15. END OF EMPIRE?
READING *THE DEATH OF EDWARD*
IN MS COTTON TIBERIUS B I

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Embedded within the prose annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are six Old English poems commemorating major events in tenth- and eleventh-century English political history. Concentrating on the last, and least studied, of the six Chronicle poems, *The Death of Edward*, this chapter reassesses this poem's problematic place in English literary history within the context of the emergence of West Saxon imperialism in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Seemingly out of step with developments in English poetic style as well as contemporary politics, this 34-line panegyric for Edward the Confessor is often overlooked in histories of Old English literature. Previous studies have tended to approach the poem as a nostalgic throwback to the heroic style of a bygone era, the last gasp of a dying poetic tradition, or a poignant tribute to a doomed political regime.[1] In what remains the most detailed study, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe contrasts this work's deeply conservative metre and diction with the more experimental style of the other eleventh-century Chronicle poem,

[1] Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 208–11; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 110–112.

The Death of Alfred (ASC 1036).[2] While noting that both of these poems strike the modern reader as 'a journeyman's performance — perfunctory, gestural, and dull', O'Brien O'Keeffe stresses that they nevertheless serve to illustrate the contrasting work that traditional verse forms could do in the eleventh-century: while *The Death of Alfred*, hints at 'something emergent', namely the looser alliterative style of Early Middle English verse, *The Death of Edward* 'puts the past to work in the service of contemporary politics'.[3] This chapter asks just what sort of political work *The Death of Edward* might have done around the time of its composition by resituating it within its original manuscript context, as part of MS Cotton Tiberius B I. [4] This eleventh-century codex reflects the imperialist world-view of the West Saxon royal house during a period of political crises.[5] However, by reading *The Death of Edward* against the backdrop of the preceding prose and verse texts in this manuscript, I argue that the codex invites us to read the poem not as a lament for the end of empire but rather with the broader narratives of salvation history and the process of *translatio imperii*, the succession of empires from one kingdom to the next, as discussed by Helen Appleton in the previous chapter in this volume.[6]

The imperialist worldview of British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B I

Cotton Tiberius B I is a composite codex that was compiled at several stages in the eleventh century. The first part of MS Cotton Tiberius B I (fols 3r–111v) comprises an early-eleventh

[2] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations'.
[3] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 150, 171–72.
[4] For descriptions of the manuscript, see Ker, *Catalogue*, § 191 (pp. 251–53); and Gneuss and Lapidge, §§ 370, 370.2 (pp. 294–95). The codex was probably produced at Abingdon.
[5] For an influential statement of the value of reading Old English texts in their manuscript contexts more generally, see Robinson, 'Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context'. *The Death of Edward* is also preserved in MS D of the ASC, BL Cotton Tiberius B IV. MS D is largely derived from C, though the eleventh-century section also contains writs dating from Cnut's reign. On the compilation of D, see Stafford, *After Alfred*, pp. 233–67.
[6] Appleton, 'Mapping Empire'.

century version of the Old English *Orosius*, a vernacular adaptation of Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos* composed *c.* 900 and closely related to the programme of translations associated with King Alfred.[7] The text was copied out by four scribes. Part Two contains two short Old English poems copied in the mid-eleventh century, a calendar poem now misleadingly known as the *Menologium* (fols 112r–114v) and *Maxims II* (fols 115r–v), and finally the C-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (fols 115v–164r), written in stages by several hands.[8] These short verse texts and the Chronicle entries up to 490 are all the work of a single mid-eleventh century scribe (Scribe 5). Scribe 6 then continued the annals from 491 to 1044 (possibly 1045). Palaeographical analysis places the compilation of the C-text of the Chronicle *c*. 1045, which also marks the point at which the two parts of the manuscript were first joined. This point seems to mark the end of the second phase of the book's production. After this, several scribes continued to update the Chronicle up to 1066, probably writing very close in time to the events described.[9] Scribe 6 added the annals up to 1048 on two or three separate occasions. Three further scribes copied the annals up to 1056, after which there is a gap in the Chronicle entries for a decade, before Scribe 10 wrote the annal for 1065, including *The Death of Edward*, and the first part of the entry for 1066 describing the appearance of Haley's comet, up to Earl Tostig's arrival at Sandwich.[10] The 1066 annal was taken up by Scribe 11, whose work breaks off midway through an account of Harold Godwinson's victory over Harald Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. It appears that

[7] Bately's edition for EETS uses the early tenth-century Lauderdale/Tollemach text (BL MS British Museum Additional 47967), as its base text, but Godden's recent edition for Dumbarton Oaks, *Old English History of the World*, uses Cotton Tiberius B I, so I cite from his text and translation. Latin text is from *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, ed. by Zangemeister, translation from *Orosius*, ed. by Fear.
[8] *Maxims II* is sometimes referred to as the 'Cotton Gnomes', to distinguish it from *Maxims I*, a similar poem preserved in the Exeter Book. All quotations from the ASC are taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS C*, ed. by O'Brien O'Keeffe, though I have silently emended all Tironian signs to 'ond'; translations are my own, with reference to *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by Swanton. The abbreviation 's. a.' stands for 'sub anno/anni'
[9] See Ker, pp. 251–53.
[10] Stafford, *After Alfred*, pp. 192–93.

these last two scribes were working shortly after 1066.[11] The remainder of the account of the Battle of Stamford Bridge was completed by a twelfth-century scribe, and at this point the C-text, and Cotton Tiberius B I itself, comes to an end. There is no mention of the Battle of Hastings.

Despite this protracted compilation, and the presence of multiple scribal hands at work over several decades, the overall impression is of a coherent, carefully planned book.[12] Although the original plan for the codex may not have extended beyond the initial copying of the *Orosius*, the expansion of the project *c*. 1045 with the addition of Part Two, links the Orosian world history with the Chronicle's account of the fortunes of the *Angelcynn* and, in particular, their West Saxon rulers.[13] Indeed, the scribes who wrote out Part Two modelled the layout of *Menologium*, *Maxims II* and ASC MS C on that of the *Orosius*, despite its unsuitability for the annalistic format of the Chronicle.[14] *The Death of Edward* was among the last of the items to be added to the codex, yet as we shall see, the poem makes a significant contribution to this ambitious project of vernacular historiography.

The rationale behind the selection and arrangement of prose and verse texts in Cotton Tiberius B I has attracted occasional interest over the years, though notably less than the other so-called 'poetic codices'. In 1947, Leslie Whitbread suggested that the *Menologium* might have struck the compiler as a suitable preface to the ASC because of its concern with the measuring of time, while also noting that *Maxims II* lines 5–9 shares with *Menologium* an interest in the seasons.[15] In 1980, Fred C. Robinson pointed out that as well as being copied by the same scribal hand (at least up to the annal for 490) these three items share certain

[11] See Stafford, *After Alfred*, pp. 228–32.
[12] As noted by Stafford, *After Alfred*, p. 191.
[13] As O'Brien O'Keeffe notes, the last quire of the MS is a singleton, suggesting 'that the final copyist of the *Orosius* did not envision adding other texts to his book' (*MS C*, p. xxii).
[14] O'Brien O'Keeffe comments that the decision to follow the layout of the *Orosius*, in a single block of text with narrow margins, posed no problems for the copying of *Menologium* and *Maxims II* but was not well suited for the copying of the ASC (*MS C*, p. xxiii). Other ASC manuscripts are laid out in parallel columns, with dates to the left. See further O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Reading the C-Text', pp. 140–41.
[15] Whitbread, 'Two Notes on Minor Old English Poems', 192–93.

themes, such as the measuring of time and kingship, as well as the structural device of listing.[16] Developing this approach, in 2015 Kazutomo Karasawa demonstrated how the positioning of *Menologium* and *Maxims II* between the two prose texts prepares the reader of Cotton Tiberius B I for the shift from the preceding Orosian dating system, in which time is measured in relation to the date of the foundation of Rome, to the BC/AD system used in the text of the Chronicle that follows.[17] In the same year, Eric G. Stanley noted that the presence of several political gnomes in *Maxims II* made this poem a fitting preface to the ASC.[18] Most recently, Elizabeth Tyler has argued that the addition of all three texts — *Menologium*, *Maxims II* and ASC MS C — to the copy of the *Orosius c*. 1045 transforms national history into universal history.[19] In the discussion that follows, I will highlight how poetry plays a key role in the manuscript, inviting reflection on the processes of history and giving voice to the imperial ambitions of the royal house of Wessex. *The Death of Edward* draws together several themes from the preceding poetry and prose in order to present a confident vision of the stability of the West Saxon house at a time of national and dynastic crisis.

