“AND IF MEN MIGHT ALSO IMITATE HER VIRTUES”

AN EXAMINATION OF GOSCELIN OF SAINT-BERTIN’S HAGIOGRAPHIES OF
THE FEMALE SAINTS OF ELY AND THEIR ROLE IN THE CREATION OF
HISTORIC MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the ways hagiographies were used to engage in memory creation and political criticism by examining them as postcolonial discourse. In it, I study the hagiographies written about the royal female saints of Ely by the Flemish monk Goscelin of Saint-Bertin in the late eleventh century as a form of postcolonial literature and memory creation. Goscelin was a renowned writer of Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives. Through his hagiographies he not only created images of England’s Christian past that emphasized its pious, sophisticated rulers and close ties to the papacy, he engaged in political commentary and criticism. This is most apparent in his hagiographies of the female saints associated with the monastery at Ely, in which invoked the memory of these women to create a useful English history that allowed him to address issues he had with the new rulers, comment on current events, and criticize Norman treatment of the English.

Hagiographic literature, which includes miracle stories, accounts of the lives, and lessons about saints, provides unique insight into memory creation. Ostensibly written to show the excellence of a saint associated with a monastery, this genre provided a way for the author to address contemporary issues he felt warranted extra attention. The audience for hagiographies included the aristocracy as well as clergy, making them an
ideal vehicle for social and political critique. Because of this hagiographies are very useful for studying medieval social and political history.

The role of hagiographies in understanding the process and impact of colonization, however, has not been addressed by Anglo-Norman scholars. Anglo-Latin hagiographies written after 1066 in England were written to validate the legitimacy of Anglo-Saxon saints, and by extension the English people, and so may be considered to be a form of postcolonial literature. This literary genre is a commentary on the relationship between colonized and colonizer, showing the perception of the politically dominant culture by the subaltern as well as the subaltern self-perception. There is a paucity of scholarly works examining the period after the Conquest as postcolonial, despite the fact that England was under the rule of a foreign force. Literature written during the first forty years of the Conquest, especially hagiographic literature, deals with the immediate consequences of Norman colonization and is thus decidedly postcolonial.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION. ................................................................. 1
   The Argument of this Dissertation. ........................................ 3
   Methods. ........................................................................... 8
   Theoretical Approaches. ..................................................... 10
   The Chapters. ................................................................. 12
   Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. .................................................... 14
   England at the Time of the Ely Saints. ............................... 20
   The Monastery and Island of Ely. ....................................... 24
   Rebellion, William I, and Ely. ......................................... 27

II. HISTORIOGRAPHY. ........................................................... 36
   Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. .................................................... 36
   Memory Studies. ............................................................ 45
   Hagiography Studies. ....................................................... 50
   Anglo-Saxon England. ..................................................... 57
   Anglo-Norman England. ................................................... 62
   Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Women. .......................... 68
   Theoretical Approaches. ................................................... 71
III. PRIMARY SOURCES USED IN THIS DISSERTATION. ......................... 81

Manuscripts. .......................................................... 81

Published Sources. ................................................. 85

IV. GOSCELIN AT ELY: THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF ITS SAINTS. ................. 89

Goscelin, Bede, and Anna. ........................................... 95

St. Sexburge. .......................................................... 112

St. Eormenhild. ....................................................... 136

St. Æthelthryth. ....................................................... 145

St. Wærburga . ....................................................... 169

St. Wihtburga . ....................................................... 181

Conclusions. ......................................................... 188

V. GOSCELIN’S OTHER WORKS RELEVANT TO THE
ELY HAGIOGRAPHIES. ................................................. 191

Liber Confortatorius. ................................................. 197

Saint Edith of Wilton. ................................................. 212

Barking Abbey. ....................................................... 227

St. Mildred. ........................................................... 233

Conclusion. ........................................................... 238

VI. CONCLUSION. ...................................................... 243
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts. ................................................................. 261
Primary Sources. ........................................................... 261
Secondary Sources. ....................................................... 262

APPENDICES. ............................................................... 270
APPENDIX A  ANGLO-SAXON ROYAL GENEALOGIES. ................. 271
APPENDIX B  GOSCELIN’S WORKS. ....................................... 273
APPENDIX C  ABBESSES AND ABBOTS OF ELY THROUGH 1100. .... 275
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Norman conquest of England in 1066 was more than a political or military conquest. The introduction of Norman social, cultural, and religious ideas at the highest levels of society put the English in the unenviable position of maintaining a sense of Englishness within the emerging Anglo-Norman society. As a result, they worked to create an image of England as a sophisticated, devoutly Christian nation, and one very effective medium used to portray this was hagiographic literature.¹ Hagiographies were written about Anglo-Saxon saints in order to not only prove these saints were at least as powerful as those on the Continent, but also to protect or reclaim monastic property. Hagiographies written in the first fifty years after the Conquest also contained political and social criticism and advice.

William the Conqueror, the first Norman king of England, had confiscated the land of most of the English nobility and given it to his Norman nobles. He had also placed Norman clerics in positions of authority within the English church, and had taken the lands and wealth of a number of English monasteries. This plundering of monasteries was often the result of disobedience to the king, or even outright rebellion, on the part of the monasteries or the secular communities surrounding them. This is the

¹The terms national or national identity are used here in the context of the Latin *gens*, and do not refer to modern nationalism.
case with the monastery of Ely in Cambridgeshire. As the result of a rebellion centered in the town of Ely, William I stripped the monastery of its lands and wealth. Throughout his reign, and into that of his son, William II (Rufus), the abbots of Ely worked to regain Ely’s wealth and property. Abbot Simeon (1082 - 1093) was by far the most energetic abbot of Ely in the pursuit of this goal. To accomplish it, he employed the talents of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin.

Goscelin was a renowned and respected eleventh-century hagiographer of Anglo-Saxon saints who came to England from Flanders in 1058. His hagiographies of the female saints of Ely not only make the case for the restitution of Ely’s property, they emphasize England’s ties with Rome and its strong local saints and contain criticism of William the Conqueror and advice for William Rufus. In short, they are a form of social and political commentary. Goscelin was very fond of England. He mentions the country’s beauty and his affection for it in some of his works, most notably those he wrote while at St. Augustine’s, Canterbury. All his post-conquest hagiographies create a memory of England that focused on its long history of strong local saints, but the Ely hagiographies also emphasize England’s tradition of just and pious rulers against whom the Normans would be compared.  

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2. A list of the abbesses and abbots of Ely is found in Appendix C.

3. The Normans had a less than favorable view of the English Church, viewing it as backward at best. Henry Royston Loyn addresses the Norman perspective on the English Church *The English Church, 940-1154* (Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2000). Susan Ridyard discusses the Norman attitude toward Anglo-Saxon saints and their use of psychological warfare in *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglia Cults* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988). This will be further discussed in chapter two.
THE ARGUMENT OF THIS DISSERTATION

The Norman conquest of England has been the topic of much academic research. Scholarship of this period in English history has focused on legal, political and religious changes; however, the role of memory and its use in creating a useful past by both the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans is one area that has not been addressed to any great degree. The study of documents such as hagiographies and gesta provide insight into the political and social impact of the conquest by exploring the ways these media were used to create an image of the past that could be used to engage in political critique and propaganda.

This dissertation is a study of the creation of historic memory and its usefulness for engaging in political and social discourse through the medium of hagiographic literature. I argue that Goscelin wrote the hagiographies of the female saints of Ely not only to memorialize them, but also to address issues he had with certain aspects of the new Norman rule. He began work on the Ely hagiographies in the same year that William the Conqueror died and his son, William II (Rufus), took the throne. This was a golden opportunity for Goscelin to not only criticize aspects of William I’s reign, but to use both the Conqueror and the Ely saints to offer guidance to the new king. He invoked the memory of these women to create a useful image of the past that presented an image of Anglo-Saxon England designed to have an impact on events of immediate importance to Goscelin.

His other hagiographies of male and female Anglo-Saxon saints are typical of hagiographic literature; they present the biographies of the saints in laudatory fashion,
offer examples of the saints’ miracles as proof of their holiness, and address moral issues such as greed and lust, but they do not contain criticisms of contemporary political issues. While there are references to specific events in his other hagiographies, they are not concerned with political events; also, language and imagery he uses in these earlier works do not approach the intensity found in the Ely hagiographies. As I will show in chapter five, Goscelin’s other hagiographies provide excellent insight into the cultural and religious struggle between Norman and English during this period but they differ significantly from those he wrote about the Ely saints.

Goscelin was witness to the Conquest and the treatment of the English people immediately following it. Close analysis of his Ely hagiographies reveals the social and political tensions between conqueror and conquered. Goscelin appears to have been dismayed by what he saw, not only because he loved England and its people, but because he perceived William I to be out of control, thus putting the realm in physical and spiritual danger. His best opportunity to address these concerns was through the medium at which he excelled - hagiographies. Through the lives, miracle stories, and lessons he wrote about the Ely saints, Goscelin created a memory of Anglo-Saxon England that simultaneously insisted upon respect for England and offered a glimpse of how a kingdom could prosper if the king put the welfare of the people and Church before his own.

The study of hagiographies provides insight into how and why memories such as those surrounding the Ely saints were created. Ostensibly written to show the excellence of a saint (or saints) associated with a monastery, this genre provided a platform from
which the author could address contemporary issues he felt warranted extra attention.

The audience for hagiographies extended beyond the walls of the commissioning monastery to include secular and regular clergy as well as the aristocracy, and so they could be used for social and political critique. The monastery was an integral part of medieval society, and monks communicated with the world beyond its enclosure for a variety of reasons. It was for this expanded audience that Goscelin wrote the Ely hagiographies. He looked to the past and drew upon cults of local saints to paint a picture of England’s history that addressed contemporary needs. Norman clergy and aristocracy in England reading these hagiographies were shown not only the history of England as Goscelin wished them to see it, but also their shortcomings. The saints’ strengths pointed to Norman weaknesses. Acts of violence against the saints or those under their protection mirrored acts perpetrated upon the English immediately following the Conquest by the Normans.

This manipulation of history to emphasize aspects of individuals or societies was employed by both the English and Normans as a source of propaganda designed to

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4 Ruth M. Karras points out that the audience for hagiographic literature extended to every level of society. Hagiographies were read by the clergy and social elite; those who could not read them heard them in sermons or watched them in dramatic performances. “Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (July, 1990): 3-32, at p. 4. Karl Leyser argues that hagiographic literature was written for an aristocratic audience. “The German Aristocracy from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century: A Historical and Cultural Sketch,” *Past & Present* (December 1968): 25-53, at p. 27. A fuller historiographic discussion of hagiographies, including their audience, is found in chapter two.

5 The relationship between Cistercian monasteries and the surrounding communities is addressed by Constance B. Bouchard in *Sword, Mitre, and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987). Barbara Rosenwein discusses the relationship between Cluniac monasteries and their larger communities in *Rhinoceros Bound: Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). Both authors lay to rest the idea that monasteries were socially isolated and had little contact with the outside world. Instead, secular society and monasteries had complex economic, social, and religious relationships.
glorify their own societies while calling into question the legitimacy of the other’s
government, social values, and practice of Christianity. The Normans viewed the
English as an unsophisticated and backward people who were only marginally Christian.
Goscelin countered this view by presenting a history of English society as one that placed
high value on personal relationships and responsibility as well as having sophisticated
social, political, and religious institutions.

Scholars have begun to study medieval hagiographies as a way to gain deeper
understanding of society during this period. This research includes studying the ways
women were represented by male and female hagiographers, the way hagiographies
served as political tools, and how hagiographers created memories that were beneficial
not only to monasteries but to individuals as well. All of these studies introduce new
ways to utilize hagiographies to understand medieval society. However, they view
hagiographies in the broadest scope. There is much to be learned from a closer, more
focused study. No work has been done exploring either the way an individual
hagiographer used his work to address political and social issues or engage in political
criticism, or how specific hagiographies were used to engage in political discourse.
This work addresses this gap by analyzing in depth specific hagiographies written by one
monk at the transition of royal governance from William I to William II.

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6 Specific authors and their works will be discussed in greater depth and detail in chapter two.

7 Tom Licence touches on the ways Anglo-Norman hagiographies were used to criticize Norman clergy and
aristocracy, but because the focus of his article is not specifically on the socio-political use of hagiographies,
the treatment is necessarily superficial. “History and Hagiography in the Late Eleventh Century: The Life
and Work of Herman the Archdeacon, Monk of Bury St. Edmunds,” English Historical Review (June 2009):
516-544.
Goscelin wrote the Ely hagiographies between the years 1087 and 1089. The monastery of Ely was founded by Æthelthryth in 673, and the four subsequent abbesses were her sisters and nieces. All five abbesses were made saints and were the patrons of the monastery, although Æthelthryth had primacy. The town of Ely, in addition to being the site of their monastery, was one of the last strongholds of resistance against William I and the Normans. Goscelin’s works about these saints contain strong, sometime scathing, political critiques meant to send a message to William II, his nobles, and clergy, as well as furnish morality lessons. The miracle stories Goscelin chooses are, in places, such thinly veiled analogies to current events that it is surprising he did not fall into disfavor from either William or the Norman archbishops. Although William I was dead when Goscelin wrote these stories, he was still soundly criticizing a king, and the new king could have taken exception to this. Goscelin used these royal saints as a means of reminding William II and the Norman nobles and clergy of the duties and proper roles of rulers and leaders. The hagiographies suggest these women were better administrators and Christians than were the Conqueror and his men. Goscelin created an image of England by presenting these female saints as exemplars of English piety and royal obligation.

Through their lineage, he depicts a history of Anglo-Saxon England replete with pious kings and queens, the conversion of pagans to good Christians, and rulers who put God and their people before themselves. His account of the miracles associated with the saints emphasizes their willingness to protect and defend their followers against any foe. In addition, the significance of Ely as a site of ongoing rebellion well after the Battle of
Hastings was not lost on Goscelin, and he used it well. He retold the account of the siege of Ely as the Viking raids of the ninth century, casting the Normans as the raiders. In this way Goscelin further connected the gentle, pious, feminine aspect of leadership associated with the saints with its masculine, martial obligation to protect. The saints were thus remembered not only for their pious natures and just administration, but for being intimately tied to English resistance.

Goscelin’s works do more than show how a skilled hagiographer could engage in political discourse. They illustrate the process of creating historic memory by providing an example of the way any chronicler or hagiographer not only chose who and what would be remembered, but also who and what would not be remembered. Examining Goscelin’s hagiographies of the Anglo-Saxon saints of Ely as vehicles for memory creation offers insight not only into the complex interactions between the English and Normans during the immediate post-conquest period, but also the ways in which the past was employed to suit the needs of individuals, groups, and societies, and places this dissertation within the larger field of memory studies.

METHODS

Over the last fifteen to twenty-five years, memory and the way it was used to create an image of the past that was politically, religiously, or socially useful has become an important analytic tool in medieval studies, since modern scholarship is affected by
the perceptions and needs of those who recorded and stored events. Using the methods involved in memory studies to examine the Norman Conquest allows a more sophisticated study of the social, cultural and religious impact the Conquest had in England. This work examines hagiographic writing not only for its content, but for the qualities the author emphasizes and the descriptive language used. Closely studying the work of one hagiographer not only provides a more nuanced understanding of the issues and concerns surrounding contemporary events, it offers insight into the way historical memory is created through word choice, imagery, and omission. Those who made these decisions - hagiographers, chroniclers, and other writers - consciously chose what was to be remembered and thus created cultural identities that benefitted the society for which they wrote. Changes in secular and religious power required remembering the past in ways that validated contemporary social and institutional structures.

Hagiographies required of their authors the ability to present those aspects of the life of a saint that satisfied the commissioning party’s expectations, always maintaining the holiness of the saint and emphasizing the spiritual and personality traits associated with him or her. They also afforded the author the opportunity to emphasize the issues of great and immediate importance to him. Beyond the obvious laudatory language, expected in a story recounting the holiness of a saint, lie the issues important to the

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8The theory behind this research was first presented by Patrick Geary in *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*, where he argues memory is created by saving or suppressing memories of an individual, institution, or country (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). A fuller discussion of the scholarship of memory studies is found in chapter 2.

9Hippolyte Delehaye began the first modern study of hagiographies in 1905 with *Legends of the Saints*, in which he shows how and why first-and-second-century saints’ lives were created (Brussels, 1905, Donald Attwater, trans., NY: Fordham University Press, 1962). Further discussion of hagiographic studies, including the contribution of Peter Brown, is found in chapter 2.
author. Through descriptive language, miracles associated with the saint, and Biblical references used to highlight and compare the saint to established models of holiness or sin, the author communicated to his audience contemporary concerns he had as well as those qualities he felt were important to society.

Examining Goscelin’s hagiographies of the Anglo-Saxon saints of Ely as media for creating and using historic memory offers insight not only into the complex interactions between the English and Normans during the post-Conquest period, but the ways in which the past was employed to suit the needs of individuals and groups. Woven into memory studies is the discourse of power - the kinetic, often unspoken, negotiation of the relationship between ruled and ruler. What is not immediately obvious is who holds the power. Superficially it would seem that the person with the most weapons and wealth is the more powerful; however, it is the memory-maker who actually has the greater influence. Men, deeds, and dynasties are subject to the writings of chroniclers, hagiographers, and bibliographers. Their choice of subject, language, and content determine the course of remembrance.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The two theoretical approaches to power relationships applicable to the use of memory studies in medieval history, particularly Anglo-Norman history, are gender theory and postcolonial theory. Both examine the discourse of power through language; gender theory addresses internalized societal norms associated with the construct of masculine and feminine, postcolonial theory approaches power through the literature
created by the subaltern to engage in discourse with the cultural and political hegemony of a colonizing nation. Gender theory provides a framework in which to explore the ways societal norms of masculine and feminine are used to indirectly control behavior or, as is the case with Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies, used to criticize a leader through subtle role reversal. Too zealous an application of this theory to Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman history, or the anachronistic imposition of modern concepts of masculine and feminine, will result in an inaccurate image of these societies. For example, it would be incorrect to present Anglo-Saxon women as repressed. Women’s position during this period was, like that of men’s, dependent upon their social status. Royal and aristocratic women held a great deal of power both politically and religiously. Nevertheless, exploring the ways period-specific notions of gender were used to create images and memories provides a more nuanced analysis of sources from this period.

Postcolonial theory, although used most by historians of the early-modern and modern eras to study interactions between European imperial powers and their colonies, holds promise for Anglo-Norman studies. Post-colonial theory approaches history through the lens of literature and is applied to the effects of imperialism on the culture of the colonized nation from the moment of colonization. Particularly relevant to the Anglo-Norman period is the thesis that literature produced in a colonized country during the initial imperial period is neither entirely that of the colonists’ home country nor that of the colonized people. It is an entirely new genre that navigates the difficulties associated with the need to maintain the imperial power’s authority as well as to keep the colonized people placated. It is, in short, the literature of the colonized, and reflects the emergence
of new identities through the association, and melding, of different cultures. England in
the last half of the eleventh century was a colonized nation, and the literature produced
during this period, especially hagiographic literature, has characteristics remarkably
similar to modern postcolonial literature. In both instances, the colonized people create
literature designed to engage in discourse with the colonizer, assert the inherent dignity
and validity of the colonized, and indirectly criticize the new social structure.
Postcolonial theory offers a way to explore how the new Anglo-Norman society
incorporated aspects of both Anglo-Saxon and Norman culture to create its own identity.
It also helps explain the social and cultural reasons the Normans assimilated into English
society rather than creating a cross-channel extension of Normandy.

THE CHAPTERS

My research intersects the fields of memory studies, Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-
Norman studies, and hagiography studies by utilizing the theoretical frameworks
associated with gender and postcolonialism. The secondary literature associated with
each of these areas is extensive. This chapter introduces the argument of this dissertation
as well as briefly describing the history of Ely and the circumstances surrounding
Goscelin’s commission there. Chapter two provides a brief historiographic overview of
the pertinent literature in these areas as well as that concerning Goscelin of Saint-Bertin.
The field of research dealing with the cults of saints, though it offers insight into
medieval society, is not directly relevant to this work and so will only marginally be
included in this historiography.
Chapter three is an overview of the primary sources used. It contains descriptions as well as discussions of each manuscript and edited work. This chapter lays the foundation for the analyses of the hagiographies of the Ely saints and offer some insight into the issues and events that affected not only Ely and Goscelin, but all post-Conquest England.

Chapter four is an in-depth analysis of the hagiographies of the royal saints of Ely and the ways in which Goscelin engaged in political and social criticism. Using specific examples from these works, I describe the issues Goscelin felt needed addressing, namely the way a ruler should behave, the way a Christian should behave, and the consequences to be expected by those in power for inappropriate behavior. As will be seen, each saint illustrates at least one of these issues and their example offers ways each of these problems could be overcome.

A discussion of Goscelin’s other works is the subject of chapter five. Examining these works emphasizes the way the Ely hagiographies differ from his previous and subsequent hagiographies. Included in this chapter is the Liber Confortatorius, Goscelin’s book of advice and comfort to his student and friend Eve. Although it is not a hagiography, it provides unique insight into Goscelin’s frame of mind during his itinerant years. Chapter six ties the previous chapters together and briefly describes again how I have supported my argument that Goscelin used the opportunity present in his commission to write the hagiographies of the Ely saints to criticize William I and advise William II. It also contains ideas for further scholarly examination of hagiographic literature as a medium for engaging in political criticism.
The study of the way in which historic memories are created, whether they are of an individual, institution, society or nation, provides insight into the larger social, cultural, and political issues that prompted the creation of these memories. Those created in response to the Norman Conquest and immediate post-conquest period provide a unique window into the struggles facing not only the English, but the Normans, during the formation of a new, Anglo-Norman, society. Because memory creation is at the heart of the genre, hagiographies are useful tools for understanding the reasons and methods behind the formation of a useful past. The very reason for writing them encouraged political and social commentary by providing a safe place for the author to express his opinions and concerns; after all, he was writing about people who were long dead. Studying hagiographies for commentary on events contemporary to the hagiographer is relatively new. Analyzing specific hagiographies written by one monk provides an opportunity to understand the complex ways this genre was used in general, and the problems facing early Anglo-Norman England specifically. This work is a study of the hagiographies of the female saints of Ely, written by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, and the ways they were used to engage in political and social discourse as well as create a national memory of Anglo-Saxon England.

GOSCELIN OF SAINT-BERTIN

Goscelin of Saint-Bertin was one of the most prolific writers of Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives in England in the eleventh century. There are fifty-one works concerning saints either known to be his or attributed to him with confidence, as well as a book
written for his student Eve (Liber Confortatorius), a chronicle of Saint Augustine’s Abbey, and a catalog of saints buried in England. He left no autobiographical information, what is known about his life has been gleaned from writings by contemporaries such as Reginald of Canterbury, who was a confrère of Goscelin’s at that abbey, from William of Malmesbury’s De Gestis Regum Anglorum and De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum, and the Liber Eliensis. We do know that he came to England from Flanders with Bishop Herman of Ramsbury, and his life can be divided into four distinct phases: his life at Saint-Bertin, his life at Ramsbury, his itinerant period during which he wrote the largest part of his corpus of literature, and his final years at Saint Augustine’s monastery in Canterbury.

Goscelin began his monastic career in the Flemish monastery of Saint-Bertin, which had a reputation for the quality of education its monks received and produced a number of writers who specialized in biographic and hagiographic works. This reputation no doubt had an influence on his reception as an hagiographer. The monastery was one of the first stops for those arriving on the continent from England and one of the last for those traveling to England. This being the case, the monks there would have been familiar with Anglo-Saxons and, likewise, Anglo-Saxons would have

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10 Thomas J. Hamilton, Goscelin of Canterbury: A Critical Study of His Works and Accomplishments, 2 vols. (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1973), 2:83. A list of works known to be Goscelin’s, or positively attributed to him, appears in Appendix B.

11 Hamilton, Goscelin of Canterbury, 1:122-123.

12 Ibid., 1:137.
been familiar with the monastery. Goscelin most likely entered the monastery as a child and so would have received orders of sub-deacon and deacon prior to leaving the monastery.

During his tenure at Saint-Bertin, Goscelin met Herman, Bishop of Ramsbury and Sherborne, and came to England under his patronage in 1055. Herman first came to England when Edward the Confessor returned from exile in 1041. The king had lived in Normandy, and brought Norman clergy back with him, including Herman who appears to have been the king’s chaplain until he was given the bishopric of Ramsbury in 1045. He returned to the continent, visiting Saint-Bertin’s monastery in 1055. He befriended Goscelin there and invited him to accompany him to England. Goscelin’s first residence in his new country was Sherborne Abbey, where he also served as chaplain for the nearby convent at Wilton. He wrote the \textit{Vita S. Wulfsige} and \textit{Vita Sancta Eadithe} while at Sherborne. Goscelin wrote the \textit{vita} of St. Wulf impe between 1078 and 1080, with the new bishop, Osmund, being the likely recipient.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Hamilton} Thomas Hamilton addresses this issue, arguing that in the mid-eleventh century most monks were \textit{monachi nutriti}, or oblates, rather than \textit{monachi conversi} who took vows later in life. Given this, he assumes that Goscelin would have been ordained a priest. He bases this assumption on Goscelin’s incipit to the Life of Saint Wulfins as well as Lanfranc’s \textit{Decreta}.
\end{thebibliography}
This did not stop Osmund from expelling Goscelin from Sherborne and, eventually, the diocese of Salisbury in 1080.\textsuperscript{17} There is no indication as to why Goscelin was sent from the abbey, however it is possible that he argued with Osmund over the liturgy. Gregorian chant had been used in England since the tenth-century monastic revival, but beginning in the eleventh century, Norman abbeys modified this. Goscelin now considered himself to be English, and likely fought any attempts to change the structure of the liturgy.\textsuperscript{18} This was not the only way the Anglo-Saxon Church differed from its continental counterpart, there were two other, very significant ways. The first was the predominance of bishops who were consecrated after being monks. In his \textit{vitae} of Saints Wulfsin, Dunstan, Elphege and Aelfwold, all of whom were monks before they were bishops, Goscelin praises them highly in their roles as bishops, suggesting his acceptance of this practice even if most Normans clerics looked down upon it. Bishops were selected from the secular clergy in the continental Roman Church.

The second significant difference is the institution of the cathedral monastery and the practice of having the monastery serve as the cathedral chapter. Though they were pervasive in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the concept was alien to the

\textsuperscript{17}In \textit{Goscelin of Canterbury}, Hamilton posits two reasons for this dismissal; that the two strongly disagreed over the practices of the Anglo-Saxon church or that Goscelin protested the new type of chanting the Normans were trying to introduce into England. Goscelin was, in addition to being a hagiographer, a writer of liturgical music. Stephanie Hollis argues that Osmund felt Goscelin’s relationship with Eve was scandalous. There is no real evidence that the two were involved in anything more than a close friendship, and it seems as though Hollis is misinterpreting the language of spiritual friendship, which can be quite sensual; Hollis, ed., \textit{Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin’s Legend of Edith and Liber Confortatorius} (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), p. 233. Dismissing a troublesome monk appears to have not been uncommon. Tom Leyser discusses Archbishop Lanfranc’s angry letter to Bishop Herfast of East Anglia ordering him to dismiss his secretary, Herman of Bury St. Edmunds; “History and Hagiography,” p. 520.

\textsuperscript{18}For a further discussion of this, see Hamilton, \textit{Goscelin of Canterbury}, pp. 172-174.
Norman clergy brought over by William. Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury, who was appointed by William in 1070, approved of this institution, as did most of the high-ranking clergy. Indeed, under Lanfranc this institution was expanded in England, despite the disapproval of some bishops. Osmund, who was made abbot after Herman died in 1078, seems to have been among the bishops who took issue with cathedral monasteries.

It was during his stay at Sherborne Abbey that Goscelin became tutor to a resident at Wilton named Eve. She became his student at a young age and continued to study under him into her adulthood. The two developed a close intellectual and spiritual friendship until her departure to Angers around 1080. This friendship had a profound effect on Goscelin. This work contains some of Goscelin’s most powerful writing, and as will be shown in chapter five, is the closest of his works to the hagiographies of the saints of Ely. Shortly after his dismissal from Sherborne, Eve refused to see him. She eventually left England, without notifying Goscelin, to become an anchorite in Angers. This was a devastating turn of events, prompting him to compose the long missive, which would become known as the Liber Confortatorius, a work of both advice and admonition for Eve. The emotions are raw, expressing both his sorrow at Eve’s departure and his anger at being forced from Sherborne. Goscelin compares Osmund to the pharaoh who enslaved the Hebrews and describes the Normans as no better than Antiochus or Herod.

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20 Ibid., I:164-167.

21 Ibid., I:166-167. A discussion of the historiography of Liber Confortatorius, including the debate surrounding Goscelin’s relationship with Eve, is found in chapter two.
He likens the Normans in England to the Roman Empire and England to the lands they conquered and subjugated.22

Goscelin became an itinerant monk after leaving Sherborne Abbey, accepting commissions from abbots to write hagiographies and living at the monastery for which he was working. It was during his itinerant years that he went to Ely. Around 1087 or 1088 he was commissioned by the abbot, Simeon, to write the history of its royal saints. As mentioned earlier, Ely had been the site of resistance to Norman rule, with a year-long siege in 1070 ending in the defeat of the island’s inhabitants. In 1087 he was commissioned by Abbot Simeon of Ely to write the history of its royal saints.23 It was in this environment, where the townspeople still resented the Normans and the abbot was trying to regain Ely’s properties and expand its influence, that Goscelin wrote the Ely hagiographies.

In 1090, ten years after leaving Sherborne Abbey, Goscelin became a member of the community of Saint Augustine’s monastery in Canterbury. He continued to write hagiographic works about Anglo-Saxon saints while he was at Saint Augustine’s, including the Historia Major Sancti Augustini, Historia Minor Sancti Augustini, Historia Translationis Sancti Augustini, Vita et Miracula Sancti Melliti, and the vitae of Saints Justus, Honorus, Deusdedit, and Theodore. In addition, he composed liturgical

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music and a catalog of all the Anglo-Saxon saints. He spent the rest of his life there, dying in 1107.\textsuperscript{24}

**ENGLAND AT THE TIME OF THE ELY SAINTS**

England in the seventh century was politically and religiously very different from the one in which Goscelin lived and wrote. The country was divided into kingdoms, of which Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, Essex, Sussex, and Kent held the greatest power. Smaller kingdoms such as Hwicce and South Gyrwe were ruled by under-kings, and it appears these territories were given by the kings of the larger kingdoms through the last quarter of the eighth century.\textsuperscript{25}

Ties between kingdoms were often made through marriage, with the wife usually coming from the more powerful household when the kingdoms were not equally strong. In this capacity, they served to maintain the peace between kingdoms as well as create military alliances.\textsuperscript{26} Goscelin mentioned these strategic marriages almost in passing when he wrote the *Vita Sancte Eormenhild*. He recounts that Eormenhild, granddaughter of King Anna by his daughter Seaxburga, “...was, therefore, given by her father, King Earconberht, to Wulfhere, King of the Mercians, and by this mediator were Kent and Mercia made as one kingdom.”\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{26}Stacy S. Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p 19. Modern historians have named these dynastic wives peace-weavers. The growing historiography about these women is discussed more fully in Chapter II.

\textsuperscript{27}CCCC, f. 72', “Tradita ergo est a patre rege Ercomerto Wulfero regi Merciorum hacque mediatrice, Cantuarii et Mercii facti sunt uti unum regnum.”
It should not be assumed, however, that women were no more than pawns for powerful men during this period. They were responsible for running the household, managing financial affairs, and seeing to the welfare of the kingdom with their husbands. Anglo-Saxon royal women entered into marriage with their own wealth, and they were free to use it as they saw fit. Very often queens used their wealth to support religious institutions and to reward loyalty. Part of their role as household manager included entertaining guests, which gave them an important political role, and their advice was usually taken seriously by the king. Goscelin took this role for granted in his description of Eormenhild’s relationship with her husband Wulfhere. Of their marriage he says: “But her husband the king, on his own, obeyed her desires and petitions, on his own yielded to her advice.”

Anglo-Saxon queens also played an important role in the reestablishment of Christianity in England. The country had been Christian from the time it was a Roman province, but the religion became severely marginalized after the Angles, Saxons, and Juts began to invade and settle in England in the fifth century. In 597 A.D., Augustine

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28Ibid., 72, “Rex uero maritus sanctis ipsius desideriis ac peticionibus ultro obediebat ultro se eius monitis inclinabat.”

arrived in England and began the process of reestablishing Christianity in Kent. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that during King Æthelberht’s reign in Kent, Augustine was sent to England by Pope Gregory to spread God’s word to the people: “At this time Pope Gregory sent to Briton Augustine with a good many monks to preach God’s word to the English people.” But Æthelberht’s acceptance of Christianity was not just the result of Augustine’s ability to proselytize; Æthelberht’s wife, Bertha, was a Christian Frankish princess who had been married to him with the express condition that she be allowed to practice her own religion. According to Bede:

For even before this [coming of Augustine] he had heard of the Christian religion because he had a Christian wife from the Frankish royal family, called Bercta [Bertha], whom he had accepted with the parents’ condition that she would have the freedom to practice her faith and religion without harm, with her own bishop, named Ludhard, whom they had sent with her to support her in the faith.

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Edward James provides a compelling argument that the process of reintroducing Christianity to England had less to do with direct papal initiative than with perception of Frankish kings that they were responsible for converting their subjects. He notes that in the sixth century Frankish kings claimed overlordship to southern England, and that Pope Gregory had complained that the English had been asking for priests since they could not find local priests. He asked the Queen Regent of Francia, Brunhild, to send priests to England. Therefore, according to James, Augustine’s mission to England was as much a result of politics as religion. This allowed Bede to make these missionaries, who reintroduced Roman Church structure to Britain, to be the heroes of his narrative and, in so doing, marginalize the Irish Church; Britain in the First Millennium (London: Hodder Arnold, 2001).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Benjamin Thorpe, ed. (London: Krause Reprint Ltd., 1861, reprint 1964), I, pp 34-37. “Her Gregorius papa sende to Brytene Autustinum mid wel manegum munecum þa Godes word Angla þeode godspelledan..” A more thorough discussion of this source is found in chapter three. Hereafter, all citation references to this work will be abbreviated ASC.

Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, Peter Hunter Blair, ed. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959), I:25. “Nam et antea fama ad eum Christianae religionis pervenerat, utpote qui et uxorem habebat Christianam de gent Francorum regia, vocabulo Bercta, quam ea conditione parentibus acceperat, ut ritum fidei ac religionis suiæ cum episcopo, quem ei adiutorem fidei dederant, nomine Liudhardo, inviolatum servare licentiam haberet.”
The Church was reasserting its presence in England not only by sending missionaries, but through royal women who supported and founded monasteries and churches and influenced their husbands. Goscelin used the memory of Christianity coming to England through the agency of Christian queens in his life of St. Sexburge. He presents her as a good Christian wife who influenced her husband to not only accept Christianity himself, but to spread it through their kingdom, thus saving not only her husband’s soul but the souls of their subjects. At Sexburge’s urging, Earconberht “...first utterly exterminated from his entire kingdom all the idols and all the paganism that still remained there under prior kings and now not merely spread the kingdom of Christ but made [his kingdom] totally Christ’s.”

Bede’s portrayal of royal women tends to focus more on their role in bringing Roman Christianity to the people of England than their political roles, and when he discusses them by name it is always within the context of conversion or the foundation of monasteries and churches. The proper practice of Christianity is linked to women through Bede. Goscelin echoes Bede in his hagiographies of the Ely saints, not only adding authority to his own work but recalling a cultural memory of good Christian queens who helped bring the people of England back from paganism. Queens were, of necessity, tied to their husbands in memory as in life.

33 Klein, Ruling Women, pp 10-11.

34 CCCC, f. 70”, “...primo omnia idola que sub prioribus regibus adhuc erant residua, ab uniuerso regno suo cum omni paganismo funditus externauit, regnnumque Christi apud se iam non tam dilatauit, quam totum Christi esse fecit.”
Where queens brought the faith to the people and contributed to its spread through the foundations of religious institutions, kings were presented by Bede as defenders of the faith in a very martial sense. His repeated emphasis on the holiness of certain kings, especially when they are fighting against pagan kings, complements the devoutness of queens and links feminine and masculine aspects of conversion (i.e. the more passive act of funding religious institutions and the more aggressive act of militarily fighting against paganism) with the Church in England. It is important to note that Bede always tied devout kings to Roman Christianity, not Irish. His repeated references to Rome and the missionaries coming from the continent underscore his view that the Roman Church was the only legitimate one. This is not an insignificant point. Bede was regarded by later writers and Church officials, such as Goscelin and Bishop Lanfranc, as an historiographer beyond reproach; his account of the type of Christianity practiced in England, his willingness to attribute its spread in England to women, and his emphasis on familial or dynastic holiness would play an important role in Goscelin’s works.

THE MONASTERY AND ISLAND OF ELY

The monastery at Ely was founded in 673 A.D. by Æthelthryth, daughter of King Anna. Æthelthryth had been the wife of Tondbert, king of South Gyrwe, and then of Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria. Ely was her own property, being a wedding gift from Tondbert. The foundation is mentioned in all of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

35Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, IV:19.
manuscripts, as is Æthelthryth’s death, although her marriages are not. These entries are one or two sentences each, with nothing extraordinary associated with either the foundation or the saint.

Ely was originally a double monastery, as were most of the Anglo-Saxon monasteries during the seventh and eighth centuries, with men and women living in different houses. These were always run by abbesses, usually from royal households. This arrangement was sanctioned by secular and ecclesiastic authorities, and was probably introduced into the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as a result of Frankish clerical and secular immigrants. The double monastery had its advantages. It was an efficient use of financial and human resources, since it reduced the number of buildings required to maintain separate monasteries and, since they were run by royal women, they freed up men to support the king militarily.  

The first four abbesses of Ely were Æthelthryth, Sexburge, Eormenhild, and Wærburga. Bede records the lives and miracles of Æthelthryth and Sexburge in the Historia Ecclesiastica, and Goscelin drew from this source when creating his own works on the saints. He also made frequent reference to the familial ties not only of the saints to each other, but to King Anna. By doing this, Goscelin directly linked eleventh-century England with its Anglo-Saxon past.

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36 Carol Neuman de Vegvar discusses this in-depth in “Saints and Companions to Saints,” in Holy Men and Holy Women, Szarmach, ed., pp. 51-93.

37 Rosalind Love shows the passages taken verbatim from Bede in two recensions of the Vita Sanctae Æthelthrythe in Appendix A of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin and the Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely.
The last royal female saint of Ely was Wærburga. After her, it continued as a double monastery until 870 A.D., when the Danes conquered East Anglia. During this period, Ely was destroyed along with all the monasteries in the kingdom. There is no record of the abbesses or abbots of the monastery between Wærburga and its destruction, and the monastery remained empty until the Benedictine reforms of the tenth century, which were begun during the reign of King Eadgar. It was restored as an all male, Benedictine, monastery by Bishop Athelwold in 963 A.D. Double monasteries disappeared from England during these reforms. Athelwold not only restored the monastery, but increased its land holdings and wealth. This is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

And the bishop [Athelwold] first came to Ely. There Saint Æthelthryth lies. He caused the monastery to be built, and then gave it to one of his monks, he was named Brihnoth, then ordained him abbot. He set there monks to serve God where once were nuns. Then he bought very many villages from the king, making it exceedingly rich.

Athelwold was given holdings at Meldeburne, Earningforde, Northwalde, Hatsfield, and Derham by King Eadgar. Athelwold further purchased holdings throughout Cambridgeshire, as did subsequent abbots. Eventually the demesne of Ely held or had rights to more than thirty villages, which gave the abbey a sizeable income. Edward the Confessor received part of his education at the abbey, and became one of its greatest

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38 ASC, I, pp 134-135, especially Bodl. Laud 636: “Fordiden ealle þa mynstre þa hi to komen.” “They were completely destroying all the monasteries to which they were coming.”


benefactors, giving them not only land holdings but procuring a Papal confirmation of the privileges and immunities he had given the monastery.\textsuperscript{41} At the time of the Norman conquest, Ely was one of the wealthiest abbeys in England.\textsuperscript{42}

REBELLION, WILLIAM I, AND ELY

Uprisings against William and the Normans had occurred since William took the throne. These rebellions were partly the result of some English nobles maintaining William was not the legitimate heir to the English throne, and partly a reaction to the indigenous nobility being dispossessed of their land and wealth after the Battle of Hastings. The result was a simmering resentment toward the Normans in some areas of England such as Northumbria.\textsuperscript{43} For example, in 1068 William gave the earldom of Northumberland in northern England to Robert de Comines with disastrous results. The \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} records “Here in this year King William gave Earl Robert the earldom of Northumberland, and the men of the land surrounded him in the town at Dunham and struck him and the nine hundred men with him down.”\textsuperscript{44} William put the

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 459, 476-477.


\textsuperscript{43}Robin Fleming addresses this issue, arguing the magnates in the greater part of England, who gained thei holdings in the last half of Cnute’s reign, did not have time to consolidate power prior to the Norman Conquest. Northumbria was an exception; the noble families there maintained their land and power from the tenth century, creating a much more stubborn independence among them. Fleming argues this explains the relative success of Northumbrian rebellions during the immediate post-Conquest period - these families had a strong power base and loyal following; \textit{Kings and Lords in Conquest England} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{ASC}, I, p 342. “Her on þissum geare Willelm cynge geaf Rodbearde eorle þone ealdordom ofer Norðhymbraland, ac þa landes menn hine beforon innan þære burh æt Dunholme, hine ofslogan IX.C. manna mid him.”
rebellion down with extreme force. This fomented even more resentment, as did the plundering of monastic wealth in which William engaged. Not only were the monasteries themselves wealthy, they were repositories for the English nobility’s wealth.⁴⁵

The rebellion of 1070, in which the isle and monastery at Ely were involved, was a reaction to the removal of English lords from their land, the despoiling of monasteries, and a hope on the part of the dispossessed lords to overthrow William with the help of the Danes. These foreign troops, led by King Svein’s two sons Harald and Cnut, were greeted by the people of the fenlands who expected them to retake the land and depose William.⁴⁶ The rebels and their allies were led by Hereward the Wake, who was later joined by Earl Morcar.⁴⁷ During the course of this uprising, the abbey at Peterborough was plundered by the rebels. This seems at first to be counterproductive, but the reason given in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for this raid lends insight into the mind-set of these

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⁴⁵According to two of the manuscripts that make up the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in 1071 William ordered the English monasteries to be plundered. *ASC*, I, pp. 344-345.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 345. The word used in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to describe the way the people approached the Danes, “wendon,” implies a sense of expectation or hope, but not submission. It would be inaccurate to read this as though the people were asking the Danes to replace William with a Danish king, but rather expected them to oust William and then leave.

⁴⁷Hereward the Wake was a dispossessed minor English noble. Not much is known about his larger family connections, but he did inspire respect as a soldier and strategist. Brian Golding suggests that he was related to Abbot Brand of Peterborough Abbey, who had been loyal to Prince Edgar (Edgar aetheling), and so saw William’s choice to fill the void left after Brand died with the more unsympathetic Norman abbot Turold, was a personal affront. While this is an interesting argument, there is insufficient evidence to support it. Hereward made peace with William after the rebellion and had his land reinstated; *Conquest and Colonisation: The Normans in Britain, 1066-1100* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 1994, 2001), pp. 42-43.
Those monks of Burh [Peterborough] heard it said that their own swordsmen - that was Hereward and his gang - would voluntarily raid their monastery because they had heard it said that the king had given the abbacy to a French abbot, Turnolde was his name, and that he was a very stern man [who] had come into Stanforde with all his Frenchmen.\textsuperscript{48}

The reason for the raid, according to the chronicler, is anger that a French abbot had been given the abbacy of Peterborough. The attack on the monastery was in essence an attack on the king and his policies. No casualties occurred, the monks had been warned about the impending raid and fled the monastery before Hereward and his men arrived. All the valuables of the monastery were removed and taken to Ely.

