefoot's remains, which were publicly exposed to the elements, or the ætheling Alfred's dying body, which (according to one account) was left unburied until it was recovered by the local monks, Edward's corpse was not made into a spectacle or left in the open to rot.

²⁶ ASC DEF 979, *Vita Oswaldi*, and *Passio* all agreed that the killing occurred at the royal residence at Corfe. On Ælfhryth's role, see Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 112.

²⁷ For Ælfhere's family and career, see Williams, "Ælfhere of Mercia," with reference to Edward's death at 170. See also Fisher, "Anti-monastic Reaction," 261-70; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 106-07; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 169 and 172-73.

²⁸ "Zelantes... ministri"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 138-39. Ælfhere's involvement was suggested by William of Malmesbury, who described the translation as an act of penance; *GR* ii.162.4. For arguments for Ælfhere's guilt, see Thacker, "Oswald and His Communities," 246-49; Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 18-19; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 143. For an opposing view, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 172-73. The question of Ælfhere's involvement is treated further below.

²⁹ This is Simon Keynes' opinion; see *Diplomas*, 173.

³⁰ "Vili tegmine coopertus"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 140-41.

Although it is not impossible that this interment constituted a show of respect for the dead ruler, it is more likely that the quick burial was intended to conceal evidence of the assassination. A king's disappearance would not have gone unnoticed for long, but a speedy burial in an unlikely location—perhaps compounded with posthumous disfigurement, as implied in Wulfstan's account—would have helped protect the perpetrators from retaliation or prosecution.

The attempt to evade punishment appears to have been successful, for there is little indication that the killers were ever brought to justice. The Chronicle stated bluntly that Edward's "earthly kin did not wish to avenge him," and Byrhtferth expressed indignation that the assassins believed they had escaped unscathed, since they did not suffer "the punishments which mortals inflict on mortals."³¹ Both texts insisted that God would eventually make the killers pay for their crime, but Byrhtferth could only weakly justify why they were allowed to live, while the Chronicler depicted Edward's kin as negligent for refusing to exact blood vengeance.³² The authors of these two works evidently expected that the assassins should forfeit their lives, and they were hard-pressed to rationalize why death sentences were not imposed. Treason against one's lord had been designated an unforgivable, or *bot*-less offense by the late ninth century, with later law codes requiring that an accused traitor be killed if he could not pass a three-fold ordeal.³³ The Chronicle did not call

³¹ "Hyne noldon his eorðlican magas wrecan"; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D. "Penas quas mortales mortalibus ingerunt"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 142-43.

³² Byrhtferth's explanation was that God spared the killers in order to give them the opportunity to repent of their misdeeds; they did not improve their situation, however, but used this extra time to compound their sins. See *Vita Oswaldi*, 142-43.

³³ Alfred 4 decreed that "If anyone plots against the life of the king, his life and all he possesses will be forfeit" [Gif hwa ymb cyninges feorh sierwe... sie he his feores scyldig 7 ealles þæs ðe he age]; and in the early eleventh century, II Cnut 64 reiterated that "betrayal of a lord is *bot*-less according to earthly law" [hlaforðswice æfter woroldlage is botleas]. The procedure for the ordeal was outlined in II Æthelstan 4: "And we have declared concerning lord-betrayal that whoever betrays his lord, his life will be forfeit, if he cannot deny it or if afterwards he is guilty at the three-fold ordeal" [Ond we cwædon be hlaforðsearwe, ðæt he beo his feores scyldig, gif he his ætsacan ne mihte oþþe eft on þam þrimfealdum ordale ful wære]; translation adapted from Attenborough 131. See also III Edgar 7.3 (which, according to one manuscript, allowed the king to waive the sentence of death; see note above in Chapter 4); II

Edward's assassination treason (*hlafordswice*), however, but labeled it *morð*, a term which indicated an unnatural or undeclared killing and which was also classified as a *bot*-less offense.³⁴ Secret killings were especially heinous because they made it nearly impossible for the victims' survivors to claim compensation or take revenge on the perpetrator; if an act of *morð* were discovered, the killer was to be turned over to the victim's kin for vengeance or sent to the triple ordeal to prove his innocence.³⁵ Given that such a severe response was required for *morð* against an ordinary person, the consequences should have been proportionally greater for those who *ofmyrðrodon* a

Cnut 26, which denied traitors the right to sanctuary; and II Cnut 57, which reiterated II Æthelstan's guidelines for the ordeal.

³⁴ ASC DE used the verb *ofmyrþredon*, a compound which incorporates the term *morð*. In Patrick Wormald's words, "whatever 'mord' meant, it was not 'normal' homicide"; *Making of English Law*, 363. The term was frequently employed to describe deaths inflicted by witchcraft or sorcery, and in the lawcodes penned by Archbishop Wulfstan of York in the early eleventh century, those who committed *morð* were lumped together with heathens, witches, sorcerers, prostitutes, and perjurers—all of whom were to be driven out of the kingdom or killed; see VI Æthelred 7 and II Cnut 4-5. Elsewhere, *morð* was included in lists of material *bot*-less offenses, such as theft, arson, assaults upon houses, and treachery; see II Cnut 64. Instructions for the ordeal in instances of *morð* are included in the anonymous code *Be Blaserum*: "We declared concerning arson and *morð*-killings that the oath be deepened threefold and the ordeal-iron enlarged to a weight of three pounds. If the accused cannot produce the oath and if he is then guilty, let it be in the judgment of the most senior men of the borough whether or not he should live" [We cwædon be þam blaserum 7 be þam morþslyhtum, þæt man dypte þone aþ be þryfealdum 7 myclade þæt ordalysen, þæt hit gewege þry pund... Gif he ðone að forþbringan ne mæg 7 he þonne ful sy, stande on þæra yldesta manna dome, hweþer he lif age þe nage, þe to ðære byrig hyran]; translation adapted from Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 367, in which *morþslyhtum* is rendered "underhand killings." Wormald suggests that *Be Blaserum* was contemporary either with II Æthelstan or with Æthelred's pre-Wulfstanian laws; in either case, he argues, this document reveals the local implementation of the law. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 367-68. See also O'Brien, "From *Morðor* to *Murdrum*," 335-37 and 343-47; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 106 and n.145.

³⁵ II Cnut 56 articulated this aspect of *morð*: "If a person is killed and it becomes an open killing, let the killer be given to the dead person's kin. And if the killer is accused of it and if he fails to clear himself, let the bishop decide the punishment" [Gif open morð weorðe ðæt man amyrrad sy, agyue man magum. 7 gif hit tihle sy 7 æt lade mistide, deme se bisceop]. This clause likely referred to a secret killing which was later discovered—a scenario consistent with the circumstances surrounding Edward's death; there are also verbal similarities with the ASC account: the verb *amyrdrian* in II Cnut is another form of *myrðian*, which was used in the ASC. Bruce O'Brien has recently argued that the Old English term *morð* did not encompass secret killings, as its Old Norse and Old French cognates did. The ASC's use of the term suggests otherwise, however, as Edward's earthly *morð* is diametrically opposed to the divine promulgation of his saintly status; in this context, *ofmyrðrian* represents the opposite of *mærsian*, glossed by Bosworth-Toller as "to make known, spread the knowledge of anything, declare, proclaim, announce, celebrate." This usage closely fits the description of murder in Old Norse law: "it is murder if a man hides it or conceals the corpse or does not admit it"; Dennis et. al., *Grágás*, 146. On "open *morð*," see Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, 106 n.145; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 363-64. On Old English *morð* and its differentiation from post-Conquest forms which implied secret killings, see O'Brien, "From *Morðor* to *Murdrum*," 343-47 and 351-53. See also Bosworth-Toller 660.

king. Yet in Edward's case, there would have been no material evidence for treason or *morð* after the king's disappearance. Although the most stringent measures of proof were needed to escape a death sentence, the absence of a corpse would have stymied attempts to bring the suspected assassins to justice.³⁶

But it is also possible that there was little genuine effort to find, try, and sentence the killers. As Edward's brother and successor, Æthelred would have been responsible for initiating action against the assassins: as a kinsman, he should have taken vengeance; as a king, he should have overseen the legal prosecution of the regicide.³⁷ Yet although Byrhtferth and the *Passio* made much of the royal brothers' love for each other, Æthelred would have found himself in an awkward political position after Edward's death. He was only twelve years old when he came to the throne, and the supporters who had secured his accession were the likely perpetrators of the crime.³⁸ Blood vengeance and capital punishment were not practical possibilities under these circumstances, and since there were precedents for assigning non-lethal punishments to *bot*-less offenses, Æthelred may have opted for relatively mild sentences, if he was able to impose any penalty.³⁹ Monetary settlement may have

³⁶ Mary Richards has argued that in Anglo-Saxon England, wounded bodies had to be exposed and examined in order to determine the appropriate compensation; it is not impossible that a similar procedure would be undertaken with victims of homicide (an attested practice later in Iceland). See Richards, "Body as Text," 103-04; Dennis et. al., *Grágás*, 146; and see above, n.35.

³⁷ Susan Ridyard postulates that Æthelred's promotion of Edward's cult made him a party to God's vengeance upon the killers: "in promoting that cult, [Æthelred] was thus acting as the instrument of the 'divine feud'"; *Royal Saints*, 167. This logic seems strained, however, given the early sources' dismay over the king's reluctance to take vengeance.

³⁸ For Æthelred's conflicts of interest after Edward's death, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 173-75; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 166-67; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 108.

³⁹ A death sentence may not have been automatic in cases of *morð* and treason. One version of III Edgar 7.3 allowed the king to grant a convicted traitor his life, whereas II Cnut 56 and the anonymous code *Be Blaserum* permitted the bishop or "the most senior men of the borough" to decide final sentence for *morð*. III Edgar 7.3 stated: "And the proved thief, or he who has been discovered in treason against his lord, whatever refuge he seeks, shall never be able to save his life, unless the king grant that it be spared" [Gesece se æbæra þeof þæt þæt he gesece, oððe se þe on hlafordsearwe gemet sy, þæt hi næfre feorh ne gesecean, buton se cyninge him feorhgeneres unne]; translation adapted from Robertson I 26-27. II Cnut 26 reproduced this clause verbatim but omitted the possibility of royal pardon. See notes above for II Cnut 56 and *Be Blaserum*. For III Edgar 7.3, see note above, Chapter 4.

been one solution.⁴⁰ In the decades following Edward’s death, Archbishop Wulfstan revised and compiled early tenth-century tracts which delineated royal wergeld values, and his interest suggests that these sums were immediately relevant around the turn of the millennium—perhaps because such payments had recently been made, or perhaps because they should have been made but conspicuously weren’t.⁴¹ Although the cost of a king’s life was enormous, according to the values provided in these documents, it is conceivable that Æthelred coerced a payment from supporters whom he was unable or unwilling to bring to more violent justice.⁴² Alternatively, Ealdorman Ælfhere’s eventual translation of Edward’s remains may have been accepted as compensation for the killing. Given the ealdorman’s early opposition to Edward’s ascension and his vigorous support of Æthelred, his ceremonial (and no doubt expensive) relocation of the royal corpse may have constituted a recognizable act of atonement for his part in the regicide, allowing him, as so many Old English laws required, to compensate for

⁴⁰ Although there is no surviving record of what the life of a West Saxon ruler was worth, Alfred’s laws took for granted that a ruler’s wergeld was common knowledge: Alfred 4.1 stipulated that a charge of treason could be cleared by an oath equal to “the king’s wergeld” [cyninges wergelde].

⁴¹ Fragments of archaic Northumbrian and Mercian law established enormous sums for the death of a king: the Northumbrian laws stipulated that a wergild of 15,000 *thrymsas* (a unit equal to three pennies) be paid to the kin and an additional 15,000 *thrymsas* of *cynebot* be paid to the kingdom; the Mercian laws required a wergild and a *cynebot* of 30,000 *sceattas* each. The only account of such exorbitant sums actually being paid occurred in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 694: “Here Canterbury settled with King Ine because they burned Mul, his brother; and they gave him 30,000 pounds for his friendship” [Her Cantuare þingodon wið Ine farðan ðe he Mul his broðer forbærndon, 7 hi gian him .xxx. ðusenda to freondcipe. Hic populus Cantie fecerunt pacem cum Ina rege, dantes ei .xxx. milia librarum, eo quod tradiderunt Mul, fratrem iam dicti Ine, incendio et combusserunt eum]; ASC F 694. This episode was also included in ASC ABCDE 964, but Mul’s relationship to Ine was only mentioned in ASC F (added in a later hand); their kinship is mentioned in ABC 685 and EF 686, however. The calculation of the wergeld in pounds (*punda*) occurred only in ASC BC. For ASC F, see Baker, *MS F*, 40-41. For Wulfstan’s re-codification of these tracts, see Bethurum, “Six Anonymous Codes,” 457-59; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 391-94; Whitelock, *EHD I*, 468-70. For the wergild paid for the murder of Kentish princes Æthelberht and Æthelred, see Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 92-93; and for religious foundations established as compensation for royal assassinations, see Rollason, “Murdered Royal Saints,” 13-14 (and see below, n.43). The Northumbrian and Mercian laws are edited in Liebermann as *Norðleoda Laga* and *Mircna Laga*.

⁴² Ælfhere and his family, in Ann Williams’ words, “had a reputation for riches”; if anyone could have afforded these sums, Ælfhere could have. See Williams, “Ælfhere of Mercia,” 155-57, quotation at 157. Compare with Alfred 26-28, which delineated how a wergeld payment should be divided up if a group attacked and killed an innocent man: the person who struck the fatal blow would be responsible for the man’s wergeld and the fine paid to the king, but all the other men in the troop would have to pay approximately ten percent of the dead man’s wergeld as punishment for belonging to such a group.

his actions both “before God and before the world.”⁴³ In the 1040s, Earl Godwin compensated for the assassination of the ætheling Alfred with a lavish gift and a public oath, making peace with the new king while retaining his wealth and position, and it is not impossible that Edward’s assassins came to a comparable agreement with Æthelred.⁴⁴ The killers themselves may have even anticipated such an outcome, and this could help explain why they had no apparent qualms about conspiring to assassinate a lawfully elected and consecrated king. For Æthelred, however, his brother’s missing body could have provided an excuse for his leniency towards the killers: without a corpse as evidence, the mild punishments might be attributed to insufficient proof of wrongdoing instead of to the young king’s inability to control or reprimand his nobles.⁴⁵ For the Chronicler and Byrhtferth, then, the problem may not have been that no punishment had been exacted but that the relatively mild consequences were disproportionate to the magnitude of the offense.

Even if the killers’ primary motivation was to hide evidence of their crime when they concealed Edward’s body, contemporary chroniclers identified more sinister objectives. The *Passio*, while acknowledging that the corpse was hidden to cover up an earthly offense, also assigned an ideological significance to the secret burial:

⁴³ “For gode 7 for worulde”; see for example III Edgar 1.2 and II Cnut 11.1, 38.1. For earlier examples of the endorsement of a royal cult as a form of penance for regicide, see Rollason, “Murdered Royal Saints,” 13-14; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 92-93; Scargill, “Oswiu and the Murder of King Oswine,” 39-46; Yorke, “Edward, King and Martyr,” 108. For Ælfhere, see Williams, “Ælfhere of Mercia,” 170. David Rollason suggests that Ælfhere’s translation was an insufficient act of compensation: where earlier royal murders had been compensated by the construction of churches to house the victims’ remains, Ælfhere’s mere translation was not a commensurate act of penance; see “Murdered Royal Saints,” 18-19; *Saints and Relics*, 143. See also Thacker, “Oswald and His Communities,” 248.

⁴⁴ It is uncertain whether Harthacnut would have been able to punish Godwin more harshly, given the latter’s wealth and influence; a decade later, Edward the Confessor tried to exile the ealdorman and his sons but failed. The young Æthelred no doubt faced a similar problem with his own well-established ealdormen. For restrictions on the king’s ability to act against his nobles, see Stafford, “Limits of Royal Power.” Godwin’s relationships with Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor are discussed above, Chapters 2 and 4.

⁴⁵ It is not impossible that the suspected killers successfully undertook the ordeal and were spared a death sentence, though there is no evidence for this.

The queen quickly ordered her men to secretly bear [the body] away into hidden and marshy places, where it would not seem to be buried in the earth, so that it could not be found by anyone else. With these orders having been fulfilled without delay, she issued an edict by which no one might speak any harsh thing or mourn for his killing, evidently believing that she had entirely erased his memory from the earth. With these things completed, she immediately retired, undoubtedly so that no one should suspect her for what she had done, thus dissembling about the matter.⁴⁶

This supposed attempt to obliterate Edward's memory suggests that the queen was not simply concerned with the immediate consequences of her actions but wanted to do her stepson more lasting harm. This idea was not unique to the *Passio*, for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle made an analogous accusation in similar language, claiming that "those earthly slayers wanted to destroy his memory on earth."⁴⁷ Both accounts stated unambiguously that these attempts failed, for the Chronicle completed its couplet by asserting that "the heavenly avenger has widely spread his memory in the heavens and on earth," while the *Passio* went on to detail the miraculous discovery and translation of the body.⁴⁸ Yet the fact that the destruction of the king's *memoria* or *gemynd* was featured in both sources suggests that obliteration was recognized as a particularly insidious component of the regicide. Without a body, Edward's survivors would have been unable to produce a final public image of the dead king in a funeral procession or ceremonial burial, and they would not have been able to rally support at his tomb, as others had regularly done at the tombs of recently dead kings.⁴⁹ Even more problematic was the fact that obliteration was ordinarily reserved for those who had

⁴⁶ "Imperat itaque celeriter satellitibus clanculo illud efferi, et in locis abditis et palustribus ubi minus putaretur humo tegi, ne ab aliquo amplius inueniri potuisset. Quibus iussa sine mora complentibus, edictum quo nil inclementius proposuit, ne quis de interitu eius gemeret aut omnino loqueretur, se nimirum memoriam eius de terra omnino delere existimans. His ita peractis... continuo secessit, ut uidelicet quod fecerat sic dissimulando super hoc de ea suspicionem nemo haberet"; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 7.

⁴⁷ "Þa eorþlican banan woldon his gemynd on eorðan adilgian"; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D.

⁴⁸ "Se uplica wrecend hafað his gemynd on heofonum 7 on eorþan tobræd"; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D.

⁴⁹ See above, Chapters 2 and 3.

been cast out of the Christian community: if Edward was denied respectful burial and Christian memorialization, his body would have been equated with the disgraced remains of excommunicants and criminals.⁵⁰

These implications would have been easily recognized by contemporaries, and the claim that shameful obliteration was one of the killers' deliberate goals was surely intended to outrage the audiences of these texts. The authors of the Chronicle and the *Passio* compounded the sense of indignation by adopting the biblical tradition of oblivion in their accounts of the regicide. The mentions of memory in both sources closely echoed Psalm 33:17, "the face of the Lord is above evildoers so that he obliterates their memory from the earth."⁵¹ In Old English translations of the psalm, this verse was rendered in language very similar to the Chronicle's, and the citation in the annal describing Edward's assassination must have been intended as a direct scriptural reference.⁵² In addition to recalling biblical punishments, this rhetoric would have evoked diplomatic sanction clauses which declared that anyone violating the terms of a given charter would have his memory obliterated or his name scratched out of God's book of life.⁵³ Yet in the psalm and the anathema clauses, obliteration was

⁵⁰ The association of royal bodies with criminal and excommunicated bodies is discussed above, Chapter 4.

⁵¹ "Facies Domini super facientes mala ut *perdat de terra memoriam eorum*" (emphasis mine). A parallel sentiment is expressed in Job 18:17, in which the possible fates of a wrongdoer are enumerated: among other things, "his memory will be obliterated from the earth and his name will not be celebrated in the streets" [*memoria illius pereat de terra et non celebretur nomen eius in plateis*] (emphasis mine). Similarities can also be drawn with Psalm 68:29, "let sinners be removed from the book of life and not be written with the just" [*deleantur de libro viventium et cum iustis non scribantur*], a sentiment which would have been recognizable in the anathema clauses of Old English and Latin charters. See Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 63 and 68-69.

⁵² Psalm 33:17 of the Paris Psalter was translated: "Ac Godes andwlita and his yrre byð ofer þa þe yfel wyrcað, to þæm þæt he *forleose heora gemynd ofer eorþan*" (my emphasis). MS A of the Old English *Capitula* of Theodulf translated the psalm as: "Drihtenes ondwlita bið ofer þa yfeldondan men to þon þæt he hig *forspille 7 adylige of eorðan hyra gemynd*" (my emphasis); MS B read: "dryhtnes andhwilita ofer wyrrende yfelu, þæt he *forspille of heorþan hyra gemynd*" (my emphasis). The Latin in both manuscripts of Theodulf read: "uultus autem Domini super facientes mala, *ut perdat de terra memoriam eorum*" (my emphasis). The Paris Psalter is edited in Stracke, *Paris Prose*; Theodulf is edited in Sauer, *Theodulfi Capitula in England*, 347. For obliteration in the accounts of Edward's death, see quotations above.