Reading the Old English *Orosius* in eleventh-century England

In order to convince his readers that Rome had not in fact fallen in 410, Orosius downplays the impact of the Gothic invasions (VII.40.1), explaining that she was spared the miserable fates of the three great world empires that preceded her, Babylon, Macedon, and Carthage, on account of the Christian morality of her leaders (II.3.6–7).[20] In Orosius' narrative, Rome

[16] Robinson, 'Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context', pp. 26–9. See further Bollard, 'The Cotton Maxims'.
[17] Karasawa, 'The *Menologium* and *Maxims II* in the Manuscript Context'.
[18] Stanley, 'The *Gnomes* of Cotton Tiberius B.i', 199.
[19] Tyler, 'Writing Universal History in Eleventh-Century England'; Tyler, 'Cross-Channel Networks of History Writing'.
[20] *Orosius*, ed. by Fear, p. 77.

outlasts the Gothic invasions by assimilating its would-be conquerors into the Christian faith; instead of destroying the Roman Empire, the Goths became its protectors and were now responsible for its renewal (VII.43.6).[21] The Old English adaptor of Orosius' *Historia*, working during King Alfred's reign or shortly thereafter, seems to have been particularly interested in the imperial theme of his source.[22] Notably, where the opening sections to most of the seven books are abridged or omitted entirely, the introduction to Book II, on the succession of the four great world empires and their distribution in the four cardinal points of the world, is presented in full:[23]

> II.i. An wæs Babylonicum, þær Ninus ricsade. Þæt oþer wæs Cræca, þær Alexander ricsade. Ðridda wæs Affricanum, þær Phtolome ricsedon. Se feorða is Romane, *þa gyt ricsiende sindon*. Þas feower heafodlicu ricu sindon feower endas þyses middangeardes, mid unasegendlicre Godes tacnunge. Þæt Babylonicum wæs þat forme, and on eastewerdum. Þæt æftere wæs þæt Crecisce, and on norðewerdum. Þæt þridde wæs þæt Affricanum, and on suðeweardum. Þæt feorðe *is* Romane, and on westeweardum. (Emphasis added).
>
> [One was the Babylonian Empire, where Ninus reigned. The second was the Greek Empire, where Alexander reigned. The third was the African Empire, where the Ptolemies reigned. *The fourth is the empire of the Romans, who still rule*. These four major empires are the four corners of the world, with a divine siginificance that cannot be expressed. The Babylonian Empire was the first, in the east. The second

[21] Fear p. 412.
[22] On the dating of the translation and its sources, see Godden, 'The Old English *Orosius* and its Sources'; Godden, 'The Old English *Orosius* and its Context'; and Bately, 'The Old English *Orosius*'. On the translator's interest in the history of empires, see Kretzchmar, 'Adaptation and *anweald* in the Old English *Orosius*'; Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*'.
[23] See Khalaf, 'A Study on the Translator's Omissions and Instances of Adaptation in *The Old English Orosius*'.

was the Greek one, in the north. The third was the African Empire, in the south. The fourth *is* the Roman Empire, in the west.][24]

The English translator's use of the present tense to describe Roman empire might seem surprising to the modern reader familiar with the narrative of 'the fall of Rome' in the early fifth century. However, the appropriation of Roman imperial titles first by the Carolingians and subsequently by other Western rules, including the West Saxons, gave Orosius' *Historia* new meaning in the early Middle Ages. This vernacular rendering of a Latin classic invites its English readers to compare the present-day rulers of Wessex with the Roman emperors of old, who also presented themselves as defenders of *cristendom*.[25] I have argued elsewhere that the Old English *Orosius* maps onto the political ambitions of the West Saxon royal house in the early tenth century, bolstering West Saxon claims to hegemony over Britain.[26] Indeed, the author may have had contemporary West Saxon rulers in mind when, in a rare expansion to the Latin source, he atttributes the survival of Rome after the Gothic invasions of the early fifth century to the Christian faith and morality of its *caseras*:

II.1.7. And swa eac sylce wearð Romeburh ymb m wintra and hund and syxtig and fulneah feower, þæt Eallrica hire ealldorman and Gotona Cyning hyre anwaldes hi

[24] *Old English History of the World*, ed. and trans. by Godden, pp. 98–9. Cf. Orosius, *Historia* II.1.4–5: 'quale a principio Babylonium et deinde Macedonicum fuit, post etiam Africanum atque in fine Romanum quod usque ad nunc manet, eademque ineffabili ordinatione per quattuor mundi cardines quattuor regnorum principatus distinctis gradibus eminentes, ut Babylonium regnum ab oriente, a meridie Carthaginiense, a septentrione Macedonicum, ab occidente Romanum' (In the beginning was the kingdom of Babylon, then the kingdom of Macedon, after that the African kingdom, and finally that of Rome, which remains in place to this day. Through this same ineffable ordering of things, the four principal kingdoms which have been pre-eminent to differing degrees, have occurred at the four cardinal points of the world: the kingdom of Babylon to the east; that of Carthage to the south; that of Macedon to the north; and that of Rome to the west.) (*Orosius*, ed. by Fear, pp. 73–4).

[25] See further Godden, 'The Old English *Orosius* and its Context'; Pezzarossa, 'Reading Orosius in the Viking Age'. On the theme of *cristendom* in the OE *Orosius*, see Harris 'The Alfredian World History and Anglo-Saxon Identity'.

[26] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*'. For discussion of the Orosian history and its significance in early medieval England, see above, Introduction.

> beniman woldan, and hio hwæþere onwealh on hire onwealde æfter ðæm þurhwanade. [...] þa hi hire agen ealdorman and Gotona cyning hyre anwaldes beniman woldon, hit þeah God for hiora cristendome [...] naðer ne for hiora caseras ne for hyra sylfra — ac hi nu gyt synd ricsiende ægþer ge mid hiora cristendome ge mid hiora anwalde ge mid hiora caseran.
>
> [So also the city of Rome lasted almost one thousand one hundred and sixty-four years until Alaric, its count and the king of the Goths, tried to take its power away, but it remained undiminished in power after that. [...] when both its own governor and the king of the Goths wanted to take its power away, God would not allow this because of their Christian faith — both that of their emperors and the Romans' own — and the Romans are still ruling with their Christian faith and their empire and their emperors.][27]

If anything, however, the imperial theme of the *Orosius* would only have increased in its relevance to the West Saxon royal house during the later part of the tenth and eleventh centuries, when its kings became ever more confident in their claims to overlordship of Britain. Around the time when the *Orosius* was copied into Cotton Tiberius B I, in the early eleventh-century, Æthelred was issuing charters as 'rex nationum totius gentis Brittanie' (King of all the nations and people of Britain) and 'industrius Anglorum basileos' (Diligent Emperor of the Angles).[28] By *c.* 1044, the second part of Cotton Tiberius B I was copied, Edward the Confessor was using imperial titles that emphasized the geographical reach of his power over all the peoples of Britain and its surrounding isles, such as *rex totius Britanniae*

[27] *Old English History of the World*, ed. and trans. by Godden, pp. 102–05.
[28] S 926, charter issued by King Æthelred to Bishop Godwine in 1002; S 93, charter issued by King Æthelred to Bishop Brihtwold in 1015.