Hereward was a shrewd tactician, knew the lands and fens around Ely well, and had no love for the Normans.\textsuperscript{49} During the medieval period, Ely was an island in a tidal marsh. It was nearly impossible to reach; one had to know how to navigate the fens surrounding it, which made it highly defendable. The residents of Ely resented the Normans and so were sympathetic to the rebels. For these reasons Hereward made Ely the headquarters from which he launched his raids against the Normans. Morcar, the dispossessed Earl of Northumbria, and Bishop Æthelwine of Durham joined Hereward.

The rebellion had become a serious enough threat for William to deal with himself, and in 1071, the king and his army laid siege to Ely, attempting to gain access to

\textsuperscript{48}ASC, I, p. 345, “Þa herdon þa munecas of Burh sægen þæt heora agene menn wolden hergon þone mynstre - þæt wæs Hereward and his genge - þæt wæs forðan þet se cyng heafde gifen þæt abbotrice an Frencisce abbot - Turolde wæs gehaten - and þæt he wæs swiðe styrne man - and wæs cumen þa into Stanforde mid ealle hise Frencisce menn.”

the island with pontoon bridges. This attempt failed, and the king lost many men in the process. Although this frustrated him, William’s only military option was to wait until his siege forced the rebels to surrender. This did not take very long.

There are two accounts of the rebels’ surrender in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. According to one of the manuscripts, the rebels, except for Hereward, surrendered and were led out by Morcar. This version also contains the vague passage “...and all the men he took and did with them what he would.” In the other, the Danes left the island with the treasure from Peterborough, but their ships were scattered at sea or sunk by storms. Then the rebels, again without Hereward, surrendered to William. Both accounts relate that the Bishop of Durham, Æthelwine was sent to Abingdon Abbey where he died that winter.

*Liber Eliensis* contains a different, more involved account of the siege. There is no question that the author felt the new king of England was treating his subjects poorly:

And when the king learned that Hereward, the bravest of warriors, was there and with him strong men, he [William] gathered an exceptionally large number of men to fight against them and he thought up evil against that holy place and destroyed it...for it [Ely] was often wearisome to the kingdom and against the new king brought many insidious plots, and those who were fleeing from the evil joined themselves to them [the rebels on Ely] and were reinforcements to them.

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50 *ASC*, I, p. 346. “And þa menn calle he tôc and dyde of heom þæt he wolde.”

51 *ASC*, I, p.347.

52 Ibid.

This obvious bias against the king, and laudatory treatment of Hereward and the rebels taking refuge in Ely, is likely a reflection not only of the attitude of the monastic community at Ely, but of the villagers as well. There is no doubt that Ely possessed strong natural defenses and, with little enhancement from the rebels, was virtually impossible for William and his forces to take. Hereward and his men foiled every attempt by the king to create bridges that would enable his troops to access the island, killing many soldiers in the process. In frustration, William began confiscating the lands belonging to the church and monastery of Ely, and giving them to his knights.\textsuperscript{54}

It was after William took the monastery at Eynesbury, which was one of Ely’s properties, and sent the monks who lived there to the monastery at Bec in Normandy that the abbot and monks of Ely took action. This not-so-subtle display of royal power must have been particularly onerous to the monks. Not only had William confiscate a monastery, rather than simply demesne lands, he assumed authority over the monks and sent them out of England. The \textit{Liber Eliensis} does not explain the decision to petition for peace in terms that indicate the loss of lands or royal usurpation of the authority of the abbot that were the impetus, but rather as the monks being concerned for the greater good of the Church and the people of Ely. There was a famine on the island as a result of William’s blockade of the island, and the monastery had insufficient stores to feed the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{54}Ibid.}
monks and the townspeople. According to Liber Eliensis:

Therefore the monks of Ely, aware of the evil things that were happening in the kingdom and deeply grieved at the usurpation of the Church’s things by a foreign nation, remembered the magnificence of the Lord’s temple and holy place...and, inspired by Divine clemency they entered into a plan to send a constituency to the king to petition for his mercy and peace.  

The abbot, Thurstan, and a group of the monks went from Ely to Warwick, where William was, and begged him for peace and mercy. They swore loyalty to him and acknowledged him as the rightful king, but also reminded him that he would need their help to get to the island. They promised to show him the way onto Ely in exchange for the return of their land and goods. William agreed, and he and his forces finally entered Ely. He captured the rebels, except for Hereward, and had the townspeople brought out. He imprisoned some of the rebels, set some free after blinding them or removing their hands and feet, but let the townspeople go after witnessing this.  

The monastery still lost most of its holdings and the abbot and monks were regarded as traitors by the townspeople. William ordered a castle built where the monastery stood, although he was deferential to Saint Æthelthryth, leaving a gold mark at her shrine as he entered the monastery. Eventually, a cathedral would be built over the

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55Ibid. II:109. “Monachi igitur de Ely, cognoscentes mala que in regno fiebant, et in ecclesiarum rebus pervasionem fieri et diminutionem ab externa gente graviter doluerunt, magnificentiam templi Domini reminiscentes et loci sancti...[e]t divina inspirante clementia salubre demum ineuntes conislium, ad regem mittere constitutum illius flagitare misericordiam et pacem.”

56LE, II:110-111.

57That William initially ordered a castle built on the site of the monastery is a good indication of the degree of unrest in the area. He built castles throughout England in areas which were difficult to control.
site of the monastery rather than a castle. Abbot Thurstan set about reclaiming the property taken from Ely, laying those nobles and their descendants who had taken property from the monastery under anathema unless it was returned. According to Liber Eliensis, the king continued to harass Thurstan for the rest of his life. When the abbot died in 1072, William appointed Theodwine, a monk from Jumièges, as his replacement. If he thought his new abbot would be more malleable, he was mistaken. Theodwine refused the position until the king ordered all the property taken from Ely returned.

Theodwine was abbot until his death in 1079. A monk named Godfrey, who had served as Theodwine’s proxy during the last few months of the abbot’s life and whom Theodwine had recommended as his successor, was elected to be the next abbot. According to Liber Eliensis, William I ordered Godfrey to be transferred to the monastery of Malmesbury in 1082, although no explanation for this transfer is given. One possible reason, however, is revealed in a subsequent chapter of Liber Eliensis. Under Godfrey, Ely’s liberty and customary rights in Kentford were reinstated by royal charter. It is likely that William was concerned about the abbot’s vigorous attempts to reclaim Ely’s land and so ordered him moved to another monastery.

William then ordered Bishop Walkelin of Winchester to send his brother Simeon, prior of the church at Winchester, to replace Godfrey. The reason behind the king’s

_58_ LE, II:110-111.

_59_ Ibid. II:112-113. Although Theodwine had, in effect, forced William’s hand by insisting the king return all the moveable goods he had taken from Ely as a condition of his appointment, William ordered the goods returned upon Theodwine’s death. This put Godfrey in the position of having to, once again, reclaim the monastery’s property.

_60_ Ibid II:117. The monastery’s liberty meant that lands held by Ely in Kentford were exempt from the sheriff’s jurisdiction.
choice is given as his “venerable old age, purity of life, kindness of mind, and frequency
of alms-giving, and the magnitude of his goodness which strove to surpass reputation,
which had reached the ears of many.” In other words, Simeon appeared to be a sweet,
malleable, old man who would behave himself as Ely’s abbot and never question the
king or oppose his will. Unfortunately for William, however, he had again chosen a man
who put his position as abbot above his loyalty to the king. This was made obvious from
the start, even before he was officially Ely’s abbot.

Simeon apparently did research on Ely before he accepted the position, because
he knew its history well enough to delay his consecration. He insisted upon being
consecrated by the Bishop of Lincoln, rather than at Canterbury. Simeon knew that
Edward the Confessor had declared, and Pope Victor confirmed, that the abbots of Ely
could receive ordination from whichever bishop they preferred:

...however, the reason he was put off for some time is that Remigius,
the Bishop of Lincoln, considered consecration was his own right,
contrary to law, King Edward declared and Pope Victor confirmed
that the abbots of Ely receive ordination from any bishop they
preferred, without the obedience of a subordinate position...”

By insisting on being consecrated by a bishop of his own choosing, Simeon was sending
a very clear message to the king as well as the Church magnates that he would serve as
abbot as he saw fit, and that his loyalties were now only to his monastery.

61 Ibid, II:118. “senectus venerabilis, vite munditia, mentis benignitas, elemosinarum frequentia, famamque
suam, que multorum aures attigerat bonitas magnitudine superare studebat.”

62 Ibid, “a qua tamen aliquandiu ob hoc maxime dilatus est, quod Remigius Lincolniensis episcopus eius
benedictionem suo iuri contra ius deputaret, Ædwardo rege statuente et Victore papa confirmante abbates
Elyenses sine subiectionis obedientia a quocumque mallent episcopo ordinandos.”
Simeon understood how to navigate the politics of both the Church and state, and was keenly aware of how important it was to reestablish not only the monastery’s property, but also its reputation. He also wanted to regain the trust of the townspeople, who viewed the monks as traitors for surrendering to William. Doing this required updating the hagiographies of the saints associated with the monastery. In order for the hagiographies to be taken seriously by the Church magnates and also by William II and the new Norman landholders, they had to be written in excellent Latin. They also had to prove the legal and ecclesiastic legitimacy of the monastery and its rights.

It was necessary to present these royal female saints in a light that was familiar to the Normans, who were not accustomed to the political and social strength Anglo-Saxon women held. At the same time, the hagiographies had to make clear that these were strong saints who were willing and able to protect their monastery and followers, and that any attempts to wrong the monastery would be met with swift retribution. In order to ensure the task was done properly, Simeon commissioned the best hagiographer in England. Goscelin of Saint-Bertin not only produced all that Simeon required, he created a memory of the saints and the monastery that reflected all of England’s history and left no doubt that the English had a long history of piety and proper Christian practice, well-established government and legal system, and an innate dignity that demanded respect.
CHAPTER II
HISTORIOGRAPHY

My research studies the creation of historic memory, and the reasons for such creation, during the immediate post-conquest period in England through the use of micro-history. As such, it requires not only knowledge of the works by and about Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, but an understanding of the work done in the fields of memory studies, Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman studies, and hagiography studies, as well as gender studies and post-colonialism. The scope of scholarship associated with each of these areas is extensive, and an overview of the historiography of these subjects will more clearly show how my work fits into the corpi of this scholarship. In order to facilitate historiographic discussion, this chapter is organized by topic. Where there is overlap among the sources, that is, when one source is important in more than one area, the more thorough discussion will be done in the topic most relevant, with the work being only briefly discussed elsewhere.

GOSCELIN OF SAINT-BERTIN

Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, as mentioned, was a prolific writer, but very few contemporary sources exist about the monk himself. Books written about Anglo-Saxon
England, Anglo-Norman England, and medieval Church reform often contain passages or even chapters, about his work, as will be discussed in this section, and there are scholarly articles about his work. A few of his hagiographies have been edited and published as both books and journal articles. There is only one work, however, which contains biographic as well as bibliographic information on Goscelin. This is an unpublished dissertation written by Thomas J. Hamilton in 1973. Hamilton’s dissertation not only catalogs the works which were known to be written by, or were attributed to, Goscelin at the time it was written, it gives a rather extensive biography. This information was gleaned from a variety of sources in both England and France. Although more sources have been positively attributed to Goscelin since Hamilton’s work, it remains the single most important source of scholarship on Goscelin. No serious Goscelin scholar since 1973 excludes reference to Hamilton, and there has been no other work of such depth done on Goscelin since.63

A number of Goscelin’s manuscripts have been edited and, occasionally, translated. The scholars who have undertaken this task provided literary analyses of their particular manuscripts and placed them in historical context. Some of the earlier translations reflect such careful scholarship, the translators’ introductions and insights have served as secondary sources for subsequent generations of historians. Frank Barlow’s translation of Goscelin’s *Vita Ædwardi Regis Qui Apud Westmonasterium Requiescit* is one such source.64 His work is cited by hagiography scholars in their own

63Hamilton, *Goscelin of Canterbury*.

translations of Goscelin as well as by church, medieval, and gender historians. Charles H. Talbot edited the manuscript of Goscelin’s Liber Confortatorius, and this remains the only edited version. Monika Otter used Talbot for her translation of Liber Confortatorius, as did W. R. Barnes and Rebecca Hayward. Both translations, which will be discussed later in this chapter, provide analysis of Goscelin’s life and works, but they rely heavily upon Hamilton, Barlow, and Talbot for historical perspective. Talbot’s introduction not only places the work in historic context, it contains information on Goscelin’s patron, Bishop Herman.

More recently, Rosalind Love has published several editions and translations of Goscelin’s hagiographies, including those of St. Birinus, St. Wulfsige, as well as those of the female saints of Ely. Her contributions include a more careful defense of Goscelin as the author of these works, and a thorough discussion of other scholarship about Goscelin and his works. One of the most helpful inclusions in her edition of the Ely hagiographies is a comprehensive list of parallels and allusions. This list includes not only Biblical allusions found in the Ely hagiographies, but passages found in classical and medieval texts that parallel passages found in these hagiographies. Especially noteworthy is the number of parallels in allusion and imagery between these hagiographies and those of other saints written by Goscelin. It is these parallels that help identify a work as Goscelin’s; he would repeat passages, allusions, or images almost verbatim in different


hagiographies. This inclusion also made the task of analyzing how the Ely hagiographies differed from Goscelin’s other works much simpler.

Rosalind Love’s edition and translation of Goscelin’s *Vita Sancti Birini*, the only known hagiography of St. Birinus, is the topic of Harold C. Zimmerman’s recent article. He argues that the author of the *vita* uses St. Birinus to criticize the Norman Conquest of England, specifically the brutality of the Normans. He argues that the author treats Birinus’ conversion of the West Saxons as a form of conquest. The author, who is never acknowledged as Goscelin by Zimmerman, then uses Birinus’ conquest to show that a conquering nation should not belittle the conquered. In this sense, this article is an attempt at a postcolonial analysis of one of Goscelin’s hagiographies.67

Goscelin’s hagiographies are important to scholars of church and medieval English history not only because of the considerable volume of these works, but because they represent a vast geographic area in England and are about both male and female

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67Harold C. Zimmerman, “Comparing Conquests: The Life of St. Birinus and the Norman Invasion of England,” *Studies in Philology*, 109 no. 3 (2012): 153-172. Zimmerman does not directly attribute the *Vita Sancti Birini* to Goscelin, although it has been positively attributed to him. This work at first appears to parallel my own work, but it differs in two significant ways. Zimmerman asserts that this is an attempt by the author to show the Normans are not behaving as true conquerors should behave. He also mentions the change in England’s power structure, especially the role of sheriffs, after the Conquest. However, he does not present the argument that the *vita* was directly intended for a Norman audience. In other words, he is not arguing that the author was engaging in political discourse and criticism with the Normans, only that he was pointing out that conquerors who brutalized the conquered could never fully conquer. Also, although he alludes to the postcolonial nature of this *vita* - the language, the presentation of England’s past as a source of national pride, etc. - he does not show that this hagiography was intended to create a national identity through the creation of memory, nor does he place this work within the larger corpus of medieval postcolonial secondary literature.
saints. These works offer unique insight into the ecclesiastical politics of late eleventh-century England, the relationship between secular and regular clergy, the place of women in Norman England, and the role of Anglo-Saxon saints in the assimilation and integration of Norman nobility into English society. Richard Sharpe, for example, discusses the importance of Goscelin’s hagiographies of St. Mildred to establishing St. Augustine’s monastery in Canterbury as the rightful owners of the saint’s relics as well as integrating Norman reforms with English tradition. He also points out the significance of these hagiographies in understanding the social and political implications of great building projects undertaken in England by Norman prelates and secular leaders.

There have been some articles written about Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, some of which address his hagiographies in a social and political context, some discuss the way his contemporaries or near-contemporaries viewed his work, and still others are concerned with his relationship with his student, Eve, who became an anchoress in France. Goscelin’s hagiographies, especially those of Anglo-Saxon female saints, provide a unique glimpse not only of the social and political difficulties surrounding the Conquest, but the struggle to define or redefine gender roles. Georges Whalen presents an insightful discussion. He argues that Goscelin’s works were so numerous that they provide a unique opportunity to explore how gender and politics played a role in the

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68 Goscelin wrote hagiographies for monasteries in Wessex, Essex, East Anglia, and Kent.

decision to commission a hagiography. By comparing the various *vitae* written by Goscelin in relationship to both a public and monastic audience, he shows the social environment of post-Conquest England and the changing, sometimes conflicting, attitudes toward women during this period.

Goscelin, he argues, intentionally portrayed female saints as strong and independent-minded, and frequently made reference to the importance of women in the Bible, in part to irritate the Normans since, according to Whalen, their treatment of women was more repressive than the English. He also argues that it was Goscelin’s way to bolster the reputation of women as witnesses.70 Placing Goscelin in the role of proto-feminist is a bit of a stretch; however what makes this an important work is the way in which Whalen shows Goscelin’s active involvement in advocating the legitimacy of the English Church and Anglo-Saxon saints as well as how the sizeable corpus of Goscelin’s work may be used to provide insight into social, political, and religious power struggle that followed the Norman Conquest.

Goscelin’s reputation as a hagiographer among his contemporaries is difficult to assess since there is such a paucity of contemporary sources about him; however, Paul Anthony Hayward does an admirable job of doing this.71 He argues that Eadmer wrote his

70Whalen, “Patronage Engendered” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, pp. 123-135, Smith and Taylor, eds.

life of St. Peter, the first abbot of St. Augustine’s abbey in Canterbury as a response to the life Goscelin portrays in his *Vita Augustini*. Hayward’s thesis centers around Eadmer’s desire to assert the abbey’s independence from episcopal jurisdiction by distancing the abbey from the crown while Goscelin gave primacy to the king (Æthelberht) by placing him under obligation to support and protect the abbey. By presenting what is in effect a tale of battling hagiographers, Hayward simultaneously brings to the fore the regard with which Goscelin was held during his time and the different ways hagiographies were used.

Helen Foxhall Forbes uses Goscelin’s *Liber Confortatorius* in her discussion of medieval traditions about the fate of the soul in the interim between death and Judgement Day. She argues there has been confusion about the way souls were divided into groups. According to Forbes, in the high Middle Ages there were those who believed souls fell into three groups: those who went directly to heaven, those who needed help getting to heaven, and those who were going to hell regardless of the interventions of others. There were also those who believed there were four divisions: those who were going directly to heaven, those who were going directly to hell, those who would be judged favorably and would eventually get into heaven, and those who needed the prayers and intercession of the living to avoid hell. She cites *Liber Confortatorius* in her explanation of the division of souls into four groups. Goscelin described four groups: the saints, who gave everything up for God; those who were
clergy, or were very close to being saints, and who remained in a type of paradise until judgement; the minus perfectorum electorum, which included those who regularly gave alms, faithful married people, and who would have to go through purgatory; and the damned. While her scholarship does not include an analysis of Goscelin per se, it does show the ways scholars have used his works, including Liber Eliensis.  

Perhaps no work of Goscelin’s has gathered more interest than his Liber Confortatorius. It is a book of comfort and advice written for his student and dear friend Eve after she left England to become a recluse at the church of St. Lawrence in Angers. It is more than just a book of advice, however. Liber Confortatorius reveals the depth of Goscelin’s love for Eve and his heartbreak over her absence. It contains his memories of their time together, their shared experiences, and expressions of his emotions not found in any of his other works. The language is emotional, at times passionate, and the love he felt for Eve is apparent. His expression of deep affection for Eve has led to a debate over the nature of this love. Monika Otter argues that Goscelin was not only in love with Eve, he longed for her physically and the passion revealed in his writing reflects the internal conflict he endured because of these emotions. Otter’s interpretation, as revealed in an essay at the end of her translation of the book, is that of a relationship

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tantalizingly like that of Abelard and Heloise, with Eve escaping Heloise’s fate by leaving England.\textsuperscript{73}

In contrast, H. M. Canatella argues that there is nothing about lust or repressed longing in this work. Rather, it is a very good example of the way spiritual love was expressed during the Middle Ages. It is, according to Canatella, a portrayal of a very deep, intimate, and mutually beneficial friendship with no overtones of sexual tension. He points out that writing the book was likely as helpful to Goscelin, as he dealt with his loss, as it was to Eve. He emphasizes the idea that their deeply spiritual relationship ennobled both of them, and his description of this relationship as ennobling is intentional.\textsuperscript{74} Canatella supports his argument that Eve and Goscelin shared a non-physical, spiritual love by referring to Stephen Jaeger’s description of spiritual love during the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{75}


MEMORY STUDIES

Patrick Geary was the first to specifically examine the use of memory in medieval studies, especially the ways societal identity, norms and values were created by saving or suppressing memories, as well as the reasons to create a useful past for that society. In *Phantoms of Remembrance* he shows that changes in secular and religious power required remembering the past in a way that validated eleventh-century power structures.76 While it may seem rather obvious now, Geary’s argument that records from the past should not be viewed as records of facts, but as an opportunity for insight into the way memory creates new identities was ground-breaking in 1994.

By arguing for reading sources in their context as well as for the information recorded in it, he opened up medieval sources to new investigation and analysis. Another important point made by Geary is that it is not only what is remembered that affects the view scholars have of the past; what has been forgotten is equally important. By examining why sources no longer exist – either through neglect or willful destruction – scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the intent of the record keepers or those in power, allowing greater depth and nuance to their work.

Other medievalists followed Geary’s lead and began to incorporate memory studies more and more into their scholarship. Constance Brittain Bouchard examines the

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use of *gesta*, accounts of the deeds of great ecclesiastical or secular leaders, to create a useful past that not only offered bishops and abbots a model for proper behavior, but justified their church’s or abbey’s position within the religious community and their right to command various resources.\(^{77}\) Bouchard leaves no doubt that the study of memory and how it is created is important to understanding what motivated people during the Middle Ages. This, in turn, offers a deeper understanding of how communities identified themselves as well as the complex interaction between laity and clergy.

Bouchard also addresses the debate surrounding the question of whether there was familial continuity in the ninth through twelfth centuries or a sudden shift to patrilineal identity at the turn of the eleventh century.\(^{78}\) She uses marriage and naming patterns, as well as noble connections to the Church and monasteries, to show the way families used the past to link themselves to aristocratic families. She also shows how families manipulated the way they would be remembered by using marriage and gifts to monasteries to ensure the image of the family passed on to posterity was positive.

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One of the earliest and best works on the creation of memory and identity is *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, by Felice Lifshitz.\(^7^9\) She was among the first to show how hagiographies and the cults of saints were used to not only establish regional identities by creating memories of the past, but the way this manipulation of the past was used as a political tool. She argues that memory creation was a result of crisis - either political, social, or religious.

Lifshitz studies two periods of political and religious crisis in Neustria. The first is the Carolingian period of monastic reform, when monks in Neustria endeavored to present it as always being particularly pious in the face of the Carolingian insistence that all things Merovingian were corrupt, if not outright pagan and therefore in need of change. The second period is that of the Viking invasions, when the monks and secular leaders of Neustria reclaimed the pious history of the area. Eventually, with the rise of the Normans, identity became tied not only to religion, but to being Norman. During this period, the memory of a pious Neustria was vanquished by the Normans. This emphasizes one of the most important aspects of memory creation - the act of intentionally eliminating or omitting memories to create a politically useful view of the past.

Women, oral history and non-literary means of creating memory are addressed by Elisabeth van Houts in *Memory and Gender*. In addition to her study of hagiography in the creation of memory, which is discussed in the next section, van Houts describes the way historians can use testimonies and wills to trace the important role women and oral history played in the creation of historic memory. She discusses the role of family networks, especially during the Norman conquest of England, and the importance of women as keepers of family and cultural memories. This may be the most significant contribution of this work, since it introduces the idea that memory is kept not only by men who wrote hagiographies and *gesta*, but by women and through alternate media. She argues that women not only contributed to the creation of national memories through oral histories and the way they were portrayed by male and female writers, they were instrumental in the creation of material culture as a means of remembrance. Women commissioned not only markers, but tapestries, vestments, and jewelry.

Leah Shopkow examines the way memories are created and recreated by communities by studying the works of Norman historians such as Dudo of Saint Quentin, William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni. She shows that these histories were more like *gesta*, since they recounted Norman history in order to create an

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image of Normandy and its people. Her work is significant not only because of the way it approaches the creation of memory on a larger political level, but shows the way monks used history to create institutional identity.

An important part of memory creation is not just the process of memorialization, it is the exclusion of people, places, or events as well. Those responsible for the creation and maintenance of memory held considerable power. Karine Ugé’s in-depth study of how Flemish monasteries created useful pasts by determining what would be stored and what would be destroyed, and the reasons the monasteries felt the need to create these memories, illustrates the way politics affected the creation of memory. Her examination of the narratives and other documents from the monasteries of Saint-Bertin, Marchiennes and Saint-Amé from the ninth through the eleventh centuries illustrates the way monasteries manipulated the past in order to deal with conflicts of authority, possession of relics, reformation and prestige. These narratives had very strong political overtones since they were written during times of conflict. The result of Ugé’s research is not only to show how memories are created, but also the interactions of secular and clerical leaders. It should be noted that Goscelin was from the monastery at Saint-Bertin, and so would have been familiar with the creation of useful historic memory.

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Patrick Geary introduced a new way of looking at sources when he introduced memory studies to the field of medieval history. Scholarship has expanded to include the creation of political memory and the way women are remembered. The field of Anglo-Norman history, however, has not seen much work done concerning memory. Much more scholarship involving these sources and memory studies is needed. It is a logical progression, then, that documents from the time of the conquest be reexamined in this context.

HAGIOGRAPHY STUDIES

The first person to suggest a use for hagiographies that went beyond memorialization of a saint was Hippolyte Delehaye. In this work, Delehaye argues that hagiographers believed they were presenting history along with the lives of saints. Thus, hagiographies could be used for some historical information regarding ideas of sanctity. The aim of this book was to provide insight into why hagiographers included certain events that were not necessarily directly related to the saint whose life was being recorded, but it was the beginning of modern scholarship using hagiographies and influenced later scholars’ work.

One of the most important contributions of hagiographic literature to medieval history is in the study of saints and their cults. Peter Brown broke new ground by using

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83Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*.
these sources to study the impact the rise of saints’ cults had in the Mediterranean area during the late antique period. 84 His book, *The Cult of the Saints*, is a departure from the use of hagiographies simply as literary sources that provide insight into medieval constructions of sanctity. In it, Brown argues that the cults of saints provided a way to not only join Heaven and Earth through veneration of saints, but also a way to exert power on Earth. Bishops, by using saints relics for public veneration, took some power from the Roman aristocrats who wanted to keep saints’ relics for their personal spiritual benefit. Significantly, Brown used hagiographies to support his argument. David Rollason also uses saints’ cults to discuss power relationships in Anglo-Saxon and post-conquest England in *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*. 85 He argues that economic and political influence was directly related to a group’s ability to convince its society to develop interest in a particular saint. Like Brown, he uses hagiographies to support his argument.

Expanding on Brown’s work, Felice Lifshitz’s use of hagiographies, as discussed above, was a new and important addition to the study of memory creation. Her study of the way hagiographies were used to validate the power of new leaders - secular as well as


spiritual - was, at that time, unique. Particularly relevant to the field of Anglo-Norman studies, as well as memory and hagiography studies, is her argument that memory creation is crisis-led. As will be seen, during the early Anglo-Norman period, treatment of Anglo-Saxon saints was a point of contention, and their hagiographies were important in the creation of a memory of a holy and sophisticated England.

The study of hagiographies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the political interactions between Church, state, and individuals has been addressed by Jane Zatta. She points out that political and religious interests were expressed in genres such as history, law, and hagiographies. These were used to present their audiences with view about different institutions that promoted a particular agenda. Particularly relevant is her argument that hagiographies were used to protect and regain monastic property against despoliation by the Normans and the imposition of excessive taxes and requirements.

Hagiography studies offered opportunities for more focused research to scholars of gender and women. Elisabeth van Houts addresses the issue of women and their role in the creation of memory. In addition to the non-hagiographic means women contributed to the way a society or nation was remembered, which was discussed in the

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88 Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*. 

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first section of this chapter, she uses hagiographies to illustrate how memories were created. She does this by examining the way women were represented by male and female writers.

She argues that women were used to create useful memories, especially through the use of hagiographies, and illustrates how hagiographies addressed the way women remembered other women and how men remembered women. She uses the hagiographies of Saint Adelheid of Vilich and Saint Edith of Wilton as examples. Saint Adelheid’s hagiography was written by a nun named Bertha who had not personally known Adelheid. Van Houts is especially intrigued by the use of the saint’s maid as a source of information, especially since the maid’s memories supported property claims made by the nuns of Vilich, thus supporting the argument that women’s testimonies were taken seriously. Particularly relevant is the way women used oral history in post-conquest England not only to lay claim to their lands, but to maintain the memories of Englishmen who had died fighting against William’s army. Through their memories of the past, women helped create an image of England that empowered the English in the face of Norman victory.

An excellent example of the use of hagiographies in creating a useful memory to add prestige to a monastery and increase its influence and importance is found in Signs of
Devotion by Virginia Blanton.\textsuperscript{89} She studies the role hagiographies of Æthelthryth, one of the saints of Ely, played in the monastery’s assertion of independence. Her work on the cult of St. Æthelthryth does not go into great detail about the use of the saint’s memory in creating an English identity, nor does she use the vitae of Æthelthryth or the other saints to explore the political use of memory creation. She does show the way the monks at the monastery of Ely in the post-conquest period used the past to their advantage by using hagiographies to promote the cult of Æthelthryth. She argues they created an image of themselves as linked through Æthelthryth to the monastery. It was through this association the monks claimed institutional liberty. They define her body as a symbol of the monastic polity, and so the memory of Æthelthryth makes her body representative of the monks’ authority over her space, i.e. the monastery of Ely.\textsuperscript{90}

The specific use of hagiographies to create a useful past is not unique to the English. The Normans used hagiographies in a similar way. Brian Golding addresses the Norman Conquest and the role of hagiographies and gesta by both the Normans and the English.\textsuperscript{91} Both sides used these forms of communication to create an image of themselves that would ensure future generations saw them as being in the right and the


\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., pp. 144-145.

\textsuperscript{91}Golding, \textit{Conquest and Colonisation}. 
other side as deserving any pain inflicted upon them as a result of the invasion. These sources help prove the Normans viewed the English as less worthy than they were as well as illustrate the ways that the Conquest created physical and economic problems for the Normans as well as the English. Golding shows how events were recorded in order to create a vision of the past that was useful to each side.

Samantha Kahn Herrick studies the hagiography of three obscure male Norman saints from before the tenth century and the way their hagiographies were used to create a link to eleventh century dukes.\textsuperscript{92} She shows the political use of hagiographies and how those in power used an imagined past to create an image of themselves that shows their piety as well as their power. The audience for these saints’ \textit{vitae} included the nobility as well as the clergy. Her discussion of the \textit{Vita Vigoris}, which was written in the eleventh century, highlights similarities in content and purpose to Goscelin’s \textit{Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely}. The hagiographies she examines are those of male saints, but the argument is similar: their purpose was to create a memory of the past to address immediate concerns. She does not, however, make the argument that these hagiographies were written as a form of political discourse aimed at a particular ruler.

Emily Albu argues that the Norman nobility used *gesta* to create an image of themselves as the champions of Christendom. She makes clear that these texts were often commissioned by dukes and counts. This is an important point that shows how actively those in power controlled, or attempted to control, memory. Further, these texts show how much control these men actually had. Albu finds evidence that, while such works may be laudatory on the surface, a closer reading often reveals subversive subtext. Her research underscores the importance of reading *gesta* and hagiographies closely. She, like Brian Golding and Samantha Kahn Herrick, shows the conscious effort on the part of medieval writers to create either an image of the past that is closely connected to their present or to record recent events in such a way that future generations will see the past as the writers wish it to be seen.

The use of hagiographies in memory studies has added greatly to our understanding of medieval gender relationships, political power, and the role of women in medieval society. The field of hagiography studies has certainly evolved from evidence of attempts at historical writing, and the use of hagiographies is now an accepted form of research in social and cultural history. However, it is still used for broader anecdotal evidence. Hagiographies, and individual hagiographers, have not been

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94 Ibid., 3.
studied in depth for their contribution to political discourse. There is still a need for
closer analysis of the structures of hagiographies - their organization, and the style and
word choice of the hagiographer - and an evaluation of this form of literature in context
with social and political situations contemporary to their writing.

ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

The historiography of Anglo-Saxon England is extensive in scale and broad in
scope. It has been studied from the late nineteenth century, primarily in England. The
focus of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, until the middle of the twentieth century, was
predominantly political/legal, religious, military or language studies. It was focused
strongly on specific events or people and not on the larger history of England during this
period; however, one book must be mentioned. Frank M. Stenton’s classic *Anglo-Saxon
England*, first published in 1943, covers English history from the late Roman period
through the reign of William the Conqueror. It is a narrative history that covers the
political, religious, economic and legal history of England, but within it are the
beginnings of the field of social history.

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95 For example, William A. Morris, “The Office of Sheriff in the Anglo-Saxon Period,” *English Historical
219-224.

Typical of other works concerning Anglo-Saxon England from this time, Stenton presents the Norman Conquest as a positive event in English history, but his presentation does not suggest England was an uncivilized conglomeration of petite kingdoms and he does note that there was resentment among some of the English toward the Normans. His narrative shows Anglo-Saxon England as a complex society, with connections to the continent in trade, diplomacy and religion. This work, which covers 500 years, presented Anglo-Saxon history as a subject worthy of study in its own right and has, since its first publication, been cited in virtually every serious work on the subject.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Anglo-Saxon scholars began to incorporate more social history into their work. Rather than presenting English history through the study of only political or church leaders, or battles, historians began examining the social aspect of Anglo-Saxon history. This approach allowed these historians to study such topics as the how common Anglo-Saxons lived, women during this period, and the way Christianity affected the population as a whole.

Significant scholarship on the English Church began in the 1960s, with Frank Barlow setting the standard for scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon Church. Barlow made clear the connections between king and Church, arguing the ties between crown and Church were closer in England than on the continent. This was the first substantive work dealing with the hierarchy of the Anglo-Saxon Church as it related not just to society, but
to the English crown and the papacy as well. Notably, this work does not address monasticism or theology. It focuses strictly on political, economic, and social structure and influence of the English Church in the half century before the Norman Conquest. In the second edition, Barlow did add sections on monasticism, which gave a more complete picture of the role of the late Anglo-Saxon Church in English society.97

Scholars were also beginning to consider aspects of Anglo-Saxon religion as part of the political structure of Anglo-Saxon England. David Rollason argues that the cult of saints during this period was as important to English society as the political and religious institutions. Further, the monasteries that housed the saints’ relics were supported politically or financially by the crown. He makes a strong case for royal involvement in the governance and affairs of the Church. This work also addresses the issue of foreign influence in England’s veneration of saints and relics as well as the domestic social groups responsible for promoting saints’ cults. This book is especially important because it was the first extensive study to treat the cult of saints as being politically influential in England both before and after the Conquest.98

Henry R. Loyn’s treatment of the English Church from the tenth through the twelfth centuries examines the English Church as it was affected by social and political


98Rollason, Saints and Relics.
upheaval. Like Barlow, he emphasizes the close ties between the king and the Church hierarchy; unlike Barlow, however, Loyn’s focus also includes the economic role of the Church in English politics and society. This work also emphasizes the various attempts, successful or not, at reforming Church practices. He argues strongly for the positive role the Normans played in improving the Church.  

More recent scholars have begun to look at the evolution of the Church in England from a bottom-up perspective. Rather than view the creation of churches and monasteries as the work of kings, as is the case with Barlow and Rollason, John Blair looks at the creation of minsters - churches served by a religious community, usually a monastery - as the defining characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon Church. He does acknowledge that these minsters were founded by kings or members of a royal household, and that they were administered by relatives of the founder, but argues these minsters were the impetus for the formation of towns. Blair further departs from previous scholars in the scope of his research. He relies as much upon archaeological evidence as traditional written sources.

Archaeology and anthropology became more important to historians as a way to get a glimpse of the past. Kenneth Harrison’s study on the course of Anglo-Saxon

99 Loyn, *The English Church 940-1154.*

England to the year 900 is one such work. His approach is somewhat chronological, but within this chronology he discusses the importance of the Anglo-Saxon calendar, the way Christianity gradually made its way into England after the Roman period, the importance of trade, and the ways chronicles, charters and histories from this period can be read to study people at every level of society. This work does not offer a strict ground-up view of Anglo-Saxon England, but it is an example of the attempt beginning in the 1970s to shift historical focus more toward everyday life.

Robin Fleming also offers a history of Anglo-Saxon England from Rome’s presence through the Conquest that does not focus on political or religious institutions. Instead, she relies heavily upon archaeological evidence to show the social and economic of average people. She also presents a more realistic explanation of the immigration of different groups into England that is based on archaeological finds and the works of anthropologists. Rather than massive influxes of Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, she shows that there was gradual migration of small groups. She discusses the ways in which the Viking raids of the ninth century affected trade and the political structure, and credits them for the growth of towns and renewed trade in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

There are other authors who have written histories of Anglo-Saxon England using


archaeological and anthropological evidence, but this book is historiographically significant for two reasons. The scope of this work is both broader and deeper than any previous work based on sources other than written. It also provides a more nuanced understanding of average people in Anglo-Saxon England than earlier scholarship.

Anglo-Saxon history presents particular challenges, especially for its early history, since there is so little written evidence available. The field has progressed, however, by using archaeological evidence and by changing the way traditional sources of study such as church and legal documents are examined. More of an effort has been made to include the history of commoners and of women from every level of society. Scholarship in the field, however, is lacking in the use of micro-histories to gain a deeper insight into Anglo-Saxon society. For example, research into the interactions between monasteries and their communities, similar to the work done by Bouchard and Rosenwein, would add significantly to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon England. Hagiographies have been underutilized in social and political scholarship of this period, as have been wills, charters, and cartularies. Although the source base for the field is limited, there is still opportunity for further scholarship.

ANGLO-NORMAN ENGLAND

Anglo-Norman studies have followed much the same course as Anglo-Saxon studies, with early works focusing primarily on military or political history. In the late
nineteenth century there was a significant scholarly debate over the role the Conquest played in the introduction of the lord-vassal relationship into England. E. A. Freeman argued that there was no change in English political institutions after the Norman Conquest, and that Anglo-Saxon England already had a system of military service for land prior to 1066. J. H. Round countered this by arguing that there was no such system in place before the Conquest, and that the Normans imposed a new system of military obligation on the English. This debate impacted Anglo-Norman scholarship for decades to follow.

Anglo-Norman scholarship has moved to the social impact of the Conquest, economic histories that present this period not only as a time of economic difficulty, but also as a time where trade picked up as agricultural practices more emphasis on pastoral production – particularly wool. The political changes that occurred after William took

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106 Especially H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon and the Norman Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd, first ed. 1962, reprint 1963, in which it is argued that while the Normans saw the English as uncouth and beneath them, positive changes brought by the Norman Conquest positively impacted agriculture, the growth of wool as a national export, and oversees trade, as well as areas such as language. Also, Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216* (London and New York: Longman Press, first ed. 1955, 5th ed. 1999), which addresses the political changes from Edward the Confessor on. This is primarily a
the English throne began to focus on the way the Normans interacted with the English and on how William established his reign. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the political impact of the Conquest came under scrutiny. An important topic of research during this period was the existence of English feudalism. The prevailing argument was that there was no feudalism prior to the arrival of the Normans. R. Allen Brown defined a feudal society as characterized by vassalic homage, fiefs, castles and knights. He argues that since this is not a description of Anglo-Saxon England, there was no feudalism prior to the arrival of the Normans.

The predominant view was that the Normans brought political unity as well as increased power to the crown. Anglo-Saxon politics, culture, and law, according to this view, was overstated and irrelevant. Later, Marjory Chibnall would argue that the melding of Norman customs and society with those of the English was a difficult process and often painful to the English. Her approach is to look at the Conquest from three perspectives: the actual Conquest and the establishment of Norman nobility in English military history, but Barlow also emphasizes the growing wool industry.


108 Especially R. Allen Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest* (New York: Cromwell Press, 1968). This earlier work argues against the existence of a feudal system in England prior to the Conquest, and that Norman changes in the economic and financial structure of England, as well as legal and religious changes was a vast improvement over the previous Anglo-Saxon systems of internal trade, kingship, law, and religion.

institutions, wealth and the governmental establishment of records of wealth, including the Domesday Book, and the integration of English common law with Norman legal customs.

In the 1990s, some historians tended to take a less tolerant view of the Normans. Anglo-Saxon laws and institutions were seen as prosperous well before William, and their scholarship focused on the societal complexity of Anglo-Saxon England.\(^\text{110}\)

According to Robin Fleming, Anglo-Saxon society emphasized the importance of alliance and land holding, with personal and familial alliances being of primary importance. The Normans are presented as usurpers who overran English tradition, took land from towns and landholders, and replaced English clerics with those from Normandy. Scholars also began to show the English in the Anglo-Norman period were not passive about their status within the new Norman government. It is argued by Brian Golding that, despite William’s concerted effort to model his reign after that of Edward the Confessor, he was resented by the English.\(^\text{111}\)

On the other hand, some scholars looked for common ground between the English and the Normans. They dispute the earlier arguments that the Normans were militarily superior, but argue that the aristocracy in both Normandy and England had the

\(^{\text{110}}\)Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*.

\(^{\text{111}}\)Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation*. 
same military culture. This new focus in scholarship also includes the idea that, while the
English were initially hostile toward the Normans, eventually the two assimilated into a
new English identity.  

Concerning the changes that the Church underwent after the Conquest, some
scholars took a new turn in their research. Rather than maintaining the argument that
monasteries suffered under the Normans, they began to examine Norman religious
patronage. There were some, like Emma Cownie, who argued that post-Conquest
monasteries benefitted from the Conquest, since the new nobility became a source of
support for monasteries. The reasoning was that, in order to gain the good will of the
people as well as the monks, knights patronized monasteries. It was a way to integrate
themselves into the community.

The impact of Domesday Book in the English church is addressed by H.R. Loyn
in *The English Church 940-1154*. Loyn discusses the difficulty inherent in trying to
understand the new church organization using Domesday Book, and presents three levels
of evaluation: the role of Norman dignitaries, the importance of minster churches, and
the growing role of the local parish church. This use of Domesday Book, to examine the

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114 Loyn, *The English Church 940-1154*. 
changes in church organization in post-conquest England, is one the most important contributions of this work. Historians had, of course, used Domesday Book to glean information about England under William I, but using it to examine changes in the English churches was new.

Looking for England’s roots has not lost its appeal, but the scope is no longer limited to rulers, military, and religion. A noticeable change is that women became increasingly included in the larger narrative, suggesting that scholars were beginning to study society in a holistic manner rather than fractionalizing scholarship into wars, kings, and religion. A more subtle change is the way England was viewed within a larger European context. Early scholarship considered Anglo-Saxon England in a truly insular way – it focused on England and really only looked at England’s role in the world beginning with the Norman Conquest of 1066.

Historians from the 1990s on began to look at England’s early history as part of the larger European history.¹¹⁵ English Christianity was studied for its impact on the Continent, and its politics were no longer seen only as the interactions of the various kingdoms with each other. The relationship between English clergy and continental clergy became a topic of study, as did trade with the merchants on the continent. Historiography also became important, and in the twenty-first century theory was used to

analyze the works of earlier historians. In fact, some of these historiographies are the studies of how England’s past was used in periods to present an image of England that fit the needs of the English people during that time.\textsuperscript{116}

ANGLO-SAXON AND ANGLO-NORMAN WOMEN

The study of women during the Anglo-Saxon period was part of a larger historical debate about women’s history in the 1980s, although in the late nineteenth century there was some interest in women’s status and rights to property.\textsuperscript{117} Scholars started looking at early medieval history, including Anglo-Saxon history, in order to study the roles of women – especially to see if women had more rights during this period than the later periods such as the late Middle Ages, the Early Modern period, and the Renaissance. Historians of early medieval women on the continent focused on the impact of, and the role of women within, Christianity. They also studied the role of women within existing political systems.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{116}J. A. Hilton, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Attitudes: A Short Introduction to Anglo-Saxonism} (Frithgarth, UK: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2006). This is a social and economic history in which Hilton argues the historiography of Anglo-Saxon England can be broken into seven categories beginning with the English Renaissance and concluding in the Post-Modern period. This book could also be considered part of memory studies, since it focuses on how historians in these periods created a useful past.