⁵³ For anathema clauses in charters and their biblical sources, see Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 52-72, especially 68-69 for the obliteration of memory in sanction clauses. In Anglo-Saxon Charters, the

effected by God; in the accounts of Edward, obliteration was attempted by men. Although the resolutions of the hagiographical texts confirmed that the destruction of Edward's memory was expressly prevented by God's intervention—he miraculously revealed the body in the *Passio* and glorified Edward's memory in the Chronicle—the allusion hints that the assassins had violated more than just earthly law; their attempt to inflict oblivion was a wrongful appropriation of divine prerogative.

Obliteration was also a recurring feature of saints' lives in Anglo-Saxon England, for as a narrative device, oblivion allowed the re-discovery (*inventio*) of forgotten saints and the establishment of cults in their honor. Sometimes these lost saints were simply victims of time and shabby record keeping. The sanctity of Bishop Swithun of Winchester, for example, went virtually unremarked until he began appearing in visions more than a century after his death; even after his remains were discovered, elevated, and translated, contemporary chroniclers were hard pressed to find accounts of his life and miracles.⁵⁴ Alternatively, oblivion could be intentionally inflicted upon a saint by an earthly antagonist.⁵⁵ In Ælfric of Eynsham's vernacular life of St. Vincent, the martyr's relics were thrown in the ocean lest they serve as a reminder of his triumphant death: "let him be sunk in the sea's waves, so that his own victory shall not shame us so often in men's sight, which sees it all; let him at least be hidden in the deep sea."⁵⁶ Likewise, in Ælfric's account of St. Sebastian, the martyr's corpse was thrown into a sewer so that "the Christians should not discover his body

phrase *deleatur memoria* appears in S 142 (Offa 757x774); S 537 (Eadred 948, spurious?); S 1259 (Archbishop Æthelheard of Canterbury 805). The Old English phrase *Adilgie his noman of lifes bocum* [let his name be erased from the book of life] appears in S 1326 and S 1370 (both of Bishop Oswold of Worcester, 969 and 961x972). Elsewhere, sanction clauses declare that offenders' names should be scratched out of the book of life (*deleatur nomen ejus de libro vite* or *in sempiterno graphio deleatur*; see for example S 743 and S 470).

⁵⁴ See Lapidge, *Swithun*, 7.

⁵⁵ This motif often originated in Latin sources and was preserved by vernacular translators; see below.

⁵⁶ "Be he besenced on sælicum yðum, þæt us swa oft ne sceamige for his anes sige, on manna gesihþum, þe hit eall geseoð; beo he huru bi-diglod on þære deopen sæ"; LS II 37.255-58.

afterwards and make him a martyr.”⁵⁷ In each of these texts, the saints’ persecutors took for granted that obliteration was an expected component of a death sentence, but the *vitae* also reveal considerable anxiety about how the resulting corpses would be interpreted. It was vital in both of Ælfric’s examples that the bodies be removed from the public gaze, obscuring the identities of the individual martyrs while hiding the fact that executions had been performed at all. Vincent’s body proved a source of humiliation for his killer and had the potential to undermine his position among his people; Sebastian’s provided a rallying point for the Christian community, enabling the eventual creation of a subversive cult. Obliteration sought to preempt such consequences.⁵⁸

In other instances, Old English hagiography treated obliteration as a standard type of torture or humiliation: in the anonymous passion of St. Margaret, for example, sympathetic pagans begged the martyr to renounce her faith because her judge “is a very hot-hearted man and he wants to kill you and blot out your memory from the earth.”⁵⁹ It is significant that Anglo-Saxon hagiographers retained the mentions of

⁵⁷ “Ða cristenan ne becumman to his lice and to him martyre macion siððan”; LS I 5.456-60. The fifth-century Latin *passio* attributed (inaccurately) to Ambrose read: “ne forte Christiani eum sibi Martyrem faciant”; *Acta Sanctorum* Ian. II, 278. For the authorship of the early *passio*, see Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, 429.

⁵⁸ A similar example is found in Snorri’s account of the saint-king Olaf Haraldsson: after Olaf was killed in battle, his enemies wanted to burn his body or sink it in the sea; the king’s followers hid the corpse to keep it safe, and it was translated to an honorable grave some time later. Patrick Wormald sees this desire to obliterate the body as an attempt to prevent the development of cultic reverence, which spread very quickly after Olaf’s death in 1030; “*Rule and Conflict*,” 600. The fate of Olaf’s body and the spread of his cult in England are discussed in Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 96-98; for the episode, see Snorri, *Heimskringla*, 523-24 and 527-30.

⁵⁹ “Is swiþe hatheort man and he þe wile forspillan and þin gemynd of eorðan adilgian”; Clayton and Magennis, *Margaret*, 118. The quotation appears Cotton Tiberius A.iii; there is no equivalent line in the alternate Old English version of the *Life* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 303. The Latin *Passio S. Margaretae* reads: “perdere te festinat et delere memoriam tuam”; Clayton and Magennis, *Margaret*, 200. The verbal similarity between this passage in the Old English life of Margaret and MS A of the Old English Theodulf (quoted above, n.52) is noteworthy; in particular, both texts mention killing (*forspillan*) and obliteration, whereas the Latin psalm makes no reference to killing. See also the anonymous Old English account of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, which claimed, when referring to Roman persecutions of Christians, that “those heathen men wanted to entirely extinguish the radiance of Christianity and obliterate every memory [of it] from the earth” [ða hæðenan menn Cristendomes leoman mid ealle adwæscan woldon and ælcne myne ofer eorðan adylgian]; see Magennis, *Seven Sleepers*, 33

obliteration that appeared in their Latin sources; English audiences apparently understood the destruction of memory as a horrific punishment in its own right. In this context, the incorporation of oblivion into accounts of Edward's death would have helped the king appear more saintly: since he was not subjected to heathen persecution or forced to defend his Christian faith, the inclusion of a recognizable hagiographical trope may have made him seem more like a traditional martyr.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the fact that obliteration was depicted as a genuine threat to a tenth-century English king suggests there was more at work than mere hagiographical convention. Other genres of Old English literature reveal a comparable concern with oblivion, which was portrayed as an inevitable fate if no measures were taken to prevent it.⁶¹ Creating written texts was one way to preserve individual and collective memory, for, according to a tenth-century charter formula, "the words and deeds of men frequently recede from memory unless they are preserved and recalled to memory in the form of words and by the precaution of entrusting them to writing."⁶² Such records were not failsafe, however; King Alfred lamented "the bad conduct of those writers who—in their sloth and in carelessness and also in negligence—leave unwritten the virtues and deeds of those men who in their day were most renowned

⁶⁰ David Rollason has labeled "murder by fellow Christians for secular motives... [a] qualification for sanctity" among Anglo-Saxon royalty. However, given how rare it was for royalty who died violent deaths to be revered as saints in the tenth century, Rollason's interpretation seems to fall short. See Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 1.

⁶¹ Compare with the discussion of oblivion in the Antique world in Flower, *Art of Forgetting*, 2-5.

⁶² "Dicta hominum uel facta... frequenter ex memoria recedunt nisi litterarum apicibus et custodię cautela scripturarum reseruentur et ad memoriam reuocentur"; S 1280. This example is from a 904 lease of land to Alfred's sister and brother-in-law, Æthelflæd and Æthelred of Mercia; translation adapted from Robertson, *Charters*, 35-37. The formula is employed in a number of other tenth-century grants: S 465 (Edmund, 940); S 474 (Edmund, 941); S 475 (Edmund, 941); S 481 (Edmund, 942); S 488 (Edmund, 943); S 517b (Eadred, 946); S 640 (Eadwig, 957); S643 (Eadwig, 957); S817 (Edgar, 963x975, spurious?); S 376 (Edward the Elder, 909, spurious?). There was a renewed emphasis on written texts from the turn of the tenth century, when King Alfred began his program of educational reforms: he ordered the translation of seminal Latin texts into Old English, committed the laws of earlier English kings to writing along with his own, and created a historiography for his ostensibly unified Anglo-Saxon nation with the commission of the ASC. For an exploration of how "writing superseded speech and memory as the standard method of conveying and storing information" in the Anglo-Saxon period, see Kelly, "Lay Society and the Written Word," 23 ff.

and most eager for honor.”⁶³ Yet although good record-keeping could facilitate the development of a collective cultural memory and provide exemplars for the living, the cultivation of one’s own fame and memory was not always regarded as a virtue.⁶⁴ Ælfric, for one, reproached those who “do whatever they do for men’s praise rather than for God’s love; they are foolish in that they buy empty fame, not the eternal reward.”⁶⁵ Although the pursuit of glory might secure one’s memory in a transitory world, this ambition was conspicuously at odds with the Christian imperative to seek immortality in heaven rather than on earth.⁶⁶

By contrast, a pious cultivation of remembrance could benefit the soul while incidentally allowing the dead to escape oblivion on earth. Individuals could improve their chances of salvation by securing the intercessory prayers of an ecclesiastical community: inclusion in a *liber vitae* would ensure that future generations would continue praying for a person’s soul; and provisions in grants and wills for memorial masses and gifts to churches on the anniversary of one’s death—literally, on his

⁶³ “Hearsælþa þara writera þæt hi for heora slæwðe 7 for gimeleste 7 eac for recceleste forleton unwriten þara monna ðeawas 7 hiora dæda, þe on hiora dagum formæroste 7 weorðgeornuste wæron.” Sedgefield, *Alfred’s Boethius*, 44. The passage continues, naturally, to emphasize the futility of posthumous fame. See also Frank, “*Beowulf* Poet’s Sense of History,” 65.

⁶⁴ For exempla, see Bede’s preface to the *Ecclesiastical History*: “Should history tell the goodness of good people, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evils of wicked people, no less effectually the devout and pious listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God” [Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemorat de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuitando quod noxium est ac peruersum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit, accenditur]; Bede, *HE, Praefatio*. For the creation of collective cultural memory through written texts in the early Middle Ages, see McKitterick, *History and Memory*.

⁶⁵ “Hi doð for manna herunge swa hwæt swa hi doð . swiðor ðonne for godes lufon . ðonne sind hi stunte . þæt hi cepað þæs ydelan hlysan . na þæs ecan edleanes”; CH II 39.69-74.

⁶⁶ This sentiment was implied in *Beowulf*’s epitaph, which ambiguously characterized the king as “most eager for praise” (*lofgeornost*, Klaeber 3182); elsewhere in Old English, this word was used almost exclusively in negative contexts and suggests that the hero nurtured an inappropriate desire for fame. But compare with *Beowulf*’s earlier admonition to Hrothgar: “Each of us shall await the end of this earthly life; he who can should attain glory before death; afterwards, that will be best for a dead warrior” [Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan / worolde lifes; wyrc se þe mote / domes ær deape; þæt bið drihtguman unlifgendum æfter selest]; Klaeber 1386-89. For *lofgeornost*, see Robinson, *Appositive Style*, 81-82; Mitchell, “Literary Lapses,” 16-17; but see also Clark, “The Last Word” and Tripp, “Most Eager to Praise.” For Anglo-Saxon understandings of the transience of earthly life, see Fell, “Perceptions of Transience,” especially 172-74.

memory-day (*gemynddæg*)—guaranteed that his soul would perpetually receive spiritual attention.⁶⁷ The grave itself provided a concrete focus for remembrance, a physical witness to its occupant’s time on earth. At the time of burial, the arrangement and adornment of a body in its grave were designed to provide mourners with a final, deliberate image of the deceased before the remains were covered over; after burial, aboveground markers ranging from wooden stakes to elaborately carved stonework differentiated individual graves, advertising the identity and status of their inhabitants and providing memorials for visitors.⁶⁸ In addition to providing a physical focus for ecclesiastical intercession and a spiritually instructive example of human mortality, a

⁶⁷ On *libri vitae*, see Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 195-96; Keynes, “*Liber Vitae*”; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 174-85; and for the possibility of stone monuments functioning as *libri vitae*, see Okasha, “Memorial Stones,” 97-100. The will of Wulfgar (S 1533, 931x939) decreed that his widow should provide food to the community which housed his grave each year on the anniversary of his death (*on þone gemynddæg*); Ceolwin’s grant to Winchester (S 1513, c.900) was made on the condition that the community pray for her soul and her husband’s on his anniversary (*his gemunde dege*); Bishop Wilfrith’s grant to Worcester (S 1297, 922) required that the community annually “commemorate to a certain extent the anniversary of my death with the profits which they obtain from the estate” which he had granted them [be sumum dælæ gemyndgien ða tide mines forðsiðes mid ðæm nyttenessum ðe hio on ðæm londe begeten]. For translations and notes on these texts, see Robertson, *Charters*: 30-31, 42-43, 52-53, 291-92, 299, 307. The term *gemynddæg* is attested four additional times in the Old English corpus, all of which refer to saint’s days (three in the Old English version of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* and once in Alfred 43). Other grants and wills stipulated that survivors “remember the time of my death” [gemyndgien ða tide mines forðsiðes] with annual gifts to ecclesiastical communities; S 1289, and see also S 385; S 1188; S 1510; S 1511.

⁶⁸ On the mnemonic impact of individual graves and bodies at the time of burial, see Williams, *Death and Memory*, 1-78; Williams, “Agency of Bodies,” 263-67; Halsall, “Burial, Ritual, and Merovingian Society,” 327-29; Härke, “Cemeteries as Places of Power,” 12-13; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 117-18. Although physical remnants of above-ground grave markers are limited, it is clear that bodies were memorialized at the site of their burial, as there is archaeological evidence that markers of various materials were used throughout the British Isles. The most elaborate and expensive would have been made of carved stone: slabs that covered the grave entirely, above-ground stone sarcophagi, “hogback” memorials, and head- and foot-stones marked the location of prestigious graves. Elsewhere, there is evidence for post-holes at the head or foot of graves, suggesting that wooden posts or structures were erected; wooden head- and foot-boards are also attested. Paths between burial rows and cohesive burial plots within larger cemeteries seem to have been designed to facilitate visits by the living to individual graves. For stone memorials, see Rodwell and Rodwell, “St. Peter’s Church, Barton-Upon-Humber,” 300; Phillips and Heywood, *Excavations at York Minster I.1*, 84; Gilmour and Stocker, *St Mark’s Church*, 16 and 55-56; Biddle, “Fourth Interim Report,” 325; Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, 11-13; Jones, “Excavations at Lincoln,” 98; Kjølbye-Biddle, “Disposal of the Winchester Dead,” 227; Okasha, “Memorial Stones,” 91-95. For wooden grave markers, see Rodwell and Rodwell, “St. Peter’s church, Barton-Upon-Humber,” 292, 300; Gilmour and Stocker, *St Mark’s Church*, 20-21; Hadley and Buckberry, “Caring for the Dead,” 140-41. For burial plots and paths within cemeteries, see Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 180-81; Rodwell and Rodwell, “St. Peter’s church, Barton-Upon-Humber,” 292 and 299; Härke, “Cemeteries as Places of Power,” 16; Gilmour and Stocker, *St Mark’s Church*, 15-16.

prominent or expensive tomb would help perpetuate a person's memory among future generations.⁶⁹ Although homilists cautioned that overly ornate tombs provided no spiritual advantages, the evidence for ostentatious burial in the late Anglo-Saxon period suggests that the grave served as an important locus for earthly memory: large, intricate tombstones situated prominently in or around churches indicate that the wealthiest members of society (or, rather, their survivors) were invested in securing conspicuous memorials to honor their lives and deaths.⁷⁰

At the time of Edward's assassination, prestigious tombs would have been expected for high-status individuals, but kings' bodies would have been granted the additional honor of intramural burial in an ecclesiastical foundation. A hallowed grave was considered a preliminary step towards salvation in tenth-century England, and compared to other kings', Edward's soul would have been at a disadvantage without a community of religious commissioned to pray specifically on his behalf. But as well as providing a convenient focus for intercessory prayer, a king's tomb constituted a

⁶⁹ Numerous grants and gifts were made to individuals' designated burial churches: some people bequeathed lands, money, and food rents to the foundations where they would be buried (S 1524; S 1419; S 1533; S 1498; S 1503; S 1523; S 1521); some stipulated what should be given to the burial church as soul-scot (S 566; S 1539; S 1488; S 1534); and others designated their body or shrine as part of their gift to their burial church (S 1498; S 1503). In homiletic literature, graveyards were depicted as particularly good places to contemplate mortality. An Old English homily in MS Bodley 343 instructed, "look then on the graves and say to yourself: lo, this man whom I knew before formerly lived happily in this world. Then the perforated bones might teach us, and the dust of the dead would speak to us from the graves, if they could speak" [loca þenne on þa burignes and sæg to þe sylfum: Hwæt, þæs mon iu on þissre worlde wunsumlice lyfede þe ic ær cuðe. Þenne magon þa ðyrle ban us læren, and þæs deaden dust of þare burignes to us cwæðon wolden, gif heo specen mihten]; Irvine, *Bodley 343*, VII.197.6-10. Such rhetoric might introduce body-soul dialogues; see also Assmann XIV 165.32-42 (cited above, Chapter 4); Vercelli 13.19-36.

⁷⁰ For grave markers and coffins as signs of wealth and prestige, see Biddle, "Seventh Interim Report," 321; Kjølbye-Biddle, "Disposal of the Winchester Dead," 228; Okasha, "Memorial Stones," 97. Vercelli 10 provided one moralistic condemnation of ornate graves: "And even if the most rich and powerful command that a resting-place be made for them of marble and of other gold ornaments, set all over with gems and with silver coverings and covered with bedding, and set entirely with precious spices and covered all around with gold leaf, bitter death will nevertheless separate all of that" [7 þeah þa strengestan 7 þa ricestan hatan him reste gewyrcean of marmanstane 7 of oðrum goldfrætewum, 7 mid gimcynnum eal astæned 7 mid seolfrenum ruwum 7 beddum eal oferwreon, 7 mid dieorwyrðum wirtgemengnessum eal geseted 7 mid goldleafum gepread ymbutan, hwæðere se bitera deap þæt todæleð eall]; Vercelli 10.224-31, and see also Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 109-11, for a discussion of this passage. Elsewhere, as in Ælfric's homily for the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, condemnations of rich tombs were based on Matthew 23:27-28; see II Pope XV 534.70-79.

physical memento of his life and reign, an indicator of his own exceptional status and a testament to the legitimacy of the royal office.⁷¹ Kings were perhaps the most remembered class of individuals in the Anglo-Saxon period, with their memories actively cultivated during and after their lifetimes: their legacies were evoked by later generations of rulers, their accomplishments were recorded in written (and probably unwritten) histories, their laws and grants comprised many of the surviving documents of the period, and their tombs were contained safely and prominently inside churches. If memory was understood as a defining characteristic of dead monarchs, posthumous oblivion would have represented the antithesis of royal dignity; if no king could be forgotten, a forgotten man could not have been a king.⁷² By this logic, if Edward's remains were denied a royal funeral and consigned to an anonymous grave, his kingly status, in hindsight, would have been suspect. Just as his throne-worthiness had been challenged before his accession because his mother had lacked a royal consecration, so the legitimacy of Edward's rule was called into question after his death because his remains did not receive a royal funeral.⁷³ Comparable statements would be made some sixty years later, with the disgraced or unburied bodies of Harold Harefoot and the ætheling Alfred, and in all three cases, the maltreatment of royal bodies was intended to convey a precise ideological message: these men were not true kings.

Yet unlike Edward's concealed remains, Harold Harefoot's corpse was made into a spectacle and Alfred's body was publicly subjected to mutilation and torture. In these latter cases, visions of broken, decidedly un-kingly bodies were intended to replace the image of glorious royalty that contemporaries had come to expect. The treatment of Edward's corpse, by contrast, was meant to be anything but spectacular. Rather than instilling a disgraceful image of the dead king in his subjects' memory, the

⁷¹ This point is discussed above, Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷² See Flower, *Art of Forgetting*, 6-9.

⁷³ On the debate over Edward's throne-worthiness, see above, n.1.

killers removed the body from the public gaze; rather than attempting to re-cast Edward as a bad king through a shaming display of his corpse, the killers minimized the importance of his reign by preventing any memorialization of his body. The *Passio* went so far as to claim that there was an official prohibition against mourning Edward's death, evoking Classical examples of *damnatio memoriae* to demonstrate how serious the attempt at obliteration had been.⁷⁴ But despite the *Passio*'s rhetoric, Edward's obliteration must have been limited to the concealment of his body: accounts of his reign were not removed from written texts; he was certainly not forgotten by the subjects who rallied to recover, rebury, and celebrate his body; and his memory was not repressed by Æthelred, who reportedly mourned his brother's death and later became an active patron of his cult.

Even if the killers had not orchestrated a full-fledged obliteration, however, a missing corpse would have significantly impacted Edward's legacy, especially among future generations who had not lived through his brief reign. If royal tombs were regarded as repositories for dynastic memory and rulers' corpses as physical embodiments of their royal line, Edward's posthumous memory would have been significantly disadvantaged if his body were not honorably entombed like other kings'. Indeed, had Edward died a natural death in 978, a tomb might have been the chief memorial to his reign: he was a teenager when he became king and reigned only three years after his father's death; he had no children, and his half-brother had no real need to evoke his memory in order to stake a claim the throne. Furthermore, given how little written information survives concerning other late Anglo-Saxon kings with short reigns, Edward's textual legacy might have been similarly minimal.⁷⁵ An exhaustive

⁷⁴ This was the queen's edict; see quotation above. For an overview of memory sanctions in the Antique world, see Flower, *Art of Forgetting*, 1-13.