(King of all the Britons) and *rex Anglorum omniumque insularum in circuitu persistentium* (King of the Angles and of all of the islands in the surrounding area).[29] Coins and seals issued during the 1050s depict Edward crowned and enthroned in the style of the Byzantine and German emperors,[30] while the *Vita Edwardi Regis* (*c.* 1065–67) praises him as a new Solomon whose succession in 1042 ushered in 'a golden age [...] for his English race'.[31] The copying of the Old English *Orosius* into this eleventh-century codex similarly promotes the cause of West Saxon imperialism, inviting readers to compare the current political situation with the tribulations of the ancient Christian kings of Rome. Read in an eleventh-century context, the *Orosius* implies that the preservation of West Saxon *anwald* will rest on the faith of its people and their rulers, just as the survival of Rome had centuries before. The duty of West Saxon kings to ensure the correct observance of Christian feasts throughout Britain is the central theme of the next item in the codex.

The positioning of *Menologium* and *Maxims II* in the manuscript

The early-eleventh century copy of the *Orosius* ends towards the bottom of folio 111v, at the end of a quire, with the description of the bloodless conquest of Rome by the mild Christian king, Alaric, and the subsequent settlement of the Goths within the Empire, in Italy, Spain and Africa (VI.38). The remainder of the page is left blank. The text of the *Menologium* begins in a mid-eleventh century hand (Scribe 5) at the top of a new page (folio 112r) with an ornate capital 'C'.

[29] S 1009, charter issued by Edward to Godwine in 1045; S 1012, charter issued by Edward to Old Minster, Winchester in 1045. Other Edwardian titles found in charters include *Engla landes cyngc* (King of England) (S 1032), *tocius Albionis basileos* (Emperor of all of Albion) (S 1017) and *Christo conferente rex et primicerius Anglorum atque Danorum* (King Conferred by Christ and Leader of the Angles and Danes) (S 1025).
[30] See further Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 167–69.
[31] *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster*, Proem, ed. and trans. by Barlow, pp. 6–7.

Figure 1 goes here, full-page portrait, followed by the caption:

Figure 1. 'End of Old English *Orosius* (conquest of Rome by Alaric)', London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I, fol. 111v. Early eleventh century. ©British Library Board.

Figure 2 goes here. full-page portrait, followed by the caption:

Figure 2. 'Opening of *Menologium* (the feast of Christ the King)', London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I, fol.112r. Mid-eleventh century. ©British Library Board.

The Menologium, a 231-line calendar poem composed during the tenth-century English Benedictine Reform, is the the first in a series of poems in Cotton Tiberius B I, culminating in *The Death of Edward*, that employ envelope patterning, repetition and variation to link important events in ecclesiastical and royal history with the cyclical turning of the seasons. Cementing the link between the Christian rulers of Rome and Wessex implied by the *Orosius*, the poem contains several references to the central role of 'folc mycel' (the great people, i.e. the Romans, 9b) in the history of the English church, first the Augustinian mission (95b–106a) and then in bequeathing the names of the months around which the Christian calendar revolves 'in foldan her' (here in the land, i.e. in Britain, 15a). As Karasawa notes, the extra detail which the poet devotes to describing the feast of St Augustine, combined with the five references to *Bryten-* scattered throughout the text (14, 98, 104, 155, 230), are indicative of 'the domestic perspective of the poem'.[32] I would go further in arguing that although the poem's main goal is to faciliate memorisation of the key feasts of the liturgical year, *The Menologium* also advances the cause of West Saxon imperialism.

[32] Karasawa, *Metrical Calendar*, pp. 89, 104. Karasawa notes that the term *Bryten* never occurs more than once in any other Old English poem. On the use the similarly ambiguous term *Bretwalda*/*Bretenwalda* in ASC 827, see below.

Hence, the opening and closing lines place the heavenly kingdom of Christ (1–15a, 226–28a) in apposition with the broad kingdom of Britain ruled by the king of Wessex:[33]

> Crist wæs acennyd, *cyninga wuldor*,
> on midne winter, mære þeoden,
> ece ælmihtig; on þy eahteoðan dæg
> Hælend gehaten, *heofonrices* weard. (1–4)
> [...]
> Þænne emb feower niht þætte fæder engls
> his sunu sende on þas *sidan gesceaft*
> folcum to frofre. Nu ge findan magon,
> haligra tida þe man healdan sceal.
> swa bebugeð gebod *geond Brytenricu*
> *Sexna kyninges* on þas sylfan tiid.[34] (Emphasis added) (226–31)

> [Christ, *the glory of kings*, was born in midwinter, the great Lord, the eternal Almighty, and on the eighth day, the guardian of the heavenly kingdom was called Jesus. [...] Then it is after four nights that the Father of angels sent his son into this *broad creation* as a comfort to the people. Now you can find the feasts of the saints that should be observed as far as the command of *the king of the Saxons* extends over *the spacious kingdoms of Britain* at the very same time.]

[33] Cf. Tyler, 'Writing Universal History in Eleventh-Century England', p. 82. As Karasawa notes, the term *Brytenricu* here may mean both 'kingdoms of Britain' and 'spacious kingdoms' (*Metrical Calendar*, p. 129).
[34] Text and translation from *Metrical Calendar*, ed. by Karasawa.

As well as helping the reader of Cotton Tiberius B I to navigate the transition from the Orosian dating system to the BC/AD system employed in Chronicle, as argued by Karasawa,[35] *The Menologium* therefore also positions *Sexna kyninges* (the king of the Saxons) as protectors of the Roman faith throughout the island of Britain. As discussed below, the imperial might of Wessex and the Christian faith of its rulers is a recurring theme in the Chronicle poems, culminating in *The Death of Edward*.

In between the *Menologium* and the C-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, on folios 115r–115v, stands another short poem, *Maxims II*. Although this collection of wise sayings might appear removed from the codex's imperial theme,[36] on closer inspection *Maxims II* universalizes certain themes implicit in the surrounding historical material, while also consolidating links between present-day English rulers and their Roman predecessors. Echoing both the *Orosius* and *Menologium*, the poem opens with a series of short, gnomic statements highlighting the duties of earthly kings and the material legacy of Rome in the English landscape:

> Cyning sceal rice healdan. Ceastra beoð feorran gesyne
> orðanc enta geweorc, þa þe on þysse eorðan syndon,
> wrætlic weallstana geweorc.[37]
> (*Maxims II*, 1–3a)
>
> [A king must rule a kingdom. Cities are visible from afar, the ingenious work of giants, those that are on this earth, the wondrous work of wall-stones.]

[35] Karasawa, 'The *Menologium* and *Maxims II* in the Manuscript Context'.
[36] For a study of the poem's structure and theme, see Bollard, 'The Cotton Maxims'.
[37] Text of *Maxims II* is cited from *MS C*, ed. by O'Brien O'Keeffe.

As Elizabeth Tyler notes, these lines present 'a figure of continuity or *translatio imperii* rather than of destruction, hiatus and a new order.'[38] In other words, the opening of *Maxims II* emphasizes links between present-day English rulers and their Roman forebears who built great cities (*ceastra*) in the same land.[39] In the lines that follow, however, these images of royal and imperial continuity give way to a series of contrasts between changes in the natural world, such as the swift movement of the wind and the passing of the seasons, and the permanence of humanity's suffering and the eternal power of God (3b–14). In the closing lines, the poem returns to the theme of God's determination of the fates of men's souls:

> Meotod ana wat
> hwyder seo sawul sceal syððan hweorfan,
> ond ealle þa gastas þe for gode hweorfað
> æfter deaðdæge domes bidað
> on fæder fæðme.
> (*Maxims II*, 57b–61a)
>
> [The Measurer alone knows where the soul must turn afterwards, and all the spirits that turn towards God after death-day, dwelling in glory in the father's embrace.]