\textsuperscript{118}Suzanne Wemple is one of the first scholars to address the role of women during the early Middle Ages on the continent. She studies women in Merovingian and Carolingian societies and the impact of Christianity on these women; \textit{Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900} (Philadelphia:
More recently, scholars have begun to study seriously the role of women in Anglo-Saxon England as peace-weavers. Stacy Klein studies the role of Anglo-Saxon royal women during this period in her book *Ruling Women*. In addition to a very thorough discussion of the role of women within the household, and the power they had, she points to their role in creating alliances between kingdoms and the fact that their husbands took their advice very seriously, as evidence of their agency.

Studies of women in Anglo-Saxon England also focused on these issues, but the impact of the Conquest on women’s status in England is an additional, significant part of this debate. At the heart of this issue is the question of whether the Normans imposed new restrictions on women, or if Anglo-Saxon women were constrained by the same expectations as their continental counterparts. In Christine Fell’s in depth study of Anglo-Saxon women, she argues that the view of women as only homemakers and hosts is myopic and does not accurately represent the ways women contributed to society.

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120 Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England and the Impact of 1066* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986). Jane Chance also studies the role of women in Anglo-Saxon England in *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986). Her analysis is less forceful, arguing women were passive peacekeepers through marriage. She argues strong Anglo-Saxon women were a threat, so passivity was the only accepted role for women.
According to Fell, women in Anglo-Saxon England had a voice in the decisions made by their husbands and legal rights to property that marriage did not compromise. Marriage united two family groups, and women could count on the support of their natal family. She further points out that women held high positions within the Church, serving as abbesses in double monasteries and working with bishops. It was the Norman Conquest, she argues, that profoundly changed the status of women in England. Stephanie Hollis counters that the position of Anglo-Saxon women, especially women in monasteries, gradually declined during this period, so that there was no great change in their status at the time of the Conquest.\(^{121}\) She uses texts such as Aldhelm’s *De Virginitate* and the works of Bede to support her argument.

As scholars became increasingly interested in religious women, research focused not only on the lives of nuns, but on their interactions with their communities and ways women could follow a life of religious contemplation outside monasteries.\(^{122}\) The contribution of royal women to monastic life – both by supporting monasteries and by founding them – has also found its way into the historiography of the Anglo-Norman period. One of the most promising areas of research in medieval English women’s

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history is that of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman religious women. These women were predominantly royal or noble women, and thus served as a link between secular and ecclesiastic leadership. They were present at Church councils, most notably Whitby, and their insights and opinions were taken seriously. Further research in this area could include the role of religious women in conversion, as peace-keepers between the secular aristocracy and the Church hierarchy, and (in their roles as abbesses) as lords.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

This dissertation is a study of the way memory is created by examining specific hagiographies, and the way these sources were used to address social and political issues in the immediate post-conquest period. Implicit in the creation of memory, however, is discourse of power and agency; specifically the struggle between the English and the Normans over the image and agency of the English people. Gender theory and post-colonial theory, though not the focus of this work, provide a framework to address the reasons for creating useful images of the past.

Gender theory is the relationship between masculine and feminine and concerns the continual negotiation of power between two entities, whether man and woman or conqueror and conquered. Michel Foucault analyzed the nature of power as a system of control, surveillance, and discipline used to enforce acceptable behavior. Such behavior is defined by the dominant societal force and is internalized by the governed. The result
is a self-monitoring population that not only accepts the mores of those who govern, but reinforces them through the use of shame and the threat of ostracization. Foucault was not specifically a gender historian, but his theories about the nature of power are frequently used by gender theorists and historians. His thesis that obedience to social conventions is internalized is relevant to my research in two ways. First, Goscelin’s implication that women were better rulers, indeed better men, than the king and the Norman nobility was designed to shame them into proper behavior. The socially accepted gender roles of the time had been reversed, thus opening the men up to ridicule and social censure. Second, he used the spiritual authority inherent in his role as a monk to enforce the legitimacy of Ely’s claims by reminding the king that the saints were protective and jealous of their followers and their monastery.

The field of gender history, for all practical purposes, began with Joan Wallach Scott’s article, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” In it, she created a model for studying women’s history that argued against a separate sphere approach, making the obvious, but hitherto unacknowledged, point that women lived with men in a world created and defined by men. So, the study of women was therefore also a study of men. A power relationship exists between the sexes based on expectations of behavior.

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Gender, then, is a cultural construct based on a particular society’s ideas of proper male and female behavior.\textsuperscript{125} The ideas she set forth in this article eventually became a series of essays which Scott published as a book, \textit{Gender and the Politics of History}.\textsuperscript{126} In the introduction, she defines gender as “a primary way of signifying relationships of power...a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated.”\textsuperscript{127} This definition is especially applicable when analyzing Goscelin’s hagiographies of the female saints of Ely. His descriptions of them inverted common gender roles in a way that masculinized the saints without overtly emasculating the Normans. By using gender to psychologically manipulate his audience, he redefined power in a way that not only gave more agency to the English but allowed Goscelin to chide the Normans’ behavior.

While gender theory addresses power relationships based on societal perceptions of proper roles based on sex, postcolonial theory provides a basis for understanding the interactions between an imperial power and the people it subjugates. It has been used primarily by historians of the modern period to understand the reasons behind, and the effects of, imperialism; however, it is also a very useful analytical tool for medieval scholarship. Central to the theory is the thesis that both colonizer and colonized tries to

\textsuperscript{125}Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category,” p. 1056.


\textsuperscript{127}Scott, \textit{Gender and the Politics of History}, pp. 44-45.
identify the other through self-definition. The colonized do this by creating historical memory that asserts their inherent dignity. The colonizers do this by asserting moral superiority and feminizing the conquered.

Postcolonial theory has its foundation in the idea of imagined communities. This term was coined by Benedict Anderson as a way to explain nationalism and national identity. He defines a nation as “an imagined political community...imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Implicit in this statement is the idea that each nation creates its own identity, and that identity relies in part in its relationship to other nations.

Anderson created this definition to help explain modern colonial relationships, but the applications reach farther than he described. He himself cannot imagine national identity before the Age of Exploration, and so does not acknowledge its existence in the Middle Ages. He presents community identity as being tied only to religion and so was, as he put it, unselfconscious. He is, in effect, saying there was no concept of nation

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130Anderson, Imagined Communities, p. 6.

131Ibid., p. 16.
during this period, only socially hierarchical groups whose identity was defined by
religion and whose power structure was based upon literacy. In an apparent
contradiction to his own definition of nation as a group identity not defined by
geographic boundaries, he argues the people of the Middle Ages had no sense of nation
because they lacked any sense of belonging to a geographic space.\textsuperscript{132}

Kathleen Davis refutes Anderson’s assessment of medieval history by arguing
that definite, identifiable national identities did indeed exist in medieval Europe.\textsuperscript{133} She
shows how Anglo-Saxon writers formed a national identity not only by creating historic
memory but by separating themselves linguistically. The vernacular became their way of
asserting national uniqueness, of creating \textit{Anglecynn}, the social and political idea of
Englishness.\textsuperscript{134} She argues that the same ideological processes involved in creating
modern national identities are not temporally restricted, nor do they rely on specific
conditions such as print culture or capitalism.\textsuperscript{135}

Medieval scholarship has much to gain by incorporating postcolonial theory.

\textbf{According to Davis, it is useful not just for understanding the way people in the medieval
}\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., p. 15.

\textsuperscript{133}Kathleen Davis, “National Writing in the Ninth Century: A Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking About the

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., p. 621. \textit{Anglecynn} translates from Anglo-Saxon as England-kin, the notion of the English people
being related not through blood but by common traits such as language, culture, and history. These are
some of the same traits that Anderson argues are central to modern national identities.

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., p. 613.
period perceived the nation, it is also a way to show “that the medieval difference from
the modern cannot be set out in terms of an opposition.” Davis shows not only the way
medieval people felt and how they created national identity, but also the way modern
European nations as well as historians of the modern era have, in a sense, colonized the
medieval period. In an attempt to define the modern state, they have created a temporal
other in which the medieval antecedent is primitive and naive. Events from the Middle
Ages are reinterpreted to suit modern national identities, creating historical memory in
which what is forgotten is as significant as what is remembered. Subsequent
scholarship in the field has followed Davis’ lead by using Anderson’s criteria for creating
a national identity to gain a more nuanced understanding of medieval societies as well as
argue against the colonization of the field by modernists.

Imperialism and colonization are usually associated with the tangible. Nations
seeking empire are, after all, physically setting out to colonize another; their hegemonic
and ideologic presence is reinforced by the physical presence of soldiers, administrators,
and ambassadors. It may seem unusual, then, to consider the intangible as equally
vulnerable to imperialist ambitions. This is, however, exactly what has happened to the
field of French medieval studies, according to Carol Symes. In her deeply insightful
article, “The Middle Ages Between Nationalism and Colonialism,” she addresses the

\[136^{\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 613 - 614.}}\]

\[137^{\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 628-630.}}\]
ethical quandaries faced by modern medievalists as well the subordination of the French Middle Ages to imperialist ambitions of modern France. Modern French medieval historians, she argues, are placed in the position of perpetuating a national creation myth by cherry-picking events from its medieval past that suit the ambitions of the government or engaging in scholarship that will gain them little acclaim. The Middle Ages, she writes, provide “...either a proving ground for modern agendas or a waste dump for those aspects of modernity that we would prefer to jettison...”\textsuperscript{138} Like Davis, she points out that modern nation-building required an historic image that justified the nation’s present actions. Symes goes further, however, by proving that it is not just medieval history that has been colonized by modernity, but historians of the period.

The importance of this article lies in the potential impact on scholarship of modern nationalism. As Symes points out, it is the intellectual property of medievalists that is being colonized, and their identity as scholars that is being subjugated by modernity. As a result, medievalists - and by extension all historians of non-modern Western history - have to engage in postcolonial discourse that asserts the inherent dignity and the importance of their work.

The application of theoretical frameworks to the field of medieval history can be difficult. Most theories that have been used to study the Middle Ages were developed to

explain modern phenomena. Postcolonial theory is no different, and historians of medieval Europe have wrestled with how best to use it to inform their own research. One of the best works on applying postcolonial theory to medieval scholarship is Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s edited work, *The Post Colonial Middle Ages*. The essays contained in this book are thematically wide-ranging and offer a good representation of the ways postcolonial theory has been utilized by medievalists. These themes include the importance of language, both oral traditions and literacy; the importance of creating an other against which national identity can be extolled; and the of economics in medieval imperialistic tendencies.

More recently scholarship includes an article in *The Annals of the Association of American Geographers* by Rhys Jones and Richard Phillips in which they argue against a distinction between modern and pre-modern colonization. They argue there are no *a priori* grounds for distinguishing between modern imperialism (from 1500) and pre-modern. They focus on colonization as a specific aspect of imperialism using social, cultural, and political geography theory. They attribute the drive for a temporal distinction between modern and pre-modern imperial impulses to a sudden growth in geography as an historical discourse within the last 25 years as well as to guilt associated with Eurocentrism. They emphasize that medieval perceptions of the other were not

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limited to religious differences but extended to include geographic boundaries. They point out medieval colonial discourse was not dissimilar to modern discourse. The colonizing nation justified expanding the borders of its cultural influence by defining others within the context of geographical borders. Those people who lived within certain geographic areas were described as either less civilized or less human than the colonizing nation. They use as an example Gunther of Paris’ description of the Poles as crude, brutish, and lacking reason.\textsuperscript{140} The authors do not argue that national identity existed in the pre-modern period; rather, the modern state evolved from earlier notions of ethnic community defined within geographical boundaries.

Lisa Lampert-Weissig also discusses the role of boundaries and borders in her examination of medieval literature, \textit{Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies}. In this work, she addresses key issues in the application of postcolonial theory to medieval studies such as the need to reexamine borders - geographic as well as intellectual, the problem of periodization, and the creation of memory through omission. She argues that the intersections of medieval literature and postcolonial theory offer important insights into modern society as well as medieval history.\textsuperscript{141}


\textsuperscript{141}Lisa Lampert-Weissig, \textit{Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd., 2010).
The historiography involved in this dissertation is extensive, but this is necessary in order to better place Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies within the context of modern scholarship. As has been shown, different theoretical approaches have added greatly to the field of medieval history. These theories include memory creation studies, gender theory, and postcolonial theory. Particularly promising to the field of Anglo-Norman studies is scholarship combining medieval English history, memory studies, postcolonial theory, and hagiographies. There is a paucity of scholarly inquiry into the uses of hagiographic literature as a form of memory creation and political criticism during the post-conquest period. This suggests this is the next logical step for Anglo-Norman scholars.
CHAPTER III

PRIMARY SOURCES USED IN THIS DISSERTATION

Placing Goscelin’s hagiographies of the Ely saints in historical, theological, social, and political perspective requires an examination of more than the hagiographic literature surrounding the monastery of Ely. Many more sources, hagiographic and other were consulted during the course of my research. This chapter contains descriptions and discussions of these sources as well their relevance to the Ely hagiographies. The chapter begins with a discussion of the manuscripts used for this dissertation followed by the edited works used. Translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

MANUSCRIPTS

The hagiographies central to this dissertation are primarily from MS 393 at the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University, titled in the catalog as “Historia Eliensis,” hereafter referred to as CCCC. This manuscript is 8.8 inches long and 6 inches wide and is written in Latin on vellum. It is bound in brown leather on

142 A discussion of the manuscripts is also found in Rosalind C. Love’s edited and translated work Goscelin of Saint-Bertin and the Hagiographies of the Female Saints of Ely (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).
board. According to the description, the foliation is ff a+i+1-82+ii+b, there are twenty-four lines to a page and the handwriting is a clear, round, twelfth-century hand. Folios 1v through 3v contain a description of Augustine’s arrival in England in the seventh century, the incipit being “Anno ab incarnatione dominica DC xvi qui est annus uigesimus primus ex quo augustinus...” and the explicit “Cuius uidelicet natalis in magna gloria solet celebrari die nonarum iuliarum.” Folios 3v through 33v contain the life and miracles of St Æthelthryth, the incipit is “Beata et gloriosa uirgo Aetheldritha...” and the explicit is “…referens cunctis audire uolentibus omnia que ei contigerunt.” Immediately beneath this is the incipit, “Incipit prologus in libellum de uita et gestis Beate ÆDELDRÉDE Virginis quem uersifice composuit Gregorius Eliensis monachus.” The monk Gregory appears to have been in the process of putting in verse Æthelthryth’s miracles, since he started on 34v and his work ends on 55v but seven folios (55v through 58v) are blank, although appear to have been prepared for further work.

Folios 59v through 71v contain the life and miracles of St. Wihtbruge. This section begins with “Orientale orientalium anglorum sidus uirgo Domini Wihtburga...” The

143 This description is available at institutions that subscribe to parkerweb, a joint website between the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, and Stanford University. The site is http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/ and was accessed on November 4, 2011 at the Cambridge University Library.

144 The Anglo-Saxon spelling of Æthelthryth and, to a lesser extent, Sexburge, vary throughout the different sources such as other hagiographies, the Liber Eliensis, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. Throughout this work the names will be spelled Æthelthryth and Sexburge for sake of consistency.
capital in Orientale is illuminated with a drawing of the saint seated on a seat resembling a backless throne against a bright blue background with a red outline surrounded by a green circle. She is holding a crown in her left hand and a flowering branch, according to the manuscript description, in her right.\textsuperscript{145} The illuminated capital B in the incipit for Æthelthryth does not contain an image of the saint, but contains the same color sequence of bright blue, red, then green. The incipit on folio 69\textsuperscript{r} reads “...diem quo incorrupto ostensa est corpore.” The \textit{vita} of Saint Sexburge is contained in folios 69\textsuperscript{r} through 71\textsuperscript{r}. There is no illumination.

Some of the hagiographies are from manuscript O.2.I at Trinity College Cambridge, also known as \textit{Liber Eliensis}, referred to hereafter as \textit{LE}. This manuscript is the oldest version of \textit{LE}, later copies are found in the Cotton Caligula A, Cotton Vespasian A. xix, Cotton Domitian xv, Cotton Tiberius A. vi, Cotton Titus A.i., and MS Add 9822 manuscript collections at the British Library in London; manuscript O.2.I at Trinity College, Cambridge; manuscript B.2.7 at Trinity College, Dublin; Ely, Dean and Chapter MS Liber Eliensis; Ely Diocesan Registry MS Liber M; and Bodlian MS Laud. Misc. 647.

\textsuperscript{145} Rosalind Love’s describes her as holding a lily to represent her virginity in \textit{The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely}, li. She also argues there are similarities in the symbolism between this capital and the opening page of \textit{Passio Sancte Margaretae} in the Cotton Caliogula (A. vii.) collection at the British Library.
Goscelin drew some of his history of Ely and its foundress, St. Æthelthryth, from the *Liber Eliensis*, which is a chronicle of the abbey as well as the isle of Ely from the seventh through twelfth centuries. It was compiled and translated from Anglo-Saxon into Latin by a monk from the abbey and contains information on government and society in England both before and after the Conquest as well as several hagiographies of the monastery’s saints. The manuscript consulted regarding Goscelin’s hagiographies is found in the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge University, MS O.2.I. It contains *vitae* and *miraculae* about the Ely saints that are similar to the *Historia Eliensis* found in MS 393 at the Parker Library, and it is likely that the compiler used Goscelin’s hagiographies found in MS 393 for some of the *vitae* and *miraculae* of the saints.

The *Liber Eliensis* was not complete at the time Goscelin was at Ely; the chronicle ends after recording the martyrdom of Beckett in 1170. It also contains a larger history of the monastery and events surrounding the Conquest. The manuscript is 9 inches long and 6.5 inches wide, written in Latin on vellum bound in wooden boards covered with vellum. According to the description from the James Catalogue, the foliation is ff 256 + 2, there are 29 lines to a page, and the writing is a beautiful late twelfth-century hand. It contains two fly leaves, and folios 229\(\text{r}\) and 230\(\text{r}\) are from a music book with music on a 5-stave line. It is marked B.408, no. 408 and is from the Ely Cathedral Priory, as indicated by a mark in the margin of folio one, which occurs in other
Ely manuscripts. The manuscript begins with a calendar of saints’ feast days. Folio 3’ begins “Inicipit prologus de historia eliensis insule” and the facing page contains drawings of Saint Æthelwold (caption reads Sanctus Æthelwoldus, Ep) and King Edgar (Ædgar Rex), each sitting under arches decorated with fleurs de lys and pointing to each other. There are empty arches to the right of Edgar. This manuscript was edited by E.O. Blake.146

PUBLISHED SOURCES

Blake’s edition of Liber Eliensis is used to provide background and contrast to Goscelin’s interpretation of the history of Ely and its saints. The Liber Eliensis was, however, created to show Ely in its best light, which makes it valuable for this work. The compiler chose the content with great care, and its use as a tool of memory creation provides further insight into the social negotiations surrounding the assimilation of Norman culture into Anglo-Norman culture. In addition to the history provided by the compiler, Liber Eliensis also contains documentary evidence important to its history, such as charters and royal writs.

Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum [Historia Ecclesiastica hereafter] is especially helpful in establishing the foundation Goscelin built upon for some of the

146E. O. Blake, ed., Liber Eliensis.
saints, particularly Æthelthryth and Sexburge.\textsuperscript{147} Comparison of recensions of Goscelin’s *Vita Sancte Ætheldrethe* with Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* provide evidence that Goscelin not only read Bede, he copied some parts of Bede’s work verbatim.\textsuperscript{148} Bede took special care to note the pious or holy nature of kings and their families in order to present the history of the Church in England in a way that emphasized its ties with Rome and the continent. In this way, his goals were similar to Goscelin’s: to present an image of England that emphasized a close connection to Rome and thus legitimized its religious institutions. Because Bede, whose authority was uncontested, described English holy dynasties, especially that of King Anna, Goscelin was able to emphasize not only the correctness of Christian practice in England but its long history.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* provides a political, social, and legal background of England, especially from 1040 to 1080 A.D. The *Chronicle* is actually seven different manuscripts covering the same period but written by different chroniclers: the Corpus Christi College Cambridge manuscript, the Cotton Tiberius A vi manuscript, the Cotton Tiberius B v manuscript, the Cotton Tiberius B iv manuscript, the Bodleian Laud. 636 manuscript, the Cotton Domitian A viii 2 manuscript, and the Cotton Otho B xi 2 manuscript. They were edited and translated in a two-volume work by Benjamin

\textsuperscript{147}Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis*.

There are variations in the accounts of events among the manuscripts, which will be noted in this work as needed.

Analysis of Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies in terms of memory creation and political commentary is enhanced by comparing them to his other works. These other sources include *Vita Sancti Birini, Vita et Miracula Sancti Kenelmi,* and *Vita Sancti Rumwoldi.* The lives of Saints Kenelm and Rumwold were written prior to Goscelin’s commission at Ely, the life of Saint Berinus was written closer to the end of the eleventh century. Goscelin’s *Liber Confortatorius* and *Vita Sanctae Edithae,* and his *Vita Sancte Wulfsige,* written prior to his tenure at Ely, provide examples of Goscelin’s writing style and imagery before he began his work on the royal female saints of Ely. Comparing these works to those from Ely illustrates the way Goscelin’s language changed, becoming more forceful in the Ely hagiographies. It also shows how he changed the way the saints were presented and the differences in the way he used

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--- *Vita Sancte Wulfsige,* Love, ed. and trans.
Biblical and classical references. His *Vita Sanctae Edithae* is of special interest, since it offers the opportunity to examine his hagiography of a female saint written prior to those at Ely.
CHAPTER IV

GOSCELIN AT ELY: THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF ITS SAINTS

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies that shows the ways he used language and imagery to create useful memories of these female saints. These new memories not only fulfilled the obligations of his commission, they provided an opportunity for him to address key issues that were troubling him about England’s new king and his nobility. The most pressing of Goscelin’s concerns appears to be the indifference, or even hostility, William I had shown for his new subjects. Intimately connected with this was Goscelin’s perception of the lack of Christian virtues being exhibited by William I and his nobility. When Goscelin wrote the Ely hagiographies, William I had just died, and his son William Rufus was the new king. It was too late for Goscelin to directly chide the Conqueror in these hagiographies, but it was possible for him to use him as a negative example for William Rufus. He chose, instead to use these hagiographies not only to make the case for restoring all of Ely’s properties and liberties, but also to address issues such as royal responsibility to realm and Church, and to offer guidance to the new king.
The Ely hagiographies were written within a short time of each other. Chronologically, it is likely that the *miraculae* of Æthelthryth was composed first, probably in conjunction with her now lost *vita*. The hagiographies of Sexburge, Eormenhild, Wærburga, and Wihtburga were written afterward, in that order. Because the chronology of the hagiographies is so close, I have organized this chapter thematically to correspond with the issues Goscelin addressed: the behavior of a good ruler; the actions of a good Christian; and the consequences of not embracing the traits of a good ruler and Christian. Goscelin’s approach was to utilize the memory of each saint to exemplify one of the above traits. This enabled him to focus on a single point which, in turn, provided the opportunity to rebuke and instruct the audience. The analyses of the hagiographies begin with Sexburge followed by Eormenhild, each representing different aspects of Goscelin’s image of the ideal ruler. Æthelthryth’s *miraculae* comes next since she is Goscelin’s exemplar of proper Christian behavior. Finally, the hagiographies of Wihtburga and Wærburga emphasize miracle stories designed to make clear what someone in a position of power may expect from God if he does not act in a manner befitting his position.

Goscelin was commissioned by Abbot Simeon of Ely to write the saints’ hagiographies after the rebellions of 1070-1072. Simeon was intent on not only

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153 In CCCC 393 the hagiographies are in the following order: Goscelin’s Æthelthryth’s miracles, verse version of these miracles composed by Gregory of Ely, then Goscelin’s hagiographies of Wihtburga, Sexburge, Eormenhild, and Wærburga. A more detailed description of the manuscript is found in chapter 3.
regaining Ely’s property but restoring its reputation and regaining the trust of the townspeople. The people of Ely believed that the previous abbot, Thurstan, and some of the monks had aided William and his troops during the rebellion by showing them how to gain access to the island, and so relations were strained. Additionally, Norman governance of this area was harsh as a result of the rebellion. The process of reclaiming property taken from the monastery, as well as recreating an image of the monastery that instilled pride in the townspeople, required that the hagiographies of the saints associated with the monastery be updated.

Simeon understood the political as well as the social importance of this and commissioned one of the best hagiographers in the country to undertake this work. Rewriting the hagiographies of the Ely saints for a Norman audience required a hagiographer as skilled as Goscelin who knew how to present the lives of Anglo-Saxon saints in a way that inspired respect for them from the Norman clergy and nobility. In order to not only regain the monastery’s lands but ensure against any subsequent claims against them, the message needed to be conveyed that these women were powerful in their own times and remained powerful advocates for the monastery. Goscelin was

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154 *LE*, Book II:109. These events are discussed in detail later in this chapter.
skilled at presenting female saints in a way that was at once irritating and awe-inspiring to the Normans. 155

Goscelin took this commission during his itinerant period (ca. 1080-1090), a time marked not only by resentment over the way he was treated by the clergy brought in by William, but also the way the English were being treated. He was troubled by the behaviors exhibited by the Conqueror and Norman nobility, and he took the opportunity presented by Abbot Simeon to address his concerns. The Ely hagiographies differ from Goscelin’s work prior and subsequent to his arrival there both in tone and underlying message. They contain strong and sometimes scathing political critiques meant to send a message to William, his nobles, and clergy, as well as furnish moral lessons. The miracle stories chosen are, in places, such thinly veiled analogies to current events that it is surprising he did not fall into disfavor from either William or the Norman archbishops. Goscelin used the royal saints of Ely to remind William and the Norman nobles and clergy of the duties and proper roles of rulers and leaders, suggesting these women were better administrators and Christians than were the Norman men. He created an image of England by presenting the female saints as exemplars of English piety and royal obligation.

155Georges Whalen argues that Goscelin intentionally used hagiographies that portrayed strong women in part to irritate the Normans, but especially to bolster the reputation of female witnesses and to remind his audience of the theological equality of women. Whalen, “Patronage Engendered, in Women, the Book and the Godly,” Smith and Taylor, eds., pp. 123 - 135.
One of the hallmarks of postcolonial writing is recreating a nation’s past in a way that makes clear that the indigenous, colonized, nation is worthy of respect. Goscelin did this through the Ely saints by creating a familial community of saints, with their forebear, King Anna of East Anglia, at the center. The idea of a holy dynasty is a sub-theme that runs through each of Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies and is found in subsequent hagiographies, especially of female saints. One feature common to all Goscelin’s work concerning royal saints is a long genealogy. This creates a sort of network of royal saints, since the familial relationships in these genealogies often contain royal saints from other English households. For example, there is a connection between the genealogies of Saint Mildred and Saint Earcongota of Ely, since they were cousins. One possible explanation for Goscelin doing this is that this not only serves to place the saint firmly within English history, it creates a uniquely English image of holiness, since there was a long English tradition of associating royalty and sanctity.

Goscelin’s frequent reference to saints’ familial ties to Anna who, though not a saint himself, was the father, uncle, and cousin of saints, had another purpose. Anna was remembered by the English as a strong, just king who fearlessly defended Christianity in his realm. This memory continued into the eleventh century, and so by reminding the

\[156\text{This will be discussed further in chapter five.}\]

\[157\text{C. H. Talbot originally made this observation about Goscelin’s work about royal saints containing long genealogies; however, he offers no explanation for his doing so; Goscelin, Liber Confortatorius, p. 16.}\]
audience of the saints’ relationship to Anna, Goscelin was reaffirming the English perception that it was a great nation and asserting this perception to the Normans. He also added authority to his portrayal of dynastic sanctity by frequently referring to Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, using it to emphasize East Anglia’s, and by extension England’s, ancient ties to the Roman Church as well as its long history of royal saints. A clear connection between Rome and England was designed to counter any issues Norman clergy had with the practice of Christianity in England.

Goscelin kept the memory of Anna alive in his Ely hagiographies for two reasons. First, by reminding the audience of who Anna was and emphasizing the saints’ relationship to him, he emphasized the secular power these women had. The monastery was founded by a queen on her own land using her personal wealth. Because Anna’s daughter had built the monastery, the administration of it was hers even centuries after her death. This reinforced Abbot Simeon’s claim to institutional sovereignty.158

Second, it allowed Goscelin to create a holy dynasty around the saints. King Anna was the source of the Ely saints’ sanctity by virtue of his own devoutness. Because he was also related to so many of the Anglo-Saxon saints, he could also be seen as contributing to their holiness. Goscelin’s creation of the dynasty of saints subtly suggests

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158 Virginia Blanton argues this emphasis not only on the sanctity and chastity of these saints, but on their royal lineage, especially Æthelthryth’s, is meant to showcase the power of these women and so of the monastery; *Signs of Devotion*, pp. 142 - 146. Susan Ridyard argues that there was a definite link in the minds of the Anglo-Saxons and Normans between royal sanctity and royal power, so the royal status of these saints underlined and supported their status as saints; *The Royal Saints*, pp. 5 - 7.
that if holiness can run through bloodlines, it can also run through a nation. Frequently referring to Bede allowed Goscelin to portray Anna as a very devout Christian king who was related to many Anglo-Saxon saints. It also strengthened his descriptions of the Ely saints, since parts of the hagiographies he wrote about them are taken directly from the Historia Ecclesiastica.\textsuperscript{159}

GOSCELIN, BEDE, AND ANNA

Before analyzing the Ely hagiographies, Bede’s importance to Goscelin’s work must be addressed. Bede wrote the Historia Ecclesiastica in the eighth century, and was heavily invested in creating an image of England’s past that was tied strongly to the Church in Rome. One of the ways he did this was by recording royal lineages replete with saints, such as that of King Anna. Goscelin would later use this same device for the Ely hagiographies. Bede praised Anna as especially holy, and he was the lynchpin for a rather extensive holy dynasty which included the female saints of Ely. Appendix A contains a family history not only of Anna’s immediate family but of the larger holy dynasty used by both Bede and Goscelin. Bede made frequent reference to Anna’s piety, his excellent character, and the fact that he was respected by his peers for being a good

\textsuperscript{159}Joscelin Wogan Browne argues that Bede’s Poem to Æthelthryth links her to Rome, and that this link was important in post-Conquest hagiographies by combining his prestige with her ancient lineage as well as the founding of Ely, Saints’ Lives and Women’s Literary Culture c. 1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 58-60. This is quite obvious in Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies. In some instances, Goscelin quotes directly from Bede, in others the references are obvious enough to leave no doubt as to their source.
king, a point which Goscelin emphasized. This served more than one purpose. As mentioned, creating a holy dynasty in England strengthened the idea that Christianity had been a part of the English identity for centuries - longer, in fact, than Normandy had been a separate political entity.\footnote{125} Goscelin wove this national identity into the larger memory of these women he was creating through his hagiographies. By drawing on the authority of Bede, Goscelin also emphasized that East Anglia was a region with deep Christian roots tied to Rome and a five hundred-year-old history of defending the faith.\footnote{126}

Anna was the son of Eni, who was the brother of King Redwald. Anna’s first cousin was Sigbert, whose holiness is noted by Bede. Sigbert had been an exile in Gaul during the reign of Ricbert, who had killed Sigbert’s Christian brother, King Earpwald, and returned East Anglia to paganism. While in Gaul, Sigbert converted to Christianity. When he returned home, he brought with him Bishop Felix, who helped spread Christianity in East Anglia.\footnote{127} Sigbert’s conversion in Gaul was important to Bede, as is the fact that he brought with him from there a bishop to bring Christianity back to the

\footnote{123} Elisabeth Van Houts, \textit{The Normans in Europe} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 13. Normandy became a French duchy in the early tenth century, when Charles III (the Simple) gave the territory to the Viking leader Rollo, who became the first Duke of Normandy.

\footnote{126} There had been a strong Norman influence in the English Church since around 1047, and Norman writers frequently disparaged the English Church, complaining it lacked any real zeal for reform; however, after the Conquest there was a decided change in the direction reform took. For more on the political aspect of post-Conquest reform in England, see H. R. Loyn’s discussion in chapter 4 of \textit{The English Church, 940-1154}.

\footnote{127} Bede, \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}, II:15.
people of East Anglia. It further linked England’s Church with the Continent and, by extension, Rome.

Bede describes Sigbert as being an outstanding warrior and king who was so devoted to Christianity that he gave the kingship to his cousin Egric and became a monk. He took his vows of nonviolence so seriously that he refused to leave the monastery to bolster the morale of the East Anglian soldiers when the pagan king of Mercia, Penda, attacked. Sigbert was dragged from the monastery by Egric’s soldiers, but refused to take up a sword, fighting instead with a staff. He was killed. Bede praised Sigbert for his devotion to the faith, portraying him as though he were a martyr for refusing to break his monastic vows and take up the sword, saying, “But he would not forget his vows, while he was surrounded by a great well-armed army, he wanted to carry only his staff in his hand, and was slain with King Egrice.”

This story is echoed in Anna’s daughters Æthelthryth and Sexburge, whom Goscelin portrays as refusing to break vows they had taken. Æthelthryth’s virginity, in fact, was portrayed as an act of martyrdom.

Anna became king of East Anglia after this battle. Like his cousins, Anna is portrayed by Bede as a noble and pious king who further encouraged the growth of

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128 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, III:18, “Sed ipse professionis suae non inmemor, dum opimo esset uallatus exercitu, nonnisi uirgam tantum habere in manu uoluit: occusuque est una com rege Ecgrice...”

129 Alison Goddard Elliot notes that only martyrs went directly to heaven, but when persecution of Christians ended, perpetual virginity (by both men and women) became a form of spiritual martyrdom; Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1987), pp. 143-144.
Christianity in his kingdom and who fought against pagan encroachment. For example, he related that Anna gave shelter and protection to Coenwalh, king of the West Saxons, who converted to Christianity while receiving shelter and protection from Anna after being driven from his kingdom by Penda: “For he [Anna], with whom he [Coenwalh] was exiled, was a good man and king, and his children were good and holy.” Bede does more in this sentence than show Anna as providing hospitality and Christian charity, he used this opportunity to remind the reader that Anna was a progenitor of saints. This is the first mention in the Historia Ecclesiastica of Anna’s holy offspring, and especially important to Goscelin, since three of Anna’s four daughters became abbesses, and subsequently saints, at Ely and the fourth, Æthelburga, would become a sainted abbess in France.

Bede emphasized Anna’s willingness to open his doors, and even his kingdom, to others. When the Irish monk Fursey came to East Anglia in 633 A.D., Anna welcomed him warmly, permitting him to build a monastery on land that Sigbert had given him. Anna, along with his nobles, richly endowed it. This support was also important for

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130 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, III:7. “Nam et ipse [Anna], apud quem exulabat, rex erat uir bonus, et bona ac sancta sobole felix...” Coenwalh lost his kingdom when Penda of Mercia attacked it. The war was the result of Coenwalh putting aside his wife, who was Penda’s sister, for another woman. It is likely that Anna’s taking in Coenwalh had less to do with Christian charity and more to do with his own war against Penda. Bede, however, was concerned with showing the excellence of English Christianity and would have seen this as an act of charity as well as part of the ongoing fight against paganism in England.

131 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, III:19
Goscelin; he frequently mentions the Ely saints’ support of the church and, in particular, monasteries. Bede praises Anna for being noble in mind and deed, a very pious and devout man who was also a king that fostered Christianity in his realm. That Anna’s nobles also gave gifts to Fursey’s monastery implies that the king expected this from them, or at least encouraged this support. This is particularly significant; Goscelin emphasizes Sexburge’s financial support and royal protection of churches and monasteries in her realm as well as her ability to command the nobility and her expectation that they live good, Christian lives. Goscelin reflects her father’s generosity and expectations of the nobility through her, driving home the importance of royal obligation.

Bede makes a point of mentioning that Fursey was Irish, and so one may assume the monastery would have followed Irish Church practices. This bears some examination, since Bede left no doubt in the Historia Ecclesiastica that he saw the Roman Church as the only legitimate one. It seems incongruous for Bede to present Anna, whom he so clearly connected with Rome, as a supporter of Irish Christianity yet he records that Anna and his nobles did just that. This story must have been important to him, since he could easily have left it out of his narrative. His inclusion suggests that Bede placed great importance, and therefore emphasis, on Anna’s willingness to honor the commitment made by Sigbert, regardless of the monastery’s affiliation. Considering
that Bede made special note that Sigbert would not break his vows in order to fight, it is clear he saw promise-keeping as an important characteristic of a good Christian king. It would be difficult to portray his successor, Anna, as being at least as holy as Sigbert if he was unwilling to do so. However, Anna’s willingness to uphold a promise made by another king allowed Bede to emphasize the importance the English kings placed on promise-keeping. They are thus shown to be at least the equals of Continental kings in honor and Christian virtue. Goscelin would pick up this theme and continue it in the Ely hagiographies. Goscelin, too, viewed the sense of personal responsibility implicit in maintaining promises as one of the characteristics of a good king. Maintaining the positive connection of Anglo-Saxon kings to their Continental counterparts also reinforced Goscelin’s message that England’s history and traditions were in many ways stronger than Normandy’s. He drew on Bede’s authority to underscore this point.

Another important consideration in the way Bede tied Anna to Fursey through Sigbert is the importance of precedent. He had already established that Sigbert brought back Bishop Felix from Francia when he returned to East Anglia, implying the proper practice of Christianity was already established in the kingdom before Fursey’s arrival. Fursey, then, assumed the role of the outsider to whom Anna gave protection and shelter. By doing this, Bede rather subtly places the Irish Church in a subordinate position to the Roman Church, since the Irish monastery required the protection and support of a Roman
Christian king for its establishment and survival. In like manner, Goscelin later implicitly presented the Normans and the ecclesiastic reforms they were initiating as foreign, weaving into his Ely hagiographies the notion that both were dependent on royal English saints for protection. The parallels are too strong for there to be any doubt Goscelin used Bede’s example in order to implicitly subordinate Norman power in England to Anglo-Saxon saints and, by extension, English custom. One way he accomplished this was by tying the excellence of England’s saints to the dignity of its kings.

Anna and his wife Hereswith had five children: two sons - Aldwulf and Hiurmine (Jurmin) - and four daughters named Sexburge, Æthelthryth, Æthelburga, and Whitburga. All of them were saints except Aldwulf. According to Bede, he also had a stepdaughter named Sæthryth who went with Anna’s daughter, Æthelburga, to the convent

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132 Edward James argues Bede had no problem with Irish evangelists, noting Bede credits Fursey with converting many in East Anglia. He asserts that Bede gave credit to the Irish for establishing more permanent Christian institutions than the Roman or Frankish missionaries, and approved of Irish missions because he was from Northumbria and the Irish missions were mostly from Lindisfarne, which was part of Northumbria’s territories; Britain in the First Millennium, p. 163. Although this cannot be discounted entirely, the overall tenor of Historia Ecclesiastica does not lend itself to the idea that Bede condoned the Irish Church. It is true that he never blatantly disparages it, but his emphasis on the Roman and Frankish missionaries to England makes it obvious that he viewed the Roman Church as the only legitimate form of Christianity. One reason, perhaps the main reason, Bede wrote the Historia Ecclesiastica was to prove the legitimacy of the English Church through its ties to Rome and its embrace of the Roman Church.

133 Norman-influenced reform in the English Church had begun under Edward the Confessor, and Norman reforms had begun prior to the Conquest. Goscelin was opposed to some of the new practices being introduced, but in general, post-Conquest changes were not particularly onerous. Indeed, Bishop Lanfranc incorporated those English practices he found beneficial into his reforms, particularly the cathedral monastery. A very good discussion of Norman-imposed Church reform in England may be found in H.R. Lyon’s The English Church 940-1154, pp. 68-83.
Faremoûtier-en-Brie in Francia. Anna’s granddaughter, Earcongota, would eventually become the abbess of this same convent. Bede went into great detail about Earcongota's holiness. He praised her devotion to Christ, her humility, and her concern for the spiritual welfare of those in her charge. When she felt her death was near, she went to visit the ill or elderly nuns in her monastery and told them about it, asking them to pray for her. Of her death, Bede said:

That same night, at the final part, that is to say at the start of dawn, she passed through the darkness of this world and departed into the light. Many of the brothers at the same monastery, who were in different houses, reported clearly hearing concerts of angels singing and a sound like a great multitude entering the monastery; whereupon, immediately going out to see what it was, they saw an exceedingly great light from heaven which conducted that holy soul, loose from the bonds of the flesh, to the eternal joys of that celestial country.

Relating this communal vision, witnessed by the monks in her monastery, reinforces Earcongota’s saintliness. This vision also provided support later for Goscelin by equating holiness with a heavenly light. Although Earcongota turned to the nuns in her

134 Some sources, such as Liber Eliensis I:2, claim Aldwulf was Anna’s son. Others, for example William Bright, claim he was Anna’s cousin; Chapters of Early English Church History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897). The confusion seems to stem from the fact that Aldwulf’s mother’s name was Hereswith, as was Anna’s wife. I consider him to be Anna’s son rather than his cousin based on the entry in Liber Eliensis. The chronicler relied upon oral tradition as much as written record, and since births were not generally recorded in the medieval period, it seems likely that the oral tradition associated with Aldwulf and Anna is accurate. If he were Anna’s cousin, and thus the saints’ cousin, the chronicler likely would have recorded it as such, since it still created a familial relationship. See Appendix A for the family tree.

135 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica., III:8. “Ipsa autem nocte, in cuius ultima parte, id est incipiente aurora, praesentis mundi tenebras transiens supernam migrauit ad lucem, multi de fratribus eiusdemmonasterii, qui alii erant in aedibus, iam manifeste se concentus angelorum psallentium audisse referebant, sed et sonitum quasi plurimae multitudinis monasterium ingredientis; unde mox egressi dignoscere, quid esset, uiduerunt lucem caelitus emissam fuisset permaximum, quae sanctam illam animam carnis uinucleis absoutam ad aeterna patriae caelestis gaudia ducebat.”
convent to pray for her soul, it was not the nuns who witnessed the vision of her soul being taken to heaven by choirs of angels, but the monks. Her holiness is validated as much by the men sworn to obey her as the light which bore her soul to heaven. Goscelin would later use this same device to argue for the saintly status of the Ely saint Whitburga.

Bede used lack of a corpse’s physical corruption as proof of saintly virginity. This would be a very significant indicator for Goscelin, as well. Bede describes the translation of Æthelburga, who was Æthelthryth’s sister and Earcongota’s aunt, seven years after her death. Æthelburga’s body was found to be incorrupt when it was translated, thus proving to Bede that Æthelburga had remained a virgin throughout her life:

After her death, the brothers had a great many other cares and put aside the building of this church for seven years because of the excessive labor. They utterly gave up building the church [after this period] and decided to remove the bones of the abbess to another church that was already completed and consecrated. And when they opened her tomb, they found the body free from corruption as if it had been immune from carnal desires.136

As with Earcongota, it was men who bore witness to this evidence of carnal and spiritual purity, thus reinforcing her saintliness. It would also be men who would attest to the

136Ibid. “Post cuius mortem, fratibus alia magis curantibus, intermissum est hoc aedificium annis VII quibus completis statuerunt ob nimietatem laboris, huius structuram ecclesiae funditus relinquere, ossa uero abbatisae illo de loco eleuata, in aliam ecclesiam, quae esset perfecta ac dedicata, transiere. Et aperientes sepulchrum eius, ita intemeratum corpus iuenere, ut a corruptione concupiscientiae carnalis erat inmune;...”
undecayed state of Æthelthryth’s body. Bede used this same imagery to argue for both Æthelberga’s and Æthelthryth’s virginity, and by linking the two sisters in virginity he reinforces the familial ties to Anna. Just as the heavenly light that bore Earcongota’s soul to Heaven was proof to Bede of her holiness, so the incorrupt state of Æthelberga’s and Æthelthryth’s bodies proved their holiness. Goscelin would also use this as proof of Æthelthryth’s virginity, but, as will be seen, in a way that suggested a commitment to God that was uniquely English.