⁷⁵ This was the case for Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut, who had relatively short reigns which were treated cursorily in the ASC and other extant documents. On the ASC's quick and dismissive assessment of Harthacnut's reign, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 80-81.

damnatio memoriae like the one described in the *Passio* would hardly have been necessary, for the secret burial of his body would have done sufficient damage. Without a tomb, Edward might have been remembered only as a minor figure in the West Saxon dynasty, if he was remembered at all.⁷⁶

In 978, however, Edward's missing body likely caused additional difficulties for the new regime. One problem was that Æthelred might be blamed for his brother's murder. Although he was probably not involved in the killing, his supporters' actions could have made the young king look like a usurper—a claim that was later put forth by Æthelred's detractors.⁷⁷ Another concern was the precedent set by the assassination of an anointed king.⁷⁸ Edward's killing confirmed that royal consecration could not guarantee a king's safety, even among magnates who were supposed to have acclaimed him and sworn loyalty to him upon his accession; this point surely was not lost on the twelve-year-old Æthelred.⁷⁹ It would be nearly a century before another consecrated king of England would be slain by a challenger for the throne, but even after William's army defeated and killed Harold Godwinson in 1066, the new Norman regime struggled to find a way to justify its deposition of an anointed ruler. Their eventual solution was to depict Harold as a tyrant and usurper, whose overthrow was an exercise of pious justice by a rightful king.⁸⁰ It is not impossible that Æthelred's supporters took a similar approach. Their insistence on Edward's illegitimate birth was

⁷⁶ Compare with kings or ancestors who were deliberately deleted from royal genealogies; Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," 81-83.

⁷⁷ See Keynes, "Declining Reputation," 237-38; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 158-62.

⁷⁸ For the argument that cults of murdered royal saints were promoted in order to discourage royal assassinations, see Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 16-17.

⁷⁹ Edward was consecrated just two years after Edgar's second, imperial-style anointing at Bath in 973, and the quick sequence of these major ceremonial events should have done much to promote the idea of a divinely sanctioned, inviolate kingship. According to tenth-century political thought, there should have been no further challenges to Edward's reign after his consecration. For Edgar's imperial consecration, see Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 296-301. For the implications of Edward's assassination in Æthelred's reign, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 167. For royal consecration in general, see above, Chapter 3.

⁸⁰ See Garnett, *Conquered England*, 33-40.

persistent enough to feature in accounts written well after the king's death, indicating that this argument continued to be cited after the killing as evidence of an irregular accession to the kingdom.⁸¹ More compelling, however, is the description of Edward's style of ruling which Byrhtferth included in the midst of his hagiographical account. Compared to his younger brother, Edward "struck not only fear but even terror into everyone; he hounded them not only with words but even with cruel beatings—and especially those who were members of his own household."⁸² Given the text's otherwise unequivocal praise of Edward's sanctity and its utter condemnation of the attack on a consecrated king, this anomalous characterization may constitute Byrhtferth's answer to contemporary accusations of tyranny. Read in this light, the Chronicle's assertion that there was "great joy among the English witan" when Æthelred became king may constitute an implicit critique of Edward's rule in the immediate aftermath of his death.⁸³ If some of Æthelred's supporters were in fact attempting to portray his predecessor as a usurper or tyrant who had ruled illegitimately or abused his authority, the denial of a traditional royal funeral would have lent credence to this characterization.⁸⁴

Yet the efforts to delegitimize Edward's reign may have been thwarted by his

⁸¹ Some later discussions of Edward's illegitimacy claimed that he was born out of wedlock, while others simply maintained that his mother was not a consecrated queen like Ælfthryth; for a review of this material, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 163-65; Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," 300; Stafford, *Emma and Edith*, 62-63 n.38.

⁸² "Senior vero non solum timorem sed etiam terrorem incussit cunctis; qui persecutus est eos non uerbis tantum, uerum etiam diris uerberibus, et maxime suos secum mansitantes"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 136-39. See Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 102 for a discussion of this passage. The *Passio*, by contrast, portrays Edward as a good ruler during his lifetime; see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 95.

⁸³ "Micclum gefean Angelcynnnes witan"; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D. Byrhtferth also mentioned that "there was great joy at his consecration" [ad cuius consecrationem magna letitia erat]; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 154-55. Perhaps Æthelred publicly pledged to be a better ruler than his predecessor; after Æthelred's own death, Cnut appears to have made such a promise to his new subjects. See Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," especially 182-83.

⁸⁴ It is noteworthy that Harold Godwinson's body was also deprived of a public royal burial in the aftermath of his death. Although Norman theologians spent years perfecting the argument that Harold was a usurper and tyrant, this accusation appeared in the earliest Norman sources for the Conquest and was likely the reason for the inconspicuous disposal of his body. For the construction of the accusation, see Garnett, *Conquered England*, 33-40; Harold's posthumous fate is discussed below, Chapter 6.

subjects' desire to give their king an appropriate burial, and both *Byrhtferth* and the *Passio* implied that there was a popular initiative to move Edward to a consecrated grave before he was given a more formal translation.⁸⁵ *Byrhtferth* drew a particular distinction between the assassins' shameful concealment of the body and the respect that the remains received afterwards: he claimed that the corpse was thrown into a building and hastily covered after the killing, yet God did not "abandon Edward as if he were shameful and villainous; but he permitted him to be buried, not so worthily at that time as he deigned to permit him to be later."⁸⁶ This passage implies that there was an intermediate step between the killers' shameful treatment of the body and the translation of the remains to Shaftesbury, although *Byrhtferth* did not specify who exactly took control of the king's corpse or where the remains were taken. This initial burial was presumably the interment at Wareham that was mentioned in the *Chronicle* and the *Passio*. According to the latter, an interim burial was undertaken a year after the killing by the men of Wareham, who interred Edward outside their village church after the location of his corpse had been miraculously revealed; *Ælfrere* translated the body a second time because he was indignant that "such a precious pearl should be hidden in such a vile place."⁸⁷ In neither account was the initial recovery of the corpse attributed to Church officials or lay magnates, and the *Passio* was quite clear that the operation was spearheaded by inhabitants of Wareham who openly lamented the death

⁸⁵ For the 979 translation as the beginning of cultic activity, see Thacker, "Oswald and His Communities," 248-49; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 155.

⁸⁶ "Uelut probrosum et facinorosum relinquere; sed permisit eum sepelire, non tam digniter tunc sicut postea fieri concedere dignatus est"; *Byrhtferth, Vita Oswaldi*, 140-41 and see above, n.13.

⁸⁷ "Tam pretiosam margaritam in tam uili loco obfusari"; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 8. Compare ASC DE 978 (*recte* 979), which claimed that Edward was killed at Corfe and "buried at Wareham without any kingly honor" [gebyrigde on Werhamme butan ælcum cynelicum wurðscipe]; quotation from D. William of Malmesbury assumed that the killers were the ones to give Edward his unworthy burial: "And then they ordered him to be buried without honor at Wareham, begrudging him ecclesiastical ground when he was dead, just as they had envied him the royal dignity when he was alive" [Et tunc quidem sine honore apud Werham sepeliri iusserunt, inuidentes scilicet mortuo cespitem aeclesiasticum cui uiuo inuiderant decus regium]; *GR* ii.162.2.

of their ruler.⁸⁸ Although reverence for the dead king may not have attracted royal endorsement or ecclesiastical sanction at this time, it is possible that demands for a royal burial or even emerging reports of Edward's sanctity were countered with condemnations of his rulership and questions about his legitimacy.⁸⁹ Yet the missing body seems to have drawn attention to the subversion of royal order, leaving the meaning of Edward's reign and death open to debate instead of lending support to claims of tyranny or irregular succession.⁹⁰ If the king had been given a prompt, honorable burial, the respectful treatment of his body might have helped minimize the scandalous nature of his death. Alternatively, had the body been displayed as the rightfully desecrated corpse of a deposed tyrant, perhaps the case against him would have been more persuasive.⁹¹ In the absence of a body, however, and without the ritualized closure provided by a royal funeral, Edward's reign was unresolved and his death remained open to interpretation. It was only after the corpse was recovered and given an appropriate burial that Edward's posthumous identity was settled.⁹² Once installed at Shaftesbury, there could be no doubt that the king was worthy of honorable, consecrated burial. Edward's reputation was rehabilitated; by the turn of the millennium, he was remembered not as an oppressor or usurper but as an "illustrious and elected king" and a "heavenly saint."⁹³

⁸⁸ See Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 7-8.

⁸⁹ The *Passio* was the only early source to attribute a miracle to the period before the translation: a poor blind woman had her sight restored through Edward's intervention; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 6. For the emergence of saintly rumors as a result of a missing body, see Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 83. For cults initiated by popular devotion rather than ecclesiastical imperative, see Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 53-58. David Rollason has argued that unregulated saints' cults could be dangerous for king and Church: popular cults like Edward's needed to be harnessed by lay and ecclesiastical authorities to prevent them from becoming subversive; see "Relic-cults as Royal Policy," 99-101.

⁹⁰ This debate may have continued past May 979: the fact that Edward's feast day was entered and then erased from two early ecclesiastical calendars may indicate that reverence for the king was initially controversial. See Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xxi-xxii; and below, n.104.

⁹¹ This was not the case with the ætheling Alfred and Harold Harefoot, whose bodies were eventually recovered and provided with honorable burials. But these later examples demonstrate that the denigration of royal bodies was considered a viable, if unsavory, political tactic. See above, Chapter 4.

⁹² See for example Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 118.

⁹³ "Conspicuus atque electus rex"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 138-39. "Heofonlic sanct"; ASC DE 979.

Despite these characterizations, it is revealing that Edward was not brought to an established royal necropolis but to the women's community at Shaftesbury Abbey.⁹⁴ The nunnery had been founded by Alfred the Great and retained its close connections with the West Saxon royal house through the following century, but it did not possess a royal mausoleum before 979 and no additional kings were buried there after Edward.⁹⁵ It is surely significant that Edward was not brought to Winchester, where earlier West Saxon kings were entombed, or to Glastonbury, where his father Edgar lay.⁹⁶ It is improbable that distance was a major consideration, for although Shaftesbury was closest to Wareham, Winchester and Glastonbury were also nearby.⁹⁷ The deciding factor was more likely the nuns' own desire to possess Edward's remains, for they were early and vocal patrons of the king's cult and must have made a concerted effort to acquire the corpse.⁹⁸ Yet the body was not immediately buried inside the foundation: whereas Anglo-Saxon kings were normally interred in intramural tombs, Edward was buried outside the church, where he remained until he

⁹⁴ Barbara Yorke has shown that tenth-century kings were typically buried in male monasteries, making Edward's burial at a nunnery exceptional. It may be relevant, however, that Æthelred's older brother, who died in infancy, was buried at the royal nunnery at Romsey. See Yorke, *Nunneries*, 116 and 171.

⁹⁵ The history of Shaftesbury Abbey has been recently summarized in Foot, *Veiled Women*, 165-77, and discussed in Yorke, *Nunneries*, especially 76-77 and 171-74. Before it acquired Edward's remains, the only royal corpse at Shaftesbury belonged to Ælfgifu, the wife of King Edmund of Wessex, whose name was included in the Old English list of saints' resting places; see Foot, *Veiled Women*, 165-66 and 169; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 137-38; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 170.

⁹⁶ Glastonbury would have been poised to become an important mausoleum, housing the tombs of Edgar (d.975) and his father, Edmund (d.946). However, Eadwig (d.959), Edgar's brother and predecessor, was buried at Winchester's New Minster, with Alfred (d.899) and Edward the Elder (d.924); Eadred (d.955), Edgar's uncle, was buried at Old Minster with earlier generations of West Saxon kings. In the eleventh century, regular royal burial resumed at Old Minster: Æthelred buried his oldest son there in 1014 and may have intended to be entombed there himself, had a Danish siege not kept his body in London; Cnut (d.1035), Harthacnut (d.1042), and Emma (d.1052) would also be buried at Old Minster in the following decades.

⁹⁷ Shaftesbury was about twenty miles from Wareham; Winchester and Glastonbury were each approximately thirty miles away. But for the possibility that Shaftesbury was simply the most convenient location at the time of Edward's translation, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 170.

⁹⁸ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 169-71; Foot, *Veiled Women*, 170; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 171-72; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 109-10. A parallel may be found after Edgar's death, when Dunstan lobbied successfully to bring the king's body to Glastonbury; see Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Burial," 42; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 114-15.

was translated into an indoor shrine in 1001.⁹⁹ When compounded with the fact that Shaftesbury, though a prestigious royal nunnery, was not an established royal burial place, this extramural interment suggests that the 979 translation was something of a compromise.¹⁰⁰ Although Edward was provided a consecrated burial at a monastery closely associated with the West Saxon royal dynasty, and although the movement and burial of his remains was probably a high-profile ceremonial affair, his body was segregated from the tombs of his immediate predecessors and more distant ancestors. Even as his obliteration was reversed, Edward's body was kept separate from the legitimizing remains of earlier kings.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the fact that a saintly royal intercessor did not become the focus of a later dynastic necropolis may indicate that there was some residual uneasiness about Edward's status as a martyred king. Perhaps his successors feared that his memory would overshadow theirs; indeed, Cnut was apparently wary of the political ramifications of having a thriving West Saxon cult center at Shaftesbury.¹⁰²

Any ambiguity about Edward's status when he was brought to Shaftesbury in 979 dissipated in the following decades, however. By the time his relics were elevated in 1001, his cult was being actively promoted by Æthelred, who encouraged this translation and, in a grant to the monastery issued that same year, explicitly referred to Edward as a saint and martyr.¹⁰³ Edward's mass day was widely celebrated by the turn

⁹⁹ For intramural burial as a royal prerogative, see Deliyannis, "Church Burial in Anglo-Saxon England."

¹⁰⁰ This is suggested by Yorke, *Nunneries*, 171.

¹⁰¹ As Barbara Yorke postulates, Edward's burial at a nunnery, in proximity to only female relatives, "could be seen as something of a slight to Edward's claims to the throne, and a reflection of the arguments of Æthelred's faction that Edward was not a true ætheling"; *Nunneries*, 171.

¹⁰² For Cnut's tentative patronage, see Foot, *Veiled Women*, 175; and below, Chapter 6.

¹⁰³ The charter (S 899) granted Bradford-on-Avon to Shaftesbury, for the safe keeping of their relics in times of Viking invasion: the grant was made in honor of "Shaftesbury's saint, namely my brother Edward" [sancto suo, germano scilicet meo Edwardo] to protect "the relics of the blessed martyr and of the other saints" [beati martiris ceterorumque sanctorum reliquiis]. On the 1001 elevation and charter, see Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xix and 12-13; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 156-57; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 343-44 n.373. See also Thacker, "Oswald and His Communities," 248-49 for the distinct pre- and post-1001 phases of Edward's cult.

of the century, with numerous early ecclesiastical calendars listing Edward's anniversary.¹⁰⁴ But perhaps the most significant result of the reclassification of the murder as a martyrdom was the shift in the mode of discourse used to describe the king's reign and death. Once Edward was recognized as a saint, the killers could no longer be righteous men cleansing the realm of tyranny but were now enemies of Christianity; the assassination was no longer a political necessity but a cold-blooded assault on God's anointed. The conceptualization of the assassination as a passion also forced a comparison between the way saintly relics should be honored and the way that Edward's body was treated: the denial of royal burial was not merely an insult to the earthly ruler but an affront to a martyr whose relics deserved a shrine.¹⁰⁵ This final point was implicit in the Latin accounts of Edward's assassination, but it was more forcefully articulated in another contemporary *vita*: Abbo of Fleury's life of Edmund the Martyr, king of East Anglia.¹⁰⁶ Edmund had been killed by Vikings more than a century earlier, but although his cult began to flourish soon after his martyrdom, the earliest extant accounts of his sanctity were produced in the decade after Edward's death.¹⁰⁷ It is surely significant that the bulk of Abbo's narrative was dedicated to and derived from the oral accounts of Archbishop Dunstan, one of Edward's most persistent supporters, and that it was written at the instigation of the monks of

¹⁰⁴ Seventeen pre-1100 calendars included Edward, and seven of these were produced before the Norman Conquest. In two early calendars, Edward's feast was entered and then expunged: one of these was the Bosworth Psalter, where the entry was entered and erased at the very beginning of the eleventh century; according to Christine Fell, "it must have been a controversial entry." The mandatory celebration of Edward's mass day was stipulated in V Æthelred 16: Patrick Wormald argues that the clause was an interpolation added during Cnut's reign, while Christine Fell regards the law as a codification of existing practice, postulating that Shaftesbury and New Minster Winchester were already celebrating Edward's feast day. See Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 53-54; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 343-44; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, xxi-xxii; and below, Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁵ This shift is implied by the ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978): "Those who did not want to bow to his living body before, they now humbly bow on their knees to his dead bones" [þa ðe noldon ær to his libbendan lichaman onbugan, þa nu eadmodlice on cneowum gebugað to his dæda banum]; quotation from D.

¹⁰⁶ For Abbo's background and a discussion of the sources, objectives, historicity, and transmission of the his passion of Edmund, see Gransden, "Abbo's '*Passio Sancti Eadmundi*.'"

¹⁰⁷ The life has been dated between 985 and 987, the years during which Abbo was at Ramsey. See Lapidge, *Byrhtferth*, xxii-xxv, with Abbo's influence on Byrhtferth discussed at xxviii; Mostert, "Edmund," 161.

Ramsey, who were early and enthusiastic advocates of Edward's cult.¹⁰⁸ The promulgation of Abbo's text coincided with an increasing interest in Edward's sanctity, and his description of Edmund's abused corpse anticipated the accounts of Edward's remains that would be produced in the following decade. Abbo's emphasis on the Vikings' desecration and concealment of Edmund's body must have reflected the interests of an audience coping with the recent royal assassination.¹⁰⁹

Little is known of Edmund's fourteen-year reign aside from his death at the hands of Vikings in 869. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle noted simply that Edmund died in battle against Scandinavian invaders, but Abbo presented a stylized hagiographical account designed to celebrate the Christian king's stalwart resistance to heathenism.¹¹⁰ Like Edward, Abbo's Edmund was killed by a group of enemy attackers, but the two kings' deaths were otherwise dissimilar: where Edward was ambushed by his countrymen, Edmund willingly offered himself to the Viking invaders; where Edward was killed quickly and secretly, Edmund was extensively ridiculed and tortured before being beheaded. Yet both royal bodies were concealed by the killers, recovered by the faithful, buried unworthily at first, and later translated to honorable shrines. In Edmund's case, Abbo reported that the Vikings abandoned the king's mutilated body

¹⁰⁸ Byrhtferth was a monk at Ramsey, where Edward's cult—as well as the cults of other royal martyrs—flourished between 978 and 992. The request for a *life* of Edmund is consistent with the community's increased interest in royal martyrs during the period after Edward's death. For Byrhtferth at Ramsey, see Lapidge, *Byrhtferth*, xxviii-xxix; for interest in royal martyrs at Ramsey, see Thacker, "Oswald and His Communities," 245-51.

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Cubitt applies this logic to other cults of assassinated royalty (but not to the cult of Edmund); see "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 67; and compare Keynes, "Declining Reputation," 229-30. Aside from the early regicides described by Bede, nearly all of the extant accounts of murdered Anglo-Saxon royalty were produced after Edward's death; Edward's death must have been fresh in Abbo's mind when he wrote his account of Edmund. See Fell, "Edward and the Anglo-Saxon Hagiographical Tradition," 3-4 and 10-11; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 67. For Abbo's reliance on Late Antique sources for his description of Edmund's death, see Frank, "Rite of the Blood-Eagle," 341-43.

¹¹⁰ ASC A 870 (*recte* 869) reads: "In this year the Viking army rode over Mercia into East Anglia. And in that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory and slew the king and entirely overrode that land" [Her rad se here ofer Mierce innan Eastengle... 7 þy wintra Eadmund cyning him wiþ feaht, 7 þa Deniscan sige namon 7 þone cyning ofslogon 7 þæt lond all geeodon]. See also ASC DE 870 and C 871 (all *recte* 869). For Abbo's depiction of Edmund as a Christian hero, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 93-95.

but took his head into the woods, where they hid it in the undergrowth so that the English could not give him a decent burial.¹¹¹ After a lengthy search, Edmund's subjects discovered the dismembered head when it miraculously called out to them. The people reunited the two pieces of the king's body and buried it, building a small church over the grave; some years later, when the Vikings had gone, they translated the remains into an appropriately magnificent foundation.