By emphasizing the secret and hidden ('digol ond dyrne') nature of the mind of God and the uncertainty of salvation, *Maxims II* establishes the limits of human knowledge — a striking conclusion to a wisdom poem primarily concerned with what is known about the created

[38] Tyler, 'Writing Universal History in Eleventh-Century England', p. 82.
[39] On King Alfred's rebuilding of Roman *castra* as 'burhs', see Bintley, *Settlements and Strongholds in Early Medieval England: Texts, Landscapes, and Material Culture*, pp. 119–56.

world. As we shall see, the fate of the souls of Christian rulers is also a recurring theme in several of the Chronicle poems, not least *The Death of Edward*.

Together, these two short poems serve as a bridge between the world history of the *Orosius* and the national history of the Chronicle, consolidating links between the Christian emperors of old and the *Sexna kyninges* who styled themselves as protectors of the faith throughout Britain in the eleventh century. They also invite the reader of Cotton Tiberius B I to reflect on the passage of time, linking the process of *translatio imperii* to the broader narrative of salvation history.

The imperial theme of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C

Immediately following *Maxims II* at the bottom of folio 115v in Cotton Tiberius B I is the opening of the C-text of the ASC, announced by a large capital 'Æ':

Figure 3 goes here, full-page portrait, followed by the caption:

Figure 3. 'End of Maxims II, opening of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C (Julius Caesar's partial conquest of Britain)', London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I, fol. 115r. Mid-eleventh century. ©British Library Board.

Nicholas Brooks has recently commented that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's main themes are Englishness and the deeds of English kings, pointing to the origin of each of its various versions at royal courts rather than local centres:

> The *Chronicle* is indeed about kings from the time of arrival of the first boat-loads of Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century through until the final entry (for 1154) in the manuscript that continued this annalistic record the longest [i.e. MS F].[40]

Qualifying Brooks' statement, we might add that the Chronicle's history of kings in fact begins several centuries before the arrival of Hengest and Horsa, with the Roman Conquest of Britain. Dovetailing with the *Orosius*' account of Caesar's conquest of Britain earlier in the manuscript, the first Chronicle entry describes the earliest encounter between a Roman *casere* and the people of Britain:[41]

> Ær Cristes geflæsnesse lx wintra Gaius Iulius se casere ærest Romana Brytenland gesohte ond Bryttas mid gefeohte cnysede ond hy ofersiðde and swa þeah ne mihte þær rice winnan.
>
> [60 years before Christ's incarnation, the emperor Julius Caesar was the first of the Romans who sought out Britain and beat the Britons in battle and overcame them, although he was unable to establish a kingdom there.]

As we have seen, the term *casere* is used in the *Orosius* to refer to those Christian rulers of Rome who ensured her survival beyond the crisis of 410, as well as earlier, pagan rulers.[42]

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[40] Brooks, 'Why is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about Kings?', 43.

[41] The Chronicle is probably following Bede here, who similarly uses Julius Caesar's conquest of Britain as the beginning of his historical narrative in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (I.2). The account of the same event in OE *Orosius* V.12 (*Old English History of the World*, ed. and trans. by Godden, pp. 332–35) is a truncated rendering of *OH* VI.9.28 (*Orosius*, ed. by Fear, pp. 280–81), omitting details such as the number of ships in Caesar's fleet and the names of the tribune Labienus and the British leader 'Cassovellaunus'. However, the OE author adds certain British geographical details and an account of the submission of the British *cyning* and all the inhabitants of the island. The ASC uses similar language to describe the submission of the various Welsh/British, Anglo-Saxon and Scottish kings to the rulers of Wessex during the ninth and tenth centuries: see ASC (all MSS) s. a. 872, 828, 853, 878, 886, 894, 900, 918, 921, 922, 924. See further Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', 669–71.

[42] On connections between Orosian *caseras* and West Saxon kingship, see Khalaf, '*Ælfred se casere*'.

Although *casere* was occasionally used to refer to Anglo-Saxon kings in other sources, such as a charter for Eadred of Wessex (r. 946–55; Sawyer 566), the compilers of the Chronicle reserve this term for Holy Roman Emperors such as Otto II (ASC MS C 982), Henry II (ASC MS D 1067), and Henry III (ASC MS C 1049). Nevertheless, the wide distribution of this Latin loanword in Old English, and its association with the traditional vernacular term for a ruler, provides further evidence for the enduring appeal of Roman models of royal power in Anglo-Saxon England more generally.[43]

The use of the BC/AD dating system throughout the Chronicle, as opposed to the Orosian system of measuring events by their distance from the foundation of Rome, anchors these early events in the history of Britain in the narrative of salvation history. Strengthening these connecitons, the few annals that are included for the centuries following Caesar's invasion are mostly devoted to the key events of Christ's life, the early growth of the church and the more succesful conquest of Britain by Claudius, 'oþer Romana kyninga' (another king of the Romans), in 47AD.

After the Roman withdrawal from Britain in 410, the Chronicle's focus shifts to the arrival of a new wave of conquerors in Britain, this time led not by Roman *caseras* but by the war-leaders of Germanic-speaking peoples, Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic and Cynric, and Ælle.[44] In the Chronicle's account, these newcomers conquered the land from the British kings like the Romans before them. Subsequent annals chart the conversion of the earliest

[43] OE *casere* appears in prose and verse as an alliterative doublet with *cyning*, as in *The Seafarer* lines 82–3: 'næron nu cyningas ne caseras ne goldgiefan swylce iu wæron' (there are no kings or emperors of gold-givers now as there once were). On the Anglo-Saxons' close identification with Rome more generally, see Howe, 'Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England'; Tinti, ed., *England and Rome in the Early Middle Ages*; Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', 663–65. A rare exception is the Exeter Book poem *Widsith*, in which the Roman Empire is referred to as *Wala ric* (78b: 'wala rices') and the Romans as *Rumwealh* (69b: 'mid rumwalum'), both rare and probably very early terms. Neidorf, 'Caesar's Wine and the Dating of *Widsith*', argues that these terms, together with the reference to Caesar's 'winburga' (wine halls, 77a), reflect pre-migratory perceptions of the Romans and are therefore suggestive of this poem's great antiquity.

[44] Hengest and Horsa and Ælle are not given titles in the ASC, though Bede describes the former as *duces* (*Historia ecclesiastica* I.15); Cerdic and Cynric are referred to as *ealdormen* (ASC MS C 495). For discussion of the English 'migration myth' see the chapter by Daniel Thomas in this volume.

English kingdoms to Roman Christianity in the wake of the Augustinian mission. This preliminary stage of the Chronicle thus sets the tone for the more detailed later annals that take as their main subject the wars of the West Saxon kings against the Danes in the ninth and tenth centuries. As with the account of the Roman conquest, the viking wars are described primarily in territorial terms, as a struggle for dominion over the island of Britain. Yet even in in these ninth-century entries, describing events centuries after the conversion, the link between the English and Rome is sustained through references to the regular sending of alms and the exhange of gifts between West Saxon kings and the papacy.[45]

The increasingly imperial self-image of the West Saxon kings from the ninth century onwards is clearly expressed in the annal for 827 (= 829), which extends Bede's list of seven rulers who had enjoyed *imperium* over Southumbrian Britain (*Historia ecclesiastica* II.5) with the statement that the West Saxon king, Egbert, 'eahtaþa cing se ðe Bretenanwealda wæs' (was the eighth king who was Wide Ruler/Ruler of Britain).[46] However, it is in the six Old English poems embedded in tenth- and eleventh-century annals that the Chronicle's underlying imperial theme is given its fullest expression.[47] As Pauline Stafford has recently commented, these Chronicle poems 'act as explicit commentary and judgement' on the historical events described in the otherwise terse style of the surrounding prose annals.[48] Yet despite their obvious value as historical documents reflecting the attitudes of the West Saxon