Since Æthelberga was not directly associated with Ely, Goscelin did not write a hagiography for her, although he described her relationship as sister and aunt to the other Ely saints and made a statement about her becoming abbess of the monastery in Brie. This description is worth examining. He wrote: “Their third sister, named Æthelberga, about to fight for the Lord Jesus Christ, boarded a ship, passing over the watery waves and, traveling the pilgrim’s road to the monastery in Brie, held the post of abbess.”

The word *militatura*, very close to *miles*, was not a usual way to describe a female saint at this time. It brings to mind *milites Christi*, a term used in 1074 by Pope Gregory VII when calling for knights to go to battle against the Seljuk Turks in Byzantium. Goscelin

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Goscelin, *Vita Sancte Wihtburga*, Trinity Cambridge ms O.2.I f. 237, “Veteres narrant hystorie nostre gentis Angligene...sancta Sexburge sancta Æthelberga sancta Æthelthretha et sancta Withburga Anne regis fuerunt filie...,” and f. 218 “Tercia earum germana nomine Æthelberga Domino Jesu Christo militatura nauem ascendit, equoreas undas pertransit iterque peregrinationis arripiens, in Brigensi monasterio abbatisse functa officio.” Note, these passages also appear in *The Hagiographies of the Female Saints of Ely* pages 84 and 142 respectively. The monastery referred to is in the town of Faremoûtier-en-Brie.
wrote this only fourteen years later, so it would have been fresh in the minds of his audience. By choosing this word to describe Æthelburga’s activity, Goscelin was able to create an image of a female knight crossing the sea, going east to wage war for Christ against sin. Goscelin used this device of describing a female saint in masculine terms in his descriptions of St. Sexburge. By doing this, he was able to subtly juxtapose the Norman crossing to England with Æthelburga crossing to Normandy.

Anna’s eldest daughter, Sexburge, was married to King Earconbert of Kent. According to Bede, upon the king’s death Sexburge went directly into a monastery. Goscelin differs, reporting that when Earconbert died, she ruled Kent until her son Egbert was old enough to become king. At that point she became a nun, taking the veil at the monastery at Milton. She then founded the monastery at Minster-in-Sheppey and eventually joined her sister Æthelthryth at her monastery in Ely. Sexburge’s daughter Eormenhild took the veil at Minster-in-Sheppey, where she would eventually become abbess. 

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138 Goscelin does not differ from Bede in the Lectiones in Festivitate Sancte Sexburge, but does so in Vita Beate Sexburge Regine. The reason for this is unclear, however one explanation may be the audience for which each was written, with the Lectiones being read to the public as part of religious services and the Vita being intended more for the monastic community. However, since hagiographies were also written to advocate the excellence of a monastery’s saint (or saints), as well as to assert its claims to property or emancipation from episcopal jurisdiction, the Vita was likely read outside Ely as well. The authorship of the vita has been the subject of some debate, as Rosalind Love describes in Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (lxxxiv-lxxxvi), but after examining the manuscripts and conferring with Dr. Love, I am confident that the author of the vita found in the LE is Goscelin. This is based in part on analysis of the handwriting and language in Historia Eliensis (MSS 393) and Goscelin’s works on St. Augustine found in MSS 312 of the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University.

139 Love, Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, pp xiv-xv.
her mother at Ely, becoming the third abbess after Sexburge’s death. Her daughter, Wærburga, became abbess after her.

Æthelthryth was Anna’s second born, and Bede devotes a good deal of Historia Ecclesiastica to her. According to Bede, she was married twice, first to Tondbert, king of South Gwyre, then to Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria. According to Bede, she remained a virgin despite being married twice:

Now King Ecgfrith received as his wife Æthelthryth, the daughter of Anna, king of the East Angles, of whom we have frequently made mention, a very devout man, excellent in thought and deed. And before him the man who had her as his wife was the prince of South Gwyre, who went by the name of Tondbert. But a short time after taking her as his wife he died and the aforesaid [Æthelthryth] was given to the king: she was his consort for twelve years yet remained perpetually a virgin, pure and glorious.”

She eventually convinced Ecgfrith to let her become a nun, taking the veil at Coldingham and then moving to Ely to found a double monastery.

Bede begins his account of Æthelthryth by relating that she had remained a virgin through her two marriages. He adamantly defends the veracity of her perpetual virginity, saying “there is no reason to distrust this could also happen, because dependable histories

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140 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, IV:19. “Accepit autem rex Ecgfrid coniugem nomine Aedilthrydam, filiam Anna regis Orientalum Anglorum, cuius sepius mentionem fecimus, uiri bene religiosoi, ac per omnia mente et opere egregii; quam et alter ante illum vir habuerat uxorem, princeps uidelicet Australiaum Guruiorum uocabulo Tondberct. Sed illo post modicum temporis, ex quo eam accepit, defuncto, data est regi praefato: Cuius consortio cum XII annis uteretur, perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa.”

141 Ibid, IV:19.
have recorded it happened sometime in past ages.”

He does not, however, go on to describe incidents in the past of couples living in celibacy. For Bede, the only proof needed of her perpetual virginity was the incorrupt state of her corpse, as he relates “For the miraculous preservation of this woman’s flesh, being buried, could not be corrupted, is an indication that she had not been defiled by contact with men.” Æthelthryth’s virginity was important to Bede. It established her sanctity, since Bede saw the physical body as a reflection of the soul. He presents Æthelthryth as being beloved by God because she was so exceptionally holy, and it was this innate holiness that helped her maintain her virginity.

Goscelin presents Æthelthryth’s virginity in a slightly different way:

The famous offspring of King Anna, inflamed with the fire of divine fervor from the earliest beginning of her childhood, and betrothed with the ring of her heavenly bridegroom...therefore God the King, son of God the Father, desiring her beauty, brought her into his ineffable bedchamber...

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142 Ibid, IV:17. “Nec diffidendum est nostra etiam aetate fieri potuisse, quod aevo praecedente aliquoties factum fideles historiae narrant...”

143 Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, IV:19, “Nam etiam signum diuini miraculi quo eiusdem feminae sepulta caro corrumpi non potuit, indicis est, quia uiril contactu incorrupta durauerit.”

144 CCCC, f. 11v - 12r, “Hanc inclita regis Anne proles prefata ab ipsis infante rudimentis igne diuini fuoritis succensa, atque sponsi celestis anulo subbarrata,...ideoque rex Deus Dei patris filius eius speciem concupiscens eam in suum ineffabilem thalamum introduxit...” Note Goscelin used the word concupiscens, which has a decidedly physical connotation. Thus Æthelthryth was not just spiritually betrothed, but physically as well.
According to him, Æthelthryth was desired by Christ from childhood and He preserved her virginity. Since she had been chosen by God when she was a child and His desire for her protected her virginity, it was through God that she derived her holiness. Although both Bede and Goscelin connect her virginity to her holiness, it is the nature of that holiness that is different. According to Bede, she was holy, therefore she maintained her virginity; per Goscelin, Christ wanted her for his bride, therefore she was holy and maintained her virginity.

Unlike Bede, Goscelin does not defend Æthelthryth’s virginity, nor does he compare her marriages to any from the past; he simply relates how wondrous it was.\(^{145}\) However, it is worth noting that the compiler of the Liber Eliensis does compare Æthelthryth and her husbands - especially Tondbert - to Mary and Joseph and also relates the story of Eucharistus and his wife from the Collationes Patrum.\(^{146}\) This monk used the concept of a chaste marriage, and the attendant assumption that it indicated the spouses were dearer to God, to reinforce Æthelthryth’s innate holiness.

\(^{145}\) A more thorough description of Goscelin’s description of Æthelthryth’s virginity is found later in this chapter.

\(^{146}\) LE, I.5, p 16. The Collationes Patrum in Scetica Eremo was written by Johannes Cassianus (ca 360-435) who was an Egyptian monk. The Collationes Patrum is a book on the conversations of the Desert Fathers (Matthew Bunson, The Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire, Revised Edition, NY: Facts on File, Incl, 2002, 1994, pp. 98-99). In the story related in Liber Eliensis, two of the Desert Fathers ask God how far they have advanced spiritually. God sends them to a village in Egypt where a man named Eucharistus lives with his wife Mary, saying the Fathers were not as virtuous as they. When the Fathers insist that Eucharistus tell them about how he lives his life, he explains that he and his wife gave to the poor, fed travelers, and most importantly, although they were married they were both virgins. Dyan Eliot, Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 73.
Although he does not discuss Tondbert in great detail, Bede does describe the difficulties Æthelthryth faced with her second husband, Ecgfrith. This was likely due to the fact that, as King of Northumbria, he was a much more important man than Tondbert. According to Bede, Ecgfrith begged Æthelthryth’s trusted spiritual advisor, Bishop Wilfred, to convince her to consummate their marriage after twelve years of celibacy. He was offered land and wealth by Ecgfrith if he could convince Æthelthryth to go to the marriage bed:

...[Ecgfrith,] with whom she lived for twelve years yet maintained the glory of her perpetual virginity. I inquired into this matter when it came into doubt and was informed by Bishop Wilfrid, of blessed memory, that this was true and he was a witness to her virginity. Ecgfrith promised him a great amount of lands and wealth if he would persuade the queen to consummate their marriage, for there was no man she esteemed more.147

Because she was intent upon remaining a virgin in order to be the bride of Christ, she continually begged Ecgfrith to allow her to enter a convent. He eventually relented, and allowed her to enter the convent at Codingham where his aunt, Ebba, was abbess. A year later she left to found Ely.

147Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, IV:19, “...[Ecgfrith,] cuius consortio cum XII annis uteretur, perpetua tamen mansituirginitatis integritate gloriosa; sicut mihimet sciscitanti, cum hoc, an ista esset, quibusdam uenisset in dubium, beatae memoriae uilfrid episcopus referebat, dicens se testem integritatis eius esse certissimum; adeo ut Ecgfridus promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginae posset persuadere eius uti conubio, quia sciebat illam nullum uiorum plus illo diligere.”
Anna was slain in battle fighting against the pagan king of Mercia, Penda, in 654. He was succeeded by his brother Ethelhere. The East Anglian dynasty included many kings, including Anna, who died defending Christianity from pagan encroachment, according to Bede. By tying the Ely saints to a king who was not only seen as a good king and administrator, but also a martyr, Goscelin could emphasize the saints’ ability to rule well, which is especially seen in his works on Sexburge, as well as reinforce their innate holiness. The fact that Bede was the source of this information virtually eliminated any question as to the legitimacy of the English Church and the holiness of its saints.

The Normans initially took a dim view of Anglo-Saxon saints. Some of the Norman bishops and archbishops at first considered these saints to be pagan gods and goddesses that had adopted Christian names and characteristics. Some of the Norman clergy took this interpretation and used it to ridicule English saints or their cults in order to assert their superiority. Goscelin seems to have understood this form of psychological manipulation. He used his hagiographies, especially those of female

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148 ASC, pp 50-51.

149 See Lyon, Th English Church, p. 83 for a discussion of LanFranc’s initial attitude toward Anglo-Saxon saints. It should be noted, LanFranc did not maintain this idea about Anglo-Saxon saints, and became a supporter of many of them. For more on Norman psychological manipulation, see Ridyard, The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England, p. 7.
saints, as a way to fight back. By presenting these women as simultaneously holy and strong, almost virile, he engaged in the same sort of psychological warfare.

The Normans were unaccustomed to, and uncomfortable with, strong female saints. Goscelin created an image of England’s female saints that left no doubt that they were not only Christian, but stronger and more noble than the Normans, and he did this by writing his hagiographies in a way that was easily accessible to the Norman clergy and nobility. Goscelin’s ability to link the royal saints of Ely to Anna through Bede gave his hagiographies of these women undeniable authority. He tied their holiness, their temporal power and ability to rule, and their royal pedigree to a great king through a great historiographer. Their legitimacy could not be contested on the grounds that they were women since they were tied to powerful men, nor could their social status be denied since they were of royal birth. Their own holiness was also beyond question, they were part of a family whose holiness and devoutness was firmly established.

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ST. SEXBURGE

And if men might also imitate her virtues so that 
they might render to God with their own free will 
and with all their strength what this woman is said 
to have rendered to her Creator contrary to the 
softness and weakness of her nature. ¹⁵¹

One of Goscelin’s greatest concerns appears to have been the proper behavior of 
a king. This was especially important to Ely, since the crown had exerted stringent 
measures to keep Ely and the surrounding areas under control. There was also the 
problem of Norman nobles who appropriated property belonging to Ely. ¹⁵² This 
behavior was more than unbecoming. It was onerous to the English people, and so could 
potentially lead to renewed rebellion, which in turn would only add to the suffering 
endured by the English people. In order to curb such behavior, Goscelin needed to 
appeal to the king and nobility to act in a manner worthy of their status. He turned to St. 
Sexburge to illustrate the qualities a good ruler possessed, underscoring what he saw as a 
lack in William I through her example.

He wrote two hagiographic works about Sexburge: Lectiones in Festivitate Sancte 
Sexburge and the Vita Beate Sexburge Regine. The Lectiones, or lessons about a saint,

¹⁵¹Goscelin, Love, ed. P. 178. “Atque Virtutes utinam eius etiam uiri imitarentur, ut Deo sponte cum uiribus 
suis redderent quod mulier ista contra mollitem fragilitatis sue suo reddidisse predicatur auctori.”

¹⁵²Fleming, Kings and Lords in Conquest England, pp. 186-187, 192. It should be noted that, although 
Ely’s property had been taken by William, the king did work to protect the holdings of the English Church 
after all the rebellions had been put down and all of England was securely under his command.
are shorter works about a saint. *Lectiones*, along with miracle stories (*miraculae*), were meant to be read in church on the anniversary of the saint’s death, while *vitae* tend to be longer. The audience for *vitae* were usually the monks at the saint’s monastery, other members of the clergy - both regular and secular - as well as literate laity, although sections from *vitae* could also be included in liturgy. The audience extended beyond the monastery to include the nobility, who either read hagiographies themselves or had them read to them.\(^{153}\)

Sexburge embodied Goscelin’s vision of a good Christian ruler. In creating a useful image of her, he intentionally masculinized her for the Norman audience. The power held by Anglo-Saxon queens and noblewomen would not have seemed manly to the English, but the Normans were not accustomed to this.\(^{154}\) In order to get their attention, he turned the familiar gender roles upside-down. He created a queen who was, in fact, a king.

Goscelin was able to create a masculine image of Sexburge by focusing on those traits that were necessary for a ruler but gender-neutral: her willingness to put the needs of the many before her own, her dedication to character over status, her disdain for worldly treasure and desire for spiritual wealth, and her ability to be stern but never

\(^{153}\)See Leyser, “The German Aristocracy.”

\(^{154}\)In chapter five I show Goscelin did the opposite with St. Edith because he wanted to de-emphasize her more independent nature.
cruel. He then presented those traits using imagery that was masculine, and by omitting any reference to her husband when recounting her interactions with others. His problems with the perceived greed of William and the nobility are made clear in his description of her treatment of her people. He presents an image of a ruler who showed the rich and powerful no extraordinary favor. Those who did receive special consideration from her were the poor and sick.

In his works concerning Sexburge, the first trait of hers Goscelin mentions is the strength of character she shows by being able to use the power inherent in her position as queen and abbess wisely. He makes a point of emphasizing that this power does not define her, nor does she use it for her own glorification. According to Goscelin, she viewed temporal power as a responsibility. Goscelin created an image of a ruler who viewed her temporal power not as a God-given right or as evidence of her innate superiority, but as a tool by which she could do God’s will. Her ability to not only use her position to help others, but to eagerly put it aside was a hallmark of a good ruler to Goscelin. From his perspective, a ruler received power from God in order to do good works, lead by example, and protect the poor and weak; thus, a ruler’s focus had to be on the greater good and the expectation of heavenly, rather than temporal, reward. Because of this, his hagiographies of Sexburge emphasize the fact that she could not be seduced by wealth. He begins his Lectiones in Festivitate Sancte Sexburge by noting that,
[s]he was more glorious because of her temporal rank, not, however, because she had it, but because not only did she conquer forcefully while she had it, she also, having been able to use it powerfully, put it aside with even greater force. As a true mistress she mastered wealth, and could not be held by that which she held.155

According to Goscelin, a true ruler took no pride in being of royal birth but, rather, understood the responsibility that such a position held. Wealth, like power, was merely a tool that could be mastered, as this woman so clearly did. Implicit in this statement is the suggestion that a good king would also eagerly cast power and wealth aside in favor of service to God.

Goscelin’s emphasis on Sexburge’s lack of interest in one of the most obvious expressions of power, wealth, deserves more attention. She was not only indifferent to it, she was its master and so was not influenced by it. Goscelin’s statement that she could not be held by what she held suggests that he saw avarice in the new lords of England and was displeased. This is a warning that love of wealth was a serious flaw not only because it diverted one’s attention away from spiritual abundance, but because a king driven by a desire to accumulate financial wealth was more easily influenced by those with money and diverted his interest from the good of the realm.

155 CCC, ff 69r-69v “Ex temporali dignitate gloriosior existit, non quidem propterea quia habuit, sed quia vel habendo fortiter vicit, vel habita tanto fortius abiecit, quanto potentius eius uti licuit. Ut Vera imperatrix diuitiis imperabat, nec his quas tenebat teneri puterat.” Although Goscelin does not mention here what it is that Sexburge conquered, it is made clear later that she used her power to help convert the people of Kent to Christianity as well reign as queen regent until her son was old enough to become king. Although she would later cast aside worldly power when she became a nun, she would eventually wield power of a different nature as abbess.
Humility in a ruler was equally important to Goscelin, as was piety. He notes that Sexburge was “[r]arely in public, frequently in church after the affairs of the realm [were done], she seemed not so much a married woman as a female monk.” Implicit in this is an admonition to focus less on public displays of power and wealth and more on the well-being of the realm and on devotion to God. His frequent reference to the need for a king to be mindful of his duty, pious, and somber make it apparent he did not find these traits in William or the Norman nobility.

Along with duty to the realm went a sense of compassion and concern for those who were suffering in any way. Goscelin’s idea of a Christian king included, indeed emphasized, the royal responsibility to protect the weak and help the sick and hungry. Through the example of Sexburge, he shows how far he believes a monarch should go to care for his subjects. Far from being distant and aloof, she is presented as the epitome of an involved ruler who takes an active role in the administration of the realm. It is not enough, according to Goscelin, for a king to protect the realm from outside threats. He must also protect it from internal threats such as the mistreatment of the poor and helpless. This means actively working to improve the lives of his subjects through charity, royal protection, and the encouragement of Christianity by living a model

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\[\text{CCC, f. 70}', \text{ "Rara in turba, frequens in ecclesia ut uideretur post regni negotia non tam marita quam monacha." The Latin } \text{monacha} \text{ has a rather more masculine connotation than monachia.}\]
Christian life and supporting the Church. Goscelin portrays Sexburge as being a shining example of a Christian life well-lived:

Ealdormen knew her as their mistress, the poor as a nurse, those visiting her as a leader, these as a mother, those revered her grandeur, those adored her humility...The palace she had made into a hospice, her chamber, as much as the law of marriage allowed, she had as an oratory. From one direction hosts of people and princes flocked to the court, from the other crowds of the poor and those afflicted with various troubles. Indeed, in these her sacred compassion was more beautiful to the eyes of the pious than the vain ambition in the splendid attire of the rich.157

Goscelin presents a very complex yet telling picture of Sexburge as queen in this passage from Lectiones in Festivitate Sancte Sexburge. People from every walk of life approach her, but depending on their status and need she is either a mistress, a leader, or a queen to whom the rich and powerful flocked to admire, or she was a nurse, a mother, or provider to the poor and sick who sought her help. The rich admired her rank and importance, but the pious admired her compassion which was more beautiful to them than the extravagant clothing of the rich. She was so concerned about her subjects that she used the royal residence as a hospital, taking in the poor, sick and hungry. Her

157 CCC, f. 70r. “Duces nouerant dominam, pauperes alumnam, illi principem, isti frequentabant matrem, illi venerabant maiestatem, isti colebant humilitatem...Palacium fecerat xenodochium, cubiculum, quantum ius maritale permittebat, habebat ut oratorium. Currebant ad aulum hinc caterue plebium et procerum, inde examina inopum et uaria clade afflictorum. In his uero speciosior erat piis oculis sancta miseratio, quam in splendido ornatu diuitum uana ambitio.” Concerning Goscelin’s description of Sexburge turning the palace into a hospice and the bedchamber into an oratory, Rosalind Love notes Goscelin may be referencing an earlier hagiography of St. Radigund (Goscelin, Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely, Love, ed., p. 5, n. 4). This reference, then, would have been familiar to the Normans and would have served to make the connection between an English and Frankish saint.
devotion to God was such that she had a small place for private prayers in her bedroom, although Goscelin hints that her devotion did not mean she neglected her marital responsibilities.

There is no doubt her sense of duty, charity, concern, and piety were qualities Goscelin admired and wished to see in his own time, and even when describing her as queen he emphasizes she is a leader, not a vain monarch. Rather, he points out that the rich and powerful came to her for advice and counsel. What is obviously most important to Goscelin, however, is the duty of a monarch to take care of those in his charge. He makes this very clear in Sexburge’s concern for the poor and suffering, which is echoed in his *Vita Beate Sexburge Regine* where he writes,

> But the holy queen, intent upon alleviating the hardships of diverse people, established the palace as a refuge for the unfortunate. Those who were consumed by sickness and starvation she had gathered from the street and tended to. Greed did not find in her that which it could shake, pride that which it could swell, ambition which it could seduce.\(^{158}\)

Again he emphasizes her great concern for those of her subjects who were suffering, and her willingness to make her home a refuge for the sick and hungry. He also reiterates her lack of greed, her humility, and her disinterest in worldly power - she was unshakeable and incapable of being seduced.

Although Goscelin goes to great lengths to remind the reader that she was compassionate, devout, and humble, this is not an indication that she did not know how to wield her earthly power when necessary. In fact, it is quite clear that she was not only able, but willing to use her authority to ensure both the spiritual and physical safety of those in her charge. Goscelin’s account of her leaves no doubt that, as both queen and abbess, she did not hesitate to use her power to direct and correct behavior when necessary. She knew when it was necessary to use it, and according to Goscelin, it was never more necessary than when dealing with injustice:

she thunderously issued the avenging sentence of imperial majesty terrifying to the proud under judgement. With the utmost care and diligence possible everything was seen to and prepared so that the administration of the whole realm had in her both sufficient protection and, as reason dictated, was accommodating to those of all ages.\textsuperscript{159}

The term thunderously should be interpreted as formidably, with her anger kept in check; likewise, “proud under judgement” applies to her being particularly stern with the nobility who appeared before her for censure. Goscelin’s portrayal of her makes it easy to assume that her extreme concern for the powerless in her realm would lead her to deal harshly with those abused their power. If she was so stern a judge while she was alive, it stands to reason she would be at least as stern from heaven. It is also a reminder that

\textsuperscript{159}Goscelin, Love, ed., p. 146. “...imperialis uindicem sententiam maiestatis superbis in iudicio formidabilem intonaret. Cum summa utique cura atque diligentia omnia prouisa erant et parata, adeo ut tota res publica en ea haberet et satis presidii et, prout dictabat ratio...”
pride is a sin, and regardless of temporal rank, must be cut down. In this case, commoner and noble alike are subject to her reprimand if they let pride get the better of them.

This passage emphasizes Goscelin’s concern that a ruler attend to the administration of the realm with diligence and care, and that personal circumstances be taken into consideration when meting out justice. It also reflects the qualities Goscelin considered necessary for a good king. Sexburge is shown as being concerned for all the subjects in her realm, treating commoners as equals to the high-born, and extending protection to all. She used reason rather than emotion when dealing with her subjects, thus earning their respect and admiration. Nowhere, however, in his descriptions of Sexburge as queen does Goscelin mention her husband, Earconberht. She provides for the sick, hungry, and poor, by herself. On her own authority the palace is turned into a shelter for those in need. Rich and poor alike flocked to the palace to see her. She was advisor and leader to the powerful as well as protector of the weak. Especially noteworthy is that, when relating the way she sat in judgement, Goscelin presents her as doing so alone. She is presented as a female king. In fact, she is an exemplary king.

One of the important roles of a king, according to Goscelin, was the support and protection of the Church and the promotion of Christianity in his realm. Sexburge also filled this role, although she did so after she was married. Goscelin begins his *Lectiones in Festivitate Sancte Sexburge* by calling her the “[p]rogeny of kings, parent of kings,
indeed bearer of saints...”

According to this, she would have preferred to have become a nun and never married. That she did marry, and produce children, was a matter he had to address carefully since she needed to be seen as no less holy because she was not a virgin. His description of her decision to marry, and of the men who courted her, shows her ever-present sense of duty, presents her as having a sacred destiny, and indicates that her betrothal was in fact a Divine decree:

[S]he preferred the monastery to the palace, the church to marriage... but she was not able to resist the authority of her parents, and the counsel of powerful friends, and especially the divine providence that foresaw in her a chosen race, and the support of many. Kings, dukes, and princes, native born as well as foreign, courted her for marriage, but only to Earconberht, king of Kent, son of Eadbald who was son of Æthelberht, greatest and first of the Christian kings of England, was the palm given by Divine will, because none was seen [who was] of higher power and of elegance.

Because she was a princess, she was expected to marry, and that marriage would be a political one. However, in Sexburge’s case God stepped in, allowing her to marry only a man chosen by Him. Earconberht’s lineage back to the first Christian king of England is

160 CCC, f. 69r. Regum proles et regu parens, immo sanctorum genitrix...

161 CCC, f. 69r. “...mallet monasterium quam palatium, ecclesiam quam matrimonium...sed reniti non poterat auctoritati parentum, et consiliis potentum amicorum, maxime autem diuine dispositioni que in ea preuidit genus electum, et subsidia multorum.”

162 CCC, f. 69r. “Reges duces principes tam indigene quam externi ambiebant eius conubia, sed soli Eorconberto regi Cantuare, filio Eadbaldi filii Æthelbrihti summni ac primi ex Anglis regibus christiani, diuino nutu cessit hec palma, quia nullus dignior usus est in potentatu et rerum eligentia.”
important to Goscelin. It is the one thing that makes him a suitable match for a princess of such holy heritage.

By describing Sexburge as the mother of a “chosen race” as well as the “support of many,” Goscelin is in fact comparing her to both the matriarch Sarah, through whom the nation of Israel was born, and to the Virgin Mary, through whom mankind received its salvation. Thus, by God’s will, she is simultaneously mother to a chosen people and, by comparing her to the Virgin, remains virginal. In his Vita of Sexburge, Goscelin makes this point even clearer. He writes,

And because there was in her an arrangement of both of the Lord’s commands, by which the harmony of the two Testaments is formed, she gave birth by her husband to two children of both sexes, whose birth was favorable to both God and men.\(^{163}\)

Presenting her as the mother of a chosen race also creates a connection between the English and the people of Israel - God’s chosen people. In fact, the result of this union was three saints - their daughters Earcongota and Eormenhild, and Eormenhild’s daughter, Wærburga, a point which Goscelin does not neglect to remind the reader.\(^{164}\)

While she was in a position of power in the secular world, as queen and later as queen regent, she used her position to aid the Church. In this case, showing her in the

\(^{163}\)Goscelin, Love, ed., p. 144. “Et quia in se utroque Domini erat mandato instructa, quibus duum testamentorum consonantia informatur, in utroque eexu bina uiro pignora peperit, quorum ortus tam Deo Quam hominibus effectus est gratiosus.”

\(^{164}\)CCCC, f. 69r
role of queen and wife does not adversely affect the overall image Goscelin has created. He uses her here as an inspiration to the audience, especially William, much as she was an inspiration to her husband. This reversion to a decidedly feminine role also helped relieve tension the audience likely felt at the image of such an independent woman. Also, by relieving pent up anxiety, Goscelin allowed his message to become internalized by the audience.

In acting as patron and protectress of the Church, Sexburge assumed a familiar role. According to Goscelin, she fostered the spread and increased the strength of Christianity in Kent through her husband:

This famous heroine intently inflamed the king, her husband to obedience to God...And so the king at her frequent encouragement first completely exterminated from his whole kingdom all the idols which had still lingered under previous kings, along with all paganism, and now not only spread the kingdom of Christ in his realm, but made it totally Christ’s. No less [significant], with his most zealous queen he multiplied the churches and enriched the monasteries.\(^{165}\)

Here, her role in fighting paganism is reminiscent of her father, Anna, who died defending the realm against pagan encroachment. Through her frequent urging, the king stamped out the last remnants of paganism in Kent. The implication is that, without her constant reminders, the king might not have been as thorough in this pursuit. Churches

\(^{165}\)CCC, 71": “Regam uero maritum insignis uirago attentius accendebat ad diuinum obsequium...Rex itaque crebro ipsius instinctu, primo omnia idola que sub prioribus regibus adhuc erant residua, ab uniuerso regno suo cum omni paganissimo funditus exterminauit, regnumque Christi apud se iam non tam dilatauit, quam totum Christi esse fecit. Nec minus cum intentissima regina multiplicauit ecclesias amplifauit monasteria."
and monasteries were increased and enriched by both. Implicit is the suggestion that, if
the king would accept Sexburge as partner and guiding influence, she would provide
heavenly assistance and protection.

According to Goscelin, Sexburge was singularly determined to ensure the realm
was truly Christian. He reiterates their heritage, in part to emphasize that the inherent
piety in both Sexburge and Earconberht was the impetus for their zealous conversion of
Kent. He also was reminding the audience yet again of England’s tradition of piety by
recalling the holy dynasty associated with Anna. His point was that, because Sexburge
and her husband were so closely tied to Rome through their bloodlines, Kent would be
truly Christian in every sense of the word. Although they supported the Church, Goscelin
never suggests Sexburge and Earconberht felt they controlled it. Their role was to
protect its rights, ensure its prosperity, and encourage Christianity through example. By
placing them in the role of protectors of the Church, Goscelin is subtly admonishing
those who not only did not defend the Church (including the monasteries), but who
actively decreased its wealth.

The relationship between the crown and the Church was one of the most
important issues to Goscelin in two ways. As a monk, he was very aware of the impact
William I’s actions had on England’s monasteries financially. His peripatetic life in
England allowed him to see first-hand the way the king’s policies and military actions
had affected them. He also witnessed the impact the reforms made by William’s clergy had on the institution of the English Church. More specific to his commission, he had to convince the king that by protecting Ely he was, in fact, upholding a royal obligation. He did this by describing the way Sexburge cared for the Church as a relationship between God and ruler that ensured the well-being of the realm. According to Goscelin, there is peace in the land when rulers serve as the Church’s protectors and benefactors. He makes this very clear in his description of the relationship between Earconberht and Sexburge and the Church:

There was agreement between the sovereigns themselves and the priesthood, and by this harmony the world is splendidly ruled and the Church of God is accustomed to flourish and bear fruit. A minister of commendable holiness and exceptional merit, Bishop Honorius, and his successor St. Deusdedit, also an excellent bishop, each made a an immortal covenant with the blessed queen in his own time. By their sacred teachings and exhortions, that which was Caesar’s, to Caesar she rendered, and what was God’s was given to God.\textsuperscript{166}

Goscelin has again presented Sexburge as masculine. He does not say the king and queen, \textit{rex et regina}, but rather presents both Sexburge and Earconberht as the sovereigns, \textit{regnum}. This most certainly would have gotten the audience’s attention.

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This passage contains several warnings and lessons from Goscelin. Not surprisingly, the first lesson concerns the relationship between kings and the Church. Goscelin is reminding his audience that in England’s past, rulers knew how to treat the Church and each other and so there was harmony throughout the land. When Goscelin wrote this, King William’s relationship with the Church in England, particularly the monasteries, was very rocky and England was far from peaceful. The people were not happy, land was being taken from English nobility and given to Normans, and ecclesiastic positions were filled by Normans loyal to William. Goscelin emphasizes the fact that when Sexburge was ruling, the crown and Church were in an amicable and mutually beneficial relationship, and the rulers worked to ensure the people and the Church prospered. Goscelin is obviously making the point that a king is responsible for the welfare of his people and the Church and that their needs must come first.

Another point Goscelin makes in the above passage is that Sexburge was well respected by two holy men and had entered into an “immortal covenant” with them. There is no explicit indication as to the nature of this covenant, but the implication is that she will continue to nurture and protect the Church. This explains the Biblical reference that follows.¹⁶⁷ She was diligent about taking care of both the secular, rendering unto Caesar what was his, and the divine, rendering to God what was His. He made it clear that

that Sexburge gave God his due by physically and fiscally supporting the Church, not
taking from it in order to run the kingdom - a clear reference to William’s treatment of
Ely.

It is also another instance of Sexburge assuming the role of king. The pact was
made with her alone. It was she who rendered to Caesar what was his and to God what
was His. This underscored her authority and implied that this woman was a better king
than William. Her covenant with the Honorius and Deusdedit, being immortal, meant
she would watch over England, and especially Ely, for eternity. This was, then,
Goscelin’s reminder to William II that, as King of England, he was subject to the scrutiny
of this Anglo-Saxon queen.

Goscelin took seriously the royal responsibility to not only protect and support the
Church, but to keep his subjects from physical and spiritual harm. Although kingship
was no longer tied to sanctity as it had been in the Anglo-Saxon period, the spiritual well-
being of a people was connected to their king’s. William was known to have a quick,
fierce temper, and he had shown a keen interest in the wealth of England’s monasteries.
Goscelin appears to have judged the king as being more concerned with his own power
and wealth, and with satisfying his own desires, than he was with the welfare of the
English people. The implications of this behavior would have been troublesome to
Goscelin; a king who let his anger rule him and whose focus was on earthly riches rather
than heavenly rewards was not only endangering his own soul but those of the people he ruled. It makes sense that, as a monk, he felt obliged to point out a king’s obligation to live an exemplary life to William II. Goscelin surely hoped the son would not follow his father’s example of kingship, and so provided a model of proper royal behavior.

Goscelin identified particular traits as necessary for a good Christian king to possess; including modesty, chastity, faith, integrity, and sanity. A king needed to be obedient to God’s will, able to overcome lust, and willing to put the welfare of his people first. His description of Sexburge’s reign makes this very clear:

By her perseverance shame does battle and petulance is overcome, chastity wins the victory, unchaste desires are cut back, faith grows strong, the deceit of treachery is weakened, devotion ripens, sin is destroyed, invincible constancy perseveres, it weakens the fury of madness, integrity reigns, the baseness is cast aside, continence is approved, lust is condemned, injustice yields to justice, temperance restricts the flood of extravagance, cowardice is paralyzed, courage is strengthened, prudence rules rashness is exterminated, humility brings obedience, pride is trampled down and the sound mind suppresses madness, good hope wearies despair, need runs away and an abundance of all good things flows. With princes distinguished by such a blessed beginning to their reign, the people of the land rejoiced in being kept from harm by public protection and private diligence.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Goscelin of St. Bertin, Love, ed. pp. 146, 148, Instantia eius pugnat pudor et petulantia superatur, pudicitia uictrix insultat, impudicitiae uota reciduntur; fides uiget, fraudis dolositas enueratur; pietas maturescit, destruitur scelus, consantia invincibilis perseverat, uesania furoris effeminatur, honestas regnat, turpitudo deicitur, continentia approbatu, dampnatur libido; equitati cedit iniquitas temperantia luxurie fluxa restringit, torpescit ignauia, fortitudo roboratur; prudentia imperat, temperitas exterminatur; humilitas obedit, concuculcatur superbia; sana mens amentiam deprimit, desperationem spes bona fatigat, fugit egastas, bonorum omnium copia redundat. Designatis autem tam felici auspicio in regno principibus, res populi publico se presidio et diligentia gaudebat priuata defendi.
Goscelin does not say “with such a king and queen;” rather, he refers to Earconberht and Sexburge as princes, reinforcing the notion that Sexburge acted as a king.

Goscelin reestablishes Sexburge here as a model king and William I as a king in need of a role-model. In the above passage, he spells out the weaknesses he found in William and the Norman nobility in the list of all the vices Sexburge fought. At the same time, by describing her excellent behavior, Goscelin is providing a way to temper these weaknesses and turn them into virtues. In this way, anger, lust, deceit, treachery, insanity, baseness, injustice, extravagance, rashness, impiety, and pride are portrayed not as unforgivable sins and vices but as behaviors that could be modified. Goscelin’s message here is clear. If William II would follow the example of Sexburge rather than his father’s example, by persevering in humility, chastity, piety, continence, and temperance, if he would insist on justice and reason, then he would become a king upon whom God and the saints would smile.

The above passage also shows Goscelin’s perception that the new lords of England were driving the English people into despair and lack. He shows that Sexburge resolutely set about eliminating vice and sin from her realm, and as a result the people were happy. Not only did she protect them from external harm, through private diligence she ensured they led Christian lives. By extension, if the king followed her example, his subjects would consider him to be a good king.
Goscelin continued to emphasize Sexburge’s selflessness as a ruler. When Earconberht died, Sexburge was free to become a nun. However, according to Goscelin’s *Vita* of her, her son was too young to become king. So she, “from the days after her husband’s death, she manfully ruled the kingdom for a while, until the months of her son Egbert’s minority were transformed into the strength of manhood.” She sacrificed her own desires in order to make sure her subjects did not suffer. Her sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice her own desires and even needs to fulfill it, are repeatedly referred to by Goscelin. It is clearly something he felt needed to be understood by the current monarch, nobles, and ecclesiastic leaders. His description of her as manfully ruling the kingdom also underscores the way Goscelin emasculated William I by masculinizing Sexburge.

She eventually did become a nun, and established a convent of her own in Minster-in-Sheppey. According to Goscelin, Sexburge opened the doors of her new monastery to the poor while shunning any of the noble-born women who were simply looking for a way to escape marriage or who wanted to be Christ’s brides in name only.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{169}}\text{Goscelin, Love, ed., p. 148.} \text{...a diebus uiri sui quibus defunctus est aliquandiu regno uiriliter prefuit, donec impuberes Egberti filli sui menses in robur uirilis reformauit etatis.} \]
In this way, she is portrayed as almost Christ-like herself. Goscelin writes:

Nor did she choose those shining with the nobility of secular excellence, nor those who were born of royal stock or reared in luxury. Indeed she imitated the Lord’s example...she joined together in the practice of the works of God the daughters of those members of her household who were either leading an ordinary life with her or were engaged in the business of cultivating the land under her. Nor were those marked out by the light of distinguished family sought, but those adorned with good character, nor did she require nobility of birth, but of mind. She did not trust in those who were first in birth or wealth, but those who were suited by their virtues.\textsuperscript{170}

Goscelin again emphasizes her dedication to her subjects, pointing out this convent was intended to be a place for all women who desired to live a life dedicated to Christ. This was not a retreat for noble-born women, as were other monasteries such as Wilton Abbey, but a refuge for those of common birth. Goscelin’s image of the saint shows her to be singularly unimpressed with status and wealth, more concerned with spiritual, rather than temporal, excellence. This underscores his vision of a ruler who protects the poor and helpless. It also suggests a criticism of some of the wealthier monasteries and convents in England at this time, where monastic life did not focus on privation and dedication to prayer and contemplation. After the Conquest, many Anglo-

\textsuperscript{170}Goscelin, Love, ed. p. 160, “Nec secularis excellentie nobilitate splendentes, nec regali satas origine aut deliciis innutrita elegit. Imitata est profecto exemplum Domini...Dilias itaque domesticorum qui mediocrem uitam uel cum ea in curia transegerant, uel ruribus sub ea excolendis dediti erant negotio, operis Dei exercitio copulauit. Neque preclari generis lampade insignes, sed moribus adornatas investigabat, nec querebat obilitatem carnis, sed mentis. Nec primas natalibus aut diuitiis, sed quas uirtutibus congruere confidebat.”
Saxon widows fled to convents to avoid marriage to Normans and loss of their wealth. Goscelin, while sympathetic, would likely not have condoned this as a reason for entering a convent. It is not unreasonable that, although the intended audience for these hagiographies was the Norman ruling class, Goscelin would not include commentary about the practices of other monasteries.

The only women of noble birth who were allowed to join her were those women of her court who she knew were dedicated to living a simple life. Again, Goscelin drives home the idea that a ruler should be less concerned about his own wealth and status than that of his subjects. He felt virtue was more important to a ruler than worldly acclaim, and a king filled the role of father to the realm, so he emphasized that to Sexburge, virtue was more important than wealth or status, and she felt her role as mother to these women very keenly.

Part of Goscelin’s vision of royal obligation included the ability of the king to be a good administrator. He was responsible for the economic well-being of the realm as much as its physical and spiritual well-being. Here again Goscelin used Sexburge as a model. He describes the way she increased her convent’s wealth, adding property to ensure there were adequate food supplies and provisions for the nuns. When she decided to go to Ely to join her sister Æthelthryth, she made very sure they were well cared-for.

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171 Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 137 - 139.
and that the convent was free from any external obligations:

...the Glorious queen, added to the Church’s property, bought for a price from her own son Egbert. These were to provide food for the holy virgins and maid servants of God. These were confirmed by legates and a blessing from the blessed Pope Sergius in Rome, and were made stronger by the unending authority of the charters. Moreover, the Pope, under threat of excommunication from the body and blood of Christ, prohibited anyone, both in the present and the future, to take this away or make it subject to another’s control, without permission of the nuns.172

This passage is both an example and a warning. Just as Sexburge ensured the monastery’s well-being before leaving, so a king was responsible for ensuring the well-being of his realm before he went abroad. Since William I made frequent trips to Normandy, Goscelin’s intention is not too hard to deduce. At the same time, he is making it very clear that any attempts by anyone at any time to take property from her convent, or exert control over it, were subject to excommunication. She would protect it in life and in death, and the implication is that she would do the same for Ely.

Sexburge went to Ely and eventually became its abbess. According to Goscelin, she did not want to assume this post, but did so because she felt duty-bound to do so. Goscelin uses her as an exemplar of regal selflessness, and through her emphasized again his belief that royal status meant a life of service and self-sacrifice, not privilege

and self-indulgence. Just as Sexburge had to be sure the monks and nuns in her care lived according to the monastery’s rule, the king was responsible for keeping the realm under the rule of just law. He writes:

Then the blessed one realized she was laden with greater care, for she had also to keep watch against the delinquency of them all. Consequently, she endeavored to minister all things to everyone as well as to each individual, although she would have preferred to be at rest in Christ’s peace alone...\(^{173}\)

As abbess, she was very aware of her responsibility to keep those in her care safe from sin and to maintain discipline. Here again, Goscelin uses Sexburge to illustrate his vision of the way a king should treat his subjects, and the need for him to put his realm above his own comfort. He also reemphasizes the idea that a ruler should be stern but fair. He shows Sexburge as stern and unwilling to tolerate any act of vanity or lust, but she is not shown to be unduly harsh. Instead, she started with the gentlest approach possible to correct undesired behavior, only increasing the severity of the correction if the censured did not respond to earlier, milder attempts.

This reasonable approach to discipline was Goscelin’s attempt to provide a model for the king to respond to his subjects. He provides a further example when he relates

\(^{173}\)CCCC, 71’, Intellexit beata tunc se maiori oneratam diligentia, cum etiam pro omnium commissorum sibi uigilandum esset tutela. Omnibus ergo omnia et singulis satagebat ministrare singula, cunque mallet in Christi pace requiescere solitaria...”
the way she approached the irascible with kind words, the obdurate with punishment.