Abbo devoted a good deal of text to the Vikings' abuse of Edmund and the various indignities they inflicted upon the corpse. The king was beaten, whipped, and shot before being decapitated; afterwards, the trunk of his body was left unburied in a field, and his head was hidden in the woods "to be devoured by birds and wild beasts."¹¹² The treatment of both parts of the corpse would have recalled the punishments prescribed for criminals and excommunicants: offenders were sometimes mutilated and left as carrion; sometimes their heads were buried, displayed, or discarded some distance from the rest of their body.¹¹³ These allusions would surely not have been lost on a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon audience, but Abbo focused less on the desecration of the royal body than he did on the initial lack of a decent burial. In his account, the Danes' concealment of Edmund's head—which, Abbo noted, had been anointed with sacramental oil—was explicitly motivated by a desire to deprive

¹¹¹ Another example of Vikings absconding with an English head appears in the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*, which claimed that Ealdorman Byrhtnoth was beheaded by his enemies at the Battle of Maldon (991); the Vikings kept the head as a trophy, and Byrhtnoth's body was buried with a ball of wax above his shoulders. See *Liber Eliensis*, 136; Owen-Crocker, "Mutilation, Decapitation, and the Unburied Dead," 97.

¹¹² "Aut auibus et feris deuorandum"; Abbo, *Edmund*, 80. On decapitation in Old English literature, see Owen-Crocker, "Mutilation, Decapitation, and Unburied Dead," 93-99.

¹¹³ Compare Catherine Cubitt's assertion that the decapitation and concealment "may have non-Christian origins"; "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 64. Exposure of bodies was illustrated in Lantfred's *Life* of Swithun, composed in the 970s; see Lapidge, *Swithun*, 312-13 and above, Chapter 4 n.58. On the relationship between this episode and Old English law, see Whitelock, "Wulfstan Cantor"; O'Brien O'Keefe, "Body and Law," 225-29; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 125-28 and 370; and above, Chapter 4. For execution by decapitation and the separate burial of heads and bodies, see Reynolds, "Definition and Ideology," 35-37; Buckberry and Hadley, "Walkington Wold," 312-20; Hayman and Reynolds, "42-54 London Road, Staines," 234-39. In this context, Byrhtferth's statement that Edward was saved from the fate of "shameful and villainous" [probrosus et facinorosus] men probably refers to dishonorable criminal burial; *Vita Oswaldi*, 140-41.

the king of a royal tomb:

They hid the head, throwing it as far as possible among the dense thickets of brambles, attempting to accomplish this with every cunning, so that the most holy body of the martyr should not be brought with its head to an honest sepulcher by the Christians for honorable burial.¹¹⁴

Abbo remarked again on the Vikings' motivation, just a few lines later:

All [the English] who possessed true wisdom were confident that those worshippers of strange doctrine, out of envy for our faith, had carried away the head of the martyr, which they had probably hidden not very far away in the dense thicket, and had left concealed by the coarse undergrowth to be devoured by birds and wild beasts.¹¹⁵

In response to the Vikings' determination to hide the head and leave the corpse unburied, the English sought to restore the body and provide their king a respectful funeral,

making a diligent search so that, once they discovered the head of their king and martyr, they might join it to the rest of the body and bury it with fitting honor, according to their ability.¹¹⁶

Although it is certainly conceivable that a band of ravaging Vikings would have left the body of their enemy dismembered and exposed, Abbo suggested a precise ideological motive for the desecration: the killers sought to mock the Christian religion by making it impossible for the king to receive an honorable funeral. This interpretation reflects the sensibilities of a late tenth-century audience more reliably

¹¹⁴ "Inter densa ueprium futecta longius proiectum occuluerunt, id omni sagacitate elaborantes ne a Christianis... sacratissimum corpus martyris cum capite pro tumultantium modulo honestae traderetur sepulturae"; Abbo, *Edmund*, 80. Earlier in the same passage, Abbo wrote that the head "had not been anointed with the oil of sinners but with the sacramental oil of mystery" [non impingauerat peccatoris oleum sed certi misterii sacramentum]; *Edmund*, 79.

¹¹⁵ "Pro certo etenim omnibus uere sapientibus inerat quod alienae sectae cultores, inuidendo nostrae fidei, sustulissent caput martyris, quod non longius infra densitatem saltus abscondissent, aut uili cespite obrutum aut auibus et feris deuorandum"; Abbo, *Edmund*, 80.

¹¹⁶ "Diligenti inquisitione satagentes ut caput sui regis et martyris inuentum reliquo corpori unirent et iuxta suam facultatem condigno honore reconderent"; Abbo, *Edmund*, 80. Earlier, the trunk of the body was described as "placed under the sky" [positum sub diuo]; Abbo, *Edmund*, 80.

than the professed goals of the ninth-century raiders, and it accordingly sheds light on contemporaries' understanding of Edward's more recent missing body. By denying his subjects the opportunity to provide their king with an honorable funeral, Edward's killers, like Edmund's, demonstrated their disregard for the respectful treatment of the Christian dead. The assassins were no better than heathen Vikings.

Yet the Vikings, from Abbo's perspective, didn't know any better. As bloodthirsty and barbaric invaders jealous of the Christian faith, it was only natural that they would assault churches and kings, targets which epitomized English civilization. Although they showed a special interest in Edmund's anointed head, they were concerned only with desecrating his body as an insult; they were not intentionally attacking the institution of kingship or debunking the efficacy of royal anointing.¹¹⁷ Edward's killers, by contrast, were high-status English nobles and nominal Christians, who should have witnessed the king's coronation and pledged their fidelity to him.¹¹⁸ Byrhtferth's assertion that Edward, "instructed in divine law and strong and sturdy in body," sat calmly on his horse while the killers surrounded him implies that he rightfully believed that he had nothing to fear from these men, for it would have been unthinkable for Christian magnates to ambush an anointed ruler and slay him in cold blood.¹¹⁹ Unlike Edmund's Vikings, these killers understood that a royal consecration should have obliged them to protect their king from harm. As cruel as the Vikings were, they had professed no loyalty to Edmund and were no doubt

¹¹⁷ There is no evidence that the historical Edmund had been anointed, and while this textual silence does not necessarily mean that no consecration had occurred, Abbo's reference to the king's anointing surely reflected his understanding of kingship in the later tenth century; it may even have been intended to force a clearer comparison with Edward. On the description of anointing in Abbo's account, see Gransden, "Abbo's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*," 47-50.

¹¹⁸ The statement in the ASC that the killers would not bow to Edward during his lifetime may indicate that they refused to pay him allegiance or recognize him as king; Byrhtferth put forth a similar assertion. However, if the killers were in fact high-ranking members of society, it is likely that they participated in Edward's election and consecration and publicly swore their loyalty to him. For Byrhtferth's account of the early resistance to Edward's accession, see *Vita Oswaldi*, 136-39; Yorke, "Edward, King and Martyr," 106.

¹¹⁹ "Doctus diuina lege... et robustus erat corpore et durus"; Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 138-39.

ignorant of the implications of royal anointing. Edward's killers could claim no such defense, making their actions all the more insidious and justifying the Latin authors' impulse to compare them to Judas, Pilate, and the Jews.¹²⁰

The hagiographical context of these works demanded that the king's sanctity and divine intervention would thwart the assassins' attempts to suppress their victims' bodies. Although the killers cut short the rulers' earthly lives, God gave them eternal life in heaven; although the killers tried to stifle their memory by hiding their bodies (or body parts), God caused their remains and their sanctity to be revealed on earth. This theme was not unique to these two examples, for the recovery and subsequent reverence of kings' bodies had long been a feature of Anglo-Saxon royal saints' lives. According to Bede, King Oswald's dismembered corpse was displayed as a trophy by his enemies before it was recovered and enshrined by his subjects; and according to an anonymous hagiographer of the early eighth century, King Edwin's remains had been buried after a battle in a makeshift grave, where they remained until their location was revealed through a miraculous vision.¹²¹ Yet the desire to see rulers honorably interred was not limited to hagiographical discourse, and the reported determination of Harold Harefoot's supporters to retrieve their king's body and bury it—surely against the wishes of their new ruler—suggests that this impulse constituted more than a narrative trope.¹²² In Abbo's account, it was the discovery of Edmund's head which finally

¹²⁰ See Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi*, 138-41; Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, 5.

¹²¹ Bede provided the following account of King Oswald's (d.642) dismemberment: "the king who slew him ordered his head and his hands to be severed from his body and hung on stakes" [caput et manus cum brachiis a corpore praecisas iussit rex, qui occiderat, in stipitibus suspendi]; *HE* III.12. In the anonymous Whitby *Life of Gregory the Great* composed between 704 and 714, Edwin's (d.633) burial place was revealed in a dream to a monk, who recovered the bones and brought them to Whitby; Colgrave, *Life of Gregory*, 100-05. Oswald and Edwin were both killed in battle by Penda of Mercia and both kings' heads ended up in different places than their bodies; Barbara Yorke has postulated that Edwin, like Oswald, was decapitated and dismembered after battle. See Yorke, *Nunneries*, 119. Similar themes appeared in the lives of earlier royal martyrs; see Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 60-66.

¹²² Assuming, of course, that this example was not a narrative trope in itself. The precise location of Harold Harefoot's grave in the work of Ralph de Diceto, however, suggests that there was at least a grave thought to belong to Harold by the twelfth century. See above, Chapter 4.

permitted a restoration of the social order: just as the royal body had been deprived of its head, the population had been deprived of its king; it was only after Edmund's corpse had been reunited and translated into a glorious intramural tomb that the status quo could be reestablished.¹²³ By analogy, the discovery and reburial of Edward's body was vital to restoring a social order which had been disrupted by his assassination.¹²⁴ The importance of physical restoration is reflected in the textual focus on the successful recovery and appropriate burial of Edward's corpse, but it may also explain Æthelred's delayed consecration. Although the young king was elected immediately after his brother's death, he was not anointed until after the translation to Shaftesbury, and Edward's burial may have been the event which allowed plans for the consecration to proceed.¹²⁵

Whether Archbishop Dunstan refused to consecrate a new ruler until the previous king was honorably buried, whether Edward's subjects were clamoring to pay their king the respect they believed he deserved, or whether Æthelred was determined to give his brother a royal funeral, the fact that there was an effort to recover Edward's body after so long an interval attests to the perceived value of the royal corpse. The killers certainly recognized the body as an important symbolic object which might undermine their ambitions, and their impulse to hide the royal

¹²³ "Transtulit cum magna gloria"; "sacrosanctum tumulum"; Abbo, *Edmund*, 82. In Abbo's account, there was no reference to the royal succession in relation to Edmund's violent death; the restoration of order was signaled by the expulsion of the Vikings and the provision of an appropriate burial for the saintly king.

¹²⁴ Philippe Buc has characterized royal funerals as "a ritualized crisis. Their ultimate function is the restoration of order; their meaning is to express the continuity of power despite mortality"; *Dangers of Ritual*, 83. For discussion of this function in later royal funerals, see Binski, *Medieval Death*, 60-61; and for kings' funerals as the moment where the royal dignity was transferred to a successor, see Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 409-37.

¹²⁵ According to Simon Keynes, "it is not impossible that it was the rediscovery of the body in February 979, nearly a year after the murder, and his re-burial 'with great honour' at Shaftesbury, that finally settled the matter and set in motion the train of events that led to Æthelred's coronation"; *Diplomas*, 173-74 and 233 n.7, quotation at 174. David Dumville, by contrast, argues that Æthelred was consecrated as soon as possible after Edward's death—not fourteen months later; see "Edward the Martyr." I follow Keynes, however, as his interpretation is consistent with the pattern of converging royal funerals and consecrations, which I have discussed above, Chapter 3. See also above, n.2.

corpse suggests that they were attempting to neutralize its impact on the ensuing political debate while protecting themselves from the consequences of their regicide. Had they displayed the vanquished body, they might have exacerbated the existing factionalism and irrevocably turned public sentiment against their cause; had they declared the homicide and brought the remains to be buried in the open, they could have been condemned to death for betraying and killing their lord. Concealing the corpse would surely have seemed the safest option for the perpetrators and for the new regime.

Nevertheless, the killers seem to have misjudged how the king's disappearance would be received by contemporaries. Even if they had anticipated that the hidden body would eventually be found and honored, they must not have expected the outpouring of cultic reverence that followed the regicide, for although there was a long history of royal sanctity in pre-Conquest England, the development of Edward's cult was by no means inevitable.¹²⁶ Given that Edward was the first West Saxon king to be deemed a saint, the scale of his cult and the speed at which it developed were remarkable.¹²⁷ In the late tenth century, most Anglo-Saxon royal saints were either conversion-era rulers or monastic women; Edmund of East Anglia was an important exception, but he died resisting heathen aggressors—following the example of Edwin,

¹²⁶ For royal sanctity as an achieved rather than an ascribed status, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 76-77; Nelson, "Royal Saints," 72. This is in contrast to William Chaney's (widely refuted) argument in his *Cult of Kingship* that Anglo-Saxon kings, even after widespread conversion to Christianity, were thought to possess extraordinary powers and that the cult of royal saints evolved directly from pagan sacral kingship.

¹²⁷ Although there was a long tradition of murdered royal saints, Edward was the only West Saxon king; and the most recent attested murdered royal saint before Edward was Wigstan, who died in 849. This interval and the novelty of a West Saxon royal saint make it impossible, I think, to accept David Rollason's assertion that there was "a consistent tradition of the veneration of murdered royal saints, originating in the seventh century, fostered in Mercia and Northumbria in the late eighth and early ninth centuries and transmitted to Wessex in the tenth"; see "Murdered Royal Saints," 1-13 with quotation at 12. Of the West Saxon royal saints who lived before Edward, most were monastic women. A possible exception was Edgar, whom William of Malmesbury described as saintly in the twelfth century, but there is no evidence that the king was revered as a saint in the decades immediately following his death; see William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, 134-35; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.160.2-3; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 140.

Oswald, and other martyred kings.¹²⁸ Edward, ambushed and killed by his own Christian nobles, represented a new model of saintly kingship, and this development is significant to our understanding of contemporary reactions to the assassination.¹²⁹ The king's swift designation as a martyr was not an automatic response to regicide; rather, it reflected his subjects' need to rationalize a particularly scandalous royal murder and explain it in the context of a broader Christian cosmology.¹³⁰

Yet whatever distress his assassination may have inspired among his loyal subjects, outrage alone would not have been sufficient cause for cultic reverence. Instead, I would conclude that claims of sanctity were a direct answer to the attempted denigration of the king's memory. The killers aimed to construct a negative legacy for Edward by portraying him as an illegitimate or tyrannical ruler, and the deprivation of a public royal funeral was a significant element of this propagandistic effort.¹³¹ By instigating the retrieval and reburial of his body, Edward's supporters sought to reestablish his earthly status and allow him to be memorialized as a true king. But while interment at a prestigious royal nunnery may not have been enough to counter all the accusations leveled against the dead ruler, sanctity trumped any claims of

¹²⁸ On the model of royal sanctity adopted by Oswald and Edwin, see Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 81-83 (but compare his description of Edmund at 91).

¹²⁹ Furthermore, interest in the regicide led not only to Edward's sanctification but to the revival of cults of other martyred royals; see Thacker, "Oswald and his Communities," 247-53; Fell, "Anglo-Saxon Hagiographic Tradition"; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 67. Murdered royal saints before Edward, according to their *vitae*, were typically targeted by individual, vilified antagonists who would sometimes order a subordinate to carry out the assassination. *Ælfhryth* fits this pattern in the *Passio*, but this was a self-consciously hagiographical work which accomplished its aim of demonstrating Edward's sanctity by drawing upon established narrative models; the anonymous figures who ambushed Edward in the ASC and *Vita Oswaldi* were not modeled after such generic killers, no doubt because the authors were commenting on recent well-known events, not providing hagiographical accounts of the assassination (although hagiographical motifs became more prominent in Byrhtferth's narrative once he began relating the recovery of the body). For consistent motifs in the *vitae* of murdered royals, see Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 13; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 66-79.

¹³⁰ For the saint's cult as a way to cope with Edward's regicide, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 167. For the shock produced by the murder of an anointed king, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 59. For early medieval conceptions of scandal as a shocking disruption of divine order, see de Jong, "Power and Humility," 36-39.

¹³¹ Compare with the examples in Chapter 4.

irregular accession or improper rule. If God saw fit to acknowledge Edward's sanctity, his reign must have been legitimate and just. The martyr's cult thus appears to have grown out of the impulse to repair Edward's earthly reputation: it was not enough to simply restore his royal status; that status now needed to be enhanced with sanctity. Although it was not until the 990s that we have firm evidence of cultic activity at Shaftesbury, and although Edward's universal recognition as a saint likely dates to the elevation of his relics in 1001, I would postulate that rumors of his saintliness had emerged by the time of the 979 translation, catalyzed not by the murder itself but by the abuse of the royal body and memory.¹³² Edward's supporters and opponents each manipulated the remains in order to construct a particular legacy for the dead man. Both factions appropriated recognizable, signifying modes of burial to make their case, with one side attempting to recast the king's body as a shamed corpse and the other trying to transform the disgraced remains into proof of royal legitimacy or even saintly relics. Yet although the body was central to the construction of Edward's posthumous identity, it was its absence which permitted the promotion of these competing characterizations. Once the corpse was respectfully restored to the public gaze, the debate was closed: although Edward might not have been universally loved or revered, there could no longer be any doubt that he was worthy of respectful, consecrated burial. Still, the humiliation of his body—an inversion of earthly and divine order so familiar in Christian history—was continually recalled and provided the impetus for hagiographical readings of the assassination in the following decades. His reign would now be reflected through a lens of sanctity, his body less a source of legitimizing dynastic memory than an instrument for communication with the divine. In the months immediately following his death, however, before his sanctity was widely acknowledged, Edward's body was regarded as a political object which had the

¹³² The earliest reported miracles occurred at Edward's tomb c.990; see Yorke, *Nunneries*, 172.

power to restore an upset social hierarchy and determine how the king would be remembered by future generations. It was these considerations that inspired widespread interest in the royal remains and paved the way for the development of a popular and enduring martyr's cult.

Chapter 6. Conquered Bodies: Cnut, William, and Royal Remains

When Edward the Martyr was killed in 978, the scandal that accompanied the assassination of an anointed king was mitigated by the accession of his brother Æthelred, a legitimate member of the West Saxon royal line. Despite the political animosity which had pitted Edward's supporters against his brother's, Æthelred was acclaimed "with much joy among the English witan," gaining the throne without any apparent opposition.¹ In the long run, Edward's regicide did little to upset the political and social order of the realm: those responsible for the coup retained their wealth and status, and the kingdom passed to a West Saxon ætheling with an impeccable royal pedigree.² Æthelred may have gained the realm as a result of violent deposition, but at the time of his accession, he was apparently not held responsible for his brother's death or regarded as an illicit usurper.³ Rather, his election promoted reconciliation among political factions and his consecration reasserted the idea of a divinely sanctioned monarchy in the wake of regicide.

The situation was considerably different for the conquerors who ruled England in the eleventh century: Svein Forkbeard, who drove Æthelred into exile in 1014; his son Cnut, who defeated Edmund Ironside at the Battle of Assandun in 1016; and William of Normandy, who killed Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Each of these regime changes was the product of a military victory by foreign invaders, and English commentators accordingly depicted these kings as usurpers who had illicitly seized the realm from Anglo-Saxon monarchs. Such characterizations would have been reinforced by the new kings' initially aggressive treatment of the conquered populace, for Cnut executed, exiled, or disenfranchised a number of

¹ "Mid micclum gefean Angelcynnes witan"; ASC DE 979 (*recte* 978), quotation from D.

² See Stafford, "Royal Policy and Action," 17-37; Fleming, *Kings and Lords*, 38-39.

³ See Keynes, *Diplomas*, 173.

prominent Anglo-Saxon aristocrats during his first year as king, while Svein and William continued ravaging the English countryside for months after they had come to power. Furthermore, while Svein's early death minimized his impact on English government, Cnut and William each implemented significant administrative changes that signaled clear breaks from earlier West Saxon regimes. Yet despite acceding to the kingdom by force and introducing new methods of exercising royal power, Cnut and William ultimately gained the allegiance of their new subjects and enjoyed long, secure reigns.⁴ One factor in their success must have been their ability to portray themselves as rightful kings with lawful hereditary claims to the English throne, for from the time of their accessions, both men heavily stressed their continuity with earlier Anglo-Saxon kings—identifying West Saxon rulers as their kinsmen, participating in well-established royal rituals, and renewing the laws of their predecessors.⁵ According to their own propaganda, Cnut and William were not usurpers or conquerors but legitimate kings who were rightful heirs to the Anglo-Saxon royal past.

Yet however forcefully the conquerors asserted that they were lawful monarchs, they did not forget that they had displaced native rulers and they made considerable efforts to control the memories of previous regimes. In some cases, Cnut and William neutralized the legacy of earlier dynasties by appropriating the tombs of legitimizing predecessors and harnessing their memories for their own political advantage. As I have argued above, Cnut's patronage of Edmund Ironside's tomb and William's cultivation of the Confessor's memory created an impression of continuity in the wake of military conquest. But these legitimizing bodies were not the only political remains the foreign kings had to consider. Even as they forged relationships

⁴ Cnut reigned for nearly nineteen years, from 1016 through 1035; William reigned for twenty years, from 1066 through 1086. Both apparently died of natural causes.