[45] See Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Idea of Rome in Alfredian Literature'.
[46] On the idea of *imperium* in early Anglo-Saxon kingship, see Higham, *An English Empire: Bede and the Early Anglo-Saxon Kings*. For debate as to the meaning of the title *Bretwalda*, see, for example, Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwalda*s and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*'; Fanning, 'Bede, *Imperium*, and the Bretwaldas'; Atherton, *Making of England*, pp. 101–04, 119–21.
[47] The poems appear in the following Chronicle manuscripts: *The Battle of Brunanburh* (MSS A, B, C and D for 937); *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (MSS A, B, C and D for 942); *The Coronation of Edgar* (MSS A, B and C for 973); *The Death of Edgar* (MSS A, B, C and E for 975); *The Death of Alfred* (MSS C and D for 1036); and finally, *The Death of Edward* (MSS C and D for 1065). Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 91–94, has identified a further short poem, *The Second Death of Edgar* in MSS D and E 975, composed in a looser style with intermittent alliteration and off-rhyme. A final Chronicle poem, *The Rime of King William*, included in the annal for 1086 in MS E, is closer to Early Middle English verse than Old English. For a recent discussion of developments in English verse style in the eleventh century, see Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse*, pp. 23–52.
[48] Stafford, *After Alfred*, p. 326. On the style of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle more generally, see Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form'.

court, and their relatively wide manuscript circulation, aside from *The Battle of Brunanburh* the Chronicle poems have rarely attracted the attention of either literary scholars or historians.[49]

As discussed by Paul Cavill elsewhere in this volume, the first of the Chronicle poems, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (s. a. 937), presents a highly stylised account of the decisive victory won by Æthelstan, king of Wessex, and his brother Edmund, over 'flotan ond Scotan' (Vikings and Scots) (32a) and *Wealas* (i.e. Strathclyde Welsh).[50] Wedding the high style of Old English heroic verse to the rhetoric employed in the prose annals to describe the Roman conquest of Britain, the poet presents the battle as the greatest slaughter to have taken place on the island since the 'Engle ond Sexe' (Angles and Saxons) first 'Bretene sohton [….] Wealas ofercomon […] eard begeaton' (sought out Britain […] overcame the Welsh […] won the land) (70–73). As Cavill argues, this is the rhetoric of Æthelstan's own royal court, promoting the cause of West Saxon imperlialism.[51]

The second Chronicle poem, *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (s. a. 942), uses equally traditional, heroic diction in order to celebrate the liberation of Danes living in Mercia from Norse rule by the same Edmund, now King of Wessex and 'Engla þeoden' (lord of the English/Angles) (1b).[52] Here as in *Brunanburh*, a major West Saxon military victory is praised in terms that are simultaneously territorial, religious, and dynastic:

Dene wæron æror

under Norðmannum nyde gebæded

[49] The most comprehensive analyses of the Chronicle poems are Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 72–118; and Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, pp. 175–252. See also Clarke, *Writing Power*, pp. 44–79. For discussion of the four tenth-century poems as a group, see Thormann, '*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Poems'; and Atherton, *Making of England*, pp. 166–71. A new study is forthcoming in Anlezark, *Companion to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
[50] See further Foot, 'Where English becomes British'; Scragg, 'Reading of *Brunanburh*'; Tyler, 'England Between Empire and Nation in *The Battle of Brunanburh*'.
[51] Cavill, 'Kings, People, and Lands: The Rhetoric of *The Battle of Brunanburh*'.
[52] See Foot, 'Where English becomes British', p. 131; Matyushina, 'Skaldic Panegyric and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Poem on the Redemption of the Five Boroughs'.

on hæþenra hæftclommum
lange þrage, oþ hi alysde eft
for his weorðscype wiggendra hleo
afora Eadweardes, Edmund cing.
(*Capture of the Five Boroughs*, 8b–13)

[Previously the Danes were under the Northmen, subjugated by force, in the wicked grips of heathens, for a long time, until they were saved again, to the honour of Edward's heir, protector of warriors, King Edmund.]

The Chronicle's promotion of West Saxon imperialism is raised to new heights in the two Edgar poems copied into the annals for 973 and 975. The first celebrates Edgar's royal consecration in the former Roman city of Bath, surrounded by 'preosta heap' (a multitude of priests, 8b), while the second commemorates his death and confirms that his soul now rests with the elect. Both Edgar poems employ a calendrical style similar to that of the *Menologium*, linking important moments in the history of the West Saxon royal house with the cyclical passage of the seasons and the liturgical year. Hence the first poem records that Edgar's coronation took place on 'Pentecostenes dæg' (8a), 973 years 'fram gebyrdtide bremes cinges, | leohta hirdes' (from the birth of the Famous King, Shepherd of Lights, 12–13a), while *The Death of Edgar* describes how, after the decline of English monastic life during the brief reign of Edgar's son, Edward, and resultant famine, God restored the joys of the earth to the English:

þæt eft heofena weard,
gebette brego engla, geaf eft blisse gehwæm

egbuendra þurh eorðan wæstm.

(*Death of Edgar*, 35b–7)

[Afterwards the Guardian of the Heavens, Lord of Angels remedied that, gave bliss to each of the island dwellers through the fruits of the earth].[53]

In a further echo of the cyclical structure of the *Menologium*, the Bedan pun on 'Angla/engla' (2a, 36a), and the variation of 'eorþan dreamas' (1a) with 'eorðan wæstm' (37b), participate in an envelope pattern linking Edgar's earthly kingship to that of Christ the king of heaven.

The Death of Alfred (s. a. 1036) is the exception to the Chronicle poems in that it does not expressly promote the cause of West Saxon imperlialism; instead, it laments the cruel blinding of King Æthelred's son, and Edward the Confessor's brother, by Earl Godwin. Although *The Death of Alfred* also marks a departure from the traditional alliterative patterns of Old English verse, even featuring intermittent end-rhyme, it nevertheless echoes some of the other Chronicle poems in its imagery.[54] For example, the poet's statement that no greater evil had been done in the land since the arrival of the Danes (6–7) directly parallels the ending of *Brunanburh*, while two references to Alfred's soul being now 'mid Criste' (with Christ) (10b, 20b) are reminiscent of *The Death of Edgar* (and, indeed, *Maxims II*). The absence of imperial rhetoric in *The Death of Alfred* matches the generally terse style of the annals in the C-text from Cnut's reign, no doubt reflecting the poet's sensitivity to the new Anglo-Danish political regime. With the surviving members of the West Saxon house now exiled to Normandy, it would not be politically expedient to champion what might have seemed at the time a lost cause. As we shall see, however, the West Saxon imperial theme

[53] See Salvador Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics'; Thompson Smith, 'The Edgar poems and the poetics of failure'; and Atherton, *Making of England*, pp. 277–83.
[54] See O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 150–64; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 110–11.

returns to the C-text of the Chronicle with the restoration of the Cerdicing line by Edward in 1042, to be given its fullest expression in the last of the six Old English poems, *The Death of Edward*.

The Death of Edward in its manuscript context

The annal for 1065 containing *The Death of Edward* opens on fol. 106r with a lengthy prose account of the conflict between Harold Godwinson and the Welsh prince, Caradog, the deposition and exile of Earl Tostig and his replacement by Morcar, and finally King Edward's arrival at Westminster and subsequent death. All of these events are dated not only according to the standard BC/AD temporal scheme employed throughout the Chronicle but also in relation to the feasts of the liturgical year, as set out in the *Menologium* and referred to in *The Coronation of Edgar*. Hence, we read that the 'mannsliht' committed by Caradog 'wæs on Sancte Bartolomeus mæssedæig', while the killing of Tostig's thegns took place 'æfter Michaheles mæssan'; a great meeting then took place at Northampton and Oxford 'on þon dæig Simonis and Iude'; before Edward himself arrived at Westminster 'to þam Middanwintre':

> And seo cirichalgung wæs on Cilda mæssendæig. And he forðferde on Twelftan Æfen, and hyne man bebyrigde on Twelftan Dægig on þam ylcan mynstre swa hyt æfter seigð:
>
> [And the consecration of the church was on Holy Innocents' Day. And he passed away on the eve of Twelfth Night, and he was buried on Twelfth Night in the same minster, as it says hereafter].