According to Goscelin, Sexburge,

She patiently approached the irascible and rebuked with kind words. She reconciled arguments and disputes with a gentle word. She stilled the young maidens’ wantonness with the frequent infliction of fastings. None of them uttered a willful or dishonest word...Any who persisted in wrong deeds she separated from the company of her sisters, and those who could not be corrected in private were dealt with by public shaming.¹⁷⁴

She was, then, a firm but just leader who encouraged the meek and disciplined the headstrong, but never went beyond what was necessary to maintain proper behavior.

She felt her duty so strongly that she put her own hopes and desires aside to honor it. According to Goscelin, she had hoped to join a convent before she was married but, since she was bound by duty to obey her parents, she married. As a wife, she would have preferred a chaste marriage but understood her duty to produce heirs. After she was widowed she did not go straight to a monastery, as she wished, but served as queen regent, administering the kingdom until her son was old enough to assume the role. After that, she created a convent specifically for poor women, offering them an opportunity they would not have had otherwise. When she finally went to Ely, she was elected abbess after Æthelthryth died. She accepted the post, even though she would have preferred to have worshiped in solitude.

Her faith, her strength of character, her sense of justice and duty, and her overriding concern for those in her care, are all reflections of Goscelin’s ideas about the qualities of a good ruler. He highlighted and expanded aspects of Sexburge’s legend that already existed in order to paint a portrait of the ideal ruler. She is both pious and concerned for the welfare of her people, implying that at least one king had forgotten that his primary duty was to his subjects and not his desires. By emphasizing Sexburge’s willingness to put others before herself and do what is right for them, Goscelin is challenging William’s behavior, criticizing him for failing his duty and responsibility to his people. To make this point very clear, Goscelin writes:

And if men might also imitate her virtues, so that they might render to God with their own free will and with all their strength what this woman is said to have rendered to her Creator contrary to the softness and weakness of her nature.175

Just as Sexburge publicly shamed those who persisted in wrong behavior, Goscelin is publicly shaming William by showing that an Anglo-Saxon queen was a stronger ruler and better Christian than he.

ST. EORMENHILD

Sexburge had two daughters: Eormenhild and Earcongota. The younger, Earcongota, became a nun at a monastery on the Continent, where she was made a saint

175Goscelin, Love, ed. P. 178. “Atque Virtutes utinam eius etiam uiri imitarentur, ut Deo sponte cum uiribus sui redderent quod mulier ista contra mollitem fragilitatis sue reddidisse predicatur auctori.”
after her death. The elder, Eormenhild, remained in England, eventually becoming abbess of Ely. Eormenhild is held up by Goscelin as another example of an excellent Christian ruler; but, where Sexburge shows how important it is for a ruler to exercise self-control and be willing to put the needs of others first, Eormenhild emphasizes the need for a ruler to exhibit compassion. Goscelin also employs her memory to emphasize the long heritage of Roman Christianity in England, since she was the granddaughter of King Anna and the great-granddaughter of King Æthelberht. In this relatively short work Goscelin leaves no doubt that he viewed compassion as being just as important a quality in a good leader as self-sacrifice and a sense of duty. Through Eormenhilde he also reminds the audience that England had a long history of good, Christian kings.

Goscelin begins the *Lectiones in Natale Sancte Eormenhilde* by describing the commonalities between Eormenhilde and her mother, Sexburge. Eormenhild, like her mother, would have preferred to become a nun rather than marry. Goscelin describes this desire in a masculine way, writing “Already her eager mind meditated upon training to become a knight for Christ and upon the budding of heavenly virginal purity.”

It was important for Goscelin to establish the similarities between Sexburge and Eormenhild since he was creating an image of her that completed his portrait of a good leader.

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176 CCC, f. 72r. “Iam mente anhela meditabatur Christi tyrocinia et paradysiaca uirginalis puditie germina,...” Note: the word *tyrocinia* is from the verb *tirocinare*: to be in training as a knight. The connotation is decidedly masculine, and brings to mind Goscelin’s description of Eormenhild’s aunt Æthelburga, who he described as *militatura Christi*. **137**
ruler. According to Goscelin, Eormenhild bowed to her parents’ wishes and married Wulfhere, who was king of Mercia.\footnote{There is no mention of Eormenhild in \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica} or in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle}; Rosalind Love suggests this information may have come from the \textit{Kentish Royal Legend}. For more, see \textit{The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely}, Love, ed. p. 12, n. 5.} She had only one child, Wærburh, who entered a convent at an early age, and eventually also became an abbess at Ely. As with Sexburge, Goscelin explains the reason for Eormenhild’s marriage as divine intervention on behalf of England. He writes,

\begin{quote}
Divine providence was preparing for itself a most pleasing bride out of her, and at the same time the relief for many, so that by her long burning sighs, she might be offered up in the end as a more fragrant sacrifice to God.\footnote{CCC\textsc{c}, f. 72r. \textit{\textquoteright}Ipsa diuina prouidentia parabat sibi sponsam gratissimam ab illa et multorum remedia simul etiam ut per diu dilata suspiria flagrantior Deo tandem ipsa impenderetur hostia.\textquoteright} Goscelin makes God’s purpose for Eormenhild clearer in his \textit{Vita Sancte Werburge}. He writes that, because God is kind, he sent her to Mercia to be a mother to all in need, a refuge for all, and at the same time conceive a child who would be exceedingly pleasing to God (CCC\textsc{c}, f. 77r).
\end{quote}

According to Goscelin, God had similar plans for her as he had for her mother. These plans, as will be seen, included her wiping out all vestiges of paganism in Mercia, bringing another saint into the world, and serving as an inspiration for her husband.

Eormenhild’s marriage to the king of Mercia is especially significant, since the kingdom had only recently been converted to Christianity after Penda was killed in battle. Wulfhere replaced King Oswiu, who had killed Penda.\footnote{ASC vol I, pp. 52-53.} Goscelin’s description...
of her arrival in Mercia reinforces her Christian, as well as royal, lineage:

Glorious Eormenhild, approaching this place like the morning star coming to meet Arcturus, strove fervently to bring in the light of day and the westering sun, Christ, as the light drives back the shadows. The nature of Christianity there was still either in its infancy, or fresh and unformed, and the great and deep-rooted barbarity of heathendom long remained. But the handmaid of God, who had been instructed by her parents in the apostolic alphabet of their first teacher, Augustine, by her sweetness, her soothing encouragements, and her kind manners, softened untamed hearts, and excited them to take up Christ’s sweet yoke and the rewards of everlasting blessing, but the wicked she crushed by her powerful influence. Nor did the invincible friend of the Lord rest until all the idols and demonic rituals were rooted out and she had filled the kingdom with churches and priests, and made the people accustomed to holy houses of prayer, to divine services, to all works of religion.180

Eormenhild’s devotion to Christ and to the souls of her subjects is portrayed in a way that highlights her lineage. Goscelin connects her to two undeniably devout Christian kings and, through her father, to St. Augustine, who brought Christianity to England.

Earconberht was the grandson of Æthelberht, who was converted to Christianity by Augustine. Describing her as the morning star rushing to bring light to the people of Mercia is more than a device to show her innate does more than create an image of a

180 CCC, f. 72v. “Gloriosa autem Eormenhilda huc accedente uelut matutina stella Arcturo obuia, diem et solem in occidum Christum percussis tenebris ab exorta luce certabat obnixius inducere. Adeo tunc erat ibi uel incipiens uel recens ac rudis christianitatis indoles, ingens autem et inueterata restabat paganitatis barbaries. Dei autem lamula, spossolico protodocotoris sui Augustini alphabeto a parentibus informata sua dulcedine, suis blandifluis hortamentis ac moribus benefecis mucebat indomita pectora, et ad suae Christi iugum ac perpetue beatitudinis exitabat premia, perversos uero reprimebat potentia. Nec requieuit inuicta amice Domini instanta donec idola et ritus demonicos exstirparet, ecclesiis ac sacerdotibus regnum impleret, populum ad sacra oratoria, ad diuina officia, ad omnia pietatis opera assuefaceret.”
devout woman bringing the light of Christianity to the people of Mercia. He is making Eormenhild the embodiment of England’s Christian heritage. The light she brings to the Mercians is a reflection of the light Augustine brought to the English, and it was Augustine, Goscelin reminds the audience, that taught Christianity to Eormenhild’s great-grandfather. Like her mother, she worked tirelessly to destroy paganism in Mercia, and was kind and gentle to all, but merciless to the pagan religion. She is Goscelin’s reminder not only of England’s Christian roots, but of the strength of the English people’s devotion to God.

Eormenhild had a strong influence on her husband, who Goscelin describes as willingly yielding to her advice and wishes. According to Goscelin, Wulfhere eagerly accepted Christianity and encouraged his subjects to accept it. The implication behind Goscelin’s account of Wulfhere’s eagerness to become Christian is that, even though he had been a pagan, he was too good a person to remain so. Considering how holy Eormenhild was, it would have been impossible for her husband to not be Christian. Through her husband’s conversion, Goscelin not only ties Eormenhild back to her great-grandmother, Bertha, who encouraged Æthelberht to convert to Christianity when Augustine came to Kent, but also to other queens who encouraged their husbands to convert, such as Æthelburga, wife of King Edwin, and Clothilda, queen of the
Merovingian king Clovis I. Goscelin makes it clear that Wulfhere was devoted to Eormenhild, and that this devotion was in no small part due to her faith. According to Goscelin,

He marveled at her, he venerated her, and emulated the way she fixed her attention on heaven amid the worldly rivers. Furthermore, the kings subject to his dominion, their power increased by his kindness, were drawn by his holy zeal from their native heathendom to faith in Christ and were more closely allied to him by receiving baptism.

The message is very clear. Because Wulfhere respected and admired Eormenhild and willingly listened to her, Christianity spread throughout his kingdom and, especially important to the Norman nobles, those who were under Wulfhere found their own power increased. Wulfhere, a mighty English warrior and king, emulated a woman and became a good king and model Christian. Through this story Goscelin conveyed to William and his nobles that emulating Wulfhere by respecting Earcongota would allow William to be viewed as a good king and increase the wealth and power of his nobles. Wulfhere became a king who “knew and cared about exercising temporal kingship in such a way

\[\text{\textsuperscript{181}}\text{For Æthelburga and Edwin see Bede, HE, Book I:2 of HE. Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg discusses the roles queens played in the conversion of their husbands, including Clothilda and Clovis I, in Forgetful of their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society ca 500-1100 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{182}}\text{CCCC, ff. 72' - 73'. “Hanc mirabatur, hanc uenerabatur, eiusque inter secularia flumina celo fixam intentionem emulabatur. Reges etiam ipsius ditioni subjici, eius beneficiis regno augmentati, eius pio zelo ad Christi fidem a patria gentilatate sunt attracti, et in baptismatis susceptione altius federati.”}\]
that after the transitory kingdoms he might faithfully hope for the everlasting one."\textsuperscript{183}

Goscelin is sending a message to William that, by following the example set by Wulfhere, he might also hope to find the everlasting kingdom.

Goscelin’s interest in the quality of King William’s reign, as well as the behavior of the king and his nobles, was arguably about more than the monk’s concern for the well-being of the English people or his irritation over perceived ill-treatment. He makes clear to King William exactly how a good Christian king behaves and what qualities he possesses through his description of Eormenhild. In describing all the ways in which she resembled her parents, he lists all the characteristics he wished to see in William:

Thus she was born of royal parents on both sides, in the same way she was exalted in the royal bedchamber, in the same way, and of greatest importance, amid the power of royalty, she was devoted to Christ. She was similar to her mother in beauty and outward form, like her mother in character and mode of life. Thus she had her eyes, her hands, her mouth. Her father she imitated in honor, her mother in modesty. His power, her religion, his excellence, her reverence. But above all things, viscerally she had her mother’s inmost nature: duty to all, compassion for all, in supplying the needs of all. She had the same kindness to all men, the same love in Christ, and the same passion for heavenly desires burned constantly in her.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{183} CCC, f. 73, “Iam uero nouerat et curabat ita temporaliter regnare, ut post transitoria regna posset fideliter interminabilia sperare.”

\textsuperscript{184} CCC, f. 72. “Ita ipsa regibus parentibus utrimque est edita, ita regali thalamo sullimata, ita in regni potentia, quod maius est omnibus, Christo deuota. Matrem referebat decore et forma, matrem moribus et uita. Sic oculos, sic illa manus, sic ora fererat. Genitorem imitabatur honore, genitricem pudore. Illum potestate, hanc exhibebat religione, illum prestantia, hanc reuerentia. Ante omnia autem induerat materna viscosa ad omnem pietatem, ad omnem compassionem, ad omnium necessitudinem subuentionem. Eadem in omnes homines benignitas eadem in Christo caritas, eadem iugiter ad celestia desideria sibi flagratab animositas.”
These traits, both masculine and feminine in nature, come together to create a complete image of a good ruler. She had both royal power and pious humility. She was both honorable and modest. What she inherited from her parents are not opposites as much as complements. They were all necessary, according to Goscelin, in order for a king to rule well. Eormenhild shows that a good king put Christ first, never allowing the power inherent in the crown to take control. The beauty Goscelin emphasizes in both Eormenhild and Sexburge reflects the idea that physical beauty is an indication of internal holiness. Power is balanced with piety, and high status by humility before God in a good king. Above all else, the king must desire heavenly rewards more than mundane ones, put duty before his own pleasure, show compassion to all, and tend to the needs of his subjects.

Goscelin closes his *Lectiones in Natale Sancte Eormenhilde* with an account of one of her posthumous miracles, which he describes as “tender and lovely.” In this miracle story, a school master at the monastery was apparently very harsh with the boys. The children took refuge at Eormenhild’s tomb and prayed to her for protection. The master, finding them there, pulled them away and beat them, saying, “Did you think you

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185 Constance Brittain Bouchard discusses the use of contrasting pairs of attributes in twelfth-century theological communities. These were not judgements but, rather, descriptions of traits that were desirable depending on the situation; "Every Valley Shall be Exalted: " *The Discourse of Opposites in Twelfth-Century Thought* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

186 CCCC, f. 74v.
were always going to have St. Eormenhild as a patroness over your misdeeds?\(^{187}\) The next night, according to the story, Eormenhild bound his hands and feet so that he could not move except to crawl. In the morning he called the boys to him and begged their forgiveness. He asked them to carry him to Eromenhild’s tomb and pray for him, which they did.\(^{188}\) The saint was apparently moved enough to release him.

Goscelin is again reminding his audience that a position of authority does not give one the right to abuse those in his care. The jeering manner in which the master scolds the children for turning to Eormenhild for help echos the disdain some of the Norman clergy had for the Anglo-Saxon saints, an attitude that likely did not sit well with Goscelin. The contrast between the power of the school master and the helplessness of the children also serves to emphasize the discrepancy between a king or lord and his subjects. The disrespect heaped upon the children mirrors the way the Goscelin saw English being treated by their new Norman lords.

In this rather short work, Goscelin succinctly reiterates the qualities he feels a good ruler must have: piety, humility, a sense of duty and responsibility to care for and protect the weak and poor. It also underlines those less-than-admirable qualities he perceived in the Normans: violence, greed, obsession with worldly power and wealth,

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\(^{187}\) CCC, f. 74\(^{v}\). “An putastis sanctam Eormenhildam uestrarum culparum semper habere patronam?”

\(^{188}\) CCC, f. 74\(^{v}\).
disdain for the English, and disrespect for the indigenous saints. The pain the school master suffered suggests the fate awaiting those who did not follow the virtuous path.

ST. ÆTHELTHRYTH

Goscelin very closely associated good rulership with being a good Christian, as his works on St. Sexburge and St. Eormenhild clearly show. None of the Ely saints epitomized a good Christian to him more than St. Æthelthryth, the foundress and first abbess of the monastery. Goscelin had to accomplish two goals in his miraculae of Æthelthryth: the rights of the monastery to its land and property, and the sanctity and power of Æthelthryth in life as well as death, in order for Abbot Simeon to reestablish Ely’s power and prestige. Goscelin did this by reminding the audience of Æthelthryth’s father, King Anna, and her husbands, particularly Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, as well as using the legend of her perpetual virginity to take her image beyond that of extreme devotion to Christ.

Goscelin created a memory of a woman who was the daughter of a devoutly Christian king and the wife of kings, a woman whose virginity was a form of martyrdom. She sacrificed the pleasures of the flesh and her husbands’ affection to become the eternal bride of Christ, refusing the comforts the life of a queen afforded. He showed her chastity as going beyond the physical, encompassing her mind and soul as well. He used
this opportunity to do more than fulfill his commission to Abbot Simeon; he created a useful memory of the Vikings who raided England and Ely during the ninth century in order to directly address issues he had with William and the Norman nobility and clergy. Using his command of Latin and skill at allegory, Goscelin equated the Normans with the Vikings. His descriptions of the violence visited upon the English by the Vikings mirrored recent events between the Normans and the English, particularly the residents and monks of Ely. The greed and anger described in the Viking leader reflects Goscelin’s perceptions of William.

Æthelthryth founded the double monastery of Ely in 673 A.D. after her second husband released her from their marriage and she became a nun. She had first been the wife of Tondbert, the king of South Gyrwe and, then of Ecgfrith, King of Northumbria. The island of Ely, according to the Liber Eliensis, was a wedding gift from Tondbert and thus her own property.¹⁸⁹ This is a very significant point. It was her property, to do with as she pleased, which gave the monastery added prestige and security. It also added legitimacy to the monastery’s claims to its lands as well as its privileges.

¹⁸⁹LE Book I:4. Susan Ridyard argues that this passage in the Liber Eliensis conflicts with Bede, who places Ely within the realm of East Anglia; The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England, p. 178. This is in fact not the case. Bede only states that Æthelthryth was first given in marriage to Tondbert, King of South Gyrwe, but does mention its location (LE, IV: 19). Whether it was a wedding present from Tondbert or property given to her by her father, King Anna, is less important than the fact that the right to control that land derived from Æthelthryth’s royal lineage.
Her royal status was important to Goscelin not only because it added legitimacy to the monastery’s claims to its property and assertion of ecclesiastic liberty. Goscelin reestablishes his creation of a holy dynasty centered around her father in her hagiographies. This dynasty was central to his history of a pious England, and he reminded the audience of Æthelthryth’s relationship to many of the other royal saints of England through Anna. He begins his *Vita Sanctae Etheldrethae* by establishing her relationship to King Anna:

The holy and glorious virgin Æthelthryth, mentioned for both her nobility and excellence as the brilliant historiographer of the English people, the Venerable Bede, testifies, was the daughter of the East Anglian king, namely Anna...[w] hose fame as a very religious man, no less for his mind than the performance of his deeds, was attractive to the commoners [who] honored his name wherever his rule reached in that region of England.\(^{190}\)

Æthelthryth was therefore not only holy on her own account, she was the daughter of a devout king. Significantly, Goscelin reminds the audience that Anna was not only a good Christian king, he was respected by his people for the quality of his mind as much as his deeds. This subtly draws attention to King William, who was feared rather than respected, the implication being that the quality of his mind and deeds were not respectable.

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\(^{190}\)CCC, f. 3' “Beata et gloriosa uirgo Aetheldritha utriusque titulo nobilitatis insignita ut uenerabilis testatur Beda luculentissimus hystoriographus angliegena, Orientalium regis Anglorum Anne uidelicet exstit filia...Cuius uiri bene religiosi fama non minus mentis quam operis executione uulgata uenustabat eum honoris nomine, quaqua protendebatur dominatus regionis Anglie.”
The further implication is that this mental and spiritual quality was passed from father to daughter. In fact, Goscelin seems to view a strong mind as a necessary precursor to sanctity, as seen in his description of her chastity. It was, as Goscelin describes it, “not only of the flesh, which many have, but also of the mind, which few have...” Her mental chastity gave Æthelthryth the power to battle the lust for earthly pleasures so that her thoughts were only of serving Christ. This makes her, in Goscelin’s view, the embodiment of proper Christian thought and desire. Because she was able to control her thoughts, disciplining them toward contemplation of Christ, she was, according to Goscelin, able to reject lust.

According to Æthelthryth’s legend, she remained a virgin throughout both her marriages; however it was not only her perpetual virginity and her unwavering devotion to Christ that inspired Goscelin to use her as an exemplar of Christian piety. It was also the force and determination with which she rejected any of the world’s pleasures and her singleness of purpose that allowed him to hold her up as a model of devotion. Goscelin’s language is anything but passive when describing the way she rejected lust. In fact, it is rather masculine. He makes it clear that he is not suggesting she meekly embraced virginity, or that it was naiveté that caused her to turn away from worldly desires. It was her steadfast devotion to Christ and to be His bride that drove her to reject the pleasures
of this world. His description is active and full of imagery:

She, armed with spiritual protection, powerfully smashed in pieces and smote asunder the flame-belching and deathly weapons of fiery lust. She herself, protected by the love of the immortal King, did battle against the foul and fierce princes of universal impurity with warlike sweat, and carried away the standards of victory to her Creator. ¹⁹¹

There is nothing dainty about Æthelthryth in this description. She is armed as a spiritual warrior, slashing and smashing the dragon-like specter of lust and impurity, breaking into a sweat from the effort. In this passage, Goscelin makes the point that lust is something that must be fought. That he describes Æthelthryth as doing battle against it, rather than simply turning away, is significant. He is not presenting an image of a woman devoid of desire - sexual or otherwise. If she fought against her urges then she obviously had them; however, her faith and strength of character allowed her to win this fight.

The real issue for Goscelin is not simply sexual lust, it is also the lust for power and wealth. The Latin *libidinis*, from which the modern English word libido is derived, does carry the connotation of sexual desire. It also can be defined as aspiration or longing. If Goscelin had meant only sexual lust, a more likely word choice would have been *cupiditas*, which has a much stronger sexual connotation. It is the strength of Æthelthryth’s mind and will, as well as the way she used this strength to subdue the temptations of the world and focus on Christ, that were important to him.

¹⁹¹CCCC, 11”, “Ipsa spirituali munita presidio flammiuoma atque letifera seuientes ignee libidinis arma potenter confringit et conterit, ipsa regis inmortalis amore preuenta, cum cenosis ac truculentis generalis inmunditie principibus bellicosos dimicans sudore, uictricia signa suo comportat auctori.”
This passage, then, is Goscelin’s warning and invitation to William and the Normans. In it he acknowledges that lust and ambition are very human emotions, but reminds his audience that they can be defeated. If an English queen could so masterfully battle against them, surely the king and his men could as well. Therefore, Goscelin is not suggesting that the new king and nobility are flawed for having these feelings, but that they either lack, or are not exercising, self-control. He is warning the Normans that they are immersing themselves too much in the pleasures of earthly power and turning away from Christ, but also reminding that they have the capacity to remedy that.

This warning is alluded to in the incipit of Goscelin’s Miracula Sancte Æthelthryth. He reminds the reader to praise the Lord in His saints and show passionate love for their habits and lives, venerate them, and imitate them in order to be able to properly praise God. He asks the reader

...how can we offer worthy praises to God, we who have abandoned the narrow path of righteousness and still run everyday through the broad and treacherous spaces of the twisting roads which lead toward the bottomless pit of ruin, we who do not apply the poultice of fruitful repentance to the horrible wounds of our sins, but are almost rotting away pleasurably with the gore still flowing from these wounds.\(^{192}\)

He is rather bluntly telling the audience to return to the straight and narrow path because God despises empty praise from blatant sinners. He includes himself in this description.

\(^{192}\)CCCC, f 10r, “...qualiter dignas Deo laudes preconari possumus, qui angusto rectitudinis tramite derelicto per laqueosa et ampla tortuosarum spacia uiarum ad profundam precipitationis foueam ducentium adhuc coditie discurrimus, qui diris eccatorum uulneribus nullum fructuose medicamentum penitentie apponimus, sed profluente iam sanie oblectabiliter in eis pene computrescimus?”
He could not exclude himself from the community of sinners, since he is human. And as a human he understands how easy it is to slip into sin. This is also a less abrasive way to remind the audience that God will not hear the prayers of sinners who revel in their sins, refusing to forgo their pleasure for His mercy. He is accusing the Normans not only of turning their backs on God, but also of arrogantly refusing to repent for their sins and, worse, ignoring the fact that they are rotting away from their sins even while they enjoy them.

One of the most intriguing parts of Goscelin’s *Miracula Sancte Æthelthryth Virginis* contains no mention of Æthelthryth. Instead, Goscelin provides a detailed account of the Viking raids on England during the ninth century, vividly describing not only the damage inflicted during this period but the violent, almost inhuman, behavior of the raiders. He describes an attack on Æthelthryth’s tomb by the most bloodthirsty of the raiders, and lines eighteen through twenty-one describe the punishment Heaven sent upon him because of this desecration. At the conclusion of this description, Goscelin immediately begins a miracle story about a woman who was struck with paralysis and healed by being placed upon Æthelthryth’s tomb. This stark contrast is not accidental. It is a lesson showing that Æthelthryth, though capable of inflicting severe punishment upon those who show her disrespect, is more willing to show compassion to those who love her.
There is no obvious reason for Goscelin to have presented such an explicit history lesson simply to build up to a four line description of the pain a Viking suffered for his effrontery. There is, however, a plausible explanation. Goscelin created an image of this period of England’s past to address William and the Norman nobility. He uses this opportunity to take them to task for being, from his point of view, violent, merciless, and unconcerned about God or the English people. He decries the way they have treated the churches and monasteries in England, and he confronts William over his inability, or unwillingness, to control his anger.

One of the clearest indications that Goscelin is addressing the Normans is in the way he describes the Vikings. Despite the fact that he would have known it was Danes and Norwegians who had raided England, he refers to the Vikings as aquilonalium gens, men of the North.\textsuperscript{193} He is not being poetic; the word Norman comes from the Old French Normand (plural Normanz) or North man, Normandy translates as the region settled by Normanz.\textsuperscript{194} Normandy had been the portion of Neustria that constituted the archdiocese of Rouen. It was given as a settlement to the Viking leader Rollo in the early tenth century by the Frankish king Charles III (the Simple). Rollo and his men were

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\textsuperscript{193}CCCC, f. 13\textsuperscript{v}
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given this land in exchange for protecting it against other Vikings. By using the term *aquilonalium gens*, Goscelin is making a connection to the Normans’ own Viking past. This passage, then, is a direct address to the Normans, reminding them that they are engaging in very unchristian behavior. It is meant to criticize them and make clear to them what happens to those who do not respect St. Æthelthryth and her abbey and, by extension, England.

There are sections in this passage that closely resemble passages from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It is very likely that Goscelin read at least one manuscript of the *Chronicle*. In his annotated edition of Goscelin’s *Translatio Sancte Mildrethe Virginis cum Miraculorum Attestatione*, D. W. Rollason notes that an error Goscelin makes regarding the reigns of Eadberht and Æthelberht II likely stems from confusion in the Canterbury manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, also referred to as manuscript F or Cotton Domitian A VIII. The F manuscript is, in turn, closely related to the D manuscript and, especially, the E manuscript, also known as the *Peterborough Chronicle*. Significantly, both these manuscripts contain accounts of Rollo. Peterborough is

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roughly thirty miles from Ely, so it is indeed probable that Goscelin had access to, and read, one of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* manuscripts.

He begins this section of the *Miracles of Æthelthryth* by reminding the audience that God had always favored and protected the Church in England and that, even though there were frequently wars because different kings ruled different areas, the churches and monasteries were preserved from harm:

> As for the churches and the other monasteries that were everywhere in England, despite there being kings of various provences who were frequently under a state of war with each other, in the peace and security as well as in the increase of the Christian religion, they joyfully preserved the heavenly grace of mercy.\(^{198}\)

The implication is that not only was the English Church protected by divine grace, but that grace had inspired the various kings to put the welfare of the Church before their differences with each other. According to Goscelin, during this period, despite the warfare, Christianity spread because the various kings understood their role as protectors of the Church.

He then begins his account of the Viking attacks on England, which is written in both present and past tense. This is no accident; Goscelin was too careful a writer to

\(^{198}\) CCCC, f 13\(^{v}\). “Sed et ecclesias et alia monasteria que quaquaersum in Anglia erant, quamquam quia diuersarum prouinciarum diuersi reges essent uario sub euentu frequentia in inuicem bella sucederent, in pace et securitate atque in Christiane religionis augmento, as iocunditate conseruauit gratia superne misericordie.”
have changed tenses so suddenly; further, there is a definite pattern to this tense change. Parts of the narrative that are intended to set a mood or provide background information are written in the past tense. For example:

But the wicked enemy of the human race, not willing to bear such times of serenity, by Divine judgement’s permission, roused a dire and dark storm, by which the north wind blew up the tempestuous tides of the ocean and breathed the sudden fierce and deadly whirlwinds of its innate cruelty onto all the coasts of Britain.\textsuperscript{199}

The storm that was stirred up was the Viking raids; however, according to Goscelin, it was not that the Vikings were able to successfully raid, plunder, and destroy England by their own wit and power.\textsuperscript{200} God had allowed Satan - the “wicked enemy of the human race” - to unleash them upon England. This mirrors a passage in the Anglo-Saxon \textit{Chronicle} in which the author describes William’s victory at Hastings in 1066 as God’s punishment for the people’s sins, not as a result of an innate Norman superiority: “and the French had possession of the place of carnage, as to them God granted for the people’s sins.”\textsuperscript{201} In both instances, the reason the English were subjected to foreign powers was because God was punishing them for their sins. Not only does this deny

\textsuperscript{199}CCC, f. 13\textsuperscript{v}, At humani generis improbus hostis tante serenitatis tempora non sustinens, diram ac nebolosam diuino permittente iudicio concitauit tempestatem, que flante borea de procellosis ascendens estius oceani, subitos atque neciferos innate sibi crudelitatis turbines in omnes Brittanie fines efflauit..

\textsuperscript{200}The term Viking is a modern term for the Scandinavian raiders. It was not used in the eleventh century.

\textsuperscript{201}ASC, vol. I, p. 338, “Þa Frencyscan ahton wælstowe geweald, eallswa God uðe for folces synnon.”
William and the Normans any special prowess in conquering England, it brings to mind the Biblical image of God punishing Israel for its sins by allowing it to be overrun by the Assyrians. As he did with Sexburge when he said she was to be the mother of a chosen people, Goscelin is creating an image of the English as God’s chosen people, loved by Him but punished for turning away from Him. The Normans, as presented by Goscelin, are at best the tools God used to bring his chosen people back to the path of righteousness. By using the history of the Viking raids on England, he was able to safely criticize the Norman regime and remind them that they did not rule England because they were inherently superior but because they were the instruments of God’s will.

This criticism, written in the present tense, shifts the emotional and intellectual focus to the present. Throughout this section, when he is directly addressing William or the Normans, Goscelin changes from past to present tense. This device creates a sense of identity between the audience and the events being described. In another instance of changing from past to present tense in order to create a deeper emotional involvement in the audience, he describes the destruction caused by the aquilonalium gens. He brings the reader into the moment, making him feel as though he is actually living the event, juxtaposing the more recent violence at the monastery upon the historical violence.

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202 II Kings, 17:20, “And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers.”
perpetrated by the Vikings:

In such a miserable and mournful storm when the sword passes through even to the soul, fired by the zeal of inequity, churches are ravaged, the fire of true charity freezes. Some monasteries are torn down almost to their very foundations and are placed under the power of arrogant secular priests.²⁰³

Here he has created an image of savage usurpers traveling over the sea, laying siege to England, and destroying or appropriating its churches and monasteries. These are no mere raiders bent on obtaining treasure and leaving. As described by Goscelin, they are the product of a demonic storm, not content to simply slay the body but intent upon destroying the soul. They do not simply destroy buildings, they tear the very foundations of England’s monasteries up. Instead of humble abbots being in charge of the monasteries, secular priests marred by the sin of arrogance rule. There is no doubt that Goscelin is referring to the Normans in this passage. The Viking raiders were pagan, they could not have put England’s monasteries under the power of secular priests. William I, however, had despoiled several English churches and monasteries and had placed Norman clergy in positions of power in the English Church and the monasteries.

²⁰³ CCC, ff. 13⁰ - 14⁰, “Hac tam miserabili lugubrique tempestate ad animam usque gladio pertranseunte, subuertuntur ecclesie, feruet zelus iniquitatis, friget ignis uere caritatis. Cenobiorum quedam ab ipsis pene fundaminibus destruuntur, quedam tumido seceralium sacerdotum dominio subiguntur.”
To underscore his point that William was behaving in a shameful way, he describes the invaders as beast-like:

For the men of the North, savage and impious, to satisfy the gnashing and raving hunger of their ferocity, and longing to quench the thirst of their malice with the outpouring of human blood, rushed from the cold places of their birth and, with not a small fleet of ships, plowed through the ocean, held the shores of Britain and, encircling the whole island, began to ravage it, now by sea, now by land, by flame and by sword.  

Goscelin’s description of the attack on England is similar to the accounts in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of William’s coming to Ely to subdue the rebellion there. From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

But when the king, William, learned of this [that the rebels had take refuge on Ely], he summoned out a force on land and a force of ships and beset the land all about...and the king took their ships and weapons, and their property and he took all the men and did with them what he would.

In both this account and Goscelin’s, there is an attack by land and sea, and the isle of Ely is surrounded on all sides just as the larger island of England had been. While the chronicler who wrote this entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle leaves to the reader’s imagination what exactly it was that William did to the men, the compiler of the Liber

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204 CCCC, f. 13', “Etenim aquilonalium plagarum gens atrox et impia sue ferocitatis exercende fame fredens ac seuiens, humanique sanguinis effusione sitim malignittis potare cupiens, a gelidis natu matis sue sedibus prosiliuit, et cum non minima nauali classe uastum sulcans pelagus Brittannie litora tenuit, totamque ipsam insulam nunc mari nunc terra circuiens, flammis ac ferro cepit depopulari.”

205 ASC, vol. I, p. 346, “Ac þa se kynge Wyllelm þis geahsade þa bead he ut scypfýrde and landfýrde, and þæt land eall utan embsette...se kynge nam heora scypha and wæna, and manega sceattas. And þa menn ealle he tôc and dyde of heom þæt he wolde.”

158
Eliensis makes it very plain:

The armed men were led out, the leaders first, then a certain number of men who were distinguished because of their reputation or some position of dignity. Some he punished with imprisonment, some were subjected to the privation of their eyes, hands or feet. He let the mass of common people go unpunished...Edwin was taken captive, and with him many men of great power and renown. They were named [charged] and tightly bound.206

Goscelin’s imagery of invaders wild with rage and bloodlust meshes well with both the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Liber Eliensis. Because Ely had been part of the Northern rebellion, and when it was subdued the Normans slaughtered many of the townspeople who were fighting against them, the leaders were subjected to corporal punishment, and the rebels were taken away in chains, their freedom lost.

It is in his description of the desecration of Ely where Goscelin begins to drive home unrelentingly the idea that William’s treatment of the monastery was, from his perspective, inexcusably harsh. He points out that the isle of Ely was not immune from naval attacks because there was easy access from the ocean through its marshes. He goes into great detail about the way the invaders entered the island and what they did once

206 LE, Book II:111, “Producuntur armati, primo principes, deinde numerus aliquantus fama preminentium vel dignitate aliqua. Quosdam carcerali pene, quosdam ocularum, manuum vel pedum privationi addixit, multitudinem vulgi dimisit impunitam...Capitur Edwinus et cum eo viri innumeris validi honoris et potentie nominati et artissime victi.” As mentioned in Chapter 2, The Liber Eliensis was compiled by a monk of Ely in the twelfth century. MS 393 (CCCC) is included in the larger Liber Eliensis and is the older of the two works. Goscelin would have had access to the records used to create the Liber Eliensis while he was there, and his works were later copied into the Liber Eliensis.
there. It is a description that is designed to be shocking to the audience and so elicit sympathy. It is also meant to bring to mind recent events and make William and the Normans uncomfortable. He continues in the present tense:

Accordingly, the hosts of heathen pour in and, raving with a spirit of savage frenzy, on the fullest reins of wickedness, they ferociously storm all over, cruelly lay waste to and destroy everything. Old men as well as boys are slaughtered, young men whom both strength and handsomeness of body commended are dragged off to foreign lands, deprived of their freedom.\textsuperscript{207}

The emotional impact this passage would have had on the audience is profound, since it could no longer separate itself from the action. It is confronted with the image of the weak and innocent being tormented by savage men who revel in their wickedness. It also mirrors recent events in England. The above passage brings to mind the actions of William and the Normans in Northumbria. The English nobles rebelled against the usurpation of English estates and the deposition of English nobility in favor of Normans. Further, the Conqueror ordered his men to be extremely diligent in putting down any sign of unrest. The result was that peasants were killed as well as nobles. The \textit{Liber Eliensis} records these events, which occurred just prior to the Northern rebellion and the retreat

\textsuperscript{207} \textit{CCCC, f. 14}, \text{"In hanc itaque irreuentes paganorum phalanges, atque cruente debachationis spiritu seuientes, productis impiectatum habiens, ferociter per omnia discurrunt, crudeliter cuncta deuastant et consumunt. Senes cum pueris interimuntur, iuuenes quos et robur et elegantia commendabat corporis, ad exteras nationes libertate priuati abducentur."}
of the rebels to Ely:

Indeed, [King William] kept laying waste to Northumbria, as well as the other provinces in England, and ordered his men to slaughter the people, sparing no age. So, while the Normans were all the time directing their energies towards their savagery, a famine ensued that so overwhelmed the people that they ate the meat of horses, dogs, and cats, and consumed human flesh. 208

Both excerpts present an image of stronger, better armed forces attacking helpless people, both instances indicate that old and young were slaughtered along with the able-bodied, and each makes a point of telling the reader that the attackers made no attempt to curb their savagery and, indeed, seemed to enjoy it. Goscelin would have had access to the records at Ely when writing his hagiographies, so he surely had read this account of so recent an event.

There are two separate entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that reflect incidents reminiscent of the above passage. The first entry, which brings to mind Goscelin’s miserable and mournful storm that freezes the fire of true charity, records what happened just after Hastings, when William expected the English people to immediately recognize him as king. William began to move his army through the English countryside when the

people did not come to him to acknowledge him as king:

And Count William went a second time to Hastings and there waited [to see] whether the nation would bow down to him; but when he perceived that they would not come to him, he went up with all his army which was left to him and that had since come over the sea to him and ravaged all that part which he passed over until he came to Berkhampstead. 209

The next entry, in the year 1071, which reflect’s Goscelin’s account of churches and monasteries being ravaged and destroyed, describes William’s actions towards the English monasteries: “Waltheof made a truce with the king, and in this Lent the king caused all the monasteries that were in England to be plundered” 210 By harassing the English monasteries during Lent, the most holy time of the year for Christians, William was engaging in exceptionally unchristian behavior.

After establishing how horrific the Viking raiders’ entry onto Ely was, and how viciously old and young were slaughtered and the able-bodied taken away in chains to become slaves, Goscelin describes the actual desecration and destruction of the monastery. He describes it as a convent of virgins, although at this time it was still a

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209 ASC vol I p. 168, “Wyllelm eorl for eft ongean to Hæstingan and geanbodode þær hwæðer man him to bugan wolde. Ac þa he ongeat þæt man him to cuman nolde, he fór upp mid eallon his here þe him to lafe wæs, and him syððan fram ofer sæ cóm and hergode ealne þone ende þe he oferférde oð þæn he com to Beorhhamstede.”

210 ASC vol. I p. 344, “Her se eorl Wælþeof gryðode wið þone cyng, and þæs on Lengten se kynge let hergian ealle þa mynstra þe on Englalande wæron.” It is worth noting here that this entry also records a famine in that year: “þæs eres wæs micel hunger.” “In this year there was great hunger.”
double monastery, and presents an image of evil run amok:

The convent of virgins [Ely]...that deplorable race, not knowing the worship of God but devoted to the foulest rites of the devil, attacks, contaminates the holy things, tramples them down and plunders them. Because of the heavy burden of sins, the stones are moved from the sanctuary and there is a wretched smashing of the vessels of God.\footnote{CCC, f. 14', "Cenobium uirginum...pro dolor nescia Dei culture sed spurcissimis diaboli ritibus dedita gens inuadit, sancta contaminat, conculcat ac diripit. Peccatorum causis pregrauantibus tolluntur lapides de sanctuario, fit miseranda uasorum Domini collisio."}

This passage reflects the retribution William exacted from the monastery for its complicity in the rebellion. When the siege of Ely ended and the Normans took the island and monastery, according to the Liber Eliensis, William ordered his troops to guard the doors to the church so that the monks would have no access. The reason given for this in the Liber Eliensis is that, had the monks been able to come out to greet him with crosses and the relics of saints, William would have been obliged to acknowledge the respect with which they received him and been placated. By preventing this, he was able to punish them for their role in the rebellion.\footnote{LE, II:111.} The clear implication is that William wanted to not only humiliate the monastery for its perceived role in the rebellion, he wanted the wealth held within it.
The *Liber Eliensis* relates that the king did make an attempt to show respect for the foundress of the monastery:

> On his arrival at the monastery, eventually standing a long way away from the holy body of the virgin, he threw a gold mark on to the altar, not daring to approach closer. He was afraid of having judgment passed on him by God for the evils which his men perpetrated on the place.\(^{213}\)

By portraying William as being afraid to approach Æthelthryth’s tomb, the compiler of the *Liber Eliensis*, is making the point that William was aware that he was behaving, and ordering his men to behave, in a way abhorrent to God. Because the monks were unable to make obeisance, William was able to express justifiable umbrage and punish them. He had already confiscated a considerable amount of the monastery’s land but, rather than take more land as payment, the king demanded money.\(^{214}\) He exacted a fine of seven hundred marks as payment for complicity with the rebels.

The *Liber Eliensis* explains that this money was to be paid to a royal representative in Cambridge. This was more money than the monastery had, and the monks were forced to sell the precious articles in the monastery’s church to pay this. However, the *Liber Eliensis* continues, as a result of fraud on the part of the men who

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\(^{213}\) *LE*, II:111, “Ad monasterium denique veniens, longe a sancto corpore virginis stans, marcham auri super altare proiecit, proptius accedere non ausus; verebatur sibi a Deo iudicium inferri pro malis que sui in loco patrarunt.”

exchanged the goods for gold, an eighth of an ounce of gold was taken from the total.

This infuriated William, as the following passage makes clear:

For although his suffering was diminished and he had gained entrance, an unusually bitter fury inflamed him, he was going to exact vengeance for what was his as though it had been diminished through injustice. There arose all around much misery. Turmoil, plunder, rape, rage, threatening to waste. There was no place left for peace or security. The monks, bound fast by pain that had been inflicted and was now renewed, entered into a new pact with him [William], promising to add three hundred marks to the seven hundred, supplying a thousand marks, to gain his favor and the liberty of the place and restoration of their properties. Because of this, all the rest that was gold and silver in the church, was broken, even the image of St. Mary with her son seated on the throne which Abbot Ælfelfsinus marvelously had wrought, with gold and silver. Similarly, the images of the holy virgins were despoiled of much adornment of gold and silver so that the money price could be paid. 215

This attack appears to be the subject of the earlier quote from Goscelin’s Miracula Sancte Æthelthryth. The holy items in the monastery’s church were destroyed, and its wealth removed “for the burden of heavy sins” that the monks committed.