⁵ These efforts are discussed above, Chapter 3. See also Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 144-45.

with select predecessors, Cnut and William were confronted with problematic corpses that might draw attention to the exceptional nature of their accessions or provide focal points for political opposition. At the beginning of William's reign, the most troublesome set of remains belonged to Harold Godwinson. Despite claims that Harold had come to the throne illicitly, the first generation of Norman apologists was unsure how the dead ruler should be remembered; they condemned him as a usurping tyrant, yet they acknowledged his royal anointing and occasionally called him *rex*, even after the Conquest.⁶ Harold's ambiguous status must have been especially pronounced directly after Hastings, when his body effectively vanished. Although his mangled corpse was recovered on the battlefield, it was neither displayed as a trophy nor given a public royal funeral. Rather than allowing the defeated body to serve as a reminder of the recent political and military upheaval, William deflected attention from his rival and the circumstances of his death by removing his remains entirely from the public eye.

Where William had only one controversial corpse to manage, Cnut had to cope with a wider range of problematic bodies. In addition to the remains of his conquered rivals, Edmund Ironside and Æthelred, Cnut showed particular concern for bodies that recalled his Viking past. His father, Svein—buried in England after decades of ravaging the kingdom—must have provided the most immediate reminder of this violent heritage, but Cnut was also concerned with saintly victims of Viking violence, like King Edmund the Martyr, whose relics he singled out for glorification. Also troublesome were the remains of recent West Saxon royal saints, especially Edward the Martyr and Edith of Wilton, whose cults had been promoted heavily by Æthelred and whose relics might remind religious supplicants of the native dynasty that had so recently been supplanted. Where Edward the Confessor and Harold Godwinson had no

⁶ See Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda."

sons to contest William's authority, Cnut must have feared that Æthelred's adult children or Edmund Ironside's young sons might someday return and claim the kingdom. Given his dynastic ambitions, Cnut's careful control of earlier royal corpses preempted accusations that he was an illicit usurper who had deposed the legitimate West Saxon line. By cultivating important tombs while deflecting attention from more troublesome corpses, Cnut offered a revised history of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy in which he was the latest in a line of lawful English rulers.

This chapter investigates how these two conquerors used problematic bodies to their political advantage during times of dynastic transition; I propose that the manipulation of these corpses was meant to obscure the abrupt and bloody changes of regime and promulgate the idea that Cnut and William were legitimate heirs to the kingdom. For the most part, these efforts appear to have been successful, as controversial bodies were apparently not used to rally support against the foreign kings. However, the fact that both conquerors felt compelled to minimize or appropriate these physical mementos of earlier regimes hints at concerns about how volatile political corpses might affect the security of their reigns.

William of Normandy and the Body of Harold Godwinson

When Harold Godwinson was killed at the Battle of Hastings, his despoiled corpse was abandoned in the general carnage. According to William of Poitiers, Harold's remains were discovered among the dead "deprived of all signs of status" and so badly mangled that they had to be identified by his mistress: "he was recognized by certain characteristics rather than by his face."⁷ As the first English king in more than a century to die in battle, the image of Harold's broken body must have contrasted

⁷ "Carens omni decore"; "Quibusdam signis, nequaquam facie, recognitus est." William of Poitiers, *GG*, 140-41.

sharply with his subjects' memory of the royal anointing he had received just a few months earlier. Textual descriptions of Hastings reinforced the gruesome, un-kingly nature of Harold's demise, and within twenty years of the battle, his death was widely attributed to a chance arrow to the head or eye—a manifestation of divine justice against a royal pretender, according to Norman apologists.⁸ Yet none of the earliest chroniclers specified how Harold had died, and there was no consensus among these or later sources concerning the fate of his remains.⁹ William of Malmesbury maintained that Harold's body was granted to his mother, while William of Poitiers said that her request for the corpse was denied; the chronicle of Waltham Abbey claimed that its monks provided Harold with an honorable burial soon after the battle, while Orderic Vitalis reported that the Conqueror had him buried on the seashore; and the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* imagined that his remains were interred on top of a cliff, in a stone cairn with an inscribed tombstone.¹⁰ In addition to these conflicting accounts, there were persistent legends of Harold's survival and preternaturally long life, and by the later Middle Ages, the abbeys at Waltham and Chester each claimed to possess his body.¹¹ The considerable discrepancies among these sources confirm that

⁸ The earliest textual references to Harold's death by an arrow to the eye appeared in the Montecassino chronicle of Amatus, probably composed between 1079 and 1081. William of Malmesbury reported that he was killed by an arrow to the head, shot from some distance; he also maintained that a Norman soldier slashed Harold's leg after he had been hit—a dishonorable blow that incurred the Conqueror's anger. The Bayeux Tapestry seems to depict Harold dying with an arrow to the eye (a tradition later followed by Henry of Huntingdon), while the Chronicle of Battle Abbey stated simply that Harold was killed by a "chance blow" [fortuito ictu]. See William of Malmesbury, *GR* iii.242.3 and iii.243; Searle, *Battle Chronicle*, 38-39; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 71-72; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, vi.30; Bernstein, "Blinding of Harold," 49-64. On Amatus' chronicle, see Amatus, *History of the Normans*, 1-11 and 46; Barlow, *Carmen*, lxxxiv; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 136 n.3.

⁹ Neither the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, William of Poitiers, Orderic Vitalis, nor John of Worcester mentioned how Harold died.

¹⁰ See William of Malmesbury, *GR* iii.247.1; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 140-41; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 50-57; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 178-79; Barlow, *Carmen*, 34-35.

¹¹ The *Vita Haroldi* (probably composed between c.1204 and 1206) provided the most extensive account of Harold's survival, maintaining that he lived through the battle of Hastings, went on pilgrimage, and finally returned to England to live as a hermit; he was buried in Chester upon his death. For the *Vita Haroldi* and other survival legends, see Thacker, "King Harold at Chester"; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, xlvi-xlvihi; Cohen, "Survival Legends," 148-51; Fellows-Jensen, "Harold II's Survival"; Ashdown, "Survival of Harold Godwinson."

no public memorialization occurred immediately after Hastings and that no final image of Harold had been offered through the display of his corpse. Even if he had been given a worthy burial, as some later sources professed, it is clear that he was not entombed in Westminster or in any other established royal mausoleum. Just as Cnut and Harold Harefoot had convened their first political assemblies far away from the newly buried remains of problematic predecessors, the magnates attending William's coronation would not have been distracted by the fresh grave of the king whom their new ruler had recently slain.

Given the lack of consensus among the texts produced in the decades after the Conquest, it appears that William buried his rival secretly or anonymously, removing the corpse from the public eye rather than providing any opportunity for his new subjects to formally mourn their defeated king. According to Norman interpretations, this was a fitting fate, for Harold did not deserve a royal funeral "when innumerable men remained unburied because of his excessive greed."¹² Once the battle was over, however, William would have been concerned with how a royal burial would affect his own claim to be the Confessor's rightful heir. If he provided a public funeral, he would have granted legitimacy to Harold's royal claims and undermined the case that his invasion was just; furthermore, the months between the victory at Hastings and his own consecration at Westminster may have been too chaotic for a signifying interaction with Harold's remains to sway the loyalties of the English population.¹³ Moreover, William's authority was not yet secure enough to risk the open desecration of his rival's body: unlike Harthacnut, who had sufficient political capital to imagine he could abuse his predecessor's remains without endangering his royal status, William would have risked a backlash from the dead king's supporters if he subjected

¹² "Cuius ob nimiam cupiditatem insepulti remanerent innumerabiles"; William of Poitiers, *GG*, 140-41. This logic was followed by Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 178-81.

¹³ For William's preemptive justification for the Conquest and prolonged ravaging of southern England, see Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda."

Harold's corpse to humiliation.¹⁴ This is not to suggest that the concealment of the body was not in itself a political act. By obliterating Harold's remains, William denied him the ceremonial funeral that was the prerogative of a lawful monarch while making it impossible for anyone else to capitalize on Harold's memory. Just as the concealment of Edward the Martyr's corpse prevented him from receiving the posthumous honors to which kings were entitled, the suppression of Harold's remains prevented him from being memorialized as a legitimate ruler while William was asserting his own tenuous authority.

But where Edward's body was soon discovered and given an honorable tomb, Harold's was not, and where Edward's legacy as a saintly king was quickly and firmly established once his relics were returned to the public sphere, Harold's permanently missing corpse meant that competing stories of his death and burial continued to circulate for centuries after the Conquest. The most dramatic of these later accounts claimed that Harold survived Hastings and died as a hermit many years later; others maintained that his body had been honorably entombed after the battle; and in the fourteenth century, residents of Chester proclaimed that they had unearthed Harold's incorrupt body, complete with royal regalia.¹⁵ The earliest claim to the remains, however, was asserted by Waltham Abbey, where Harold had founded a college of secular canons during the Confessor's reign.¹⁶ By the end of the twelfth century, the abbey's chronicler reported that the community requested their patron's body immediately after Hastings,

¹⁴ For the suggestion that Harold was denied consecrated burial, see Thacker, "King Harold at Chester," 155.

¹⁵ For the *Vita Haroldi* and other survival legends, see above, n.11. For the fourteenth-century exhumation, which was first recorded in a near-contemporary Welsh annal for 1332, see Thacker, "King Harold at Chester," 163-64.

¹⁶ This account was current by at least the 1120s, when William of Malmesbury recorded that Harold's mother had buried his body at Waltham with the Conqueror's permission; see *GR* iii.247.1. Harold's foundation of the college of canons was confirmed by Edward the Confessor in 1062; see Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, xxxviii-xliii and 24-39.

so that we, happy in the gift of his body, might rejoice that we have received great consolation out of his death, and that the building of a tomb in the church in our own time might be a perpetual memorial for our descendants.¹⁷

The chronicler was evidently familiar with a tomb at Waltham that purportedly belonged to Harold, but despite his insistence that the remains were openly granted to the community by the Conqueror himself, it is difficult to accept that the tomb actually contained Harold's remains.¹⁸ The conflicting early reports of Harold's fate and the political turmoil that followed Hastings make it unlikely that his body was publicly granted to Waltham for honorable interment and memorialization, as the chronicler asserted. It may be that the remains were moved to Waltham from some initial resting place sometime after the battle, although none of the extant sources mention such a translation.¹⁹ Alternatively, it is possible that William entrusted the corpse to the Waltham canons privately, allowing the community to bury their patron in hallowed ground on the understanding that the grave would remain anonymous. However, there is no evidence for either of these scenarios, and it is telling that there was no mention of Harold's body at Waltham before the twelfth century. It seems more likely that the community at Waltham, seeking a concrete connection with their royal patron, eventually produced a corpse which they identified as Harold's and cultivated a tomb

¹⁷ "Corpus ad locum quem instituit ipse remittere ut beneficio corporis exhilarati, de morte ipsius plurimam nos gaudeamus suscepisse consolationem, et posteris nostris presens in ecclesia tumuli structura perpetuum sit monumentum"; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 52-53. The *Waltham Chronicle* (or the *De inventio sancte crucis*) was composed between 1177 and 1189; *Waltham Chronicle*, xxxiii-iv.

¹⁸ The Waltham chronicler forcefully dismissed any claims that the king had survived Hastings, providing a lengthy account of how William granted the community the body and even offered to help pay for the funeral. Once the canons had recovered the remains, "They brought the body to Waltham and buried it with great honor, where, without any doubt, he has lain at rest until the present day, whatever stories men may invent that he dwelt in a cave at Canterbury and that later, when he died, was buried at Chester" [Cum magno honore corpus Waltham deductum sepelierunt, ubi usque hodie, quicquid fabulentur homines quod in rupe manserit Dorobernie et nuper defunctus sepultus sit Cestrie, pro certo quiescit Walthamie]; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 50-57 with quotation at 54-57.

¹⁹ This solution was proposed by E.A. Freeman, who attempted to reconcile the Waltham version with William of Poitiers' account by arguing that Harold was originally buried on the seashore but later moved to Waltham at the community's request. See Freeman, *Norman Conquest III*, 517-18 and 785-87.

that lent the foundation prestige—even if the body inside was not authentic.²⁰ For a chronicler who had witnessed the dissolution of Harold’s secular college in 1177, the grave of Waltham’s royal founder would have offered a direct physical link to the Anglo-Saxon royal past and lent credibility to the abbey’s own historiography.²¹

A century earlier, by contrast, it would have been in the best interest of the new Norman regime that Harold’s body receive as little attention as possible, especially among communities who would be inclined to revere him as a heroic king or even a martyr. Even if the Conqueror had entrusted the remains to an existing foundation, it is more plausible that he would have chosen a community that would be loyal to Norman interests rather than Waltham, which owed its prosperity to Harold’s patronage. William was surely aware of the potential dangers of cultivating a royal tomb. Accounts of Edward the Martyr and the ætheling Alfred which circulated after the Conquest served as reminders that Anglo-Saxon royal remains could become highly politicized objects; and the conspicuous disinterest in the Confessor’s tomb after 1066 suggests that the community at Westminster was apprehensive about paying too much attention to the grave of an Anglo-Saxon king.²² Yet if William was concerned about the celebration of Harold’s body and memory, his fears may have been borne out at Waltham within a generation of the Conquest, for the abbey’s chronicler reported that the corpse had been translated three times by the 1120s:

I can now in my old age remember that I was present at the third translation of

²⁰ Simon Keynes suggests a similar explanation for the recovery of Edward the Martyr’s relics; see Keynes, “Shaftesbury Abbey,” 54-55.

²¹ A similar effort is evident in Waltham’s promotion of its relic of the holy cross, which was allegedly discovered during the reign of Cnut and granted to the church by its founder in the 1040s; see Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 1-23. For the dissolution of Harold’s secular community in 1177 and its replacement with Augustinian canons, see Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, xxxiii-iv. On the creation of monastic memory, see Cubitt, “Monastic Memory and Identity,” especially 271-72 for the role of material objects in constructing memory.

²² For an account of Alfred’s mutilation by the Conqueror’s own chaplain, see William of Poitiers, *GG*, 2-5. Susan Ridyard notes that there was a revived interest in writing hagiographical accounts of Edgar’s saintly children immediately after the Norman Conquest; see *Royal Saints*, 171-75. For post-Conquest disinterest in the Confessor’s Westminster tomb, see above, Chapters 2 and 3.

his body, which was occasioned either by the state of building work in the church or because the brothers out of devotion were showing reverence for the body.²³

Even if this translation was prompted by mundane construction work, the author's acknowledgment that the community was accustomed to revering the body suggests that Waltham had become something of a cult center for Harold. If the body was moved for the third time during the first quarter of the twelfth century, as the chronicler implied, the earlier translations probably took place during or shortly after William's reign. It is unclear whether this attention had explicit political dimensions or whether it was perceived by the reigning Norman kings as a subversive cult, although it is revealing that his translations coincided with the exhumations of other Anglo-Saxon royal bodies at places like Old Minster, St. Paul's, and Westminster.²⁴ In the context of contemporary royal translations, a ceremonial elevation by the canons of Waltham would have re-confirmed Harold's royal status and retrospectively legitimized his reign—despite attempts by Norman propagandists to cast doubt on his original claim to the kingdom.

The multiple translations at Waltham also raise the possibility that Harold was not just being revered as a king but as a saint.²⁵ By the beginning of the thirteenth

²³ "Cuius corporis translatione, quoniam sic se habebat status ecclesie fabricandi, uel deuotio fratrum reuerentiam corpori exhibentium, nunc extreme memini me tertio affuisse"; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 56-57. The building works that the author referenced took place in the 1120s, providing an approximate date for the third translation; see Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 56 n.2.

²⁴ The various kings entombed at Old Minster were transferred to the new Norman Cathedral in the late eleventh century, probably along with St. Swithun's relics in 1094; Æthelred and Sæbbi were moved into new tombs in St. Paul's after a fire in 1087; and Edward the Confessor was exhumed from his Westminster tomb and discovered to be incorrupt in 1102. Additionally, St. Edmund was translated at Bury in 1095, and the royal women of Ely were translated in 1106. Other prominent pre-Conquest bodies received similar treatment; for example: Dunstan, Ælfheah, and various other Anglo-Saxon archbishops of Canterbury were translated into the new Norman cathedral c.1077; St. Augustine and the earliest archbishops of Canterbury were translated into a new abbey in 1091; the saints of Barking Abbey were translated in the 1090s; and St. Cuthbert's body was translated at Durham in 1104. See Crook, "Movement of Cnut's Bones," 176-82; Biddle, *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, 308 and 311-12; Thacker, "Cult of the Saints," 113-16; Binski, *Westminster and the Plantagenets*, 93-94; Sharpe, "Augustine's Translation"; Ridyard, "Post-Conquest Attitudes," 183, 189, 196-97, and 203.

²⁵ The editors of the *Waltham Chronicle* regard the translations as attempts to divert attention from

century, the author of the *Vita Haroldi* depicted his protagonist in unambiguously hagiographical terms, and a poem celebrating the patrons of Waltham explicitly stated that Harold was “now numbered among the saints.”²⁶ Although no comparable allusions to Harold’s sanctity survive from the eleventh century, William’s foundation of a new church on the Hastings battlefield may represent an attempt to prevent cultic reverence from emerging at the site of Harold’s death. Battle Abbey was established in 1067 and consecrated in 1076, and its high altar was soon believed to mark the very spot where Harold’s corpse had fallen.²⁷ The earliest references to the abbey do not specifically mention an association with Harold, however, but interpret the foundation straightforwardly as a religious offering intended to promote pious reconciliation in the wake of conquest.²⁸ While William undoubtedly envisioned the church as a religious memorial, commissioning monks to pray for the souls of those who had died fighting, the new foundation also allowed him to retain control over a particularly

Harold’s remains and prevent politically dangerous reverence for the dead king; “the author suggests that one translation may have been deliberately intended to prevent too much devotion being shown at the tomb.” This reading is not borne out by the text, however (see quotation above), and I suggest that the translation was meant to inspire rather than discourage reverence. See Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, xiv.

²⁶ “Iam sanctis connumeratus.” This poem is preserved in London, British Library Harley MS 3776 ff.31r-v and discussed by Alan Thacker, who suggests that both the poem and the *Vita* were produced by the same author; see “Harold at Chester,” 159 and 172 n.29.

²⁷ According to William of Malmesbury, “The altar of the church stands on the spot where the corpse of Harold, killed for love of his country, was discovered” [Altare aecclesiae est in loco ubi Haroldi pro patriae caritate occisi cadauer exanime inuentum est]; *GP* ii.97. William was more tentative in his language elsewhere, noting that the church was situated “where, according to tradition, Harold was found among the piled heaps of corpses” [ubi inter confertos cadauerum acruos Haroldus inuentus fuisse memoratur]; *GR* iii.267.3. The *Battle Chronicle* has the altar placed on the site where Harold’s standard fell, with William planning to found a monastery before he even began fighting against the English; Searle, *Battle Chronicle*, 36-37 and 40-47.

²⁸ Orderic Vitalis, in a revision of William of Jumièges composed between c.1095 and 1114, noted that the Conqueror “endowed the abbey with the necessary wealth [for the monks to pray] sufficiently for the dead of both sides” [necessariis opibus pro interfectis utriusque partis affatim ditauit]; William of Jumièges, *GND* II, 172-73, and see *GND* I, lxviii for the date of Orderic’s revisions. The abbey is also mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s eulogy for William, which praised his piety: “In that same place where God granted him that he might conquer England, he raised a great minster and established monks there and endowed it well” [On ðam ilcan steode þe God him geuðe þæt he moste Engleland gegan. he arerde mære mynster. 7 munecas þær gesætte. 7 hit wæll gegodade]; ASC E 1086. Cnut had made a similar gesture half a century earlier, when he established a monastery at Assandun, the site of his decisive victory over Edmund Ironside; see ASC CDEF 1020 and Stafford, “Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises,” 183 for the similarities between the two foundations.

volatile piece of his conquered landscape.²⁹ Battlefields had been known to stand in for a missing body as the focus of veneration or mourning, and this may explain William's quick appropriation of the site. The seventh-century cult of the saintly King Oswald, for instance, focused on the places where he fought his pivotal battles, and the church on Oswald's final battlefield was still thriving during William's reign.³⁰ By constructing and endowing a monastery on the site of Harold's death and staffing it with Norman monks, William ensured that the custodians of the battlefield would be sympathetic to his interests and prevent the site from being exploited by opponents of the new regime; the abbey would be a monument to the Norman victory rather than an *hommage* to Harold's death.

William's precautions were apparently effective. Neither Harold's body nor the site of his death became rallying points for early opponents of the new regime, and it would be decades before rumors of his entombment, survival, or sanctity began to circulate in earnest. Nevertheless, the concealment of Harold's body should not be understood as a full-fledged attempt to obliterate his memory. On the contrary, early Norman chroniclers routinely recalled his brief reign, citing the invalidity of his consecration (among other offenses) in order to justify William's invasion.³¹ Despite

²⁹ For this depiction, see Searle, *Battle Chronicle*, 36-37 and 42-47; Watkiss and Chibnall, *Waltham Chronicle*, 52-53; William of Malmesbury, *GR* iii.267.3 and *GP* ii.97. For the abbey's endowment and Norman inhabitants, see Searle, *Battle Chronicle*, 44-49

³⁰ For the cultic activity at Heavenfield, where Oswald erected a giant wooden cross, and at Maserfelth, where he was killed, see Thacker, "*Membra Disjecta*," 100-01. Bede detailed the miraculous cures that occurred at these sites and discussed the annual pilgrimage to Heavenfield organized by the monks of Hexham, who built a church on the site; see *HE* III.2; Thacker, "*Membra Disjecta*," 107-08; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 60-63. There appears to have been continuous cultic activity at Maserfelth from the time of Oswald's death through at least the twelfth century, and the church that is attested on the site in 1086 may well have dated from the tenth or eleventh century. See Stancliffe, "Where was Oswald Killed," especially 86-91. Other Anglo-Saxon royal saints who suffered violent deaths became the subject of popular cults which focused on the local landscape, including the sites where they died; see Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 57.