The use of feast-days as temporal markers is not in itself remarkable in the wider context of the Chronicle, though the authors of the C text tend to use days of the month.[55] Nevertheless, feast-days are mentioned far more frequently in the 1065 annal than elsewhere in the Edwardian annals. The effect is to anchor the momentous events of this year — in particular Edward's death at the time of Christ's birth — in the cycle of the Christian liturgical year, with its promise of salvation and renewal.[56]

The poem on Edward's death begins at the top of a new page (fol. 106v). As has often been noted, *The Death of Edward* is decidedly conservative in diction and metre, closer in style to 'classical' Old English verse than more contemporary works such as *The Metres of Boethius* or the *Metrical Psalms* or, indeed, the other eleventh-century Chronicle poem, *The Death of Alfred*.[57] With the benefit of hindsight, modern commentators have tended to categorize the poem's traditional style as nostalgic or outmoded.[58] Catherine Clarke, on the other hand, proposes that the poem's traditional style sends 'political signals about English identity and continuity even at this moment of rupture and crisis',[59] a view recently echoed by Erin Goeres, who argues that the poet 'uses the tropes of exile and lordship not to mark

[55] For example, the annal for 1042 simply records that Harthacnut died 'forðferde on .vi. Id .Iun.' (died on 8 June).
[56] Feast-days are used intermittently in the C-text annals from 1043–55: Edward's consecration took place on the first day of Easter (1043); the severe weather of 1046 arrived after Candelmass; the 1050 annal records that Edward held a council at mid-Lent in 1051; the annal for 1052 states that Swein died on Michaelmas Day, and that Godwin came to Southward on the Monday after the Feast of St Mary, before a strong wind did great damage on the eve of the Feast of St Thomas; and the 1053 entry describes how Earl Godwin was taken ill on the second day of Easter.
[57] Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, §300 (p. 258), describes the metre of *The Death of Edward* as 'surprisingly regular', noting the presence of only three verses disallowed in earlier Old English verse (29b: 'befæste ðæt rice'; 34a: 'þæs þe þearf wæs'; 34b: 'ðæs ðeodkyninges'). For full scansion of all the Chronicle poems, following Bliss' system, see Townsend, 'The Metre of the *Chronicle*-verse'. Townsend finds the poet of *The Death of Edward* 'the least skilful' of the Chronicle poets, noting an over-reliance on A- and D-types, and a high proportion of problematic lines (158). Like *The Death of Alfred*, the recently identified poem, *The Second Death of Edgar*, embedded in the Chronicle entry for 975 in MSS D and E, also displays little respect for the traditional rules of alliteration and metre. O'Brien O'Keeffe provides a useful list of the various 'traditional formulas' (i.e. parallel words, phrases and half-lines) shared with other Old English poems ('Deaths and Transformations', pp. 173–78).
[58] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 164–72; Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 209; Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 111–13.
[59] Clarke, *Writing History*, p. 63.

the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, but to celebrate — however briefly — its continuation'.[60] In the discussion that follows, I argue that the poem's traditional style is a fitting vehicle to convey the imperial world-view that links the prose and verse items in Cotton Tiberius B I.

Figure 4 goes here. Full-page portrait followed by the caption:

Figure 4. '*The Death of Edward* (ASC MS C 1065)', London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I, fol. 160v. Mid-eleventh century. ©British Library Board.

The poem begins in the style of a royal eulogy or epitaph, celebrating Edward's lordly status and connecting the purity of his soul with his fitness to rule:[61]

> Her Eadward kingc, Engla hlaford,
> sende soþfæste sawle to Criste
> on Godes wæra, gast haligne.
> He on worulda her wunode þrage
> on kyneþrymme, cræftig ræda.
> (*The Death of Edward*, 1–5)

> [Here King Edward, Lord of the English, sent his righteous soul to Christ, into God's protection, (his) holy spirit. He dwelt for a time here in the world, in lordly splendour, skilful in counsel.]

[60] Goeres, 'Exile and Migration', p. 59.
[61] Trilling, *Aesthestics of Nostalgia*, p. 208, treats the poem as a eulogy; Clarke, *Writing Power*, pp. 63–4, reads it as epitaph.

These lines closely echo the openings of several previous Chronicle poems, aligning Edward with his illustrious West Saxon predecessors.[62] A number of themes introduced here are subsequently developed over the course of this short poem, including the Bedan association of Angles and Angels (recalling *The Death of Edgar*), the heavenly destination of Edward's soul, and his exemplary piety and skill as a ruler. The half-line 'on Godes wæra' (into God's protection) at line 3b presents a direct verbal parallel to *Menologium* lines 39b and 217b, as O'Brien O'Keeffe notes, but also recalls more generally the meditations on individual salvation that run through *Maxims II*, *The Death of Edgar*, and *The Death of Alfred*.

Echoing the imperial language of Edward's charters, as well as the close of *Menologium*, the next section focuses on the geographical reach of the West Saxon king's power, as both 'Engla hlaford' and ruler of all the peoples of Britain:

> .xxiiii. freolic wealdend
> wintra gerimes weolan brytnode
> ond healfe tid, hæleða wealdend,
> weold wel geþungen Walum ond Scottum
> ond Bryttum eac, byre Æðelredes
> Englum ond Sexum oretmægcum,
> swa ymbclyppað ceald brymmas,
> þæt eall Eadwarde, æðelum kinge,
> hyrdon holdlice hagestealde menn.
> (*Death of Edward*, 6–14)

[62] Cf. *Brunanburh*, 1: 'Her Æþelstan cing, eorla dryhten'; *Capture of the Five Boroughs*, l: 'Her Edmund cing, Engla þeoden'.

> [For twenty-four-and-a-half years, generous ruler, he distributed wealth, ruler of warriors, greatly distinguished he ruled over the Welsh and Scots, and the Britons too, Æthelred's son, over the Angles and Saxons, over the champions — whatever the icy waters encircle, all that (land) — the young warriors loyally obeyed Edward, the noble king.]

While O'Brien O'Keeffe sees this poem as mourning 'the end of the Cerdicing dynasty', I would argue that it confidently presents Edward and, by implication, his chosen successor Harold, as links in the Chronicle's long chain of rulers of Britain, stretching through Cerdic and Cynric (ASC 495) and Hengest and Horsa (ASC 455), back to the emperors Claudius (ASC 47AD) and Julius Caesar (ASC 60BC).[63] As we have seen, the *Orosius* extends Cotton Tiberius B I's history of earthly rulers back even further into the past, to the reign of the world's first king, Ninus.

The middle section of the poem contrasts Edward's happy reign with his long period of exile in Normandy during the reign of Cnut (1016–36):[64]

> Wæs a bliðemod bealuleas kyng
> þeah he lang ær lange bereafod,
> wunode wræclastum wide geond eorðan,
> syððan Cnut ofercom kynn Æðelredes
> ond Dena weoldon deore rice
> Engla landes .xxviii.

[63] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', p. 150. The presentation of Britain as encircled by icy waters also recalls the opening to the *Orosius*, which follows its source in describing the world as a series of islands (*OEO* I.1; *OH* II.1). On the Anglo-Saxon insular imagination, see Appleton, 'Anglo-Saxon *mappa mundi*', and Appleton's chapter to this volume.

[64] On Edward's exile in Normandy, see Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question', pp. 96–8; and Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 38–79.

> wintra gerimes welan brytnodan.
>
> (*Death of Edward*, 15–21)
>
> [The blameless king was always happy in spirit, although he was previously deprived of land for a long time, remained in exile-tracks far across the earth, after Cnut conquered Æthelred's kin, and the Danes ruled the beloved kingdom of England for twenty-eight years, dispensed (its) wealth.]