Goscelin was clearly dismayed at this and called William to task for it. Not only had a

215 LE, Book II:111, “Solito enim acriores intromissum et secemur furie ascendunt, ultionem sui, velud per injurias diminuti, exacturum. Oritur toto ambitu multa miseria. Tumultus, prede, rapine seviunt, vastitatem minantes. Paci vel securitati nullus locus relinquitur. Exinde monachi dolore illato et iam renovato devincit, pactum denuo ineuntes cum eo novum, trescentas prioribus septingentis adicere marcas, videlicet millenarium supplere, pollicent, ut gratia eius cum loci libertate ac bonorum redintegratione potirentur. Ob hoc totum quod in ecclesia ex auro et argento residuum fuit, insuper imaginem sancte Marie cum puero suo sedentem in throno mirabiliter fabrefactam, quam ifelfinus abbas fecerat de auro et argento, comminutum est. Similiter imagines sanctarum virginum multo ornatu auri et argenti spoliate sunt, ut pretium pecunie exsolvi queat. Sed nichilominus sperate quietis fiducia caruerunt.” I would like to express my thanks to Dr. S. Jay Lemanski for his assistance in translating this passage. As he astutely points out, the Latin conveys the idea that “people of a violent nature pursue their vengeance with the same passion as those who are reacting against genuine injustice.”
church been desecrated and plundered by the king, the grounds for this attack were orchestrated. William’s claim to compensation was based on the Ely monks’ not paying him respect by coming to greet him when he arrived at the monastery, an act made impossible by the guards he had set around the church to prevent them from leaving. The king then, not only lied, he did so for financial gain at the expense of the monastery. His lust for wealth, according to Goscelin, had made him blind to the fact that he was desecrating the sacred to satisfy his profane desires. To make things worse, William then gave in to unreasonable anger which caused further harm to the monastery. At the end of his rampage, the Conqueror had ravaged Ely and, by extension, its patron saints.

He obviously felt the need to address these issues of treachery, greed, and anger. However, in order for him to make his point to the new king, William II, he could not simply make a reference to William I’s actions. He wanted to make a point to the new king about the need to control himself and resist avarice, not insult the his family. To do this, he cast William I in the role of a particular Viking, who he described as being crueller and more severe than the others, an accomplice of the devil consumed by greed, who struck Æthelthryth’s tomb in an attempt to find out if there were money or jewels inside.
The description of the Viking's written in past tense. Goscelin then changes not only the tense, but the voice. He directly addresses the Viking, saying,

But I want to address a few words to this man completely consumed with fury. Oh savage criminal! Oh you profane and wicked man, mortally dangerous to yourself. Oh you heretic and idolater, overtaken by the spirit of falsehood, burning with the fires of perishable money, why do you presume to disturb the sacrosanct limbs of God’s consecrated virgin? Why, seduced by the empty hope of the accumulation of earthly treasure do you not fear inflicting injury to the treasure of heaven, to the result of your damnation?216

Under the guise of chiding a Viking dead for some 200 years, Goscelin is speaking directly to William. The king, though understandably furious with the rebels, had exacted a heavy and, in Goscelin’s eyes, unjust toll on the monastery. The harm the Viking did to Æthelthryth’s tomb is an echo of the harm William did to her monastery. The wealth the Viking hoped to find lying with her, William found in the monastery.

Goscelin would likely not have been very concerned about the welfare of this Viking leader’s soul, since the fact that he was a heathen ensured his damnation and thus he could neither increase it nor be lethally dangerous to himself. However, William was a Christian and so could engage in behavior that ensured his damnation. His anger and lust for temporal power and wealth, as perceived by Goscelin, were lethally dangerous to his soul and so he was indeed “heaping up” his damnation. His attempt to win

216CCCC, f. 14r, “Sed libet hunc totum furia correptum paucis alloqui. O barbare flagitiose, o prophane uir et sceleste, tibi ipsi lethaliter infeste! O perfide ac sacrilege, spiritu falsitatis obsesse, cur corruptibilis pecunie facibus ardens sacrosancta Deo consecrate Virginis membra presumis inquietare? Cur spe seductus inani, pro terreni ambitione thesauri ad cumulum tue damnationis celesti thesauro iniuriam irrogare non ueres?”
Æthelthryth’s favor by tossing a coin on her tomb was rendered moot in Goscelin’s eyes by his treatment of his subjects and her monastery.

It is important to note that this chiding is not merely an expression of Goscelin’s outrage that a king would treat a monastery so harshly, nor is it simply an attempt to present the monastery’s history - recent as well as distant - in a way that elicits a sympathetic response and a return of its wealth. It is also a direct appeal by Goscelin to William to engage in behavior befitting a Christian king. The questions he poses to the Viking in the above passage are meant to cause the audience to pause and reflect. The Normans who desecrated the monastery church are asked to consider whether their actions are going to be acceptable to God. William is asked to consider whether allowing himself to give in to his anger and desire for power and money is worth the price of his soul.

Goscelin used the Miracula Sancte Æthelthryth Virginis as a platform from which he not only emphasized the importance of self-control to a ruler, but pointed out the danger William’s anger presented to his subjects, the Church, and his soul. The image Goscelin created of Æthelthryth and the way he presented her memory were at once active and passive. He used the legend of her chastity, devotion to God, and exemplary Christian behavior actively to offer a model by which others could draw closer to God. Her lack of interest in any worldly gains and pleasures as well as her
burning desire to pursue heavenly rewards could be emulated by king or commoner. Goscelin also utilized her memory passively by presenting the way her monastery was treated posthumously to show what God finds abhorrent. He also used the opportunity presented to rather sharply call the new king of England from sin to the path of righteousness.

ST. WÆRBURGA

Goscelin’s *Vita Sancte Wærburga* is unique among the Ely hagiographies in two ways. She alone is explicitly described as a fulfillment of God’s promise, and in her *vita* alone does Goscelin give a detailed genealogy that includes four kingdoms. Doing this allowed Goscelin to remind the Normans yet again that England had a legitimate history of strong saints, good kings, and ties to Rome. He also addresses William’s pride and temper in one of the miracle stories of the *vita*. The story stands out because of its difference from the other miracle stories he relates.

Wærburga was the daughter of Eormenhild and Wulhere. From the beginning of her hagiography, Goscelin presents her as exceptional, even for a saint. She was more than just the daughter and granddaughter of saints according to Goscelin, she was a promise and a gift. The promise is of God’s continued love for England, the gift is a reward for sacrifice and devotion. Eormenhild’s hope had been to become a nun and live a life of quiet devotion to Christ. Instead, she accepted her responsibility to her parents
and agreed to marry Wulfhere. According to Goscelin, her mother sacrificed the life of a nun to marry because it was God’s will. Not only did He want Eormenhild to be a comfort to the people of Mercia, she was to bear a very special child:

For she [Eormenhild] ardently trained her child for that life for which she herself, still under the yoke of marriage, sighed with inexpressible groanings. But the most sublime Providence, kind to all things, in the kingdom made her the mother of all the poor, the refuge of all those in need, and at the same time within her pious womb she might beget a pledge of love most pleasing to God, and finally receive the delayed, desired, larger crown.\footnote{CCCC, f. 77. “Ad illam enim uitam flagrantissimam prolem exercebat, quam ipsa adhuc sub iugo maritali gemitibus inenarrabilibus suspirabat. Verum altissima Dei prouidentia benigne dispensans omnia, matrem eam in regno statuit omnium inopum, omnium necessitudinum refugium, simul etiam ut piis uisceribus pignus Deo gigneret acceptissimum, et ampliorem coronam dilatorum tandem recipieret desideriorum.”}

Goscelin makes it very clear that Wærburga was destined to become a nun by using the word \textit{pignus} to describe the child Eormenhild would bear. After the Roman period, \textit{pignus} came to mean a pledge of love that could be used to describe a child. It also means a pledge, assurance, or mortgage. That Goscelin used this word instead of \textit{infans} or \textit{filia} is important. It suggests that in return for Eormenhild’s sacrifice, in payment for the good she would do in Mercia, God would grant her a child who would be able to live the life for which she longed and who would be very holy. Therefore, Wærburga is the fulfillment of a divine promise, a token of divine love and, implicitly, exceptionally holy.

Goscelin used \textit{pignus} in other works. For example, in \textit{Vita Deo delictae Virginis Mildrethae}, another hagiographic work about a royal female saint, he uses the passive

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217
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future participle of *pignorare* to describe Mildred’s reception by Bishop Theodore of Canterbury into the monastery of Minster-in-Thanet. In the passage, Goscelin writes, “The royal bride approaches the everlasting king, about to pledge herself...”\(^{218}\) This is similar to his description of the consecration of his pupil Eve at Wilton in *Liber Confortatorius*, “…the people in the crowd solemnly looking on, with the pledge of divine faith [you] put on the sacred garment,...”\(^{219}\) In both these instances, however, it is the women who are pledging themselves to God. In *Vita Sancte Wærburga*, however, Wærburga is God’s pledge to Eormenhild. Implied in this use of *pignus* then, is the notion that this saint is God’s promise fulfilled, that God loved the sacrifice of an English queen so much that he sent a token of this love. It also carries the warning that lack of respect for this saint, her mother, or anything associated with her would not only incur her wrath, but that of God.

Goscelin’s other works show he took great delight in using unusual Latin words such as *pignus*, and he employed them to generate several images simultaneously. This may be another reason he chose to use *pignus* in his description of Wærburga rather than, say, *infans* or *filia*. There are two Biblical passages containing *pignus* that are


\(^{219}\) Goscelin, *Liber Confortatorius*, ed. Talbot, p. 28:9-10. “...populosa caterua sollemniter expectante, pignus fidei diuine cum sacrata ueste induisti,...”
applicable to the Norman treatment of Ely; the first is from Job, the second from Ezekiel. As will be seen, while the passage from Job would have resonated with a smaller audience, the one from Ezekiel would have been familiar to laity as well as clergy. The passage from Job is chapter 22, verses 5-7,

Is not thy wickedness great and thine iniquities infinite? For you have taken pledges from your brothers without cause, and stripped them naked of clothes...\(^{220}\)

It is reminiscent of the price William I demanded from the monks of Ely after the rebellion for their failure to pay proper homage to him, a failure William had ensured by posting soldiers at the entrance to the church. The result was that the monastery, and thus the brothers, were stripped naked. This passage would not have been part of the regular liturgy, and so it cannot be assumed that William and his nobility were familiar with this verse, but the monks would have known the passage, as well as the word, which would have helped them make this connection.

The other passage is Ezekiel 33:14-15, and concerns the restoration of a pledge. The Normans likely would have been familiar with it, since passages from Ezekiel would have been read in Church. It appears Goscelin chose this passage to send a message to William II who had inherited his father’s legacy of confiscated monastic property. The

\(^{220}\)“et non propter malitiam tuam plurimam et infinitas iniquitates tuas abstulisti enim pignus fratrum tuorum sine causa.” \textit{Latin Vulgate Bible Online}, http://www.drbo.org/lvb/.
passage, therefore, serves as a warning:

I shall say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, but if he turns away from his sin and does what is lawful and right, and that wicked man restores the pledge he had robbed, walks in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live and shall not die.\textsuperscript{221}

Goscelin is reminding William as well as the Norman nobles that if they continue down the path of sin they will die, but if they return that which was taken, in other words the lands and property of Ely, then they will live.

Neither of these passages is quoted, nor are the allusions explicitly stated in the \textit{vita}. This is typical of Biblical allusions not only in Goscelin’s works, but in hagiographies generally. By using \textit{pignus} to describe Wærburga, Goscelin reminds his audience that Wærburga and her mother are especially precious to God and so should be treated with utmost respect while at the same time bringing to the audience’s mind Biblical verses with which they were likely familiar. His intent here is not to directly confront the Normans but make them uncomfortable.

In his introduction to the \textit{Vita Sancte Wærburge}, Goscelin presents her ancestry in great detail. He does not do this in any of the other Ely hagiographies, although there is a similar genealogical account in his \textit{Vita Sancte Mildrethe}, which was written ca. 1092.\textsuperscript{222}

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\textsuperscript{221}“sin autem dixero impio morte morieris et egerit paenitentiam a peccato suo fecerit iudicium et iustitiam pignus restituerit ille impius rapinamque reddiderit in mandatis vitae ambulaverit nec fecerit quicquam iniustum vita vivet et non morietur.” \textit{Bible Online}, http://www.drbo.org/lvb/.

\textsuperscript{222}Love, \textit{The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely}, pp. lxxii - lxxv.}

173
The apparent reason for this extensive history is to make Wærburga’s sanctity obvious to the audience; however, it was also an opportunity for Goscelin to make very clear England’s long history of sanctity, piety, and orthodoxy. In her *vita* alone does he present a genealogy of a saint that is extensive enough to include four kingdoms, one of which was on the Continent. This history spans three folios in the manuscript and goes into great detail. Goscelin begins by stating, “She is famous in the whole of England for her pure sanctity as well as her royal status, by the testimony of miracles and a host of English histories.”

He connects her sanctity with her royal status, a connection that reflects an English cultural identity since in Anglo-Saxon England holiness was very often connected to high social status. He makes this connection stronger by offering not only miracles as proof of her sanctity but also English historical memory.

As was the case with Æthelthryth’s hagiographies, Goscelin is reminding the audience about the holy dynasty that he had created around King Anna and his descendants. Wærburga was Anna’s great-granddaughter, and through her Goscelin tied this dynasty to the very beginning of Christianity in England. Goscelin begins his account of Wærburga’s lineage with Æthelberht, who was her great-great grandfather.

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223 CCC, f. 75’. “Clara est in tota Anglia et pura sanctitate et regia dignitate, et uirtutum attestatione, atque anglicarum historiarum celebritate.”
This, by extension connects her with Augustine. His description of her in the following passage not only connects her to Æthelberht, it reiterates the holy dynasty Goscelin created to link the Ely saints with other English saints and devout secular leaders:

She derives sublime brightness from the foremost kings of the English, from the king of Canterbury, that is of Kent, the most powerful Æthelberht who, first of all the kings of the English, deserved to be dedicated to Christ by their first teacher, Augustine; indeed, she draws her high and holy descent from four kingdoms. It seems pleasant to explain that here in its proper order, so that the jewel of God may valued more dearly, and so that this morning star may be more clearly viewed by the light of those previous stars.²²⁴

She is, then, according to Goscelin, not merely physically descended from the greatest of the English kings, but a spiritual descendant of Augustine. Further, at the time Augustine arrived in England, only Æthelberht was worthy to receive Christianity from Augustine, implying that his soul was purer than the other kings’. By stating that the greatness and sanctity of Wærburga is best appreciated in light of those who have come before her, Goscelin is saying that her extreme holiness is the result of a pedigree of powerful and holy ancestors. Having established that Wærburga’s heritage extends back to the very beginning of Christianity in England, and implicitly reminding the audience that the

²²⁴CCCC, f. 75r. “A primis anglorum regibus sullimiter splendescit, a rege uero Dorobernie quod est Cantuarie potentissimo Æthelbrihto qui primus Anglorum regum per protodoctorem suum Augustinum Christo sacrari meruit, immo a quattuor regnis altum et sanctum genus trahit. Quod hic sequenti ordine exponi dulce uidetur quo Dei gemma carius appretietur, et quasi de preuis sideribus hec matutina stella clarius spectetur.” Note: sullimiter=sublimiter.
Christianity that was brought to England was Roman Christianity, he then makes the ties to the Continent stronger.

He does this by recounting that Æthelberht had two children by his wife Bertha, who is described as the daughter of the king of the Franks. This connection to the Franks serves two purposes: it strengthens England’s Christian heritage and, perhaps more significantly, it provides a link to a French king. Thus, Wærburga’s royal heritage extended back more than six hundred years in both England and France at the time Goscelin wrote this vita. This only served to emphasize the fact that William had no such heritage; he was the Duke of Normandy which itself had been a duchy for less than two hundred years when William took the English throne. William was the first king in his line.

Goscelin goes on to explain that Æthelberht and Bertha had a son, Eadbald, and a daughter, Æthelburh. Æthelburh was married to, as Goscelin describes him, “the pious king of the Northumbrians, Eadwine.” She returned to her brother, Eadbald, after Edwin was killed, and built a monastery in Lyminge. Goscelin also notes that Eadbald married Emma, who was also the daughter of a Frankish king, thus making the ties to

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225 CCC, f. 75v. Bertha was a member of the Merovingian dynasty, being the daughter of Charibert I and his wife Ingoberg. Charibert was the son of Chlothar I.

226 CCC, f. 75v. “…pii regis Northanhimbrorum Eadwini…” According to Rosalind Love, Edwin was the king of Deria and Bernicia from 616, and was murdered in battle with Cadwallon of Gwynedd and Penda of Mercia after they invaded Northumbria. (Love, The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely, p. 29, n. 6)
France stronger. Eadbald and Emma had two sons, Eormenred and Earconberht, and a daughter named Eanswith, whom Goscelin refers to as a holy virgin and notes that she was buried at Folkestone and venerated there.227

Eormenred was married to Oslafe, whom Goscelin calls noble, with whom he had Æthelred and Æthelberht “...who were divinely proved to be martyrs of Christ by a bright column of light from Heaven.”228 Goscelin writes that Eormenred also had four daughters who were holy: Domne Eafe, Eormenberga, Eormenburgh, and Eromengyth, all of whom were saints. Goscelin does not fail to include Eormenred’s brother, Earconberht, who married King Anna’s daughter Sexburge. He also is careful to include the fact that Sexburge was the sister of Æthelthryth.

From Earconberht and Sexburge came two sons who would later be kings, Ecgberht and Hlothere, as well as Queen Eormenhild and Saint Earcongota. Eormenhild then married Wulfhere and “delivered the most splendid Wæburh, in whom the flower of her parents’ royal dignity would be renewed.”229 Goscelin further explains that Domne Eafe married Wulfhere’s brother, Merewealh, and “brought forth, to the grace of the

227 CCC, f. 75v. “Eadbaldus quoque ex alterius regis Francorum filia Emma Eormenredum atque Eorcombertum principes, sanctamque virgen Enswitham, que apud Folcanstan deposita ueneratur, propagauit.”

228 CCC, f. 75v. “…quos innocenter iugulatos spendide lucis columna de celo prodidit Christi Martires.” The appearance at the time of death of a column of light from Heaven is a common hagiographic device used to prove the sanctity of a person.

229 CCC, f. 76r. “tradita splendidissiman Werburgam, cuius hec parentalis purpura infloratur, generauit.”
highest Trinity, a triple laurel of virginity, namely the holy sisters Milburh, Mildrith, and Midgyth, who enlighten their homeland with the lamps of their separate monasteries.”

Up to this point, Goscelin has tied Wærburga to ancient royal lines in France and England as well as quite a few English saints, but he has another connection to make that is meant to drive home the power of English sanctity:

    Also, the blessed daughter, Wærburga’s, nobility and saintliness is more intimately adorned by her most holy aunts, the daughters of King Penda, Cyneburh and Cyneswith, who with their kinswoman, the blessed Tibba, made famous the church of Peter, the heavenly doorkeeper, at Peterborough.

Penda was the pagan King of Mercia, and according to Bede and The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, was almost always at war with the Christian kings around him. Anna, Edwin, Oswald, Egric, and Sigebert were some of the Christian kings who were killed fighting him. That Penda’s two daughters and one of their kinswomen were Christians is a subtle endorsement of the strength of English Christianity. That Wærburga is related to these women makes her even more venerable, according to Goscelin.

\[230\] CCC, f. 76. “Ad summe trinitatis gratiam triplicem uirginatatis protulit laurem, sanctissimas scilicet sorores, Mildburgam, Mildritham, ac Milgritham que distinctis monasteriorum suorum lampadibus irradiant patram.”

\[231\] CCC, f. 76. “Almiflue quoque Werburge generositatem ac sanctimoniam proximius exornant sanctissime amite sue Pende regis filie Kyneburga et Kyneswitha, que cum propinqua sua batissima Tibba Burgensem superni ianitorois Petri illustrant ecclesiam.”
He concludes this section with a brief summary of Wærburga’s lineage, noting that all her relatives not only supported the Church but actively increased its presence in their kingdoms. He also reminds the audience that she blossomed forth from four kingdoms and ancient kings: that of Kent from the first in receiving the faith, Æthelberht of Canterbury; of the Franks from Bertha and Emma; that of the East Angles King Anna and her grandmother Sexburge; and that of the Mercians, of whom she was made a brilliantly shining descendant through her father. So therefore these were mentioned first, to proclaim the glory of the virgin, so that from the root sanctity might adorn the holy branch, indeed, that greater distinction might be ascribed to her by the excellence of kingly power which she despised.\textsuperscript{232}

Goscelin presents Wærburga as the epitome of sanctity because of her heritage, which encompasses three English kingdoms and France. She is the gift God gave to her mother in appreciation for her sacrifice and the spiritual heir of Augustine. Through her Goscelin creates an image of England and its history. Just as sanctity runs through Wærburga’s blood because of her ancestry, so it runs through England because of its saints. The devout and royal bloodlines of its kings is England’s heritage, and the willingness of its rulers, both kings and queens, to put the welfare of the Church before their own desires and to ensure the safety and well-being of its institutions makes it special in God’s eyes.

\textsuperscript{232}CCCC f. 76\textsuperscript{v}. “Sic itaque, ut premisimus, ex quattuor regnis et antiquis regibus rosa hristi Werburga florescit, a principe suscepte fidei Æthelbrihtus Cantuariourm, a Berta uel Emma Francorum, ab Anna rege et auia Sexburge Orientalium Anglorum, a patre uero proles lucidissima facta Mercorum. Hec uero ad gloriam predicande Virginis pretitulantur, ut de radice sancta ramum sanctum deceat sanctitudo, immo de contempta regni excellentia maior ascribatur claritudo.”
Regarding her miracles, Goscelin notes, “Greater than miracles are the merits by which these miracles are made, because merits can be perfect without signs, but signs are nothing without merits.” He then describes some of her miracles, but one stands out as being directed at William. In this miracle story, one of Wærburga’s herdsmen, Alnoth, who was a devout man, was being beaten by one of her overseers. Unable to bear the sight of this, she threw herself at the man’s feet and rebuked him, asking him why he was tormenting an innocent man. The overseer was too slow to bow to her, as Goscelin says either out of anger or pride, and retribution came swiftly:

...forthwith his stiff neck and his grim face were bent backward onto his back by divine indignation. Thus, as he ought to have done, he threw himself at the mistress’s feet and begged for his own the forgiveness he had denied to the innocent man...  

As mentioned earlier, William’s pride and anger were troublesome to Goscelin; however, this miracle story does not just describe an event. It describes how God punishes those who mistreat the English saints and, by extension, the English. He warns that those who

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233 CCCC, f. 82v. “Maiora miraculis sunt merita, quibus ipsa fiunt miracula, qui possunt esse perfecta merita absque signis, signa uero nil sunt absque meritis.” A similar passage occurs in f. 11v of CCCC concerning Aethelthryth: “recedit enim uirtus meritorum, sequitur adiuuante fide penetium celestis operatio signiorum, qui si non ferunt, non tamen merita non erunt, quia merita procul dubio possunt esse sine miraculis, miracula uero nequaquam sine meritis.” “For the virtue of merits precedes followed by, with the assistance of the faith of those petitioning, the heavenly working of miracles; but if, however, there have been none of these [merits and faith], there are no merits, because without doubt there can be merits without miracles but no miracles without merits.”

234 CCCC, f. 79v. “Continuo dura ceruix et torua facies superna indignatione in terga illi reflectitur. Sic demum, quod magis debuerat, ipse ad perdes domine prouoluitur, et ueniam, quam insonti negauerat, suo reatui deprecatur...” The stiff neck is a term used in the Bible to describe stubborn pride, especially in the Old Testament, when the people of Israel are often referred to as stiff-necked.
abuse the innocent, whose anger and pride drives them to harm the ones they should be protecting, can expect no mercy from God.

Goscelin’s *Vita Sancte Werburge* was more widely circulated than the hagiographic works of the other Ely saints. Goscelin wrote it for Ely, despite the fact that Wærburga is not buried there; she is buried at Chester. However, her close ties to the other Ely saints, especially Sexburge and Eormenhild, provide a good reason for her inclusion in the Ely hagiography corpus. Her relationship to the other saints strengthens their status, especially because Goscelin goes into such detail about Wærburga’s ancestry. She also provided Goscelin with an opportunity to clearly explain why England and the English deserved to be treated with respect by the new king.

**ST. WIHTBURGA**

Wihtburga was the sister of Æthelthryth and Sexburge and, as in the other Ely hagiographies, Goscelin makes her relationship to King Anna clear. The primary goal in the *Vita Sancte Wihtburga Virginis* appears to be the justification of the translation of


236 According to the T manuscript, f. 237r, which postdates the CCCC, there was some question as to whether Wihtburga actually existed. To answer this charge, the author of T makes the following statement: “there are some who...choose to doubt that this saint was the daughter of King Anna, because Bede does not mention her in his history of our people...” “Sunt quidem...dubitare uolunt quod hec sancta non fuerit Anne regis filia eo quod Beda mentionem non facit de ea in nostre gentis historia.” The authorship of the CCCC manuscript can confidently be ascribed to Goscelin, as comparisons between *Vita Wihtburge* and other works known to be his confirms. It is almost certain he was also responsible for the expanded version found in the T manuscript, for similar reasons.
her body from the monastery she founded at Dereham to Ely, and so it is the Ely hagiography that least addresses Goscelin’s attitudes toward, and concerns with, William and the Normans.

This does not, however, mean Goscelin had nothing more to say to the new king and his nobles. In fact, he had some very specific problems to address. These were associated with the actions and attitudes of the Norman nobility toward the English. As with Wærburga, he uses the saint’s miracle stories as warnings directed toward the Norman nobility. He relates two miracles that closely correspond to post-Conquest episodes involving Norman nobility. These are very thinly veiled analogies, and Goscelin makes a point of drawing attention to them by stating that there are two stories those who are faithful to Wihtburga pass down from generation to generation. In fact, he feels these miracle stories are so important, he admonishes, “Here the faithful reader should pay attention.”

The first miracle Goscelin relates occurs while Wihtburga was building her monastery and concerns the reeve of Dereham. According to Goscelin, while she was building the monastery, Whitburga ran out of food for the nuns and the workers. She prayed to the Virgin for help, and received a message to send two of the nuns out in the

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103CCC, f. 60r. “Verum inter multas Virtutes quas gessit in uita, unum eius miraculum uel etiam duo in uno que fidelis plebs sua a generatione in generationem referendo perpetuat, tugique memoria quasi in libro scripta recitar.”

238CCC, f. 60r. “Hic fidelis auditor aduerat.”
morning, and two hinds would come to give them milk. This continued each morning,
and the hinds gave enough milk to feed everyone. Goscelin then writes,

The daily benefits of heavenly generosity continued to be used in abundance for some time, but the reeve of that village [Dereham], a man of evil character, began either making light of such great miracles or mocking them. Then, driven by jealousy, greed, and arrogant indignation, bringing his hounds he tried to capture the harmless beasts, obviously scorning the provisions they had conferred upon the Lord’s family. But shaken and terrified, they fled far into their native woods.239

Again it is greed, pride, and jealousy that drive a man in a position of power to harm innocents, both the hinds and the residents of the monastery. Although he does not directly state it, the reeve of Dereham would have been Norman. After the Conquest, William took advantage of the administrative system established in England. He changed the role of shire reeve (sheriff) from a deputy of the earl to a deputy of the crown and built castles which housed the sheriff’s offices and were the military and administrative bases for the crown in the shires. The sheriff also presided over the county court. In short, it was a position of great power.240

239 CCC, f. 61r. “Que superne largitatis beneficia cum cotidiano usu per aliquod tempus habundanter proficerent, prepositus ipsius uille uir prauiingenii cepit tanta miracula aut paruipendere aut irridere. Dehinc liuore cupiditate ac superba indignatione agitatus adductis canibus nitebatur insontes feras capitare, contentis scilicet commodis que dominice exibebant familie. At ille exacerbate et absterrite, procul in suas siluas aufugere.”

Goscelin explains the punishment God sent to the reeve for his cruelty. As he was chasing the hinds on his horse, it ran into a fence and a stake pierced its underside. The horse then fell on its back, and “...when the haughty rider was thrown off, he fell back on his head and died of a broken neck.” As in the miracle story of Saint Wærburga, a broken neck is the divine punishment for the misuse of power because of pride, but in this case the neck is broken literally rather than figuratively.

The next is a posthumous miracle and also involves a hunter. Goscelin claims to have personally witnessed an attack by a nobleman upon Whitburga’s followers during a veneration ceremony, stating “this we have also verified with our eyes.” When Whitburga died, she was buried in the monastery at Dereham, but her relics were translated from Dereham to Ely despite the protests of her monks. Because the people of Dereham no longer had the saint’s remains, they made it a custom to go on procession once a year with priests and clergy, banners and crosses, candles and offerings in order to commemorate their patroness. According to Goscelin, she still watched over her

241 CCC, f. 61r. “...dum resiliendo tergiuersatur, sessor superbus supino capite excutitur, fractaque ceruice examinatur.”

242 CCC f. 61r. “Quod etiam oculis nostris comprobatum,...”

243 CCC ff. 64r - 65v describe the translation of Wihtburga from Dereham to Ely, in which the saint’s remains were taken during the night.

244 CCC f. 61v.
faithful and performed miracles to protect and avenge any cruel treatment suffered by her followers.

Goscelin recounts a miracle story from the recent past about a knight who was overly proud of his power and wealth, and terrorized her followers during their procession. He sets the scene in the following way:

...a certain knight, who prided himself on his might because he owned some land in the neighborhood, rode up to the people who were following the divine rites, seated on his horse with his various domestic dogs, and with barking *molossus* dogs. They, in faith and devotion, were intent on worship, he with pride and foul language threatened to start his hunt. Like an eagle upon doves he fell upon the harmless crowds, assaulted, dragged, thrust, seized, terrified. So having dismissed the people’s procession like some empty superstition, they continued hunting.245

The word Goscelin uses for the hunting dog, *molossus*, describes a dog that was not so much a specific breed but a type of dog descended from the Roman molossus - a very large and ferocious dog a little larger than today’s English mastiff. Such a dog could easily have killed a person, so this description of a noble turning his dogs on Wihtburga’s followers after insulting them and their ceremony shows a vicious and violent nobleman with an utter lack of respect for the people and their saint. It is also noteworthy that Goscelin says the knight dismissed the procession as if it were a

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245 CCC, f. 61v. “Quidem miles efferens se potentia quod haberet possessionem in ea uicinia, ipsis plebis diuina sacra sequentibus occurrit equo sedens cum canibus, cum uris, cum molosis latrantibus. Ile cum fide ac deo utionem tendebatur adorandum, hic in superbia et abusione imminebat ad uenandum. Quia uelut aqu columbas innoxious agmen inuolat, inuadit, trahit, impellit, rapit, angit. Ut que posthabita plebeia processione quasi superstitione uenatum pergant...”
superstition. This appears to be a reference to the Norman attitude toward the English Church as well as the saints. Whether it was this particular event that Goscelin witnessed, or another instance of Norman nobles abusing the people, is less important than that he is stating outright he has seen these nobles acting in such a manner.

The people continued with their procession, but the nobleman continued his harassment. According to Goscelin, he began to hunt not only animals, but the worshippers, who called out to Wihtburga for help. Her response was swift:

While the knight was urging on his dogs with the sound of horns, while he flew after the prey, while he tried to head them off their flight, his swift horse failed to jump, fell, and tossed his master far away. The impact of that fall shattered his hip, and broken and burst limb from limb, he quickly died, 246

This is a very clear warning, not only to arrogant nobles, but to anyone who was harassing the English people, denigrating their saints, or was scornful of the English Church. Following this passage, Goscelin steps away from the narrative to comment on the fate of the knight. Goscelin’s next words are similar to those found in Æthelthryth’s hagiography, where he directly addresses King William in the guise of the Viking raider. The language is so similar, in fact, that there can be little doubt that Goscelin is speaking

246 CCC f. 62v. “Miles dum cornicinum clangore canes instigat, dum ad feras uolitat, dum ills fuga peruertere certat, uolucer equus fallax ad saltem corruit, dominum procul excutit. Ille ruine impulsu coxam fregit, membratimque solutus ac ruptus repente interiit.”
either directly to a particular noble or the nobility in general:

Ah impudence, ah arrogance, punished by such a toss! He who would hunt not only wild beasts but also men, and who would put hunting before the worship of God, was dragged off with his own hunting spear to prison by Hell’s Nimrod - which means ‘mighty hunter in the Lord’s sight’. Therefore, others should learn from this to seek God’s grace, rather than drive out those seeking it.²⁴⁷

This admonition is directed toward the Norman nobility. He is telling them that they should refrain from treating the people of England harshly and from being disrespectful toward its saints and Church. They should not be arrogant, selfish, or violent but return to God. The consequences for those who do not, as seen in these two miracles, are likely to be very unpleasant.

Wihtburga provided Goscelin with the opportunity to address what he saw as serious flaws in the Normans such as arrogance, violence, and cruelty. He graphically described the punishment they could expect if they continued such behavior. There was obviously enough abuse being heaped on the English people, its Church, and its saints for him to feel it was necessary to address the issue.

²⁴⁷ CCC f. 62. “Eia insolentia, eia iactania, quali punita est iactura! Venatem non feras solum sed et himines, et sua uenabula diuino cultui preferentem, ille infernalis nembroht qui interpretatur robustus uenator coram Domino, suis uenatibilus captum in suum abstraxit ergastulum. Hinc ergo discant alii gratiam Dei cuerere, potius quam querentes exturbare.”
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown the ways in which Goscelin’s commission at Ely offered him a unique opportunity to engage William and the Norman nobility in a discourse about issues that concerned him. Through the hagiographies of these royal female saints, he was able to call the new king to task over a variety of leadership issues, including Goscelin’s perception of the king as unable or unwilling to control his emotions, as being greedy, and as having a great disregard for the Church in England. He intentionally gave Sexburge and, to a lesser extent Æthelthryth, masculine qualities designed to subtly emasculate the king and Norman nobility. The Ely hagiographies suggest Goscelin was not only disturbed over Norman behavior, he was concerned that the king was not exhibiting proper Christian behavior. This had ramifications that went beyond King William’s own soul. If the king was engaging in unchristian behavior, the rest of the country could follow suit. In short, William was in danger of leading the whole of England into sin and damning all his subjects.

Goscelin’s experience at Ely was unique. In no other of his works does he engage the audience so personally. Nor is the language as intense or the imagery so vivid. This is the result of his own unique experiences combined with the situation at Ely, both in the monastery and the town. Goscelin had suffered personally at the hands of the new Norman clergy, as was seen in chapter one. Forced into a peripatetic life by the new
Bishop of Salisbury, Osmond, his life was unstable for about ten years. During this time he took commissions at various monasteries, read a variety of documents at each, and observed the impact of the Conquest first hand. When he arrived at Ely, his personal experiences seem to have been brought into play. When Goscelin accepted Abbot Simeon’s commission, the monastery and town of Ely were still reeling from the harsh treatment at the hands of the Normans. It is likely this charged atmosphere, combined with his own experience, inspired Goscelin to actively engage in political criticism through these hagiographies.

Goscelin wrote these works during the immediate post-Conquest period, when both conqueror and conquered were negotiating the social, political, and religious nature of the new nation. As such, they provide useful insight into the nature of colonization, assimilation, and identity. Goscelin was neither Norman nor English by birth, and so had a unique perspective when it came to the Conquest. His hagiographies of the female saints of Ely show the larger issues faced by English and Norman. The problem of loyalty, for example, is highlighted explicitly in the person of Sexburge. She was loyal to God and to her subjects, as a result her subjects were loyal to her and the Church flourished. Implied in her hagiography, however, is the right of the monarch to exact just punishment for disobedience. Goscelin makes a point of emphasizing that discipline
must be meted out with compassion and fairness, but reminds the audience that
obedience to the abbess, or king, is not optional.

The Ely hagiographies, then, are useful not only to understand how memories are
created, but the purposes that drive their creation. Goscelin’s writings present a first-
generation post-colonial view of Conquest England. He wrote in a way that was both
accessible and acceptable to the Norman conquerors while simultaneously creating
images and memories that not only validated the English people and their traditions but
demanded that they be treated with respect. He drew on the local memories of these
saints and created an image of England’s past that not only insisted on the dignity of the
English people, but allowed him to use the saints’ strengths to point out William’s
weaknesses and to hold these royal women up as examples.
CHAPTER V

GOSCELIN’S OTHER WORKS RELEVANT TO THE ELY HAGIOGRAPHIES

Goscelin of Saint-Bertin was, first and foremost, a hagiographer, and thus the hagiographies he wrote about the Ely saints share some traits with his other works in the genre. For example, his hagiographies all present a sense of Englishness that links England to Rome. They also note the connection of the saint about whom he is writing to either royal households or other saints, creating a family of English saints. Goscelin’s works, like all hagiographies, present a biography of the saints which highlight evidence of sanctity from early childhood. This includes, in the case of female saints, a desire on the part of the saint to put aside the secular world and become a nun.

All hagiographies praise the excellence of the saints, recount their miracles, and promote the saints’ holiness which, in turn, increases the prestige of the monastery

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248 C. H. Talbot notes that one of the hallmarks of Goscelin’s work concerning royal saints is a long genealogy. This creates a sort of network of royal saints, since the familial relationships in these genealogies often contain royal saints from other English households. For example, there is an connection between the genealogies of Saint Mildred and Saint Earcongota of Ely, since they were cousins (Goscelin, Liber Confortatorius, C. H. Talbot, ed., p. 16). Talbot offers no explanation for this idiosyncracy; however, a likely explanation is that this not only serves to place the saint firmly within English history, it creates a uniquely English image of holiness, since there was a long English tradition of associating royalty and sanctity.
associated with them. What sets the Ely hagiographies apart, and makes apparent
Goscelin’s subtext of criticism and advice to the Normans, is the combination of his
language and imagery with the examples he chose to underscore the Ely saints’
excellence and sanctity.

He could not directly criticize the new ruler, since such criticism could not only
make his life more difficult but might have an impact on the way churches and
monasteries were treated. What he could do, however, was deviate just enough from his
usual style to garner attention. This difference is not as apparent when the Ely
hagiographies are examined in isolation. When considered in context of some of his
other hagiographies of female Anglo-Saxon saints, however, the differences found in the
Ely hagiographies become more pronounced. Goscelin did, of course, write
hagiographies of male Anglo-Saxon saints as well; however, because the saints of Ely
were women, a comparison to his other hagiographies of female saints makes the
uniqueness of the Ely hagiographies stand out more.

The hagiographies of female saints examined in this chapter are those about
Saints Edith and Mildred as well as the female saints of Barking Abbey: Æthelburga,
Hildelith, and Wulfilda. These works were written by Goscelin just prior to and
subsequent to his tenure at Ely. The life of St. Edith, the patron saint of Wilton Abbey,
was written between 1080 and 1082, just prior to Goscelin’s arrival at Ely. It is the first
hagiography Goscelin wrote after leaving Sherborne Abbey, and so provides a foundation for his writing style during the itinerant phase of his life. It is also his first hagiography about an Anglo-Saxon female saint, thus offering an example of his earliest work in the genre.

Goscelin went to Barking Abbey after he left Ely. There he wrote the lives of its female saints. Barking Abbey was, at the time Goscelin was there, an all female monastery whereas Ely was exclusively male by the tenth century. This, however, is the only major difference; the similarities between the two abbeys are what make the Barking hagiographies particularly relevant. Both monasteries were founded by royal women who were succeeded as abbess by their sisters, both were affected by the Viking raids of the tenth century, and both needed to exert the rights to their lands in the late eleventh century. The Barking Abbey hagiographies offer the best opportunity for style and content comparison for these reasons, but also because Goscelin went directly to Barking from Ely. The short interval between composing the two sets of hagiographies suggests the potential for similarity in their content.

The life, miracles, and translation of St. Mildred were written during the last phase of Goscelin’s life, when he was at St. Augustine’s monastery at Canterbury. He wrote these in response to the claims by the canons of St. Gregory’s Priory in Canterbury.

\footnote{Goscelin was at Peterborough in 1082. After leaving there, his likely itinerary would have been the monastery at Ramsey, then Ely, where he was known to have been in late 1087 or early 1088, then to Barking Abbey. This is discussed at length by Thomas Hamilton; Goscelin of Canterbury, I, pp. 183 - 184.}
that they, in fact, possessed the true relics of Mildred.\textsuperscript{250} Wido, who was abbot at Canterbury at the time St. Gregory’s made this claim, called upon Goscelin to write hagiographic works that would simultaneously dismiss these claims and strengthen the connection between St. Augustine and Mildred.\textsuperscript{251} The similarities between the hagiographic works about Mildred and those of the Ely saints, especially Eormenhild, indicate Goscelin drew on his experiences at Ely to answer the claims of St. Gregory’s; however, there are significant differences in style.

Goscelin’s \textit{Liber Confortatorius} or \textit{Book of Encouragement and Consolation}, written between 1082 and 1083, is also included in this chapter.\textsuperscript{252} Although it is not a hagiography, it is an important source for understanding Goscelin’s frame of mind after leaving Sherborne. Goscelin started having problems at Sherborne Abbey shortly after his patron’s death. Herman’s replacement, a Norman nobleman named Osmond, did not have as favorable an opinion of Goscelin as had Herman. Shortly after becoming bishop of the diocese of Salisbury, which included both Sherborne and Wilton abbeys, he expelled Goscelin from the diocese.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{250}{Goscelin, “The Translation and Miracles of St. Mildrith,” Rollason, ed., p. 146.}
\footnote{251}{Rollason, \textit{The Mildrith Legend}, pp. 20 - 24.}
\footnote{252}{Goscelin, \textit{Liber Confortatorius}, Talbot, ed., p. 8.}
\end{footnotes}
There is no explanation available as to why Goscelin was discharged by Osmond, but there have been many scholarly speculations. Thomas Hamilton presents two of the most intriguing, both of which involve disputes about the Church. The first theory suggests that Goscelin and Osmond disagreed strongly over the role of monks within cathedral chapters as well as the Anglo-Saxon tradition of including monks in the group of clerics from which bishops were chosen. He argues that a monk bishop was an alien concept to Osmond, who did not warm to it as did other Norman bishops and archbishops such as Lanfranc. Osmond, according to Hamilton, was also inclined to look askance at monk bishops since he was a member of the secular clergy, and the tradition in Normandy had been to choose bishops from this group alone. He notes that Osmond was extremely devoted to Norman rulers and traditions.

Since Goscelin was not only a monk who had served as pastor to Wilton Abbey but was also devoted to England, it is not unreasonable that the two clashed over this issue. When Osmond built the cathedral at Salisbury, he did not include a cathedral monastery and placed thirty-two secular canons in the chapter, according to the Norman

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253 These speculations by scholars such as Monika Otter and Stephanie Hollis are discussed at length in chapter two in the historiography of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. They involve the relationship between Goscelin and Eve. These authors offer interesting insights, but as I argue in that chapter, it is unlikely that Eve was the reason Osmond expelled Goscelin.

This blatant disregard for English tradition was probably not met with enthusiasm by the English clergy, especially the monks, and Goscelin would have had cause to feel particularly hostile since he held a favored position under Herman.

The second theory concerns liturgical reforms that Osmond may have tried to impose on Sherborne and other church institutions in the diocese. England had remained faithful to the traditional Gregorian chant, of which Goscelin was a proponent. He had received his training in Flanders where Norman liturgical reform had no influence, and so felt no enthusiasm for it. Osmond insisted on using the Norman chant, and was met with strong resistance. The imposition of a new chant based on Norman innovations would have been seen by Goscelin as another example of Norman subjugation.

Both of Hamilton’s theories about Goscelin’s dismissal have merit, but rather than choosing one or the other, it seems Osmond’s treatment of Goscelin was more likely a combination of the two. If Osmond met resistance from Goscelin at every turn, if each attempt to introduce reform was challenged by this monk, Osmond could very easily have been pushed to the point of exasperation and discharged Goscelin. This scenario explains much about Goscelin’s attitude not only toward Osmond, but also William and all the Norman clergy and aristocracy. In the Liber Confortatorius, Goscelin describes

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255Ibid., p. 171.

256Ibid., p. 173.
personal events in his life and indicates a growing dissatisfaction, indeed resentment, toward the Normans. The language he uses in this work is very vivid and is closer to that found in the Ely hagiographies.

This chapter begins with the *Liber Confortatorius*, since it provides a more personal view of Goscelin. This is followed by an analysis of Goscelin’s legend of Saint Edith, then the Barking Abbey hagiographies. The chapter concludes with the life and translation of Mildred. Throughout these analyses, the Ely hagiographies will be referenced to highlight their differences.