³¹ Norman Conquest chroniclers went to considerable lengths to identify technicalities that would make Harold's inauguration void. Chief among these was the (inaccurate) claim that the ritual had been officiated by the disgraced Archbishop Stigand; there were also concerns that Harold had seized the crown without his people's approval or that there had been too few magnates present at Westminster to conduct a lawful election. For Harold's illicit seizure of the throne, see Orderic Vitalis, *HE* II, 136-37; for the presence of too few magnates for a lawful election, see William of Poitiers, *GG*, 100-01. By

the protests of the new regime, however, Harold's consecration had been a large-scale public event, witnessed and recognized as legitimate by the kingdom's leading magnates.³² Rather than undertaking the impossible task of suppressing the memory of his predecessor's royal anointing, William closely replicated its unique elements during his own coronation: both rituals took place at Westminster's high altar, both were officiated by archbishop Ealdred of York, and both employed a new version of the English coronation *ordo* which was first used in 1066.³³ Yet while Harold had himself consecrated at the Confessor's tomb in order to draw attention to his relationship with his predecessor, the body of William's immediate predecessor was conspicuously absent during his inauguration. Even as he appropriated the ceremonial elements of Harold's consecration, William portrayed himself not as Harold's successor but as Edward's. By concealing his rival's remains, William ensured that he would be associated with the Confessor's legacy, effectively replacing Harold as the lawful heir to Edward's kingdom.

contrast, George Garnett terms that Harold had been subjected to "a legal *damnatio memoriae*" by the end of William's reign: Norman authors moved straight from the Confessor's reign to William's, without acknowledging Harold's tenure at all. See Garnett, "Coronation and Propaganda," 103.

³² See Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 125.

³³ Janet Nelson suggests that the ceremony "was designed completely to supersede Harold's, replacing it by, so to speak, a carbon copy"; see "Rites of the Conqueror," 124-25, quotation at 25. Ealdred had composed the Third English Ordo in the 1050s, probably in anticipation of the Confessor's eventual death; see Nelson, "Rites of the Conqueror," 126-28.

Royal Corpses During the Reign of Cnut

Cnut was confronted with a number of problematic bodies during his reign, the first of which belonged to his father, Svein Forkbeard. After more than a decade of raiding, Svein conquered England in the summer of 1013, but his tenure was brief; he died on 3 February 1014 and was buried in England, possibly at York.³⁴ Cnut was acclaimed by the Danish army immediately after his father died and shortly before Æthelred's forces drove him out of England. By the time Cnut finally acceded to the kingdom in 1017, however, Svein's body had been brought to Denmark and given a second burial. According to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, the earliest English account of the translation, Svein requested on his deathbed that Cnut bring his remains back home:

The father prayed to his son that if he should ever return to the land of his birth, he should carry his father's body back with him and should not let him be buried a stranger in a foreign land; for he knew that because of the invasion of the kingdom, he was hateful to those people.³⁵

The Encomiast stated that Svein was initially buried in England but that his body was later exhumed, brought to Denmark, and entrusted to his sons, Cnut and Harald:

A certain English matron had a ship prepared for her, and taking the body of King Svein, who had been buried in her country, and having embalmed it with aromatics and covered it with palls, she went to the sea, and making a successful voyage, arrived at the ports of the Danes. Sending a messenger to the two brothers, she indicated that their father's body was there, so that they might hasten to receive it and place it in the tomb which he had prepared for himself. They came gladly and received the body with honor, and with yet more honor they placed it in the monastery which had been built by the same king in honor of the Holy Trinity, in the sepulcher which he had prepared for

³⁴ Svein died at Gainsborough, according to John of Worcester; and Geffrei Gaimar and Symeon of Durham, each writing in the twelfth century, cited York—about fifty miles away from Gainsborough—as his burial place. See JW 476-77; Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, 132; Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, 146; Demidoff, "Death of Svein Forkbeard," 40; Philips, *Excavations at York Minster*, 2. A number of sources claimed that Svein was originally buried in Denmark; these include the *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, 39; William of Jumièges, *GND* II, 18-19; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* I, 156. Later Icelandic sources also took this view; see Demidoff, "Death of Svein Forkbeard," 43-45.

³⁵ "Pater orat filium, ut, si quando natiuitatis suae rediret ad terram, corpus paternum reportaret secum, neue pateretur se aligenigenam in externis tumulari terris; nouerat enim, quia pro inuasionem regni illis exosus erat populis"; *Encomium*, 14-15. For the dating of the *Encomium*, see above, Chapter 3.

himself.³⁶

This reportedly occurred in the spring of 1015, while Cnut was regrouping his forces in Denmark and preparing a new round of attacks against Æthelred and Edmund Ironside.³⁷ Yet given Svein's poignantly narrated deathbed request, it is remarkable that the *Encomiast* did not depict Cnut himself bringing the remains back to Denmark. Instead, "a certain English matron" was given full credit for the translation, exhuming and transporting the remains at her own initiative.³⁸ Furthermore, Svein appears to have arranged his own funeral and prepared a grave for himself in his own monastery—a point which the author mentioned twice. Although Cnut oversaw his father's re-interment, according to the *Encomium*, he was not responsible for the translation and was little more than a passive recipient of his father's body.

While it is unlikely that Cnut personally intended to move his father's corpse in the spring of 1015, since he had just been driven out of England and was in the process of rebuilding his fleet, his minimal involvement in the translation served the *Encomium's* broader propagandistic objectives. As seen from the 1040s, when the text was composed, Svein was a troublesome ancestor for Cnut. Although his conquest of the kingdom justified his son's claim to the throne, Svein had injured or ostracized much of the English population during his years of raiding, and unlike Cnut, who had

³⁶ "Quaedam matronarum Anglicarum nauim sibi fecit parari, et assumpto corpore Sueini regis sua in patria sepulti illoque aromatibus condito pallisque uelato, mare adiit, et prospero cursu appulsa ad portus Danorum peruenit. Mittens ergo utrisque fratribus nuntium mandat corpus adesse paternum, ut hoc maturent suscipere, tumuloque quod sibi parauerat locare. Illi hilares adsunt, honorifice corpus suscipiunt, honorificentiusque illud in monasterio in honore Sanctae Trinitatis ab eodem rege constructo, in sepulchro quod sibi parauerat, recondunt"; *Encomium*, 18-19. The *Encomiast* may have understood the burial church to be Roskilde, which was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and cited as Svein's burial place in later Norse accounts; the church was mentioned in an English charter of the 1020s. See S 958; Campbell, "Introduction," lvii and 92; Demidoff, "Death of Svein Forkbeard," 33-34.

³⁷ Cnut left England after Svein's death and spent the winter of 1014-15 in Denmark with his brother Harald. For the timing of the translation, see *Encomium*, 18-19; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.180.1; Campbell, "Introduction," liv-lvi.

³⁸ The only other chronicler to mention this woman was Thietmar of Merseburg, who wrote before 1018 that Svein's body was brought to Denmark by a "certain matron" [quaedam matrona]; *Chronik*, 394. See also Warner, *Ottoman Germany*, 333. For the reliability of Thietmar's English history, see Whitelock, *EHD* I 138.

successfully transformed himself into the very model of a Christian king during his nineteen-year reign, Svein was immortalized in most English sources as an exceptionally effective Viking raider.³⁹ The *Encomiast*—commissioned by Cnut’s widow and writing at a time when West Saxon princes were encroaching on the authority of Cnut’s sons—must have recognized that the memory of earlier Viking activity might damage the claims of the Danish dynasty some twenty-five years later.⁴⁰ Thus, even as he insisted that the kingdom belonged to Cnut (and, by implication, his descendants) by hereditary right, he distanced his protagonist from his father’s legacy. Cnut admirably fulfilled his filial obligation to bury his father in his homeland but never actively took control of the body: the translation was the product of Svein’s own advanced planning and the efforts of an anonymous woman.

While the *Encomiast*’s account should be treated cautiously, as he tailored his narrative to suit his ideological purposes, it is likely that Cnut was not directly involved with the exhumation and transportation of the corpse, given the political and military turbulence of 1015. It follows, then, that Cnut did not use Svein’s translation as an opportunity to bolster his standing among his potential English subjects. Where Edward the Elder translated his father’s remains in order to cement his tenuous royal authority in the face of political opposition, Cnut never tried to legitimize his claim to England through a public celebration of his father’s body. Nevertheless, the *Encomiast* depicted the event as a full-fledged ceremonial *translatio*, in which the corpse was exhumed and embalmed, brought to Denmark in state, and honorably entombed in a royal *monasterium*.⁴¹ For a Viking king who ravaged churches in England and had a

³⁹ See Gerchow, “Prayers for Cnut,” 220.

⁴⁰ In the early 1040s, when the *Encomium* was composed, Edward the Confessor had just returned to England to rule with his half-brother Harthacnut; just a few years earlier, the ætheling Alfred had been killed by Harold Harefoot when he tried to make his own bid for the kingdom. Furthermore, other West Saxon æthelings—notably the grown children of Edmund Ironside—could conceivably have threatened the Danish dynasty during or after Cnut’s reign. See above, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁴¹ See *Encomium*, 18-19 and quotation above.

reputation for persecuting Christians in Scandinavia, the *Encomium*'s solemn Christian ritual seems suspect—especially at a time of political and military upheaval in England.⁴² It is possible that the Encomiast played up the generic elements of literary *translationes*, inventing a ritual to obscure a less dignified effort to relocate the body. Thietmar of Merseburg, writing from a distance but before 1018, suggested a particularly urgent reason for the move: once Svein was dead, Æthelred came back to England and “tried to destroy his enemy’s body.”⁴³ Although there was scant precedent in England for the open desecration of royal bodies in 1014, it is not impossible that Æthelred or his supporters had designs against Svein’s corpse. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reported that after the population renewed their loyalty to Æthelred, “they said that every Danish king should be outlawed from England forever”—a proclamation that had immediate implications for Cnut, who was driven out of the country, but may have been understood to apply to the remains of a dead Danish king as well.⁴⁴ This possibility must have occurred to the Encomiast, given that Harold Harefoot had been humiliatingly disinterred shortly before he began composing his text, and Svein’s request that he be buried at home because he was hated by the English presumably reflected the author’s own suspicions about threats to the body.⁴⁵

⁴² For Svein’s reputation as a persecutor of Christians, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 129; Gerchow, “Prayers for Cnut,” 222. Later Scandinavian chroniclers, however, recorded Svein’s Christian piety, however; see Freeman, *Norman Conquest* I, 401-02.

⁴³ “Suis corpus inimicum exterminare conatur”; Thietmar, *Chronik*, 394. Thietmar went on to explain that a certain matron (*quaedam matrona*) had the body exhumed and brought to safety in Denmark; he then asserted that Cnut and Harold invaded England together to avenge the dishonor inflicted on their father’s corpse—a story that is not corroborated elsewhere. See Thietmar, *Chronik*, 394-96.

⁴⁴ “Æfre ælcne Deniscne cyng utlah of Englalande gecwædon”; ASC CDE 1014, which also mentioned Cnut’s departure from England. In this context, Thietmar’s phrase “suis corpus inimicum exterminare conatur” could be rendered “he endeavored to expel his enemy’s body”; see n.43 above.

⁴⁵ See quotation above. A reluctance to be entombed among strangers is certainly compatible with contemporary English burial ideology, however: posthumous memorialization and care for the soul were typically entrusted to members of a local community, who had known the deceased in life; families might be buried together, and bodies might be carried long distances to be interred at home. For an audience sympathetic to the *Encomium*'s interpretation, Svein’s desire to be buried among his loyal subjects would have been an adequate—even honorable—explanation for the movement of his remains out of England. For burial by relatives, see Hadley and Buckberry, “Caring for the Dead,” 147;

Early in 1015, however, it was the living supporters of Svein's regime who were in the most danger in England, as Æthelred targeted Danish sympathizers to punish their resistance to his armies and his rule.⁴⁶ It is in this context that the unnamed English matron can be tentatively identified. She must have been a woman of some standing, if she had access to a king's grave and permission to move his remains, and the *Encomiast* deemed her role in the translation important enough to mention a quarter century after the fact.⁴⁷ Her anonymity in the text suggests that she was a controversial figure, however, and I suggest that she may have been Ælfgifu of Northampton, Cnut's first English wife, whose son Harold Harefoot ruled England from 1035 through 1040. Ælfgifu was forcefully denounced later in the *Encomium*, and the author's reluctance to identify her here could reflect Emma's unwillingness to acknowledge her rival's connection with Cnut's family.⁴⁸ Indeed, this was not the only instance of conspicuous anonymity in the *Encomium*, for Æthelred, Emma's first husband, was never explicitly named in the text—even in detailed descriptions of his deposition and death.⁴⁹ By obscuring the identities of controversial individuals, the *Encomiast* downplayed his patroness's difficult relationships, focusing on her marriage to Cnut and their legitimate son instead of drawing explicit attention to the couple's earlier unions. Nevertheless, Ælfgifu's translation of Svein, like Æthelred's defense of England, loomed large enough in recent memory that it could not simply be

Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 117-18. For family plots, see Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 180-81; Rodwell and Rodwell, "St Peter's Church," 299. For bodies carried to a particular site from a distance, see Hill, *Whithorn*, 189.

⁴⁶ See ASC CDE 1014 for Æthelred's vengeance against the people of Lindsey, who had agreed to help Cnut. Æthelred may also have wanted retribution for Cnut's brutal mutilation of English hostages before leaving for Denmark; see ASC CDE 1014; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.179.3; JW 478-79. See also Campbell, "Introduction," liv.

⁴⁷ E.A. Freeman, for instance, postulates that she was Svein's concubine; see *Norman Conquest* I, 403 n.4.

⁴⁸ For Ælfgifu, her family, and her portrayal in the *Encomium*, see above, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁴⁹ Æthelred was referred to vaguely as the English *princeps*; Edmund Ironside, by contrast, was explicitly named, as was Cnut, who was consistently called *rex*. Furthermore, Æthelred was never described as Emma's husband, and there is no indication in the text that the queen had been married before. See *Encomium*, 22-23.

omitted from the *Encomium*; as late as the 1040s, the episode had to be addressed, if only in a roundabout way. In 1015, by contrast, Ælfgifu's relation to Cnut could have put her in considerable danger. Once Cnut had retreated, Ælfgifu and her young sons would have been natural objects of Æthelred's displeasure, and it is reasonable to imagine that they fled the kingdom, seeking Cnut's protection in Denmark and bringing Svein's body along for safe keeping. If this were the case, Svein's reburial would have been less a ceremonial translation than a timely escape from harm.

Even if Ælfgifu was responsible for the physical transportation of Svein's remains, it does not necessarily follow that Cnut bore no responsibility for the translation; despite the *Encomiast's* implications, he may in fact have ordered the body to be moved out of England. The political desecration of graves is attested in Scandinavia during this period, and perhaps it was Cnut's concern that his father's corpse was vulnerable, rather than any specific action on Æthelred's part, that prompted its relocation.⁵⁰ In theory, Svein's body should have been an asset for Cnut as he attempted to press his claim in England. The Danes had already acclaimed him king during or shortly after Svein's funeral, and if the corpse was in fact interred at York—a conversion-era minster and archiepiscopal see in the heart of England's Scandinavian territory—Cnut would have been able to evoke two legitimizing traditions with his burial there, identifying his father with an ancient line of English kings while entrusting his remains to the protection of a newer Anglo-Danish community.⁵¹ Yet while the cultivation of Svein's body could have helped Cnut rally

⁵⁰ For desecration, see above, Chapter 4.

⁵¹ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* stated that after Svein's death, "all the fleet then chose Cnut as king" [Se flota þa eal gecuron Cnut to cyninge]; ASC CDE 1014, and see above, Chapter 3, for the convergence of royal funerals and acclamations. For Svein's burial at York, see above, n.34. York Minster was a site of royal burial from the seventh through the ninth century: it housed the remains of Ælfwine (d.678), Eadberht (d.768), Osbald (d.799), and Guthfrith (d.895) as well as the dismembered head of Edwin (d.632); see Philips, *Excavations at York Minster*, 2. It may be significant that a new archbishop of York was consecrated just days after Svein's death—perhaps the funeral was a component of a larger ceremonial event in the city; see ASC D 1014.

support among his sympathizers, the prestigiously entombed remains of a Viking conqueror would not have fostered good will among those who had been forcibly subjected to Danish rule.⁵² If Svein's remains were attacked and desecrated, the corpse could become a political liability for his son. Furthermore, if Cnut anticipated that he would soon gain full control of the kingdom, he may have recognized that his father's remains would be polarizing: the glorification of the body by Scandinavian sympathizers could have perpetuated the rhetoric of conquest at a time when Cnut was attempting to unite his new kingdom; conversely, a prominent royal tomb would keep the memory of Viking aggression fresh and might even incite opposition to Danish overlordship.⁵³

It is possible that Cnut realized as early as 1015 that his father's body could do him political harm and sought to minimize its influence by having it brought out of England altogether. He did something quite similar the following year, when he had Edmund Ironside's body taken from London and buried at Glastonbury, and again in 1023, when he translated Archbishop Ælfheah's miracle-working relics from St. Paul's to Canterbury.⁵⁴ This presents a distinct pattern of problematic bodies being removed from politically turbulent areas, where they might provoke resistance to the new regime, and placed in peripheral or politically friendly areas, where their negative impact on Cnut's authority would be negligible.⁵⁵ Yet in each of these cases, the

⁵² In Denmark, by contrast, the translation may have enhanced Cnut's position as his father's heir, for the celebration of Svein's remains could have helped rally troops and support for the next campaign against Æthelred. The body's reappearance may also have assisted Cnut in his negotiations with his brother Harald, who was ruling Svein's Danish kingdom and appears initially to have been reluctant to help with the conquest of England: the arrival of Svein's body with Cnut's wife and sons (one of whom was named for his paternal grandfather) would have drawn attention to Cnut's dynastic ambitions and his status as heir to Svein's English kingdom. For Cnut's sojourn in Denmark and his negotiations with Harald, see *Encomium*, 16-19; Lawson, *Cnut*, 89-90.

⁵³ For Cnut's later efforts to reconcile with his new subjects, see Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 182-83.

⁵⁴ See above, Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ The relocation of Edmund and Ælfheah also generated good will among the institutions that received the bodies: Glastonbury, despite its ties to the West Saxon royal house, seems to have maintained a civil relationship with Cnut; while Canterbury benefitted significantly from Cnut's patronage and firmly

remains were treated with undeniable respect: Svein was interred prestigiously in Denmark, Edmund was entombed with his royal ancestors at Glastonbury, and Ælfheah was provided a saint's shrine in Canterbury. Each of these relocations had at least the superficial trappings of ceremonial translations and royal funerals, giving the impression that Cnut was glorifying the remains—not seizing them from their custodians or quietly removing them from the public eye.

In addition to neutralizing highly charged political objects, the honorable treatment of prominent English bodies helped Cnut portray himself as a legitimate Christian king. Where a conqueror might deny his dead rival a consecrated grave, Cnut provided Edmund Ironside a royal tomb; where a Viking might plunder the relics of a saint, Cnut glorified Ælfheah's bones. A similar effort is evident in Cnut's prolific generosity to religious houses and his sponsorship of other English cults, especially those of royal saints.⁵⁶ As an adult convert to Christianity with a notorious Viking past, Cnut made a particular effort to demonstrate his commitment to his new faith, but his interest in Anglo-Saxon saints had an additional advantage: he could now identify himself as the latest in a long line of English kings who patronized native cults. A particularly conspicuous example was his interest in St. Edmund at Beodricisworth, or Bury.⁵⁷ Cnut was widely credited with re-founding the community as a Benedictine monastery in 1020, and twelfth-century chroniclers regarded the new abbey as compensation for Svein's ravaging of Bury—and even as atonement for Edmund's martyrdom by Scandinavian raiders of the more distant past.⁵⁸ The new

supported his regime by the time Ælfheah's relics were translated to Christ Church. See Lawson, *Cnut*, 153-56; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 348; Heslop, "De Luxe Manuscripts," 156 and 183-84. For relics as prestigious royal gifts, see Rollason, "Relic-cults," 92.

⁵⁶ For Cnut's patronage of English monasteries, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 150-60; Heslop, "De Luxe Manuscripts"; Gerchow, "Prayers for Cnut."

⁵⁷ The name of the foundation was recorded as "Bury St. Edmunds" from the mid-eleventh century; see Gransden, "Cult of St. Mary," 638.