As several scholars have noted, the poet draws here on the common Old English poetic trope of exile, as displayed, for example, in the Exeter Book 'elegies'.[65] There are also striking parallels with two famous literary accounts of exiled kings: Scyld Scefing, the *god cyning* (good king) abandoned as an infant but who later came to rule a great kingdom (*Beowulf* lines 4–52) and was himself regarded as an ancestor of the West Saxon kings (ASC 855);[66] and Aeneas, 'fato profugus' (exiled by fate) from Troy before building the city of Latium, whence emerged Rome (*Aeneid* I.1–7).[67]

Bredehoft has criticized the *Death of Edward*-poet for his over-reliance on recycled words and formulas, citing this feature of the text as further evidence of the decline of the Old English verse tradition in the eleventh century.[68] Yet, within the context of Cotton Tiberius B I — and the poem's immediate political moment — the repetition of the formula

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[65] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', p. 170; Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 210; Goeres, 'Exile and Migration', pp. 55–8.

[66] *Beowulf* was copied into the Nowell Codex *c.* 1000 and was evidently still being read well into the eleventh century; see Simon Thomson, *Communal Creativity*, esp. pp. 232–39. ASC 855 (MS C) traces the genealogy of King Æthelwulf of Wessex back to Beaw, son of Sceaf, son of Noah. In the version of the West Saxon genealogy preserved in the *Chronicon* of the West Saxon ealdorman Æthelweard, this same royal progenitor 'Scef' arrived among the Danes as an infant in a boat, was taken in by them and became their king. On the incorporation of Scyld Scefing (as Scef, son of Scyld/Sceldwa) into the West Saxon royal genealogy, and links with the opening section of *Beowulf*, see Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the Origin of the Anglo-Saxons'; and Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama of 'Beowulf'*, pp. 143–52.

[67] On the importance of the *Aeneid* in Anglo-Saxon England, and its possible influence on contemporary accounts of Edward's exile, see Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 39.

[68] Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 112–13.

weolan/*welan brytnode*/*brytnodan* serves an immediate political purpose, to emphasize the succession of rulers in Britain, as first Edward (7b) and then Cnut (21b) distribute the wealth of 'deore rice/ Engla landes' (the beloved kingdom of England). Word-play on the adjective 'deor' (beloved/valuable), the forms of the verb *brytnian* (to distribute) and the noun *Bryttas* (Britons) implies that Britain itself is a prize to be fought over by successive rulers.[69]

The poet's treatment of Cnut's rule over 'deore rice Engla landes' has important implications for reading of *The Death of Edward* as a response to the 'second conquest' of 1066. As Bredehoft notes, 'the reference here would seem to look both backward (with a historical perspective of the other *Chronicle* poems) and forward, to the possible end of a (hopefully temporary) Norman rule.'[70] Consideration of the poem's manuscript context lends support to this reading. As we have seen, the *Orosius* provided English readers with a narrative of Roman history characterized by a series of invasions, from the Carthaginians to the Goths. Although on occasion Rome had nearly succumbed to its enemies, eventually it prevailed, firstly due to the exceptional bravery of certain consuls, but ultimately thanks to the Christian faith of her rulers. The ASC entries for first half of the eleventh century leading up to *The Death of Edward* tell a similar story, describing the disasters that befell the English, a litany of invasions and betrayals, the ignominy of subjugation to a foreign king, and the near loss of 'onweald', but for the heroic leadership of pious West Saxon kings.[71]

Edward's glorious restoration of the West Saxon line in 1042 forms the narrative climax of the central section of the poem:

Syððan forð *becom* freolice in geatwum

[69] Cf. *Maxims II*, 28b–29a: 'Cyning sceal on healle | beagas dælan' (a king must share out rings in the hall). The term *deor* is used in 26b to refer to Edward.
[70] Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 112. Bredehoft does not discuss connections with the surrounding material in Cotton Tiberius B I.
[71] For the Mercian bias of these annals, and their antipathy towards the house of Godwin (the annal for 1065 aside), see Baxter, 'MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'.

kyningc kystum god, clæne ond milde,
Eadward se *æðela eðel* bewerode,
land ond leode oð þæt lunger *becom* 25
deað se bitera ond swa deore genam
æþelne of eorðan. (Emphasis added).
(22–27a)

[Afterwards the king, gracious in customs, chaste and mild, *came forth*, noble in array, the *noble* Edward defended *the homeland*, *land and people*, until the bitter death *came forth* and took so beloved a *noble* from the earth.]

Word-play on *æðel-*/*eðel*/ *eorðan* (nobility/homeland, 24, 27a), as well as the formulaic half-line 'land ond leode', ties Edward's nobility to the land itself and anticipates the final section of the poem in which, as we shall see, the nobility of his successor, Harold, is similarly stressed.[72] The description of Edward's glorious return from exile and subsequent death, framed by the structural repetition of the verb *becom*, closely parallels the accounts of the passage of the seasons in both *Maxims II* (lines 5–9) and the *Menologium*: just as Edward 'forð becom freolice in geatwum', so in springtime 'smicere on gearwum, | wudum and wyrtum cymeð wæitig scriðan | *Þrymilce* on tun' (beautiful *Þrymilce* [i.e. May] comes gliding into the citadel, into town, elegantly clad in adornments, woods and plants, 76b–

[72] In his chapter in this volume, Paul Cavill detects similar wordplay in the earlier Chronicle poem, *Brunanburh* (ASC 937). The formula *land ond leode* also appears in *Andreas* 1321a, and twice in the context of the succession or the patriarchs after the Flood in *Genesis A*: 'eaforan læfde | land and leodweard' (he [i.e. Mahalaleel] left to his heir land and guardianship of the people, 1179b–80a); 'gleawum læfde | land and leodweard leofum rince' (he [i.e. Jared] wisely left land and guardianship of the people to the beloved man [i.e. Enoch]). Cf. *Maldon* 54a: 'folc ond foldan'. OE *leod* also means 'prince'. For example, *Beowulf* 24a: 'leode gelæseten' (support the prince).

78a).[73] This passage also recalls the reversals of the earlier Chronicle poems *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*, in which the Danes of Mercia suffered for a time under Norse rule until their liberation by King Edmund (8b–13), and *The Death of Edgar*, which concludes with the a plea that God will revive the fortunes of the English after a famine that took place during the reign of Edward the Martyr (33b–7).

As the work nears its conclusion, the poet returns to the subject of the destination of the king's soul, another theme that, as we have seen, links several of the Chronicle poems in this manuscript as well as *Maxims II*. While the wisdom poem stresses how God alone knows 'hwyder seo sawul sceal syððan hweorfan' (where the soul must turn afterwards) (*Maxims II*, 58), *The Death of Edward* recalls the verse encomiums on Edgar and Alfred in confidently proclaiming that the West Saxon ruler is already among the elect:

> Englas feredon
> soþfæste sawle innan swegles leoht
> (27b–8)
>
> [Angels carried his righteous soul into the light of heaven.]

The pun on *Englas* (27b)/ *Engla hlaford* (1b) and the repetition of 'soþfæste sawle' (2a/28a) again underlines the poem's central theme, and a key theme in the Chronicle as a whole: the Christian virtue of English kings.

With Edward's salvation assured, the poet turns in the final lines to the matter of succession:

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[73] For an overview of this topic, see Anderson, 'The Seasons of the Year in Old English'. For links between the seasonal theme of *Menologium* and *Maxims II*, see Whitbread, 'Two Notes on Minor Old English Poems', 192–93.

ond se froda swa þeah befæste þæt rice
heahþungenum menn, Harolde sylfum, 30
æþelum eorle, se in ealle tid
hyrde holdlice hærran sinum
wordum ond dædum, wihte ne agælde
þæs þe þearf wæs þæs *þeodkyninges*.
(27b–34) (emphasis added).