*Liber Confortatorius*

This is a book of advice and admonitions written by Goscelin to his student and friend Eve, who had recently left England to become an anchoress in France.\(^{257}\) It is more than an instructive guide, however. Goscelin recounts their friendship in it and expresses his anger and pain at her departure. He wrote this after he had been dismissed from Sherborne and, because of its personal nature, it offers a better perspective of Goscelin’s state of mind during this period than is found in his hagiographies. The

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\(^{257}\) All quotes in this work come from Talbot’s edition of *Liber Confortatorius*, and all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
intensity and force of the writing in the *Liber Confortatorius* are also found in the Ely hagiographies, as is some of the imagery.\textsuperscript{258}

The *Liber Confortatorius* is a valuable source on its own. As an early example of advice literature written specifically for anchoresses, it offers insight into eleventh-century English religious practices, societal expectations of women, and the interaction between male and female religious communities. It was written almost a century and a half before the *Ancrene Wisse*, and eighty years before Ælred of Rievaulx’s *De Institutione Inclusarum*, and so a comparison of the texts shows the evolution of this genre and how perceptions about female religious recluses changed over time.\textsuperscript{259}

It is also the only known work by Goscelin to be directed entirely to a specific individual. He dedicates many of his hagiographic works to bishops or abbots, but in no other work does he engage in an ongoing conversation with one person. The nature of

\textsuperscript{258}The corpus of works known to be written by Goscelin or confidently attributed to him is extremely large, and analyzing all of them was beyond the constraints and scope of this dissertation. However, only the Ely hagiographies contain emotional language similar to that found in the *Liber Eliensis*.

\textsuperscript{259}The *Ancrene Wisse* or *Ancrene Riwle*, is an anonymous work written in the early thirteenth century for three sisters who became anchoresses. Cate Gunn provides an excellent analysis of this work and places it within the larger historical context in *Ancrene Wisse and Vernacular Spirituality in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2008). Ælred of Rievaulx was a Cistercian monk and one of the most important figures in the early Cistercian movement in England. He wrote *De Institutione Inclusarum* to advise anchoresses, but it was also used by the laity for spiritual guidance. John Ayton and Alexandra Barratt’s edited version of this manuscript is a very good introduction. *Ælred of Rievaulx’s De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions* (Early English Text Society Original Series 287, 1984). For a discussion of all three sources, see Gopa Roy’s chapter, “‘Sharpen Your Mind with the Whetstone of Books’: Goscelin’s *Liber Confortatorius*, Ælred of Rievaulx’s *De Institutione Inclusarum*, and the *Ancrene Wisse*,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, Smith and Taylor, eds., pp. 113 - 122.
his relationship with Eve allowed him to express himself in a more personal way than would have been the case in a hagiography, and it is this facet of the *Liber Confortatorius* that is most important for this dissertation. The frankness with which he expresses himself to Eve as well as the personal history he relates provide a unique opportunity to understand the mind-set that affected his attitude toward the Normans.

Goscelin arrived at Sherborne Abbey with Bishop Herman around 1058, and from there became involved with the female monastery at Wilton, to which St. Edith had belonged, and it is very likely he was a chaplain there. Goscelin was commissioned by the nuns of Wilton to write a *vita* of Edith, and he developed a strong relationship with them. While working on the life of Edith, Goscelin became the spiritual advisor to a very young oblate named Eve. She was five years old when Goscelin took on this role, and over the course of the next fifteen years they developed a close friendship defined by a profound spiritual love. Goscelin was likely asked to assume the role of spiritual father to Eve by Herman, to whom she was possibly related.

It appears Goscelin initially accepted this role out of a sense of loyalty to Herman rather than any desire to provide an education for a young girl. He was a good teacher,

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260 Goscelin of St. Bertin: *The Book of Encouragement and Consolation*, Otter ed. and trans., p. 5. Frank Barlow also argued that Goscelin was a chaplain at Wilton based on an obituary of Goscelin that describes him as *monachus et sacerdos*, or monk and priest; *The Life of St. Edward*, p. 142 n. 76.

261 Stephanie Hollis notes that Herman had a very close relationship with Eve from her early childhood, suggesting that she was his niece because her mother, like Herman, was a Lotharingian and that Herman had a nephew who held land in Wiltshire in 1086; *Writing the Wilton Women*, pp. 226-227.
although by his own admission he was a bit remote. In one passage he recalls that his teaching style irritated her at times when she was a child, suggesting he had no idea how to teach such a young student. He justifies his behavior by comparing his pedagogy to the way bees make honey, saying “thus from that which tastes bad do the bees make more pleasing honey.” After Eve was consecrated as a nun, their friendship deepened and matured. He notes how he was filled with love for her as he watched her take her vows:

To that point, however, I loved you fairly well and only outwardly in the good faith of Christ. But when, among the fourteen virgins, with brilliant lamps and candles like heavenly stars, you came trembling and next to last to your wedding to the Lord, with the people in the crowd solemnly looking on, with the pledge of divine faith [you] put on the sacred garment, I was struck more deeply in my heart by that humble habit, that trembling approach, that face glowing as if from the fiery throne of God sitting over the Cherubs, wisely anxious ...

Clearly this moment was as important to Goscelin as to Eve, and he was both in awe of and touched by her apparent deep spirituality. His concern for her changed from the casual and remote interest of a teacher dutifully instructing a pupil to that of a kindred spirit eager to engage in spiritual journey. What had previously been a casual affection


263 Ibid., “Adhuc tamen te tolerabiliter forinsecus tantum in spe bona Christi dilexi. Ubi uero inter quatterordecim uirgines, coruscantibus cereis tanquam syderibus et lampadibus supernis, ad dominicas nuptias trepida et penultima accessisti ac, populosa caterua sollemniter expectante, pignus fidei diuine cum sacrata ueste induisti, ille humilis habitus, ille tremebundus accessus, ille suffusus uultus, tanquam ab igneo throno Dei sedentis super cherubim, sapienter metuentis, altius uiscera me percussere...”
for his student became more of a parental pride and love. This shift in his awareness, apparently inspired by her faith, made him more resolved to more vigorously foster her spiritual growth.

He continues his reminiscence of her consecration by recalling that he arranged for her to be at the consecration of the church at Wilton. The purpose for this was to enhance and encourage her spiritual growth, and he felt that her attendance at the consecration would provide an opportunity to further instruct her. He describes why he was so encouraged:

Also, your continued silence, careful continence, frequent [singing of] psalms, and the pious testimonies of your teacher further kindled my vows all the more. I made it so that you yourself, having been dedicated, should attend the dedication of the church which followed closely after [your own dedication], desiring that you advance by such great sacraments.264

He took the opportunity during the dedication to instruct her to pray only that her desire would be for Christ alone since she was so wounded by love for Him, and to have Him alone as her dowry.265 Goscelin obviously felt Eve was spiritually as well as intellectually ready to discuss deeper religious topics, and was proud of her, not only as her teacher but also her friend.

264Ibid., “Continuata quoque silentia tua, sollicita continentia, frequens psalmodia, pia magistre testimonia, magis accederunt uota mea. Feci ut ipsa dicata intereses proxime dedicationi ecclesie, cupiens te tantis sacramentis proficere.”

265Ibid., “...utque unam tantum petitionem peters a domino id est, ut solum Christum uulnerata caritate concupisceres, ipsumque solum in direzione cordis et in tota anima tua in dotem experteres;...”
Their spiritual relationship and friendship deepened from this point, according to Goscelin. They corresponded frequently by letter when he was unable to visit Wilton, discussing the intellectual aspects of faith as well as the deeper, more personal aspects of it.\textsuperscript{266} Both he and Eve appear to have become reliant upon each other for intellectual and spiritual conversation, and Goscelin remarks that he frequently visited her and, was keenly disappointed if she was not available.\textsuperscript{267} When Herman died in 1078, Goscelin and Eve both mourned his passing. Goscelin refers to Herman’s death as the loss of a father, and recalls that the two frequently talked to each other about their mutual loss. This was obviously very comforting to Goscelin, as he remarks, “after the death of our father [Herman], I was consoled by you more frequently in our common orphaning.”\textsuperscript{268} It is clear, especially in Book I of the \textit{Liber Confortatorius}, that the friendship between Goscelin and Eve was spiritually and personally intimate, and that they were both concerned for the other’s well-being. Because Goscelin describes in detail the depth of their friendship, some scholars have assumed that there was an erotic element to their relationship, at least from Goscelin’s perspective.

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\textsuperscript{266}Ibid., p. 29, “Afferebant tibi Christum frequentes membrane et scedule nostre, nec tue uacabant acastissime littere.” “My frequent letters and notes brought Christ closer to you, nor did I lack your chaste letters.”

\textsuperscript{267}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{268}Ibid., “Post decessum patris nostri, consolabatur tecum frequentior communem orbitatem,…”
There is nothing to substantiate this assumption; at best, Goscelin’s words suggest that he saw their relationship in terms of spiritual spouses, united in love and adoration of Christ but lacking any physical aspect.\textsuperscript{269} Goscelin, for example, often referred to Eve as his soul, or the soul sweetest to him. This was an address that had erotic overtones in classical poetry, and is found again in the twelfth century in correspondences between lovers, as in those from Peter Abelard to Heloise.\textsuperscript{270} Goscelin, however, uses this term in a chaste manner, similar to that found in Jerome. The language he used to describe his frustration at occasionally not being granted access to Eve, or when expressing his anguish over her departure, though highly charged, contains nothing to suggest an inappropriate relationship.\textsuperscript{271}

Goscelin wrote the \textit{Liber Confortatorius} to offer advice and support to Eve as she embarked on a new path. Around 1080 Eve left England and traveled to Angers, where she became an anchoress at the church of Saint Laurent du Tertre.\textsuperscript{272} This work, it

\textsuperscript{269}The love between Goscelin and Eve was the sublime love described by Stephen Jaeger in which sexuality is not corporeal but spiritual - the union of two souls rather than two bodies. The tension expressed by Goscelin, then, is not the result of his wrestling with carnal desires for Eve, but the need he felt for her spiritually; \textit{Ennobling Love}, pp. 11-20.

\textsuperscript{270}Rebecca Hayward, “Spiritual Friendship and Gender Difference in the \textit{Liber Confortatorius};” in \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, Hollis, ed., pp. 341 - 353, p. 352. A discussion of the scholarly debate around the \textit{Liber Confortatorius} is found in chapter two in the historiography of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin.

\textsuperscript{271}Hayward, “Spiritual Friendship,” \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, Hollis, ed., p. 352.

\textsuperscript{272}H. M. Canatella, “Long-Distance Love,” p. 35.
appears, was as much for his own consolation as for her instruction.²⁷³ He and Eve had
developed a very close spiritual and intellectual friendship, and it appears he came to
regard her as a daughter or soul mate. Her departure deprived him of a confidant and
apparently made him feel isolated. He frequently includes expressions of disappointment
and hurt at her leaving in this work. For example, regarding her leaving England without
saying goodbye, he writes

Yes, you shut away all your plans from such a singular soul as
though from an enemy, and, without it ever expecting such pain,
you struck it with your hasty and unannounced flight, clearly so
that the unexpected strike would be more pernicious than an
expected one. If God is love, than it would have seemed more
holy that he be approached by one committed to love than one
who rejected it.²⁷⁴

The anger and hurt evident in this passage are understandable, and are no different than
any friend, or parent, would feel in a similar situation. Goscelin was Eve’s spiritual
parent and, given her young age when he became her teacher, a surrogate father. This

²⁷³It is not known if Eve ever read, or even received, the Liber Confortatorius since there is no record
of correspondence between Goscelin and her after she left for France. This could simply mean that such
correspondence was destroyed. The manuscript did apparently arrive in France, since its history is known.
It had been in Caen in 1704, then became part of the collection of the Marquis de Menars. In 1720 it was
purchased by Sir Hans Sloane, who left his manuscript collection to the British Museum in 1749 (Talbot,
“The Liber Confortatorius of Goscelin of Saint Bertin,” p. 24). The manuscript is now in the British Library,
MS Sloane 3103, folios 1 - 114. This is the only manuscript. Liber Confortatorius, W. R. Barnes and
Rebecca Hayward, trans., Hollis, ed., Writing the Wilton Women, p. 97.

²⁷⁴Goscelin, Liber Confortatorius, Talbot, ed., pp. 29-30, “Immo omnia ccconsilia tua tam unice anime
quasi hosti obserasti, nec unquam cogitantem tantos dolores precipitata et ignorata fuga percussisti, uidelicet
ne non interniciosius ferrornt insperata icacula quam preuisa, ne qua plage superesset medela. Si Deus caritas
est, san<ctus>ius uidentur adiri commendata quam contempta caritate.”
sudden departure seems at first troubling, since the two had been so close. In fact, Eve probably did not hide the fact that she was leaving England from Goscelin since such an undertaking would have required much planning and coordination. It is more likely that, because he had been banished not only from Sherborne Abbey but from the diocese, she simply was unable to communicate with him.

In the Liber Confortatorius the strain of being expelled from Sherborne as well as losing his close friend is evident. Goscelin’s imagery and language reveals the anger he felt toward Osmond and his indignation over the treatment he received from the new bishop. He equates Osmond with Pharaoh when he reminds Eve of how they comforted each other after Herman’s death “…until there rose up a king who knew not Joseph, and the envy of vipers and the barbarism of the step-father forced your devoted one to wander far.” Goscelin, as noted earlier, considered Herman to be the spiritual father of Eve as well as himself. If Herman was the good father, Osmond was the evil step-father. Clearly Goscelin felt he was a victim of what he perceived as Osmond’s insecurity.

Goscelin continues the Pharaoh metaphor in the fourth book, titled De Humilitate (Concerning Humility). This section is Goscelin’s reminder to Eve to remain humble and to impress upon her the importance of humility. He reminds her that people are

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275 Ibid., p. 29. “...donec surgente rege qui ignorabat Ioseph, uiiperina inuidia et uitricali barbarie deuotus tuus coactus est longius peregrinari.” This is reference to Exodus 1:8.
prone to pride, saying,

but the ignobility of the flesh, and the unworthiness of its slimy
crutification, puffing up with the unclean spirit of pride, has this
quality: that upon which the Lord visits mercy boasts all the more
insolently.\textsuperscript{276}

This rather graphic description of pride seems at first to be excessive, considering his
audience is an anchoress whom he had known from early childhood. Language such as
this would be more appropriate when teaching a novice, where the shock value would
have a deep impact; however, Eve had taken her vows at least five years prior and, since
Goscelin had taught her himself, she would already be familiar with Goscelin’s views
about humility, so it is not immediately apparent why he would use such vivid language.

It is in the subsequent lines that it becomes clear this language reflects the
bitterness Goscelin apparently still felt toward Osmond and at least some of the Norman
clergy. He saw himself as the victim of a man full of arrogance and scorn. He includes
Biblical passages that speak to the prideful, such as Galatians 6:3, “Whoever thinks
himself to be something, although he is nothing, deceives himself.”\textsuperscript{277} This is not an
instance of Goscelin sending a message to Osmond in the same manner he would later
engage William and the Normans in the Ely hagiographies. He had intended that only
Eve would read this book. Goscelin is, consciously or not, venting his anger through the

\textsuperscript{276}Ibid., p. 91. “Habet autem hoc carnis ignobilitas et limose putredinis dignitas, immundo spiritu superbia
inflante, ut quoa Domino uisitatur clementius, eo extollatur insolentius.”

\textsuperscript{277}Ibid.
advice he gives Eve, as the following quote indicates. Continuing the theme of
presenting Osmond as the personification of Pharaoh, and placing himself in the role of a
pious victim, he writes,

But when one is beginning to live piously and is, as it were, going up
from his land to the Promised Land, a wicked Pharaoh, king of secular
Egypt, will usually pursue him. He [Pharaoh] mounts up his chariots
and horses - that is to say those wind-bag people - against that one; he
[Pharaoh] arms them with mockery and rebukes, and with them hurries
to trample the still-ripening crop.278

This is, on the surface, advice to Eve who was beginning a new life of piety as an
anchoress. It is a warning to be aware that there are those who might try to ridicule her
into losing her resolve and abandoning the life she had chosen. It is more than this. It is
a reflection of Goscelin’s perception of his treatment at the hands of Osmond and the
Norman clergy who accompanied him to Sherborne. Goscelin’s word choice here
deserves special attention. He does not refer to Pharaoh simply as the king of Egypt, but
the king of secular Egypt (secularis Egypti), and Osmond was secular clergy.

Goscelin apparently felt he was persecuted and mocked by Osmond and his
canons, and in this passage he simultaneously vents his emotions to Eve and warns her
that she could encounter people who would harass her. It had been only four years since

278Ibid., “Sed pie conuersari incipientem et quasi de terra sua in terram repromissionis ascendentem, solet
impius Pharaoh rex secularis Egypti presequi. Ascendit currus et equos suos, id est uentosas animas contra
illum instigat, derisionibus et increpationibus hos armat, atque in his conculare nascentia sata festinat.” The
Latin word animas could also mean persons or people in Medieval Latin; J. E. Niermeyer, ed. Mediae
Goscelin had been expelled from Sherborne Abbey, and only two since he had learned that Eve had left for France, when he wrote this book. It is unlikely that he intended to send a message to Osmond here.\textsuperscript{279} It is more probable that, given what he had been through in such a relatively short time, his language reflects his state of mind as well as the emotional intimacy he shared with Eve. He appears to have seen her as the one person with whom he could express his anger, pain, sadness, and fear.

The penultimate sentence in this section reveals the degree to which Goscelin felt he had been persecuted by Osmond. Again, his choice of an example is Pharaoh, to whom Goscelin has previously compared Osmond:

When, however, it was necessary, the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh - hardened it because he has not freed it from harness - and he turned their hearts to hate his people and to deal deceitfully with his servants, he turned them to hate, he who has not turned them that they might love, so that the elect advanced through persecutions and the persecutors perished.\textsuperscript{280}

Goscelin reduces Osmond’s power, at least in his own mind, by making him a vehicle by which God advances the souls of His elect, just as he would later make the Vikings (and so the Normans) instruments of God’s judgement in *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe*. The

\textsuperscript{279}Goscelin knew it was likely someone would try to read the book while it was on its way to Eve. In his prologue he requests that anyone who might want to read this work return it to Eve because “Archanum duorum est Christo medio signatum...” “It is private between two people, sealed with Christ as an intermediary...,” *Liber Confortatorius*, Talbot, ed., p. 26.

\textsuperscript{280}Ibid., p. 92, “Quando autem oportuit, indurauit Dominus cor Pharonis indurauit quia a duritia non liberauit, et conuertit cor eorum ut odirent, qui non conuertit ut diligerent, quatinus electi persecutionibus proficerent, et persecutores perirent.”
difference between these two instances is intention. Goscelin is using the *Liber Confortatorius* to comfort himself as well as Eve, whereas in the *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe* he is making a point. His audience must also be considered. Goscelin did not intend for anyone but Eve to read *Liber Confortatorius*, but he knew the audience for his hagiographies would be broader.

Goscelin’s resentment toward Osmond and the Normans who were now in charge of England’s government and Church is reflected in passages such as those discussed above. It is not explicit, and was likely not even intentional. Forced into a peripatetic life by Osmond and, as he perceived it, abandoned by Eve, Goscelin could not have been in a positive frame of mind. It makes sense that the resentment he must have felt would find its way into his writing, especially given the personal nature of the *Liber Confortatorius*.

That Goscelin saw the Normans as oppressors is evident in certain phrases he uses in the *Liber Confortatorius*. These phrases frequently include the Normans in descriptions of people or nations, and he occasionally uses archaic terms. For example, when he writes

> Then the Lord will judge between nation and nation, between kingdoms and kingdom, among the Assyrians and the Hebrews, between the Romans and their subjugated nations, between the Gauls and the Britons ...  

281 Ibid., p. 111, “Tunc iudicabit Dominus inter gentes et gentes, inter regna et regna, inter Assirios et Hebreos, inter Romanos et subiugatas nationes, inter Gallos et Britannos.”
he is referring to the Normans and the English. The word order is important in this example. The oppressor is named first, so when God judging between Gauls and Britons it is clear that he is describing the Gauls as the subjugating nation. The Normans are associated with the Assyrians and the Romans, the English with the Hebrews and the people subjugated by the Romans. Goscelin later made a connection between the English and the Hebrew people in the Ely hagiographies, especially that of Sexburge, to whom he refers as the mother of an elect people and compares to Abraham’s wife Sarah. He also uses the Latinized form of *utlaga*, the Anglo-Saxon word for outlaw in the following passage concerning the fate of wicked Christians and pagans:

> On the left side, however, was a row of evil Christians, condemned by God’s judgment, the other was a row of the wicked pagans not worthy of judgment but, as in the case in an earthly empire, so only the ones who are deemed an enemy or have been outlawed are subject to judgment...²⁸²

Note that Goscelin would use this word, rather than *proscriptus*, which supports the idea that he more closely identified with the English than the Normans.

There is another passage that is similar to one found in the Ely hagiographies. In Book Two of *Liber Confortatorius*, Goscelin writes about the nature and slaughter of demons and discusses Jerome’s teachings. He presents Jerome’s description of the worst of these demons: “Yet of all these [demonic] princes, there is a certain one more eminent

²⁸²Ibid., p. 111, “A sinistris autem ordo malorum Christianorum iudicio dampnatur, alter uero ordo impiorum paganorum nee dignus est iudicio, sed sicut fit in terreno imperio, ut qui hostis aut utlagus iudicatus fuerit soli subiaceat internectioni...” (emphasis mine)
in wickedness and loftier in iniquity...”

Although he ascribes this description to Jerome, this passage bears a similarity to the one in the *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe* describing the most fierce and audacious Viking that plundered Ely. Goscelin writes there that “[there was among those fierce hosts of idolaters one who was more savage, more severe, more cruel than all the others,...”

These passages are similar enough to suggest Goscelin recalled this passage when writing the *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe*.

It seems that the perception Goscelin had of his treatment by Osmond colored the way he viewed all Normans. This is not to suggest that he felt outright hostility toward them; in fact, he seems to have admired Archbishop Lanfranc, and since the bishops and abbots in England were primarily Norman, he could not have received the commissions he did during the peripatetic phase of his life. However, his personal experiences combined with events he either witnessed or heard about made him deeply wary of them. When he was commissioned by Simeon of Ely, the situation there called his memories and experiences to the fore. This, in turn, inspired him to engage William and the Norman nobility and clergy in a way he had been unable to in the past. The *Liber Confortatorius* highlights the personal trauma Goscelin experienced and likely carried with him.

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283 Ibid., p. 57, “Tamen omnium horum principum uelut eminentiorem quemdam in nequitia et in scelere celsiorem...”

284 CCCC, f. 14r, Erat inter ipsos ferociissimos idolatrarum hostium cuneos quidam aliis immannior, immittiocrudelior....”
SAINT EDITH OF WILTON

The first hagiography of a female Anglo-Saxon saint Goscelin wrote was that of Saint Edith of Wilton Abbey. Known as the Edith Legend, it is comprised of a vita and a translatio that includes miracle stories. Although the reason for commissioning the hagiography at Wilton was the same as for Ely, that is, to help reclaim lands and property taken from the monastery, this work is similar to the Ely hagiographies in only one significant way: Edith succeeded her mother as abbess of Wilton in much the same way Eormenhild succeeded Sexburge and Earcongota succeeded Eormenhild at Ely. Edith’s mother, Wulfthryth, was also a royal saint but, unlike Sexburge, left Edith’s father to return to Wilton. Wulfthryth, however, is never presented in the same masculine light as Sexburge, and Edith bears no resemblance to Eormenhild. Edith’s memory, in fact, likely tested Goscelin’s skill as a hagiographer in an unprecedented way. The saint was known to be headstrong and had a fondness for wearing fine clothes and jewelry.\(^\text{285}\) Presenting her as a paragon of virtuous modesty was indeed a challenge, but one that had to be met if Goscelin was to write a Latin vita that would be acceptable to the Norman clergy.

He accomplished this by focusing on Edith’s connection to St. Dunstan, the tenth-

\(^\text{285}\) Goscelin, *Vita Sancte Edithe*, Wilmart, ed., pp. 70-71. According to Goscelin, when Bishop Æthelwold once chided Edith for earing expensive clothes and jewelry, she replied that she possessed the Lord, who paid more attention to the mind not the clothing.
century monk who helped reintroduce Benedictine monasticism into England and whom Lanfranc admired. He also presents her as devoted to St. Denis, and keeps the language and imagery of her more sedate than in those he would write for Ely. He created an image of the saint that combined her independent nature with a deep piety and related miracles of healing and protection she performed in a way that emphasized her power. He also dedicated her *vita* to Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury and appealed to him to protect Wilton Abbey. Her *vita*, therefore, is more similar to those found on the Continent than others Goscelin wrote.286

Edith (Eadgyth in Anglo-Saxon) was born in 961 to King Edgar the Peaceful and Wulfthryth, who was his wife at the time.287 Edgar had three consorts: the mother of Edward the Martyr, identified variously as a woman Edgar seduced away from Wilton or

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286 Whalen points out that Norman convents were under strict episcopal control at this time, whereas English monastic houses of both sexes had always enjoyed greater independence. He points out Norman clergy would have preferred the greater control found in the Norman monasteries. He also states that in her hagiography Goscelin emphasizes Edith’s independent-mindedness along with her undeniable sanctity, thus creating a new model for Anglo-Norman hagiographies. While it is true that Goscelin showed Anglo-Saxon female saints as being strong and independent, he may be overstating the point. Edith’s independent nature, as seen in her *vita*, is always in the context of religious duty and obedience. A careful reading of this *vita* makes it clear that, because he was appealing directly to Lanfranc, Goscelin made a concerted effort to show Edith as having much in common with Norman nuns while maintaining her Englishness. Goscelin’s genius in rewriting Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives was his ability to recast the saints in such a way that they maintained a uniquely English character while being familiar enough for the Norman clergy to be comfortable. Whalen, “Patronage Engendered,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, Smith and Taylor, eds., especially pp.125-129.

as Æthelflæd; Wulfthryth, by whom he had Edith; and Ælfthryth, mother of Æthelred II (the Unready). Only Ælfthryth is recorded as being made queen, and it has been suggested that Wulfthryth and her predecessor may, in fact, have not been Edgar’s wives.\textsuperscript{288} This is not very likely, since marriage would have strengthened the claim any son would have to the throne. Since Edward the Martyr was allegedly murdered in order for Æthelred to take the throne, Edgar was most likely married to Æthelred’s mother. It is also probable he was married to Wulfthryth since, as mentioned above, any son of this union would have a stronger claim to the throne if his parents were married. Given Edgar’s history with women, Ælfthryth was most likely specifically named as queen to emphasize she was properly married to Edgar and that the marriage was not, in fact, bigamous.\textsuperscript{289} Despite his somewhat questionable domestic past, Edgar was favorably remembered in Goscelin’s time as bringing peace and order to England.\textsuperscript{290} Goscelin, as will be seen, used this image of Edgar to favorably link Edith to St. Dunstan.\textsuperscript{291}


\textsuperscript{289}For further discussion on this see above, Hindly, \textit{A Brief History}, and James, \textit{Britain in the First Millennium}. Also, O’Keefe, \textit{Stealing Obedience}, pp. 158-161 and Hollis, \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, pp 245-250.

\textsuperscript{290}James, \textit{Britain in the First Millennium}, pp. 250-251.

\textsuperscript{291}Lanfranc revered St. Dunstan, and had his relics elevated at Canterbury. It has been suggested by Paul Anthony Hayward that Goscelin used Edith’s hagiography to subtly coerce Lanfranc into becoming a patron of English saints in general by using what he calls the “veiled aggression that typifies” Goscelin’s work; “Translation-Narratives in Post-Conquest Hagiography,” \textit{Anglo-Norman Studies XXI: Proceeding of the Battle Conference} (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 67-94, p. 79. While it is true that Goscelin did not hesitate to insert criticism within the subtext of his hagiographies, his style does not use veiled
Wilton Abbey was well known as a center for educating royal and noble women, serving as a boarding school as well as a convent. Wulfthryth was of noble birth and her parents sent her to Wilton Abbey to be educated. Edgar had either wooed her away from the abbey or abducted her from Wilton before she became a nun. She was apparently more revered by the Wilton nuns than was Edith, and was in many ways more saint-like than her daughter. Goscelin used Wulfthryth’s perceived sanctity to assert Edith’s through association.\textsuperscript{292} The only difficult part was the nature of her relationship with Edgar.

When Edith was about two years old, her parents’ marriage was dissolved and Wulfthryth returned to Wilton and became a nun. There is no explanation given for the dissolution, but it is generally accepted that it was to allow Edgar to marry Ælfthryth.\textsuperscript{293} Goscelin created a memory of this dissolution that painted Wulfthryth as a strong and pious woman who was more determined after the birth of her daughter to become a nun than she was before she married Edgar, thus providing an acceptable reason for the end of Wulfthryth and Edgar’s marriage. In the same way Æthelthryth’s marriage to Ecgfrith

\textsuperscript{292}Hollis, \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, p. 247.

\textsuperscript{293}Stephanie Hollis, “St. Edith and the Wilton Community” in \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, pp. 245-280, p. 245.
was dissolved because she wanted to become a nun, Wulfthryth’s was dissolved with the same result. The reputation of neither the queen nor the king was tarnished by ending the marriage in this way, since desire for a monastic life was one of the few acceptable reasons for ending a marriage. Ending his marriage to Wulfthryth in this way meant Edgar’s subsequent marriage to Ælfthryth was also acceptable.\textsuperscript{294}

This solved three problems. Edgar’s image remained unblemished since, rather than suggesting he may have cast aside Wulfthryth, Goscelin shows him as having sacrificed his love for her and allowed her to become Christ’s bride. It also ensures that any children he had with Ælfthryth were legitimate and therefore could legally become king after him. Finally, it highlights Wulfthryth’s piety and devotion to Christ, since she put aside the earthly pleasures associated with being Edgar’s queen, such as wealth and power, to become a nun. According to Goscelin,

But the holy parent Wulfthryth - for she is proved to be holy both by her life and miracles - after the blessedness of giving birth to such a child, could no longer be satisfied by flesh and blood....Who shall find a strong woman? This young woman cuts off the sweet affections and most flourishing glory of the young king like the valiant Judith, and flees from the middle of the flames to the living waters.\textsuperscript{295}

\textsuperscript{294}James A. Brundage discusses this in depth in chapter six of \textit{Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

\textsuperscript{295}Goscelin, \textit{Vita Sancte Edithe}, Wilmart, ed., p. 42, “At sancta parens Wlftrudis - sancta quippe et uita probatur et miraculis, - post beatam tante sobolis genituram iam non acquivuit carni et sanguini...Mulierem fortrem quis invenit? Adolescentula, adolescentis regis dulces affectus et florentissimum decorem ut fortis ludith abscedit, et de medio flamme ad fontem uiuum refugit.” In the Book of Judith, Judith kills the general of the invading Assyrian army, Holofernes, by cutting off his head while he was in a drunken stupor.
Goscelin presents Wulfthryth as a strong woman who desired Christ more than earthly pleasures, and in this way she is similar to Sexburge. However, Goscelin appears to have taken a dim view of nobles or kings moving from one wife to another. He emasculates Edgar by using a device similar to the one he used in Sexburge’s hagiography to emasculate William. He compares Wulfthryth to Judith; just as Judith cut off the head of Holofernes, Wulfthryth cut off the advances and attention of Edgar. However, in this case Goscelin uses only feminine imagery and does not repeat this motif. Wulfthryth, unlike Sexburge, is never described in masculine terms. The image Goscelin creates of Wulfthryth also underscores her sanctity and devotion to Christ, and her flight to Wilton emphasizes her desire to be His bride. It would follow, then, that the daughter of such a woman would also be holy.

Edith accompanied her mother to Wilton Abbey where, according to Goscelin, she eventually took the veil.²⁹⁶ She became abbess, but died in 984 when she was twenty-three years old. Although she was the patron saint of Wilton, the nuns there seem to have preferred her mother and saw her as their patron. It was through the subsequent work of the next abbess, Ælfgifu, and Dunstan that Edith became the patron saint of Wilton Abbey.²⁹⁷ The treatment of Dunstan, who Goscelin names as Edith’s teacher and who was a central figure in the tenth-century reform of the English Church, in Edith’s

hagiography is itself somewhat hagiographical. Goscelin could not write a hagiography of Dunstan within Edith’s, but, as will be seen, he does make it clear that Dunstan was destined for sainthood.

Goscelin had originally been asked by his patron Herman to write a vita of the saint, but really concentrated on it in 1080, when he was commissioned by Abbess Godiva to write a legend of Edith. Godiva needed the image of Edith to be updated and improved in order to attract the patronage of Lanfranc and maintain or regain lands the convent had lost. This was not as easy a task as might at first be believed. Edith’s sanctity had been recognized, but she was a minor saint and her cult was waning. This is evidenced by the refusal of an English noble named Brihtsige to return land he had appropriated. His sister had been healed by Edith, and Godiva sent her to ask him to return the lands as he lay dying. Apparently his heirs were not sufficiently frightened at the vision his sister had of him cowering before Edith’s wrath after he died, since they refused the request.

The circumstances surrounding Goscelin’s commission at Wilton, then, were similar to those that brought him to Ely. Lands had been taken from the abbey and the residents needed powerful patronage to help regain them. Rewriting the lives and deeds of the patron saints was one way to assert a monastery’s rights, especially when the

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298 Ibid., p. 276.

property was originally given by royal decree. One might reasonably assume that there would be numerous marked similarities between the Ely hagiographies and Edith’s. This is not the case. Goscelin’s *vita* of Edith and his account of her translation and miracles lack the intensity of the Ely hagiographies, following instead a more typical format for the genre, and with good reason.\(^{300}\)

Wilton Abbey was one of the richest monasteries in England, and the richest female one, thus making it especially vulnerable to claims against its lands. Goscelin, therefore, made a point of mentioning the land and wealth given to Wilton by Edgar and presented Edith as a model of female sanctity with which the Normans were familiar and comfortable. He emphasized Edith’s connection to St. Dunstan, the tenth-century monk who helped reestablish Benedictine monasticism in England and whose relics were at Canterbury. Goscelin apparently believed the saint’s role in Church reform would be appealing to Lanfranc who was himself initiating reforms. In order to convince Lanfranc to protect and support Wilton, Goscelin tied Edith’s reputation to Dunstan through her father, through her consecration as a nun, and through her death.

\(^{300}\)Georges Whalen argues convincingly that Goscelin intentionally used a style that was familiar to the Normans in order to make patronage and protection of a female religious house more likely. He notes that English convents were more independent than those on the Continent, and in an effort to allay concerns the Norman clergy might have about the nature of English female monasticism, Goscelin focused on Edith’s royal heritage and reminds the reader that Christ respected women as much as men. It would have been counterproductive, he argues, to present Edith as the strong-willed and independent woman she was. Whalen, “Patronage Engendered,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, Smith and Taylor, eds.
The prologue of Goscelin’s *Vita Sancte Edithe Virgine* begins with a dedication to Lanfranc. Goscelin uses this opportunity to place the care of Edith, and by extension Wilton, into Lanfranc’s hands, writing, “Therefore I hand over to your protection a pearl not to be trampled by pigs, a lamb not to be mauled by wolves, a dove not to be torn to pieces by ravens.”\(^3\(^\text{01}\)\) This tactic simultaneously acknowledged Lanfranc’s ecclesiastic power and put Wilton in a more dependent position, which was decidedly more palatable to Norman tastes than the idea of independent English women. Goscelin then describes how heaven announced Edgar’s birth to Dunstan. It is done in a way meant to cast Edgar as the savior of England in the same way Christ was the savior of man. He writes that while he was praying one night for the welfare of his flock, Dunstan “heard a very clear voice pouring from the sky, telling him of peace for the English, having long been downtrodden, in the birth of this boy.”\(^3\(^\text{02}\)\) On the surface it appears Goscelin is tying Edith’s sanctity to that of her father as he would later tie the Ely saints to Anna; however, what he is, in fact, doing in this example is linking both Edgar and Edith to Dunstan.

Goscelin made a point to note that Dunstan was an important part of Edith’s life and education as she grew up in Wilton. Dunstan, who was later canonized, was an

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\(^3\(^\text{01}\)\) Goscelin, *Vita Sancte Edithe*, Wilmart, ed., p. 39, “Tradimus ergo tuo patrocinio margaritam non porcis conculcandam, agnam non lupis laniadam, columbam non coruis discerpendam.” Note, Goscelin often refers to himself as we, hence *tradimus* rather than *trado*.

\(^3\(^\text{02}\)\) Goscelin, *Vita Sancte Edithe*, Wilmart, ed., p. 40, “...uocem clarisonam de celo fusam accepit, que pacem Anglis diu afflictis, in nato silicet puero, nuntiauit.
important figure reforming the English Church in the tenth century and, as noted above, was admired by Lanfranc. Constantly reminding the reader of Edith’s ties to Dunstan was likely meant to ingratiate the saint to Dunstan, much as placing the care of Wilton Abbey and its patron saint in Lanfranc’s care was meant to do when he dedicated Edith’s vita to him.

Goscelin also mentions that Æthelwold was also Edith’s teacher. Æthelwold was another tenth-century cleric who was an important part of the tenth century reformation in England and, like Dunstan, was later canonized. Edith’s father, King Edgar, had been educated by Æthelwold, so by including him Goscelin created a family history of proper Christian education. He calls Dunstan and Æthelwold Edith’s gatekeepers, and states that they both consecrated her as a nun.

These [Dunstan and Æthelwold], like faithful servants, performing the function of love and angelic ambassadors, eagerly invited the Lord’s spouse toward her eternal marriage, whom they consecrated to the bridegroom, the king of virgins, and everlasting chastity. Her consecration by both Dunstan and Æthelwold gave Goscelin the opportunity to connect Edith to the tenth-century English Church reform, which would only have served

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to make her more appealing to Lanfranc, who worked to reform the English Church to be more like the Norman Church while incorporating English traditions to facilitate this.\textsuperscript{304}

Goscelin completes his connection of Dunstan to Edith by relating a vision Dunstan had about her impending death. He relates that Edith had a church built at Wilton in honor of St. Denis that was finished when she was twenty-three years old.\textsuperscript{305} The consecration ceremony was performed by Dunstan who, according to Goscelin, burst into tears after the ceremony, having received a vision that Edith would die in three weeks. When this came to pass, it was Dunstan who performed the funeral mass. She was buried in the church she had built for St. Denis, according to her wishes. Her mother built an almshouse in her honor that Goscelin noted was still caring for the poor when he wrote the hagiography.\textsuperscript{306}

It is noteworthy that, although Goscelin recounts miracles that occurred after Edith’s death, the \textit{vita} does not end with an account of the saint. Instead, Goscelin ends by telling the audience that, because of the signs indicating that Edith was alive in


\textsuperscript{305}It is very possible this is an embellishment of Goscelin’s meant to appeal to Lanfranc. There are two copies of the \textit{vita} of St. Edith, known as the Rawlinson and the Cardiff versions. Goscelin apparently revised the original. The Rawlinson version states that Edith was devoted to the cults of her female relatives, while the Cardiff version has her devoted to the cult of St. Denis. This version is the one dedicated to Lanfranc, which increases the likelihood that he recreated Edith’s devotion to make it more attractive to Lanfranc. Stephanie Hollis discusses this at length in her essay “Goscelin and the Wilton Women,” \textit{Writing the Wilton Women}, pp. 217 - 244, especially pp. 239-243.

\textsuperscript{306}Goscelin, \textit{Vita Sancte Edithe}, Wilmart, ed., pp. 87-98.
heaven (in other words, a saint), her mother made sure that two masses were celebrated each day for Edith: the *Dilexisti Iustciam* and *Requiem Eternam*. The first one, he notes, is in praise of the saints.\textsuperscript{307} He emphasizes that after this started there was a sudden increase in miracles. The result of this is a connection on the part of the audience to Wulfthryth’s motherly love rather than contemplation of Edith, and perhaps some of her less saintly attributes. Goscelin ended the work with this image of a grieving mother, whose only consolation was that her daughter was now a saint, to foster an empathetic response from the audience, namely Lanfranc.

The miracles Goscelin describes in the *Translatio* of Edith are similar to those found in the Ely hagiographies. Two, however, stand out as particularly relevant to the Ely hagiographies. The first of these concerns a miracle performed not by Edith, but by Wulfthryth. Goscelin introduces it by saying “...here I dedicate the praises of the mother to the daughter. It is right to celebrate together on the same page those whom the same church embraces.”\textsuperscript{308} In this story, a blind man approaches a priest named Brenna and tells him he had a vision that his sight would be restored if Wulfthryth bathed his eyes with her own hands. Brenna finally convinced her to try while she called out to the


\textsuperscript{308}Goscelin, *Translatio Edithe*, Wilmart, ed., p. 271, “...hic materna filie dedicamus preconia. Recte eadem concelebret pagina quas eadem complectitur ecclesia.” Note, I have translated *dedicamus* as “I dedicate” although it literally means “we dedicate.” It should not be taken as a form of the so-called royal we. I suggest it is a device he used to remove himself from the narrative thus allowing the audience to more closely relate to the story.
Trinity, and the man was indeed healed. She then declared herself unworthy, giving all credit to God.309

In itself, this is not an unusual miracle story. That it is included in the accounts of her daughter’s miracles is highly unusual. It is the second miracle story in the translatio, following one about an audacious monk who tried to cut off a piece of Edith’s clothing as a relic. There are two possible reasons Goscelin did this. He may have been trying to appease the nuns of Wilton who, as mentioned above, were more devoted to Wulfthryth than Edith. He may also have been continuing the literary diversion employed in the vita to bolster Edith’s sanctity through her mother’s virtue. There is no such instance in any of the Ely hagiographies; in those the miracles and sanctity of the daughters stood apart from their mothers’. Although Goscelin emphasized the familial relationship of the Ely saints, this resulted in a stronger group identity and was not used to enhance the validity of any one of them.

The second miracle concerns a sheriff who mistreats two priests from Wilton Abbey. Its subject is very similar to the sheriff who abused the nuns of St. Wihtburga’s monastery at Dereham by hunting the hinds which God had sent to provide milk for the monastery. This story, however, is quite different. Where the Dereham sheriff is described as being evil and taking delight in causing the monastery harm but not given a

name, Goscelin provides the Wilton sheriff’s name but provides no motive for his treatment of the priests. The Dereham sheriff does not fear any retribution, the Wilton sheriff realizes he has made a grave error. The account in Wihtburga’s hagiography is long; this, however, is very short, only two sentences long:

Two priests of her monastery, Osmund and Adelman, were carried off by the Wilton reeve Ailwin to his dungeons, and the blessed lady called out to the Lord. Out of fear of the lady, he released them immediately, but divine vengeance followed at once; the aforesaid, biting out his own tongue and mangling his fingers with his teeth, died, and paid the price brought about by his arrogance.  

The sheriff in this account was forced to kill himself it would seem, whereas in Wihtburga’s hagiography the sheriff was killed when he was thrown from his horse. This suggests that, while he wanted to make the point that it would be unwise to harass anyone or anything loved by St. Edith, Goscelin apparently did not think it necessary to elaborate beyond that. A likely reason for the differences between the two miracles is the absence of any recent acts of aggression against Wilton; however, when Goscelin wrote the Ely hagiographies, it was shortly after William had put down the uprising there, and there were recent instances of Norman nobles and sheriffs taking lands and harassing the monks.

Despite the fact that both Wilton and Ely employed Goscelin to rewrite their saints’ hagiographies in order to help regain monastic property that had been taken, the works he did for each monastery are vastly different. This is in part due to the need to present Wilton as requiring Archbishop Lanfranc’s patronage, which required a different approach to creating a useful memory of Edith. The larger reason, I argue, has to do not only with Goscelin’s previous relationship to Wilton but also the situation at Ely.