⁵⁸ The earliest reference to Cnut's involvement in the re-foundation is a pair of short annals which probably originated at Bury; they asserted that Cnut ordered the re-foundation of the monastery in 1020 and oversaw its consecration in 1032. These notices are preserved in two Bury manuscripts: Vatican

church was consecrated in 1032, and although Cnut's role in reforming the community may have been exaggerated by later authors, it is clear that he was a generous benefactor who helped increase Bury's wealth and prominence.⁵⁹ Such attention provided Cnut a permanent place in the history of the abbey and in Edmund's own legend, connecting him with an exceptionally popular Anglo-Saxon royal martyr who had long been the patron saint of English kings.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, there also may have been pressing political imperatives in Cnut's re-foundation of Edmund's abbey. One objective may have been to re-assert royal authority in East Anglia at a moment when its earl, Thorkell the Tall, was becoming increasingly powerful. Thorkell had an uneasy relationship with the Danish regime: he had allied with Æthelred during Svein's invasion but later made peace with Cnut, who made him earl of East Anglia in 1017; he was banished from England five years later, possibly because he was challenging Cnut's rule.⁶¹ Accounts of Bury's re-foundation depicted Cnut working together with Thorkell to establish the new church in 1020, yet this apparent collaboration may have been intended to emphasize Cnut's kingly status in a region where the earl was encroaching on royal authority.⁶² In addition to

Library, Reginensis Latini MS 12, produced in the second quarter of the eleventh century; and Oxford, Corpus Christi College 197, f.105r, where the annals are written in a hand of c.1100. See Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, 31-34; Gransden, "Cult of St. Mary," 632-33; Ker, *Catalogue*, 430. Narrative accounts of Cnut's re-foundation and consecration of the monastery include *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, 47; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.181.4; JW 643-44 (this account is an interpolation into John of Worcester's text by a Bury chronicler; see JW 616-18 for commentary on the Bury interpolations). Compare also S 980, a possibly spurious grant of privileges by Cnut to St. Edmund's. William of Malmesbury interpreted Cnut's patronage as atonement for Viking offenses; see *GR* ii.181.4-5 and also Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 216-17; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 157.

⁵⁹ For questions about Cnut's role in the abbey's re-foundation, see Gransden, "Origins of Bury," 9-16. Gransden re-evaluates her skepticism about Cnut's involvement in the re-foundation in light of the early date of the Vatican Library manuscript; see "Cult of Mary," especially 630 n.14.

⁶⁰ For Edmund as the patron and putative ancestor of Anglo-Saxon kings, see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 223-26; Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 32-34.

⁶¹ On Thorkell, see *Encomium*, 16-23 and 75-76; Keynes, "Cnut's Earls," 56-57; Lawson, *Cnut*, 174-76. For Cnut's pointed cultivation of churches in the east of England during this period, see Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, 40.

⁶² Compare above, Chapter 2, where I argue that Edward the Confessor's attempt to assert royal authority over Earl Godwin was a factor in his foundation of Westminster Abbey. Thorkell's involvement in the re-foundation is attested in the short annals from Bury (see above, n.58); *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, 47; JW 643-44. Thorkell's presence is also noted in the Anglo-Saxon

providing a display of royal munificence in honor of a decidedly royal saint, the re-foundation may also have drawn attention to Thorkell's earlier offenses against Edmund. The earl had raided Ipswich in 1009 and forced the saint's custodians to flee to London with his relics, and Cnut's initiative in East Anglia could have compelled Thorkell to humble himself by publicly atoning for his sins against Edmund and Bury.⁶³ Yet the king may also have aimed to remedy his own family's uneasy relationship with the saint, for Svein had also done considerable damage to Bury and demanded heavy tribute from the community in 1013. Perhaps more troubling, however, were the rumors that Svein had been killed by a vision of Edmund after having publicly denied his sanctity. According to one account, the saint appeared to Svein as he was meeting with his counselors:

he was terrified and began to shout very noisily, saying "Help, fellow-warriors, help! St. Edmund is coming to kill me!" And while he was saying this he was run through fiercely by the saint with a spear, and he fell from the stallion on which he sat, and, tormented with great pain until twilight, he ended his life with a wretched death.⁶⁴

Chronicle's account of the foundation of Cnut's abbey at Assandun that same year; see ASC CD 1020; Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, 39-43.

⁶³ For Thorkell's attack, see ASC CDE 1009; for the resulting removal of Edmund's relics, *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, 40. The celebration of a saintly victim of Viking violence may also have recalled the death of Ælfheah, who was reportedly martyred by Thorkell's own men in 1012. Cnut translated Ælfheah in 1023—shortly after he had driven Thorkell out of the kingdom a second time—and this event may represent another attempt to discredit the earl. For Cnut's manipulation of martyrs' cults to incriminate political enemies, see Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 18; Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 54-55; Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 183. William of Malmesbury asserted that Thorkell was "the instigator of the killing of St. Ælfheah" [*incentor necis beati Elfegi fuerat*], while Thietmar claimed that "a perfidious troop of Northmen led by Thorkell" [*perfida Northmannorum manus duce ad hoc Thurkilo*] killed the saint—although Thietmar confused the identity of the martyr, claiming that it was Dunstan, not Ælfheah, who was killed. See William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.181.3; Thietmar, *Chronik*, 398; Whitelock, *EHD* I, 138.

⁶⁴ "Expauit et nimio cum clamore uociferari cepit: 'Succurrite,' inquiens, 'commilitiones, succurrite, ecce sanctus Eadmundus me uenit occidere,' et, hec dicendo, acriter a sancto confossus cuspidem de emissario cui insederat decidit, et usque ad noctis crepusculum magno cruciatus tormento... miserabili morte vitam finiuit"; JW 476-77. Versions of this story also appeared in *De Miraculis Sancti Edmundi*, 32-37; William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.179.1 and *GP* ii.74.28-29; Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, 145-46; Orderic Vitalis, *HE* I, 156. Also compare Snorri's account of Svein's death in his saga of St. Olaf, where he reported that "it is rumored among the English that Edmund the Holy had killed [Svein] in the same fashion that Mercurius the Holy slew Julian the Apostate"; *Heimskringla*, 251-52. See also Demidoff, "Death of Svein Forkbeard."

This story seems to have emerged within a few years of Svein's death and probably originated at Bury; even Cnut's patronage did not stop its promulgation.⁶⁵ However, the creation of a new monastery did permit Cnut to disentangle himself from his father's legacy, for the community subsequently remembered him as a good king who was exceedingly generous to St. Edmund's—despite all expectations to the contrary.⁶⁶

Such a prominent act of demonstrative piety must have helped alleviate skepticism about Cnut's family history and commitment to Christianity, even as it allowed him to identify with the prototypical saintly king and, by extension, write himself into the Anglo-Saxon royal past. His patronage of other politically significant saints' cults reflects similar attempts to legitimize his reign, and his interest in recent West Saxon royal saints is particularly noteworthy. Æthelred had heavily promoted his saintly half-siblings, Edward the Martyr (d.978) and Edith of Wilton (d.984), in the hope of strengthening his earthly power by appealing to the sacred authority of his kin.⁶⁷ Edward and Edith's cults had been defined and disseminated during Æthelred's thirty-eight year reign, and Cnut, by patronizing them, presented himself as a worthy heir to a line of saintly English royalty.⁶⁸ Accordingly, Edward's cult center at Shaftesbury and Edith's at Wilton remained regular stops on the royal itinerary; in what appears to be the first English legislation of its kind, Cnut decreed that Edward's feast day be universally celebrated; and he provided Edith with an intricate golden reliquary, which he reportedly commissioned after the saint miraculously saved him

⁶⁵ The earliest account was preserved in the *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, produced at Bury in the early 1090s, but the early chapters of this text—including the description of Svein's death—were adapted from an earlier work composed during Æthelred's reign; see Gransden, "Composition and Authorship," 26-28. William of Malmesbury maintained that "Cnut knew this story, and accordingly, there was nothing he did not do to placate the saint" [sciebat haec Cnuto, ideoque nichil non effecit ut Sancto blandiretur]; *GP* ii.74.29. See also Lawson, *Cnut*, 143.

⁶⁶ See especially *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, 46-47.

⁶⁷ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 140-71; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 173-74.

⁶⁸ See Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 168.

from a shipwreck.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, there are hints of tension in Cnut's cultivation of these two saints, particularly in his treatment of their relics and the foundations that housed them. Wilton and Shaftesbury appear not to have received grants of land from Cnut—conspicuous omissions that echo his deliberate stinginess towards Glastonbury and St. Paul's, where Edward Ironside and Æthelred were buried, even as he made generous grants to other prominent monasteries.⁷⁰ Neither is there evidence of ceremonial activity or building initiatives at Shaftesbury or Wilton, as there were at other royal foundations, like Winchester and Bury.⁷¹ Edith's golden shrine seems to belie this trend, yet by the early twelfth century, William of Malmesbury was reporting that Cnut had publicly abused Edith's relics. According to his *Gesta Pontificum*, the king brazenly challenged Edith's sanctity during a visit to Wilton: "he would never believe that the daughter of King Edgar was a saint, since Edgar was a vicious man, a great slave to lust, and more like a tyrant to his subjects."⁷² When Cnut ordered her tomb to be opened, however, the saint rose up and attacked him; upon recovering from his deathly faint, the king acknowledged Edith's sanctity and gave thanks that "although severely punished, he had lived to repent."⁷³ This episode is particularly jarring when

⁶⁹ Cnut died at Shaftesbury, according to ASC CD 1035 and EF 1036 (*recte* 1035), and had issued a handful of charters there, suggesting that the monastery was a regular stop on the royal itinerary. Goscelin, who was commissioned by the nuns of Wilton to write Edith's hagiography *c.* 1080, insisted that Cnut was a regular visitor; he also described the storm at sea and Cnut's commission of the reliquary in consecutive chapters of Edith's *translatio*. Goscelin's life is edited by Wilmart, "Édith," 278-81; for the date of composition, see Hollis, *Writing the Wilton Women*, 4. The law requiring the observance of Edward's feast day is I Cnut 17.1; Patrick Wormald argues that this decree originated with Cnut and that its appearance in V Æthelred 16 is a later interpolation, although others, including Simon Keynes, are skeptical about this interpretation; see Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 53-54; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 171.

⁷⁰ I discuss Cnut's non-patronage of Shaftesbury further below; see also Foot, *Veiled Women*, 175.

⁷¹ Admittedly, there is relatively little contemporary information concerning royal ceremonial during Cnut's reign.

⁷² "Numquam se crediturum filiam regis Edgari sanctam esse, qui uitiiis detitus maximeque libidinis seruus in subiectos propior tiranno fuisset"; William of Malmesbury, *GP* ii.87.7.

⁷³ "Quanus seure castigatus, penitentiae reseruatus sit"; William of Malmesbury, *GP* ii.87.9. Earlier in this passage, William noted that Edith's body was not incorrupt—a fact that may have justified Cnut's (and others') incredulity concerning her sanctity but would have made the saint's posthumous activity all the more horrifying.

set beside William's account of Cnut's pious patronage of English saints in the *Gesta Regum*, and given the *Gesta Pontificum*'s focus on local communities, it is possible that the story originated at Wilton itself—although it did not appear in the saint's official hagiography, which the Wilton nuns commissioned in the 1080s.⁷⁴ William, however, had no reservations about disseminating this account, and he may even have imagined Cnut's expensive reliquary as penance for having insulted the saint and shattered her tomb.⁷⁵

Despite Wilton's later insistence that Cnut had been a good ruler and benefactor, William of Malmesbury's account suggests an uneasy relationship between the Danish king and the West Saxon saint. It may be relevant that Svein had plundered and burned Wilton in 1003, for the identities of the father and son could have been conflated by the time William committed the story to writing.⁷⁶ The similarities between this episode and St. Edmund's lethal attack on Svein are striking, although miraculously punished skeptics were commonplaces of medieval *vitae*, as were ill-advised openings of saints' tombs.⁷⁷ Yet even amid these hagiographical tropes, William had Cnut identify Edgar as a tyrant and accuse him of scandalous impiety—characterizations that were regularly employed by kings who had deposed their predecessors.⁷⁸ By juxtaposing Cnut's critique of Edgar with the physical violation of his dead daughter, William offered a portrait of a conqueror who denied

⁷⁴ See William of Malmesbury, *GR* ii.181.4-5. The saint's official hagiography was commissioned by the Wilton community and composed by Goscelin c.1080; see above, n.69. There is no definitive evidence that William went to Wilton, but for his research journeys throughout England, his travels to nearby foundations, and his familiarity with local traditions, see Thompson and Winterbottom, *Gesta Pontificum* II, xl-xliv; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 174-75.

⁷⁵ For the new reliquary as compensation for offending the saint, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 157.

⁷⁶ For Svein's attack on Wilton, see ASC CDEF 1003; JW 454-55.

⁷⁷ For the forced opening of a saint's shrine, see for instance Abbo, *Life of Edmund*, 85.

⁷⁸ Compare with descriptions of Harold Harefoot during Harthacnut's reign and descriptions of Harold Godwinson during William's; Edward the Martyr also seems to have been characterized as an illegitimate and tyrannical king, perhaps as justification for his assassination. I discuss these examples at length above; and see Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 181-82 for Cnut's condemnation of Æthelred's behavior in these terms.

the legitimate authority and the sanctity of recent generations of West Saxon royalty.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the dubious historicity of the saint's miraculous assault, Cnut's supposed desecration of Edith's tomb suggests that anxiety about the West Saxon dynasty might be expressed through interactions with royal corpses—a conclusion supported by Cnut's quick removal of Edmund Ironside's body from London and his systematic disenfranchisement of Æthelred's burial church at St. Paul's.⁸⁰

Yet the brutality with which Cnut reportedly violated Edith's tomb—the mausoleum was *effractus*, broken open, according to William—recalls another, more subtle act of violence against royal relics: the fragmentation of Edward the Martyr's body.⁸¹ Cnut seems to have been a particularly generous distributor of Edward's remains, for Westminster's relic list recorded that Cnut had given the monastery some of his relics (along with the arms, fingers, and miscellaneous bones of various other saints), while William of Malmesbury reported that parts of Edward's body had been brought to Leominster and Abingdon, adding that the only relic left at Shaftesbury in his own day was Edward's miraculously animated lung.⁸² Yet while English kings had

⁷⁹ William of Malmesbury also suggested that Cnut did not initially appreciate any Anglo-Saxon saints: “because of the hostility between the two peoples, he did not love English saints” [Qui pro gentilitiis inimicitiiis sanctos Anglos non diligeret]; *GP* ii.87.7. This sentiment was not repeated in the *Gesta Regum*, which details Cnut's enthusiastic patronage of English monasteries; see *GR* ii.181.4-5.

⁸⁰ St. Paul's disenfranchisement is discussed below.

⁸¹ For *effractus*, see William of Malmesbury, *GP* ii.87.8.

⁸² William of Malmesbury stated that Edward's body formerly lay at Shaftesbury and that his lung was still on display there; however, sometime after his translation to Shaftesbury in 1001, “part of his body was brought to Leominster, part to Abingdon” [Posteriori uero tempore, pars corporis Lesmonasterium, pars Abendoniam deportata est]; *GP* ii.86.6. There are also references to Edward's relics at Exeter, Reading, St. Albans, York, and Durham; see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 167 n.53; Keynes, “Shaftesbury Abbey,” 54.

The Chronicle of Abingdon Abbey, which covered the monastery's history from the seventh century through 1154, claimed that the foundation received Edward's relics during the reign of Cnut and recalled the miraculous acquisition amid descriptions of Cnut's other gifts to the Abbey; see Stevenson, *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, 442-43. For the date, scope, and manuscripts of Abingdon's chronicle, see Stenton, *Early History of Abingdon*, 1-6; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 270-82. For Cnut's patronage of Abingdon, see Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, xlii-xliii.

Edward was listed in Leominster's relic lists by the end of the twelfth century, and the saint received particular attention in a prayer book produced at the monastery between 1016 and 1047. The manuscript (heavily damaged and in two parts, BL Cotton Nero A.ii and BL Cotton Galba A.xiv) was a blank book into which a number of scribes copied prayers and liturgical materials over time: in addition to the calendars that record Edward's feast day, there is a Latin prayer evoking the saint's mercy; it

a long history of collecting and distributing relics, the division of Edward's body was exceptional, for unlike their Continental counterparts, Anglo-Saxon saints were almost invariably enshrined intact.⁸³ It is unclear whether the fragmentation would have been seen as explicitly disrespectful or protested by the nuns at Shaftesbury, who were instrumental in securing Edward's body for their monastery in 979.⁸⁴ Regardless, Cnut's division of the relics would have clearly illustrated his control over the West Saxon saint. Just as earlier Anglo-Saxon rulers occasionally demonstrated their authority over subjugated peoples by capturing local relics, Cnut expressed his dominance over the remnants of the West Saxon dynasty by dismembering and disseminating the remains of its most popular saint.⁸⁵ But perhaps more importantly, the division of relics between multiple foundations meant that Edward's cult would have been dispersed, preventing any centralized movement from emerging around a single saintly focus.⁸⁶ By relocating the body parts to peripheral monasteries or to

appears well after a prayer for Æthelred's soul, which was probably entered after his death in 1016, and may well have been added during Cnut's reign. Given the comparatively meager treatment of other English saints who were popular at this time (such as Ælfheah and Edmund), I suggest that Edward's inclusion reflects a special interest that may coincide with the establishment of a relic cult at Leominster. For Edward's cult at Leominster, see Hillaby, "Early Christian Leominster," 626; Hillaby and Hillaby, *Leominster Minster*, 25-27. For the prayer book, see Muir, *Pre-Conquest Prayer Book*; and Hillaby, "Early Christian Leominster," 628-41, for its Leominster provenance.

The Westminster source is a catalog of relics compiled at the Abbey in the fifteenth century by John Flete, which includes "relics of St. Edward, king and martyr" [reliquias sancti Edwardi regis et martyris] among the relics received from Cnut; see Flete, *History of Westminster*, 70. Compare also Ailred of Rievaulx's account of the woman who confused Edward the Confessor and Edward the Martyr at Westminster (discussed above, Chapter 2); her mistake might have been a reasonable one if Edward the Martyr had a well-established relic cult at Westminster.

⁸³ For English kings as relic collectors, see Rollason, "Relic-cults," 91-95; Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 49. For the physical integrity of most Anglo-Saxon saints, see Rollason, "Lists of Saints' Resting-places," 80-82. As Rollason notes, a notable exception to this trend was St. Botulf, whose corpse was divided among three monasteries under the supervision of King Edgar. An account of the division was recorded in the late eleventh or early twelfth century in British Library, MS Harley 3097 and is edited in Birch, *Liber Vitae*, 286-90 at 288. Other exceptions were those who had been dismembered in battle, like Oswald (d.642) and Edwin (d.632), whose limbs and head were subsequently claimed by different churches; see Yorke, *Nunneries*, 119.

⁸⁴ For the nuns' efforts to claim Edward's body, see Yorke, *Nunneries*, 171-72.

⁸⁵ For the politically motivated appropriation and redistribution of relics, see Rollason, "Relic-cults," 95-96.

⁸⁶ Cnut apparently subjected St. Ælfheah to similar (though less extreme) fragmentation, for Westminster claimed that he had given them one of the archbishop's fingers; see Flete, *History of Westminster*, 70. However, by giving London's only remaining relic of Ælfheah to Westminster, a

those that were friendly to the new regime, Cnut ensured that subversive elements of the cult would either be discouraged by the relics' custodians or be too remote from political centers to significantly undermine his authority.⁸⁷

Like the burial of Edmund Ironside and the translation of Ælfheah, the fragmentation of Edward's body was undoubtedly framed in reverential terms, ensuring that Cnut would be remembered as a pious benefactor by the communities that received prestigious remains as royal gifts.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Cnut's manipulation of Edward's relics and other politically charged corpses seems carefully orchestrated to pre-empt their use by opponents of his regime; although he glorified their memories, he kept close control over their bodies and legacies. Even Edith's relics, which ultimately seem to have been left intact at Wilton, were encased in a magnificent golden shrine that would inevitably remind supplicants of the Danish king who commissioned it.⁸⁹ Cnut evidently understood the importance of honorably cultivating the memories of his West Saxon predecessors, recognizing that it would have been a serious political risk to neglect them at a time when royal remains conveyed royal legitimacy. While other cult centers flourished under Cnut, however, the king seems to have deliberately prevented the shrines of West Saxon saints from becoming independent enough to foster political opposition. He restricted the wealth and influence of the communities that housed recent royal tombs, withholding grants of

foundation that would come to be St. Paul's chief rival, Cnut must have added insult to the injury that London's cathedral had already endured.

⁸⁷ Leominster was located west of the Severn, on the Welsh border, more than a hundred miles from Shaftesbury; it was, however, an ancient royal foundation. Abingdon was a favored monastery and received multiple grants of land from Cnut. Westminster also seems to have benefited from Cnut's patronage, and it may have been during his reign that the monastery began to emerge as a prominent royal center. For grants to Abingdon, see S 964, 967 and 973; Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon*, xlii-xliii. For Leominster as a royal foundation with a history of royal patronage, see Hillaby, "Early Christian Leominster," especially 639-41; Hillaby and Hillaby, *Leominster Minster*, 1-53. For Westminster's increasing importance during Cnut's reign, see Mason, *Westminster and Its People*, 11-12.