[And the wise man committed that kingdom to a distinguished man, Harold himself, *noble* Earl, who at all times loyally obeyed his elder in words and deeds, in no way did he neglect anything that was needful to the *people-king*.]

Noting that Harold was not of the line of Æthelred and Edward, Bredehoft states that 'the poem implies that the end of the West Saxon dynasty will, in fact, coincide with the end of Anglo-Saxon history'.[74] However, far from drawing attention to the weakness of Harold's claim, the poem in fact presents him as Edward's chosen heir, highlighting his distinction ('heahþungenum men', 30a) and nobility ('æþelum', 31a) in terms which bind him closely to his predecessor, Edward (24a, 27a). Indeed, Harold's throne-worthiness is further exemplified by his loyalty to 'hærran sinum' (his elder, 32b), Edward, and his attentiveness to the needs of the 'people-king' ('þearf […] þeodkyninges', 34).[75] Harold may not be Edward's son or direct heir, but in the eyes of our poet, he is certainly the next best thing. The placement of this poetic compound, *þeodkyning*, as the poem's last word affirms

[74] Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 112
[75] See O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Deaths and Transformations', pp. 170–71. See further Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor and the Succession Question'.

Harold's place in an illustrious line of West Saxon *kyningas* stretching back to Cerdic, who fought for and ruled over *land ond leode*/ *þeod*. In its treatment of the succession of 1065, *The Death of Edward* can therefore be read as a vernacular parallel to the conclusion of the contemporary *Vita Edwardi*, in which Edward commends the queen and kingdom to Harold with his dying words.[76] The poem can also be compared with panels 29–32 of the Bayeux Tapestry, which seem to depict Edward conferring the throne on Harold:

Figures 5 and 6 go here, two quarter-page landscapes, followed by the caption:

Figures 5 and 6. 'Detail of the Bayeux Tapestry. Eleventh Century, City of Bayeux. Panels 27–30: *Hic Edwardus rex in lecto alloquitur fideles. Et hic defunctus est. Hic dederunt Haroldo corona[m] regis*. (Here Edward speaks in bed to his followers. And Here he is dead. Here they gave the king's crown to Harold.)'

Indeed, Stephen Baxter has described *The Death of Edward* as 'a sudden and uncharacteristic burst of enthusiasm for Harold', given the clear bias in MS C annals between 1035 and 1065 towards the cause of Earl Leofric and Mercia and general antipathy towards the house of Godwin and Wessex.[77] Perhaps the poem was commissioned to celebrate Harold's accession, which took place on 6 January 1065, just a day after Edward's death — the fact that the poem does not mention Harold's death may indicate that he was indeed still alive at the time of the poem's composition. Alternatively, like the conclusion to the 1065 annal, *The Death of Edward* may have been composed shortly after Harold's death in 1066 by members of a court

[76] *Life of Edward* II.ix; Barlow, pp. 122–23. Queen Edith was Harold's own sister. Harold was also related to Cnut. On Harold's claim, see Howard, 'Harold II: a Throne-Worthy King'. On the political agenda of the *Vita Edwardi*, see Sykes, 'The Sense of an Ending'.

[77] Baxter, 'MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', 1213. Baxter suggests that Harold's recent marriage to Ealdgyth, daughter of Ælfgar, Earl of Mercia, and sister of Eadwine, Earl of Mercia, and Morcar, Earl of Northumbria, may account for the softening of the Chronicle's attitude to the house of Godwin at this point.

faction who remained loyal to the Godwinson cause.[78] Certainly, by presenting Harold Godwinson as Edward's legitimate and worthy heir, *The Death of Edward* glosses over the rival claims of both Edward's great nephew, Edgar Ætheling, and his distant cousin, Duke William of Normandy, to say nothing of Harald Hardrada of Norway and Sweyn Estridsen of Denmark.[79] Reading this poem in its manuscript context brings into focus its emphasis on dynastic stability and imperial continuity (possibly to the point of defiance), even as the foundations of the West Saxon *anwald* were crumbling.

Conclusion

Although late Old English verse has enjoyed something of a critical rehabilitation in recent years, as scholars have begun to challenge the traditional narrative of the decline of the vernacular poetic tradition in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Chronicle poems remain a neglected corpus.[80] Traditional in style and loyal to a doomed political cause, *The Death of Edward* in particular has for too long been treated as an anomaly. In order to make sense of this puzzling work, scholars have sought to associate it with various endings — of Old English poetry, of the West Saxon royal line, of 'Anglo-Saxon England' itself.[81] Approaching *The Death of Edward* in the light of the complex overlapping historiographical narratives of

[78] The remainder of the annal states: 'Her wearð Harold eac to kynge gehalgod, ond he lytle stillnesse þar on gebad þa hwile þe he rices weold' (Here Harold was also consecrated as king, and he had little peace while he ruled the kingdom).
[79] See Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 242–43.
[80] See esp. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, pp. 223–38. Thornbury identifies several tenth- and eleventh-century poems, including *The Metres of Boethius*, *Metrical Psalms*, *Kentish Hymn*, and *Menologium*, as representative of a distinctive 'southern mode' of composition that as developed in this period to provide vernacular 'simulacra' of Latin sources. Rejecting the narrative that these works are indicative of the decay of the Old English poetic tradition, Thornbury categorizes this style as 'the apotheosis of Old English verse, not its downfall' (p. 224).
[81] Bredehoft, for example, comments that 'the apparent failure of the West Saxon line (as presented in this poem) leaves post-Conquest readers (such as we are) with a powerful sense of an Anglo-Saxon ending' (*Textual Histories*, p. 112), while Trilling states: 'The self-conscious archaizing of poetic form in the twilight of Anglo-Saxon England is itself enough to provoke a powerful sense of nostalgia, especially in modern readers' (*Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, p. 209).

Cotton Tiberius B I, as this chapter has done, allows us to see it in a very different light, as a poem that gives voice to the imperialist world-view of the house of Wessex in the mid-eleventh century. Like the codex as a whole, this poem encourages its readers to believe that the royal house of Wessex will continue to prevail against foreign challengers, just as centuries before the *folc mycel* (great people) of Rome had succeeded in preserving their *anwald* on account of the Christian virtue of their rulers. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight, we know that the poet's optimism would prove misplaced — there would be no glorious restoration of the West Saxon line after 1066, as there had been in 1042.[82] Working in the midst of these tumultuous events, however, our poet could not have envisaged that Edward would prove to be the last member of 'kynn Æðelredes' to rule over Britain, any more than he might have known that his short encomium would one day come to acquire its dubious modern reputation as the last Old English poem.[83]

[82] The Plantagenets would in fact go on to adopt Edward as a symbol of continuity with the Anglo-Saxon past, while Anglo-Norman chroniclers would propagate the myth that Edward had nominated William, not Harold, as his heir. See Garnett, *Conquered England*; Ashe, 'The Anomalous King of Conquered England'; Clifton Brown, 'Sacral Kingship and Resistance to Authority in the Middle English Life of Edward the Confessor'.

[83] The last Old English poem in the 'classical' style is in fact the similarly neglected *Durham*, which probably dates to *c*. 1100. Concern with the West Saxon dynasty persists in the accounts of Edgar Ætheling and Matilda, daughter of Malcolm, King of Scotland, and great-niece of Edward the Confessor, in the continuations of the ASC in MSS D and E. Matilda married Henry I on his accession in 1100 after the death of William Rufus. Had Mahald and Henry I's son, Willian Adelin (i.e. ætheling), not died in the sinking of the White Ship in 1120, Edward might not have been the last member of the West Saxon line to rule. According to ASC MS E 1100, Mahald was 'of than rihtan Aenglalandes kynekynne' (of that true English noble family). I am grateful to Daniel Anlezark, Mark Atherton, Paul Cavill, Caitlin Ellis, Rafael J. Pascual, and Harriet Soper for their helpful comments on this chapter.

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