Goscelin’s connection to Wilton was more personal due to his friendship with Eve and, in 1080 he was still keenly aware of the disastrous effects of running afoul of those higher in the ecclesiastic hierarchy. As a result, he was careful to entrust Edith, and by extension Wilton, to Lanfranc’s care and present her in as positive a light as possible. He had neither the need nor the desire to engage Lanfranc in a subtextual dialog. Goscelin was commissioned by Wilton seven years before he went to Ely, and he less concerned about ruffling the feathers of the Church hierarchy. The situation at Ely also seems to have brought out old resentments. In the seven years between his writing the hagiography for Wilton and his arrival at Ely, he had time to observe more of the effects of the Conquest. His fondness for England as well as his own history combined in Ely in a unique way, and he took the opportunities that presented themselves there to address the political and ecclesiastic leadership in a way that was not possible at any other monastery.
BARKING ABBEY

Goscelin was commissioned to write the hagiographies of the female saints of Barking Abbey by Abbess Alviva, who was renovating and expanding the abbey in 1087. In order to do this, she needed to translate the bodies of three of the saints: Æthelburga, Wulfilda, and Hildelitha, and the new hagiographic works about them would have helped create a favorable opinion for the project. He arrived at the abbey after leaving Ely, and there are certain superficial similarities between the hagiographies written at Barking to those from Ely. He was writing about a group of female saints, for example, and for Æthelburga and Hildelitha he relied upon Bede for his history just as he had for Æthelthryth and Sexburge. However, his word choice and imagery are less vivid in these hagiographies, and there is more of an emphasis on the history of the abbey. Significantly, his description of the Viking attacks on the monastery are very different from that found in the Miracula Sancte Æthelthryth.

Alviva’s desire to maintain the upkeep of Barking was not met with much enthusiasm from ecclesiastic authorities, and the idea of moving the saints, especially Æthelburga who was highly revered, met with some resistance. It was apparently her hope that employing Goscelin to write new hagiographic works about the saints would

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make the prospect more appealing. Barking Abbey is the second oldest abbey in England, built about 666, 36 years after St. Eanswyth’s Abbey at Folkestone. It was built by St. Erconwald and his sister, St. Æthelburga. It was the first monastery in England to house nuns, and so Erconwald invited Hildelitha, a nun from the monastery of Faremoûtier, on the Continent, to teach the Benedictine rule to his sister. These two women were the first abbesses of Barking. The monastery was destroyed in the ninth century by Vikings, and rebuilt in the tenth century by King Edgar, who installed Wulfhilda as abbess. Wulfhilda was the sister of Edith’s mother, Wulfthryth. Edgar apparently also pursued Wulfhilda, but was not successful.

Both Erconwald and Æthelburga were highly venerated, and as a result the monastery and church they built were considered very holy. This regard for the saints and their buildings kept the monastery’s lands and property safe from any encroachment. It also created roadblocks for Alviva’s plans to refurbish and expand the abbey. Goscelin’s approach to this issue was to dedicate the *Vita et Miraculae Sancte Æthelburga* and the *Vita et Miraculae Sancte Wulfilda* to Bishop Maurice of London, much as he had dedicated the *vita* of Edith to Lanfranc; but there is a subtle difference.

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In the dedication to Lanfranc, Goscelin implicitly acknowledges the archbishop’s power by placing Edith’s memory and monastery under his protection. It is subtle and very effective. Alviva, however, did not need Maurice to protect Barking Abbey or its lands; she needed his support within the church hierarchy of the saints’ translations. Goscelin is not as subtle, therefore, in addressing Maurice. He uses flattery and an appeal to Maurice’s duty to convince him to allow the translations. He calls him a Prince of the Church, saying, “It befits you, therefore, O Prince of the Church, as friend of the bridegroom and keeper of the Lord’s bride, not only to undertake these [translations], but also to defend them against presumptuous protests.”

Further credence for Alviva’s plans was given in the De Translatione Vel Elevacione Sanctarum Virginum Ethelburgae Hildelithae ac Wlfildae, where Goscelin describes visions the saints sent to Alviva and other nuns in the abbey demanding their remains be moved from their cramped tombs into a grander resting place. He also praises

314 Goscelin, Vita et Miraculae Sancte Æthelburga, Colker, ed., p. 389, “Decet ergo te, O princeps eclesiastice, ut amicum sponsi et obsequutorem Dominicae sponsae, non solum hec suscipere uerum etiam contra temerarios latratus defensare.” Goscelin, who had a fondness for wordplay, used the word latratus in describing the resistance to translating Æthelburga. Although I have translated latratus here as protests, it translates literally as barking.
Alviva’s desire to maintain and improve the abbey, saying her works were greater than those of Samiramis and Dido because she was inspired by faith and the grace of God. This is a marked departure from any of his other hagiographies. Nowhere else did Goscelin include accounts of the current abbess (or abbot) within the corpus of a *vita* or *translatio*.

The most pronounced difference between the Barking hagiographies and those of Ely is in the description of the ninth-century Viking raids. The language Goscelin uses in the Barking hagiographies is decidedly calmer, and his description of the raids gives the impression that they had come to be expected by the population rather than being seen as a demonic storm sent by Satan. He certainly does not present the Vikings as the inhuman savages bent on destroying not only the Church in England, but the souls of its people, as he does in Æthelthryth’s hagiography. Instead, the raids are presented as one nation attacking the other. The Danes are not shown to be vicious beasts doing the devil’s work, but as soldiers in an army. For example, in the *Vita et Miraculae Sancte* 

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315 Goscelin, *Vita et Miraculae Sancte Æthelburga*. Colker, ed., p. 398, *Vita et Miraculae Sancte Wulfilda*, p. 418, *De Translatione Vel Elevatone Sanctarum Virginum Ethelburgae Hildelithae ac Wulfildae*, pp. 436 and 438. Regarding Alviva, pp. 437-438. Colker argues that Alviva is the same person as Ælfgiva, who was the abbess of Barking Abbey during the Conquest (p. 388, n. 21). Patrick Geary notes the various reasons relics were translated or stolen includes visions of saints insisting that their relics be moved out of dingy or cramped shrines; *Furta Sacra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978; 1990), pp. 97, 119-122, 132.
Æthelburga, Goscelin writes,

Under King Æthelred, when the scrutiny of the Lord held all things in its balance, and all the regions were worn down by the constant wars with the Danish army, there came a band of enemies to the monastery of the Blessed Æthelburga, not so much to fight as to plunder.\(^{316}\)

The first, and most important, difference between this account of the Vikings coming to Barking Abbey and their raid on Ely is in the way Goscelin names them. Goscelin refers to the Vikings in the vita of Æthelburga as the Danish army, Danorum exercitus, where in the Miraculae Sancte Ætheldreda he calls them aquilonalium gens, men of the North. He also says they came to the monastery to plunder, but does not use the violent and vivid imagery found Miraculae Sancte Ætheldreda. The Danes described in Æthelburga’s vita are portrayed in an almost sympathetic way. In the miracle story that follows, the raiders try to enter the monastery through three different entrances and are barred at each door by a wolf, a bear, and a lion. Unlike the savage, beast-like raiders described in Miraculae Sancte Ætheldreda, The Danes are wise enough to understand not only that the animals guarding the monastery were placed there by God, but they were inspired to peacefully enter the monastery and ensure the nuns were well

\(^{316}\)Goscelin, *Vita et Miraculae Sanctae Æthelburgae*. Colker, ed., pp. 412-413, “Sub rege Ethelredo cum Domini omnia librantis examine Danorum exercitus Anglicas regiones assiduis bellis attriisset, uenit hostilis cohors ad beatae Ethelburgae monasterium non tam ad expugnandum quam ad depredandum.”

231
provisioned. He writes,

At last, reformed from brutish savagery by wild animals, and understanding that they had been expelled by divine intervention, they prayed to the saints presiding over that place to be allowed to enter in peace. Immediately the beastly gatekeepers offered entrance, now bringing peace to the worshippers of peace, going with devotion where they could not with violence, and where they sought prey they now offered as sacrifices copious gifts and food sufficient to last the sisters a month.317

This is markedly different from the description of the Viking raids on Ely, where the men from the North savagely kill or enslave everyone in sight and ravage the land and monastery.

What makes this difference even more striking is that they were written within a year or so of each other, Æthelthryth’s hagiography being written before Æthelburga’s. It is tempting to think the reason for this would be linked to the need to protect the monastery and its lands, but it was Barking, and not Ely, that was protected by the divinely sent beasts, and it was Ely whose lands were being threatened. The explanation lies in the message Goscelin was sending in the Ely hagiographies; namely, that the monastery and surrounding area had suffered greatly under the violence of the Vikings who were, as presented by Goscelin, actually the Normans. Barking Abbey did not suffer

317Goscelin, *Vita et Miraculae Sancte Æthelburga*. Colker, ed., p. 413, “Tandem per bestias a bestiali feritate correcti et intelligentes se diuinitus extrudi, orant sanctos loci presides se cum pace ammitti. Protinus ingressum prebuere ianitores beluae, pacis cultoribus iam paciferae, ingrediunturque cum deuotione qui nullatenus poterant cum immanentie, atque ubi predam quesierant, copiosa dona ad diutinum uictum sororum integro mense sufficientem sacrificant.”
during the Norman Conquest, so Goscelin changed the image of the Vikings to reflect the idea that God loved Æthelburga so much that He sent wild beasts to protect her.

The Barking Abbey hagiographies are the ones most likely to resemble those of Ely since they were written so close together and the subjects were very similar. They are, however, very different. Those Goscelin wrote for Barking Abbey bear closer resemblance to the Edith legend than the Ely hagiographies. This may be due, in part, to the fact that Barking and Wilton were both female monasteries and thus any hagiographic literature written about their saints required a different presentation. However, as will be seen in the Mildred Legend, even when the commissioning monastery is all male, the hagiographies Goscelin wrote do not approach the symbolism and imagery present in the Ely works.

ST. MILDRED

The hagiographic works Goscelin wrote concerning St. Mildred were written after he had become a member of St. Augustine’s monastery in Canterbury. The vita resembles that of St. Wærburga in its extensive genealogy, but lacks any other profound similarity to the other Ely hagiographies. Mildred, also known as Mildrith, was a Kentish royal saint who lived from around 665 to 732. She was the great-great-granddaughter of King Æthelberht I, who was the first Christian king of England, and the
cousin of St. Wæburga and St. Eormenhild of Ely. Her relics, which were entombed at St. Augustine’s, added great prestige to the monastery and would be the focal point of a monastic dispute. Goscelin’s arrival at St. Augustine’s in 1089 coincided with one of the monastery’s more tumultuous periods. The problems arose from Archbishop Lanfranc’s attempt to exert control over the monastery as well as claims made by the newly created St. Gregory’s priory to the relics of St. Mildred.

Mildred had been abbess of Minster-in-Thanet, which had been founded by, King Egbert of Kent, son of Earconberht and Sexburge. He gave land to his niece, Domne Eafe, who was the first abbess. She was succeeded by her daughter, Mildred. Because of its ties to the royal house of Kent, which was the first to receive Christianity in England, the minster had an important position. St. Augustine’s received its lands and Mildred’s relics in the early eleventh century, thus elevating its status. The liturgy of the Abbey was closely tied to Mildred’s relics. One of the sources Goscelin relied upon was the tenth-century Kentish Royal Legend for information about Mildred, which indicates that, in the middle of the tenth century, Abbot Ælfstan of Canterbury was unable to open Mildred’s tomb until he swore the abbey’s devotion to her. Thereafter, the abbot of St. Augustine’s always celebrated Mildred’s feast at the Minster, rather than in Canterbury.
This not only indicated the veneration the community of St. Augustine’s felt for Mildred, it helped strengthen the claims to the abbey’s ties to the land. 318

Abbot Scotland of St. Augustine’s died in 1087, and his replacement was chosen by Lanfranc. The new abbot, Wido, was rejected by the prior and monks of St. Augustine’s. The monks, led by one named Columbanus, began to plot against Wido’s life. Columbanus was removed by Lanfranc. Shortly after this episode, Lanfranc died and outright rebellion broke out involving not only the monks of St. Augustine’s but the citizens of Canterbury. It ended when the disobedient monks were expelled by Bishop Gundulf of Rochester and Bishop Wakelin of Winchester. A new community of monks, which included Goscelin, was brought in. 319 Despite the new community’s general acceptance of Wido, however, St. Augustine’s still had a serious issue to address.

It found itself in direct competition with Christ Church and St. Gregory’s priory, especially concerning the relics of St Mildred. Archbishop Lanfranc had supported Christ Church and, in 1086 founded a college of secular canons dedicated to one of the patrons of St. Augustine’s monastery, Gregory the Great. 320 Problems arose when St.

318 D. W. Rollason, ed., “Goscelin of Canterbury’s Account of the Translation and Miracles of St. Mildreth.” Rollason notes that the Miraculae offer unique insight into the influences English practices and traditions had upon the Anglo-Norman Church. He points out that Lanfranc’s attitude toward the Anglo-Saxon traditions evolved as he became more involved with English religious practices.

319 Sharpe, “Goscelin’s St. Augustine” pp. 503-504.

320 Sharpe, “Goscelin’s St. Augustine,” p. 503.
Gregory’s claimed to have the remains of St. Mildred. It is likely that Goscelin was invited to be part of the new community at St. Augustine’s because Wido knew his reputation as a hagiographer.

The *Vita Mildrethae* was written after Goscelin left Ely, between 1087 and 1091, apparently in conjunction with the *Translatio Sancte Mildrethe Virginis cum Miraculorum Attestatione*. It was written by Goscelin in response to the Priory of St. Gregory’s claim that it had the relics of Mildred. St. Augustine’s needed to improve the stylistic quality of the saint’s *vita*, but Goscelin added much more. He carefully and clearly restated the history of the translation of Mildred’s relics to St. Augustine’s. He took a very scholarly approach to the miracle stories about the saint and, using deductive logic, destroyed the priory’s claim that they had Mildred’s true relics.321

One of the ways Goscelin made the connection between Mildred and St. Augustine’s clear was through an extensive and very thorough genealogy of the saint. The *Vita Deo Dilectae Virginis Mildrethae* begins with a history of St. Augustine’s monastery which is immediately followed by the family history of St. Mildred. This resembles Wærburga’s *vita* in its detail. In the same way an extensive genealogy helped establish the legal claim of Ely to its lands and liberties, Mildred’s family tree established the legitimacy of St. Augustine’s claims to the saint’s relics. As with

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Wærburga’s hagiography, Goscelin establishes Mildred as exceptionally holy, but in this case it is because of her lineage. He begins the *Vita Deo Dilecte* by declaring,

> Offspring of kings, the Lord’s virgin, Mildred as strong in pedigree as in holiness. [She is] the most brilliant star of the nation of Mercians, the constant, perpetual adornment of the people of Kent. This was her portion from her father and mother. \(^{322}\)

In both instances Goscelin connects royal houses; however, in Wærburga’s *vita* he emphasizes the connection to four kingdoms, including France. The focus in Mildred’s *vita* is the ties between the royal houses of Kent and East Anglia and St. Augustine’s.

Goscelin wrote the hagiographies of Mildred during the last phase of his life, when he was settled in as a member of St. Augustine’s. These works showcase not only his skill as a hagiographer, but as a scholar, and are excellent examples of the way hagiographies were used as vehicles for asserting monastic claims to property or, as in this case, relics. They do not, however, engage in the sort of political discourse found in the Ely hagiographies. Goscelin’s language is much less passionate in the Mildred hagiographies, his focus is on the systematic proof of his monastery’s rights to the saint’s relics, and he pays great attention to minute details. He is no less enthusiastic about the

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subject, but his approach to Mildred’s hagiographies suggests he saw his task as more of an intellectual exercise.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided examples of Goscelin’s other works on female saints. The saints’ hagiographies discussed here are by no means the only hagiographies of female saints he wrote, but they are a good representation and, by focusing on the hagiographies he wrote just prior to his arrival at Ely as well as just after his departure, I have shown that the Ely hagiographies have a unique place in the corpus of his work.

Male saints are not included in the larger analysis of this chapter, since it seemed more appropriate to compare like works. Since the saints of Ely were all female, an analysis of Goscelin’s hagiographies of other female saints emphasizes the changes in style found in those from Ely. However, a very brief discussion of some of the hagiographies Goscelin wrote about male saints is appropriate at this point.

The hagiography most closely related to the works discussed in this chapter is that of St Wulfsige, who was bishop of Sherborne (993 - 1002). Goscelin began his hagiography of Wulfsige while at Sherborne Abbey, at the behest of Bishop Herman; however, Herman died before it was finished and Goscelin completed it under the bishopric of Osmond. He did not have many sources with which to work, and so relied on the first-hand accounts of some of the monks there as well as the traditional stories.
known about him.\textsuperscript{323} The \textit{Vita Sancti Wulfsige} is, in this way, similar to Goscelin’s \textit{Vita Sancte Edithe}. Goscelin dedicates this \textit{vita} to Herman’s successor, saying, “...the eagle’s youth has replaced him [Herman] with you, to whom I am now writing.”\textsuperscript{324} The \textit{vita} is otherwise unremarkable as far as imagery or subtext is concerned, and there are no other similarities to any of the other hagiographies of female saints.

The \textit{Vita Sancti Birini} was written around 1093, around the same time as the \textit{Vita Sancte Mildrethe}. Birinus (600 - 649), was responsible for the conversion of Wessex. This work is substantially different from the \textit{vita} of St. Wulfsige. The language is much more vivid, and Goscelin goes into greater historical detail than in the Wulfsin \textit{vita}. This is likely because he had more sources with which to work. The language and imagery are better probably because he was more experienced at writing hagiographies than when he wrote about Wulfsige. Rather than dedicate the \textit{vita} to anyone, Goscelin’s \textit{incipit} emphasizes Birinus’ direct ties to Rome. As with the female saints, the importance of England’s ancient ties to Rome is something Goscelin apparently felt was very important, since it frequently makes its way into his hagiographies.

There is one significant similarity to the Ely hagiographies. Goscelin directly addresses the people of seventh-century England, telling them their day had come and the

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\item \textsuperscript{324} Goscelin, \textit{Vita Sancte Wulfsige}, Love, trans., p. 103.
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Word of God was coming to them through Birinus. He writes, “The King of the North, who is cold and makes [all] cold...he has had mastership of you from the beginning, while you served idols, while you were enslaved by the rule of demons.325

He again, as in the hagiography of Æthelthryth, uses the word *Aquilonaris* to refer to a northern ruler. Goscelin does not appear to have associated *Aquilonaris* with anything positive; but rather, with demons and idolatry. The rest of the *vita* is typical of Goscelin’s hagiographies of male saints. The imagery is masculine, as would be expected, with St. Birinus overcoming the pagan king and bringing the light of Christianity to England, or at least Wessex.

These two examples of Goscelin’s hagiographies of male saints provide some insight into the way Goscelin approached every hagiographic work. He first tried to place them within an historical context, and if there were no written sources upon which he could base his works, then he relied on oral histories. All the hagiographies examined in this chapter have illustrated the differences that set the Ely hagiographies apart. Each contained an element reminiscent of the Ely saints, but none contained enough similarity to suggest that the works Goscelin did for Abbot Simeon at Ely were typical of his works.

The *Liber Confortatorius* provided the personal background necessary to understand the circumstances that affected Goscelin’s mind-set as he began the

peripatetic phase of his life. It also hints at the way Goscelin would later use imagery in the Ely hagiographies to draw negative associations between individuals and their actions. In the *vita* of St. Edith we see the way Goscelin used positive association to convince Lanfranc he should protect Wilton Abbey. This work also shows Goscelin’s ability to create a familial history of sanctity. The Barking Abbey hagiographies show the uniqueness of those from Ely in the marked difference between the accounts the Viking raids on England. The *vita* of St. Mildred is similar to that of St. Wærburga in the use of an extended genealogy, but since it was written after Goscelin left Ely it simply suggests that Goscelin was adept at adopting strategies that had worked in the past to new projects. Mildred’s hagiography also shows Goscelin’s continued focus on holy dynasties. He used the extensive familial connection of saints found in Æthelberht’s family to make the case for the monastery of St. Augustine’s claim to Mildred’s relics.

All of these works contain familial links to holiness, whether it is through a holy dynasty, as seen presented in the hagiography of St. Mildred, or by ties to individual family members such as St. Edith and her mother. Goscelin’s continued use of this imagery suggests he found it necessary to maintain an image of England as historically holy. It is likely that he perceived an ongoing lack of respect for England’s indigenous saints, although how accurate this perception was is questionable. Constantly reminding his audiences of England’s history of sanctity as evidenced in it’s Anglo-Saxon rulers and
their sainted families was his way of ensuring that England, its history, and its people received proper respect. In this way, more than any other, these works are connected to the Ely hagiographies. What the other hagiographies all lack, however, is the subtextual dialogue aimed at either Church or secular leaders. This is found only in the Ely hagiographies.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Goscelin of Saint-Bertin was one of the most skilled writers of Anglo-Latin hagiography in the half century after the Conquest. He certainly was the most prolific post-Conquest hagiographer in England, writing at least fifty *vitae*, *miraculae*, and *lectiones* of Anglo-Saxon saints within a period of roughly thirty years. His works have been studied for insights into how hagiographies reflect images of sanctity, attitudes toward women, and the relationship between regular and secular clergy. What is lacking is an examination of his works within the context of place and time; that is, they need to be studied for what they say about England in the immediate post-Conquest period. Contextualizing Goscelin’s works in this way provides a deeper understanding not only of the social, political, and cultural changes England and its people underwent in the aftermath of the Conquest, but, from a broader perspective, the ways in which a newly conquered and colonized nation makes its voice heard. In this way, Goscelin’s writings - especially those of the Ely saints - are very early examples of postcolonial literature.
Goscelin’s writings have been studied primarily within the context of hagiographic literature. Scholars have long examined his use of language and imagery as well as Biblical allusion to create images of sanctity. More recent scholarship has focused on what his hagiographies reveal about gender in the Church, the general interaction of the laity with monasteries, or the relationship between regular and secular clergy and Church hierarchy. For example, Georges Whalen argued that Goscelin perceived an anxiety in the Norman clergy about Anglo-Saxon nuns and female saints and thus wrote his hagiographies specifically to address these concerns, and Virginia Blanton shows how Goscelin’s hagiography of Æthelthryth created a useful memory for the monastery of Ely, but her analysis is centered around the premise that Abbot Simeon wanted to create an historic legitimacy to the monastery’s rights to its lands. Little value has been placed on the influence the Conquest had on Goscelin’s works, and there has been no attention paid to the value of these works as postcolonial reactions to Norman settlement in England. This dissertation hopefully provides the first steps in this direction.

Rereading these hagiographies as part of a dialogue between the conquering nation and the newly subaltern people allows the issues and concerns of the English people and Church during this period to come to the fore. In this dissertation I have recontextualized Goscelin’s hagiographies of the royal female saints of Ely within the
events during which they were written and have shown how they reflect the problems inherent in the process of colonization and assimilation. These issues and concerns are no less relevant today than when Goscelin addressed them.

One of the clearest examples of the imposition of Norman customs on English institutions is seen in the English Church. High ecclesiastic positions were given to Norman clergy, and the Normans had a relatively free hand in enacting reforms. It should be noted that these reforms had been started before the Conquest by English clergy. After the Conquest, however, the attitude of the reforms took a more condescending tone, with the new Church leaders being initially dismissive of English Church practices and Anglo-Saxon saints. This was an important part of the Norman colonization of England since the heart of every community in Europe at this time was the church. Power exerted by Church leaders helped to legitimize King William’s reign by dismissing the legitimacy of the English saints and belittling English Church practices as backward and even idolatrous. The effect of this was to put the English in a submissive role.

Goscelin challenged this assertion of Norman supremacy by skillfully combining his knowledge of Continental hagiography with English history to present the Normans with hagiographic literature that was stylistically familiar to them but unabashedly presented the saints about whom he wrote as uniquely English. He insisted upon the
legitimacy and sanctity of the saint about whom he wrote through the subtle use of language and persuasion, and his portrayal of English history in these works served to emphasize the traditional power of English rulers, the sophistication of English society, and the devotion of the English people to Christ and the Church. This is typical of postcolonial literature, which asserts the inherent dignity of the colonized in a format that is very familiar to the colonizer and therefore less likely to be perceived as a threat.

Goscelin’s skill at presenting a favorable image of native English saints, history, and culture in a way that was familiar to the Normans also allowed him to address social, ethical, or religious issues he felt needed to be corrected.

Hagiographies are accounts of saints’ lives presented through stories about their lives (vitae), their deeds (miraculae), and readings or lessons about them (lectiones). Through these three literary vehicles memories are created about the saint that serve more than one purpose. The hagiographer chose what to emphasize or highlight about each saint based on the needs of the commissioning monastery and his own need to address issues important to him. There are certain elements that are common to every hagiography, such as recognition of extreme piety from a young age, heavenly lights shining on the saint at the moment of death accompanied by angelic music, and miracles performed both during the saint’s life and after death. Within this framework, however, the author had great literary leeway. Hagiographers consciously created a memory of the
saint, including or omitting information that suited the image they wanted to portray. This latitude allowed them to directly address social, religious, or political issues when they felt it to be necessary. This was seen in Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies, especially in those of St. Sexburge. By focusing on her selflessness, devotion to the Church, and firm but fair way of administering both a kingdom and monastery, Goscelin addresses his concern that those traits were missing in the current ruler.

Studying hagiographies within the framework of historic memory creation allows historians to understand more keenly the larger social issues faced by a society at a particular time and place. Hagiographers were clergy, usually monks, and part of their responsibility as clergy was to advise and admonish where necessary. Using hagiographies to engage in this type of criticism was perhaps more effective than directly confronting secular leaders, since it allowed the audience to absorb the lesson without loss of dignity. This is evident in all of Goscelin’s hagiographies, but most clear in those of the royal female saints of Ely.

The sheer volume of his writings and the length of time they span offer a unique opportunity for research into the way hagiographers used their medium to create historic memory and to participate in social and political discourse. Rather than using his works merely to explore gender relations within the Church or what made a person saintly, they should be read to ask why he wrote these hagiographies and why he chose the imagery
and language he did. They need to be studied within the larger historical context of the Conquest so that a deeper, more nuanced understanding of that time in England’s history may emerge. Maintaining focus on the circumstances in which Goscelin wrote shows how he used each hagiography as an opportunity to create an image of England that defied the scorn and derision he perceived coming from the Normans. This focus is also an excellent way to analyze the ways his writings changed over time, especially the way the issues he felt important enough to include in his hagiographies changed. In this respect, they would be useful to study the evolution of the mutual assimilation of Norman and English cultures that eventually created a new, Anglo-Norman culture.

The larger focus of my research is the ways in which memory is created and used. Historic memory is not simply an account of a society’s past; it is a well-thought-out and carefully crafted recreation of the past designed to make a point or convey a message. It is a powerful tool for asserting or maintaining power as well as creating a national identity, and understanding how and why it is created offers insight not only into the issues important to societies in the past, but into the mechanics of modern memory creation. Memory is created when a chronicler uses some form of mass media to record an event or person. Although the idea of a chronicler carries archaic connotations, it remains a modern phenomenon; today journalists, biographers, public relations specialists, and bloggers chronicle events through their own filters and for their own
purposes. Their perception of contemporary events affects what or who they choose to memorialize, how they will be remembered, and who or what will be forgotten. Through their conscious manipulation of the past, contemporary social and cultural institutions are either validated, castigated, or obliterated.

Today, as in the past, individuals, institutions, and nations have specific reasons for manipulating the perception of the past. Political figures want to be remembered favorably, or have their opponents perceived negatively. Institutions and nations create group identities by presenting a history that emphasizes their strengths and either ignores their weaknesses or rewrites them in a more positive light. The creation of a useful past is also an important tool for subaltern groups to assert their social and political legitimacy and engage the dominant social group in meaningful discourse. The transmission of historic memory in this case is often literary - works of fiction, poetry, and drama - rather than biographic works, news stories, or press releases. This is a much more subtle, and in some ways more effective, way to recast the past.

The reasons for creating a useful version of history have not changed much over the course of the centuries, only the media by which this past is recorded have changed. For this reason, studying the way memories were created and conveyed in the past adds depth to our understanding of contemporary society. Medieval hagiography is a medium which has great potential for the study of memory creation. Hagiographic literature,
which includes *vitae*, *miraculae*, and *lectiones*, provides more than accounts of saints’ lives, it reflects the issues and concerns not only of the commissioning monasteries, but of the hagiographer and the society to which the monastery or hagiographer belong. Because the monastery was an integral part of its larger community, its interests often reflected that community’s concerns. The hagiographer, then, found himself in a position to engage in social and political commentary. His job was, superficially, to write about the commissioning monastery’s patron saint or saints in a way that showed their holiness and spiritual excellence. Implicit in this task, however, was the need to make a point about the monastery, for example why its lands should not be annexed by the local noble or why it should be allowed to expand.

The hagiographer was writing for an audience that extended beyond the monastery walls. His works were often included in liturgy, and so those attending Mass heard what he had to say. His writings were also read by secular clergy and literate nobility. Because of this, the way he remembered the saint’s life and created an image of the past helped shape the perception and identity of the monastery, the community, and even the nation. It also allowed him to address issues he personally found important. The hagiographer combined language and imagery to create an historic memory, and through this memory engage in social and political commentary.

250
Hagiographies have great potential to offer insight into the process and impact of colonization, and this way of studying them deserves more attention. Because the Anglo-Latin hagiographies written after 1066 in England were written to validate the legitimacy of Anglo-Saxon saints and, by extension, the English people, they may be considered to be a form of postcolonial literature. This genre is a commentary on the relationship between colonized and colonizer. It shows the perception of the politically dominant culture by the subaltern as well as the subaltern self-perception. Postcolonial theory has been employed by scholars to study Anglo-Saxon England in the time between its identity as a Roman colony and the Norman Conquest.\textsuperscript{326} There is a paucity of scholarly works that address the period after the Conquest, however, despite the fact that England was as much under the rule of a foreign force then as it had been under the Romans. The difference is that the Normans eventually combined their culture with English culture to create a hybrid, whereas the Romans maintained a distinct and separate identity and expected the English to consider themselves Roman.

Literature written during the first forty years of the Conquest is decidedly postcolonial, since it deals with the immediate consequences of colonization. It shows the interactions and clashes between the cultures of the two nations, the imposition of Norman traditions within the Church as well as society as a whole, and it reveals the

\textsuperscript{326}Nicholas Howe does an admirable job of using postcolonial theory to show the way Anglo-Saxon England responded to the withdrawal of Roman control in \textit{Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
ways in which the English resisted that imposition. Literature of this genre is written in a way that is not a direct challenge to the colonizing nation yet validates the colonized culture. Thus, hagiographies written during the period immediately after the Conquest are excellent examples of postcolonial literature.

Goscelin’s hagiographies were written in a way that was familiar, and therefore not threatening, to the Normans. They presented an excellent opportunity for him to recreate England’s past in a way that maintained a positive identity for the English and assert their ancient dignity. In the case of the Ely hagiographies, they also provided him with a platform from which to take his audience, namely William I and the Norman nobles and clergy, to task over what he perceived as serious problems. He also used them to offer advice to the nobility and to William II.

He wove his messages into the subtext of these works, subtly reversing accepted gender roles to drive home the message that these women were better leaders and Christians than the new king and his magnates. Goscelin emphasized their rejection of any worldly wealth or power, the fairness of their leadership, their serenity, and their desire to aid and support the Church as a contrast to his perception of the king’s lust for wealth and power, his harsh and inconsistent rule, his uncontrolled anger, and his willingness to raid the churches and monasteries in England for his own gain. Within Goscelin’s Ely hagiographies are examples of how the English resisted the Normans;
indeed, these hagiographies are a form of resistance since Goscelin is actively presenting the English as devout and faithful Christians and strong leaders.

In order to fully understand how the hagiographies of the female saints of Ely are postcolonial literature, it is necessary to understand the circumstances in which they were written. Goscelin was commissioned by Abbot Simeon of Ely to write hagiographies of its saints. Simeon was in the process of regaining the monastery’s lands and property that had been taken by King William after the rebellion on the Isle of Ely. In order to do this, Simeon needed to have the lives of the saints rewritten in Latin. These new hagiographies had to present the saints’ sanctity as beyond question, make clear that the monastery’s lands had been given by royal decree, and that the saints would not be kindly disposed to anyone who mistreated the monastery or its monks. He needed a skilled hagiographer who could present the monastery and its history in the best possible light, and there was none better than Goscelin of Saint Bertin. One of the trickiest parts for Goscelin to deal with was the monastery’s role in the rebellion against William.

This rebellion had been part of a series of rebellions led by the northern English magnates who still viewed William as a usurper. At issue was the nature of English succession. Harold Godwinson became King of England after Edward the Confessor died, accepting the throne with the backing of the English nobility, as English tradition dictated. He did have a hereditary link to Edward, but without the backing of the
magnates he would not have been able to become king. William’s claim to the throne was based on his assertion that Edward had named him to be his heir while the English king was exiled in Normandy. He further claimed that Harold had sworn an oath of loyalty to him on holy relics, so when Harold claimed the English throne he was, in fact, an oath-breaker. William, however, had not tried to get the English nobles to back his claim.

Because he had not recognized English tradition, William had a difficult time asserting his rule over parts of England, most notably in Northumbria. Rebellion broke out for what would be the last time in 1070, when Earl Morcar and Hereward the Wake raised an army against William. They took refuge on the Isle of Ely, making it their headquarters. Ely, which is now surrounded by dry land, was at the time of the rebellion surrounded by fens which made access to the island almost impossible to any who did not know the terrain. Enough people supported this rebellion that it became a serious threat, and William himself led his troops to suppress it. The Norman army laid siege to Ely, cutting off supplies which eventually led to famine on the island. The situation, already desperate, became unbearable to the monks when William took demesne lands belonging to the monastery. In 1072 the abbot of the monastery, Thurstan, along with some of his monks, treated with the king for peace. William, whose temper had been pushed past the breaking point, wreaked havoc upon the town and, especially, the
monastery for their roles in the rebellion once he had gained access to the island. As a result, the monastery of Ely lost most of its lands and all of its moveable wealth to William.

The king’s violent reaction to the rebellion was, from Goscelin’s perception, excessive. He was himself a monk, and so any attack on a monastery would have been particularly onerous to him, and William’s reaction is shown to be one of uncontrolled anger; however, since the king was trying to establish his reign, it is reasonable to expect rebellions to be put down without mercy. Goscelin’s concern in this instance seems not to have been with the fate of the rebels themselves, but with the treatment the monastery received at William’s hands. The monks who had treated for peace had been given assurances they would not be treated harshly; however, when William gained access to the island he despoiled the monastery. Goscelin was apparently appalled that the king would go back on his word, and this is made clear in his description of the Viking raid on the monastery and, especially, in his address to the king under the guise of chiding the long dead Viking leader.

Perhaps of greater importance, Goscelin perceived the king as behaving in a decidedly un-Christian way. The well-being of his subjects, both physically and spiritually, were the responsibility of the king. Goscelin saw William exhibiting greed and lust for power, uncontrolled anger, and disregard for his subjects. It is likely he felt a
responsibility to remind William that such behavior had consequences beyond the physical, and that he was endangering his soul by behaving in such an immature way. Because Goscelin was not attached to any particular monastery during the seven years prior to his commission at Ely, he had opportunity to travel throughout the countryside, and it is very likely he saw the impact the Conquest was having in other areas. He certainly witnessed its effect on various monasteries, since he was commissioned at Barking Abbey and Wilton Abbey as well as others. He engaged the king as well as the Norman clergy and nobility in the various hagiographies he wrote, but those he wrote for Ely were particularly intense in both language and imagery.

Abbot Simeon had another reason for commissioning the hagiographies of the Ely saints. Because Abbot Thurstan and the monks had treated for peace with the king, they were seen by the inhabitants of Ely as traitors. The damage inflicted on the town as a result of the king’s wrath was perceived by the townspeople as being the fault of the monks. Rehabilitating the image of the saints would not only increase the prestige of the monastery in the eyes of the Normans but also improve the monastery’s relationship with the townspeople. This relationship was important, since the monastery was part of its community. There could be no symbiotic relationship if the community mistrusted the monks.
Goscelin had to recreate the history of the monastery in order to write Latin versions of the Ely saints’ hagiographies. This allowed him to simultaneously create an image of England that emphasized the excellence of its rulers, its traditional Church ties to Rome, and the unquestionable sanctity of its saints. The creation of memory is, as mentioned, a selective process, and Goscelin was a master at selecting the right aspects of England’s history to emphasize his points. He manipulated the Norman perception of England by emphasizing certain characteristics. He relied upon the authority of Bede to add veracity to his accounts of the saints’ lives. Bede was respected both in England and on the Continent as an historiographer without peer, and Goscelin knew corroborating his works with Bede’s would strengthen his portrayal of the saints.

Goscelin also created a holy dynasty around the saints that centered around King Anna, who was not a saint himself, but whose devotion to the Church and excellence as a ruler was well known in England and frequently mentioned by Bede. Anna was the father or grandfather of the Ely saints and was related to most of the other Anglo-Saxon saints. By creating a family history for the saints that centered around a king who fought tirelessly against paganism, who was a strong military leader and a just king, and who produced saintly offspring, Goscelin presented an idealized history of England that left no doubt that it was a country with a long and distinguished history.
The creation of memory, however, is more than just putting a positive spin on the past. It has a purpose. Goscelin chose to emphasize the saints’ relationship with Anna in order to subtly drive home the point that England had been Christian longer than Normandy had been. Memory creation also involves the careful application of imagery and symbolism to make a point or to create a connection in the audience’s mind. Goscelin linked England to the Children of Israel through the Ely saints, particularly Sexburge. He points out that God intended her to marry so she could be the mother of a chosen people, making a clear reference to the matriarch Sarah. While this might seem inconsequential to a modern audience, those hearing or reading Sexburge’s hagiographies would make the connection. They would have understood the subtext in this connection as well. If the English were the contemporary incarnation of the Children of Israel, then they were God’s chosen people. As a result, the Norman victory at Hastings and William’s ascension to the throne of England were part of God’s plan for England and not the result of inherent Norman superiority. This device served to simultaneously elevate the status of the English people and instill a little humility in the Normans.

Goscelin also manipulated perceptions about gender roles in order to point out the less-than-exemplary behavior of the new king and his magnates. While never directly emasculating William, Goscelin nevertheless shows him as somewhat less than manly by
holding Sexburge up as an exemplar of the ideal king. She is portrayed as a strong ruler who sacrifices her own desires for the well-being of her people. She is firm yet fair, she remains calm in the face of adversity, she supports and protects the Church, and she has no regard for social status but is most concerned for the poor, the sick, and the hungry. She sees to the spiritual and physical welfare of her subjects and, eventually, of the nuns under her care. She is not a queen, she is a king. She is a manly woman, but this is never portrayed as something bad. The subtext is, of course, if she is a manly woman, then William, who does not control his temper, is fickle, and lusts for worldly power and wealth, is a womanly man. Goscelin created a model of kingship for William to emulate, but by doing so he would be following the example of a woman.

It is through devices such as this that Goscelin’s hagiographies become postcolonial literature. Rereading these works in this way allows a fresh view of the Conquest to emerge. All of his works provide insight into the social, cultural, and political impact the Normans had on England, but the Ely hagiographies are particularly relevant because their imagery is so much more intense. In chapter five I presented the argument that the events the monastery had gone through as a result of the rebellion combined with Goscelin’s personal experiences with Norman clergy and reforms to create an environment that encouraged him to be more forceful in the messages he conveyed through the hagiographies. By looking at these hagiographies in the context of
time and place it is possible to understand more deeply the process of colonization and the effects on the colonized.

Goscelin’s hagiographies of the female saints of Ely are excellent examples of the way subaltern groups make their voice heard. Reading them as vehicles for the creation of new, useful memories of England before the Normans offers excellent insight into the mechanism of memory creation as well as the reasons for creating a useful past. Maintaining the focus of analysis on the circumstances in which they were written allows their importance as media for social and political dialogue to become apparent. These works, examined as part of a larger discourse, illustrate the way in which the colonized engage in discourse with the colonizer. They also show how each culture influences the other to create an entirely new culture. In post-Conquest England, the culture that eventually emerged was at least as much English as Norman, and the Normans came to see themselves as English. This new Anglo-Norman culture grew out of the social, political, and religious struggles between the English and the Normans in the decades immediately following the Conquest. These struggles are memorialized in the hagiographies written during this period by men such as Goscelin of Saint-Bertin.
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Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2.I

PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

ANGLO-SAXON ROYAL GENEALOGIES

GENEALOGY OF KING ANNA AND HIS FAMILY ACCORDING TO THE LIBER ELIENSIS

Tyta

Redwald

Regenhere d. 616
Eorpwald d. 633
Sigbert d. 640
Egric d. 640
Anna d. 654
Hereswith =?
Sæthryth Nun

Eorp

Eorconbert = Sexburge King of Kent
Tondbert = Ethelthryth = Ecgfrith King of South Gyrwe

Æthelhild = Wulhere King of Mercia
Eorongata Nun
Wæburga Nun

Æthelburga Nun
Whitburga Nun

Æthelberga Nun

Aldwulf d. 713
Juurmine d. 653

Ecgbert King of Kent 664-673
Hlothhere King of Kent 673-685

327 Blake, Liber Eliensis I:2, pp 12-19.
HOLY DYNASTY FROM ÆTHELBERT I

Rollason, The Mildrith Legend, p. 45.
APPENDIX B

GOSCELIN’S WORKS

The following works are known to be by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin or have been positively attributed to him.\(^{329}\)

*Historia Maior Sancti Augustini*
*Historia Minor Sancti Augustini*
*Historia Maior de Miraculis Sancti Augustini*
*Historia Minor de Miraculis Sancti Augustini*
*Historia Translationis Sancti Augustini*
*Vita Sanctae Mildrethae*
*Historia Translationis et Institutionis Monasterii Beatae Mildrethae*
*Libellus Contra Usurpatores Sanctae Mildrethae*
*Vita et Virtutes Sanctae Ethelburgae Virginis*
*Vita et Virtutes Sanctae Wulfildae Virginis*
*Textus Translationis Sanctorum Uriginum Æthelburgae, Hildelithae ac Wulfildae*
*De translatione Vel Eleuatione Sanctorum Uriginum Æthelburgae, Hildelithae ac Wulfildae*
*The Recital of a Vision*
*Lecciones de Sancta Hildelitha*
*Vita Sancti Laurentii*
*Vita Sancti Melliti*
*Vita Sancti Iusti*
*Vita Sancti Honorii*
*Vita Sancti Deusdedit*
*Vita Sancti Theodori*
*Vita, Miracula, et Translatio Sancti Ivonis*
*Vita Sancti Suithini*

Vita Miracula et Translatio Sancti Adriani
Vita Sancti Wulsini Episcopus et Confessoris
Vita Sancte Edithe et Translatio Ipsius cum Sequentibus Signis
Vita Sancte Amalburge Virginis
Lectiones in Festiuitate Sancte Sexburge
Lectiones in Festiuitate Sancte Eormenhilde
Vita Sancte Wihtburge Virginis
Vita Sancte Werburge Virginis
Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe [Æthelthryth], Virginis
Vita Beate Sexburge Regine
Vita Sancte Ætheldrethe
Vita et Miracula Sancti Kenelmi
Miracula Sancti Erkenwaldi
Liber Confortatorius
### APPENDIX C

### ABBESSES AND ABBOTS OF ELY THROUGH 1100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abbesses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Æthelthryth</td>
<td>673 - 679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexburge</td>
<td>679 - 699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eormenhild</td>
<td>699 - ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wærburh</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No record of subsequent abbesses</td>
<td>until 870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abbots:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brythnoth</td>
<td>970 - 981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsin</td>
<td>981 - ca. 1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leofwin</td>
<td>1016 - 1022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leofric</td>
<td>1022 - 1029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leoffin</td>
<td>1029 - 1044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilfric</td>
<td>1044 - 1065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurstan</td>
<td>1066 - 1071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodwine</td>
<td>1071 - 1075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godfrey</td>
<td>1075 - 1081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>1082 - 1093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>1100 - 1107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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331 According to William Dugdale, there is no know date for the deaths of Saints Eormenhild or Werburga. It is known that Werburga succeeded her mother as abbess.