⁸⁸ See Lawson, *Cnut*, 142.

⁸⁹ For Goscelin's account of Edith's reliquary, see Wilmart, "Édith," 280-81; Hollis, *Writing the Wilton Women*, 78-79. See also Foot, *Veiled Women*, 224; Heslop, "De Luxe Manuscripts," 186.

land from these foundations while richly endowing others. Although Glastonbury, Shaftesbury, and Wilton all benefitted from the king's presence and occasionally received material gifts or renewals of monastic privilege, the West Saxon mausolea were not given the means to significantly increase their wealth and influence during Cnut's reign, and the king's regular presence at these foundations may likewise have been intended to prevent them from becoming centers of dissent.⁹⁰

This was not the case at St. Paul's, where Æthelred was buried. As the preeminent church in the West Saxon stronghold of London, the episcopal community likely encouraged resistance to the Danish campaigns and the cathedral itself seems to have become a cult center for victims of Viking violence.⁹¹ After Cnut's accession, St. Paul's was heavily taxed, stripped of valuable estates, and deprived of the relics of its most popular saint, Ælfheah.⁹² This harsh treatment was consistent with Cnut's sanctions against London at the beginning of his reign—material punishment for the city's long resistance to Danish rule.⁹³ Yet Cnut's disenfranchisement of St. Paul's was considerably more aggressive than his constraints on other West Saxon mausolea, and his patronage of Edgar's saintly children contrasted sharply with his disinterest in Æthelred and his resting place. Edith's golden shrine had no equivalent at St. Paul's, and the law that required universal observance of Edward's saint's day was not extended to include a day of mourning for Æthelred.⁹⁴ Cnut's reverential visit to

⁹⁰ For the lack of grants to these foundations, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 155-56; Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 347-49; Foot, *Veiled Women*, 175; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 89.

⁹¹ See above, Chapter 3.

⁹² The translation of Ælfheah's relics in 1023 removed the cathedral's most lucrative saint. In addition, Cnut confiscated the valuable episcopal estate of Southminster from St. Paul's. The development of Winchester and its minsters as the premier administrative and religious center may also represent a deliberate slighting of London and St. Paul's. See Kelly, *Charters of St. Paul's*, 39-40; Taylor, "Foundation and Endowment," 15; and above, Chapter 3.

⁹³ Cnut appears to have punished London for resisting Danish rule and supporting Æthelred and his kin: a special tax of 15,000 pounds was applied to the city in 1018 (whereas the rest of the kingdom paid a total sum of 72,000 pounds). ASC CDE 1018; Lawson, "Danegeld in the Reigns of Æthelred and Cnut," 721-26; Hill, "Urban Policy," 103-04.

⁹⁴ Patrick Wormald argues convincingly that the decree promoting Edward's saint's day, V Æthelred 16, was interpolated into Æthelred's lawcode during Cnut's reign; see Wormald, "Æthelred the

Glastonbury on the anniversary of Edmund Ironside's death was likewise unparalleled at Æthelred's burial church.⁹⁵ Although the king's remains were not openly desecrated or removed from St. Paul's, Cnut seems to have tarnished his rival's posthumous reputation by withholding royal patronage, even as he ostensibly glorified the bodies and memories of the dead king's son and siblings. It is telling that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entries that detail the hopelessness of the final years of Æthelred's reign were written in London during this period. Critiques of Æthelred's actions and character must have been actively promulgated under Cnut, whose own legacy depended on his ability to justify the deposition of the West Saxon dynasty and prevent Æthelred's heirs from making successful bids for their father's throne; it would seem that some of these condemnations found their way into the Chronicle.⁹⁶ In

Lawmaker," 53-54. This legal mandate was unprecedented in England, but compare with Chapter 2 above: the population annually mourned Edward the Confessor on his death day, though probably not by royal decree. Cnut also proclaimed that St. Dunstan's feast day should be celebrated; see I Cnut 17 and above for more on Cnut's patronage of Dunstan. For royal decrees requiring observance of saints' days, see Rollason, "Relic-cults," 100.

⁹⁵ Cnut's renewal of Glastonbury's privileges in 1032 conspicuously excluded Æthelred from the list of West Saxon patrons of the abbey: Cnut assured the monastery its rights "as has been asserted and confirmed in privileges by my predecessors, Centwine, Ine, Cuthred, Alfred, Edward, Edmund, and the incomparable Edgar" [sicuti predecessores mei sanxerunt et priuilegiis confirmauerunt, Kenuuines, Ines, Cuthredus, Elfredus, Eduuardus, Edmundus et incomparabilis Edgarus]; S 966, and see Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, 132-33 for text and translation. This grant is spurious in its current form, as are corresponding renewals of privilege by the kings named in it; yet it is striking that this list constructs a history of royal patronage that links Cnut with some three centuries of West Saxon kings but denies Æthelred his place among them—despite the fact that Æthelred had been a regular benefactor of the abbey. Æthelred's grants to Glastonbury Abbey include S 866, S 1774, S 1775, S 1776, S 1777, S 1778, S 1780; and Ælfweard, Glastonbury's abbot from approximately 975 to 1009, attested numerous royal charters and was a regular presence at court. For Glastonbury's favored position under Æthelred, see Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 347 and 350-52 for a list of royal charters to the Abbey. Cnut's charter, S 966, is preserved only by William of Malmesbury; for its authenticity, see Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 15 n.31, 18-19, 128-30; Lawson, *Cnut*, 239; Keynes, "Cnut's Earls," 52 n.51. On Cnut's relationship with Glastonbury, see Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury*, 347-39. For Cnut's prostration at Edmund Ironside's tomb, see above, Chapter 3.

⁹⁶ This denigration is most explicit in the skaldic poetry composed for Cnut, which celebrated the Danish victory over the West Saxon kings. More subtle attacks on Æthelred's legacy seem to have included Cnut's coronation oath, which apparently included a pledge not to exploit royal power as Æthelred had done, citing a list of abuses that had been explicitly attributed to Æthelred before he died. Furthermore, Cnut's interest in the cults of Edward the Martyr, St. Dunstan (who had opposed Æthelred's accession in 975), and other murdered royal saints may have been intended to draw attention to the scandal that surrounded Æthelred's accession in 978. For skaldic poetry, see Whitelock, *EHD* I, 334-41; Townend, "Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*." For Cnut's coronation oath, see Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," especially 175-80 and 182-87. For Edward the Martyr, see Lawson, *Cnut*, 139; Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 53-54. For Dunstan and murdered royal saints, see

this context, Cnut's condemnations of his rival and blatant neglect of his tomb would have enhanced his retrospective challenges to the dead king's legitimacy.⁹⁷ Where Svein's body was completely removed from the public eye, Æthelred's remained in plain sight, in a foundation that was systematically deprived of its material and spiritual wealth—a reminder that the dead king was unworthy of the glorious burials granted to his kin.

General Conclusions

In the eleventh century, Cnut and William each took control of potentially problematic royal corpses, using these remains to proclaim the validity of their conquests and the legitimacy of their claims to England. Like earlier rulers, the conquerors deployed these bodies in conjunction with other forms of propaganda: Harold's lack of royal funeral honors strengthened William's claims that he had been a usurping tyrant and false king, while the carefully regulated remains of Svein Forkbeard and various Anglo-Saxon kings complemented Cnut's broader efforts to portray himself as a lawful, Christian king of England. However, their respective efforts to minimize the impact of these problematic bodies were considerably more effective than their predecessors'. Where the desecrations committed by Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut backfired on their instigators and the obliteration of Edward the Martyr failed completely, William and Cnut's savvy manipulation of controversial corpses prevented reverence from emerging around these remains—or at least postponed the open expression of such reverence until the generation after their reigns. In Cnut's case, this seems to have been a result of a deliberate policy that was honed over his

Cubitt, "Murdered and Martyred Saints," 54-55; Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises," 183; Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 16-18.

⁹⁷ Compare accusations that Æthelred was responsible for Edward the Martyr's death; see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 168-69; Rollason, "Murdered Royal Saints," 18; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 144-45; Lawson, *Cnut*, 139; Wormald, "Æthelred the Lawmaker," 53-54.

two decades in power. William, by contrast, restricted this type of physical propaganda to the early part of his reign, using royal bodies most effectively in the months directly following his victory at Hastings. Future generations of English kings built on William's groundwork, naming the Confessor as a legitimizing ancestor, having themselves crowned by his tomb, and eventually sharing his Westminster mausoleum; even claims of Harold Godwinson's survival and celebrations of his purported remains could not undermine royal claims of a continuous dynastic line that extended from the time of Edward to their own day.⁹⁸

Although the mythology that developed around Harold in the centuries following the Norman Conquest did no substantial damage to the ancestral claims of reigning kings, it does throw Æthelred's dismal posthumous reputation into sharper relief. Unlike Harold, whose missing body left his reign open to perpetual re-interpretation, Æthelred's legacy was shaped by the king who helped depose him. Although the textual record for Cnut's reign is less explicit than for William's, I would argue that Cnut was responsible for the almost uniformly negative historical depictions of his predecessor. He seems to have promulgated a history in which Æthelred acceded to the kingdom under suspicious circumstances, abused his authority during his reign, and was unable to defend his people or even his own family from Danish attack; and I suggest that this narrative informed the tenor of texts like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the *Encomium Emmae*, and the eleventh-century hagiography of Edward the Martyr. Where the inaccessibility of Harold Godwinson's remains allowed the development of multiple accounts of his life and death—one disseminated by Norman propagandists, others conceived as alternative explanations of his final

⁹⁸ For the post-Conquest evocation of the Confessor's legacy, see Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, 265-67. All post-Conquest kings were consecrated at Westminster, but it was not until the death of Henry III in 1272 that the abbey again became a site of royal burial; see Mason, "Westminster and the Monarchy," 270-71; Mason, "Site of King-making," 61; Hallam, "Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship," 372.

days—Æthelred's unambiguous death and the presence of his body prevented comparable speculation about his fate. His prominent London tomb may even have provided a focus for the revised history of his reign under Cnut and his heirs, for as long as there existed a memorial to Æthelred and his purported offenses, the Danish dynasty could be regarded as an improvement over the old regime.

While Æthelred's reputation was firmly established in the generation after his death and other potentially dangerous royal corpses were neutralized or used to advance Cnut's political interests, subsequent Danish kings were less savvy in their treatment of rival bodies. Compared with Cnut's subtle manipulation of West Saxon remains, the desecrations committed by Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut seem shortsighted, if not clumsy. However, the most remarkable aspect of Cnut's use of physical propaganda was his ability to simultaneously engage multiple modes of burial discourse, glorifying the remains of select predecessors while drastically minimizing the impact of others. A similar phenomenon occurred at the beginning of William's reign, as he celebrated Edward the Confessor as a legitimizing predecessor even as he denigrated Harold Godwinson's memory and removed his remains from the public eye. This trend contrasts starkly with the actions of earlier English kings, who either cultivated the legacies of their most important predecessor or withheld royal honors from him; none successfully did both at once. Given this precedent, Cnut and William's effective and concurrent manipulation of royal corpses reveals the soundness of their political instincts. But more importantly for the present argument, their treatment of royal bodies attests that interactions with predecessors' remains had become integral to the transfer and solidification of royal authority. Whether they were guided in their actions by English advisors or perceived for themselves the dangers of ignoring such powerful political objects, it is significant that they exerted control over the bodies and legacies of earlier English kings in an effort to secure their power in the

wake of conquest.

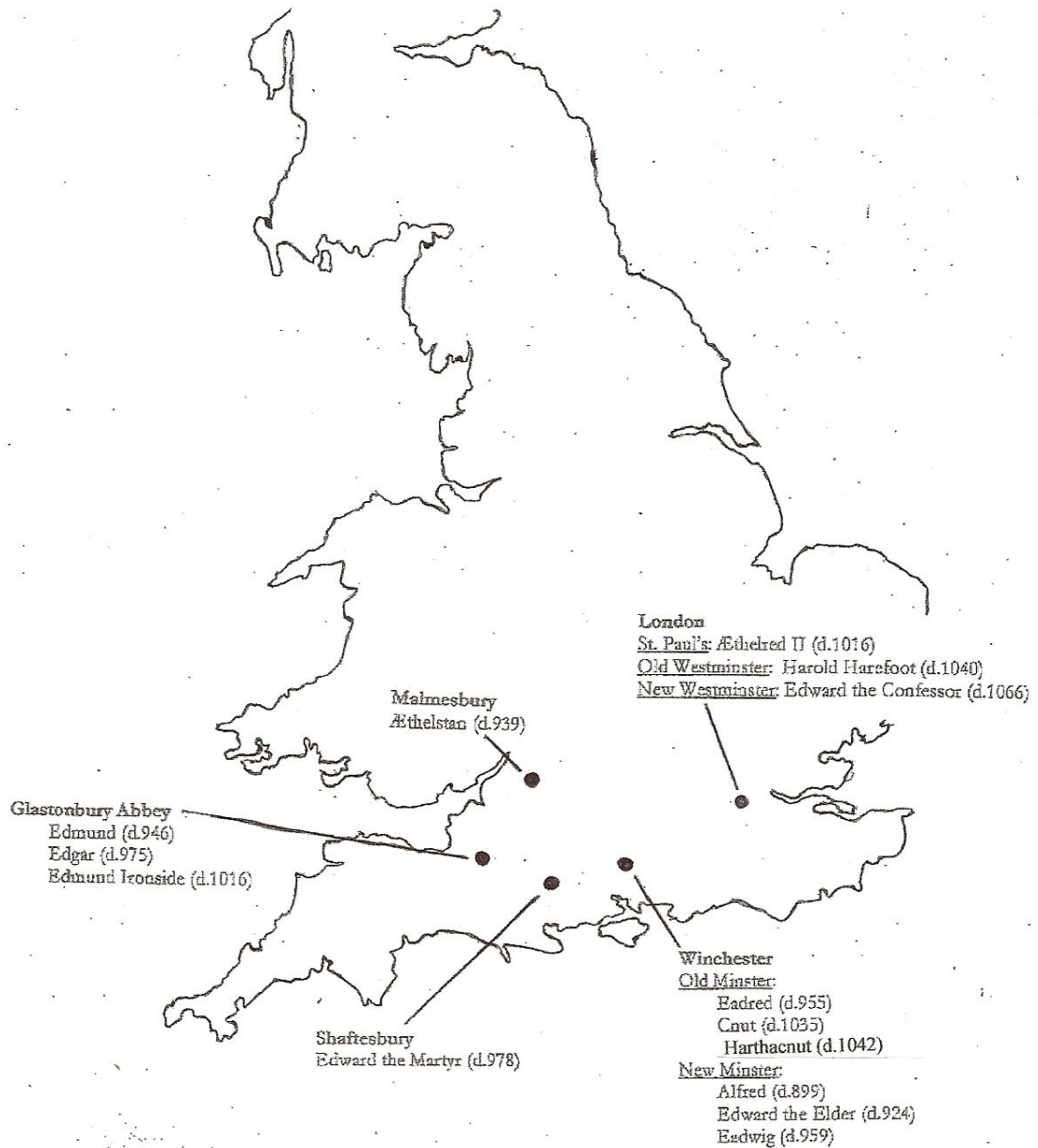
In light of these conclusions, it is remarkable that Norman and Angevin rulers did not similarly attempt to demonstrate continuity with earlier English rulers by associating themselves in death with the remains of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors. Unlike Cnut, entombed in Winchester's Old Minster in a final effort to portray himself as the heir to the West Saxon royal line, William had his body buried in Normandy, and from this point through the thirteenth century, Anglo-Saxon royal mausolea were largely abandoned in favor of Continental churches or new English foundations.⁹⁹ Despite this shift in the way English kings were buried and memorialized, early rulers were not left to oblivion: Anglo-Norman authors chronicled England's regnal history, royal saints' shrines continued to attract reverence, and a number of pre-Conquest kings had their remains translated into new Norman churches. It remains to be seen how this shift affected succession debates and to what extent older tombs featured in royal ritual after 1066, and I hope to pursue the political ramifications of these developments in a future study.

Based on the case studies treated in this project, however, it is clear that royal burial in the late Anglo-Saxon period was a vital component of the political process. In addition to giving a king's reign ceremonial closure, royal funerals could provide a forum for reconciliation and consensus and frequently culminated in the designation of a new ruler. Yet perhaps it is in the deviations from traditional royal burial practice that the importance of these last rites is most clearly revealed. In these instances, the lack of a normative royal funeral was a product of exceptional circumstances—conquest, regicide, or the absence of a worthy heir—which typically resulted in a prolonged interregnum or a period of political unrest. Nevertheless, deviation from

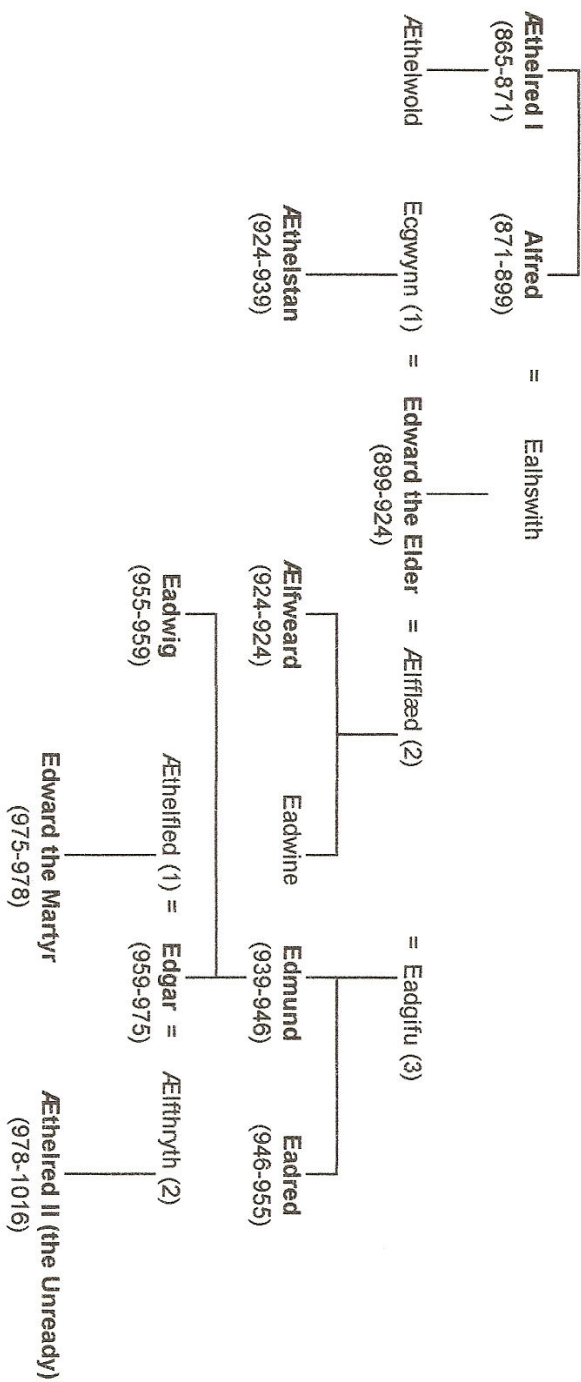
⁹⁹ The exception was Winchester, where William Rufus was hastily buried after a fatal hunting accident in 1100.

established modes of royal burial should not be regarded as aberrations. Despite the condemnations of English chroniclers, even the most drastic examples of posthumous denigration were part of a familiar discourse of burial practices. Various types of burial were current in late Anglo-Saxon England—saintly relics were enshrined in churches, lay and ecclesiastical magnates were given prestigious tombs, ordinary Christians were interred in consecrated cemeteries, executed bodies were mutilated or exposed—and each conveyed precise information about the life, death, and soul of the deceased. Rulers who desecrated or obliterated royal bodies did not do so in a cultural vacuum, nor did they introduce entirely new practices or depart drastically from established tradition. Rather, they substituted one mode of signifying burial for another, and the repeated use of these methods by English kings indicates that burial practice constituted a recognized and legitimate vehicle for making political statements. It was the pervasive understanding of how kings ought to be remembered and what royal burial ought to entail that made dishonorable variations so unpalatable for contemporaries. Yet it appears that even strained displays of reverence were enough to ease difficult royal transitions: William's secret disposal of Harold's body went unremarked thanks to his cultivation of the Confessor's memory, while Cnut treated the remains of Æthelred and his siblings with considerable impunity after giving Edmund Ironside an honorable royal tomb. But the legitimizing narratives that these conquerors created with the help of bodies and tombs are only the most extreme examples of how new kings constructed identities for their predecessors and for themselves by manipulating the remains of earlier rulers. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, English kings increasingly used royal bodies to validate their authority and shape their dynastic history. Although their efforts met with varying success, the consistent use of kings' bodies, tombs, and funerals as propaganda indicates that royal burial was considered a valid and effective mode of political discourse.

Appendix I Distribution of Late Anglo-Saxon Kings' Graves



Appendix II West Saxon Dynasty, 865-1016



Appendix III West Saxon and Danish Kings of England, 978-1066



1 = Aethelred's wives
A = Cnut's wives

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