Occupational Folklore in Early Medieval England

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2020

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Abstract

This dissertation examines three case studies of occupational folklore in early medieval England. Each of these cases reveal how medieval patterns of work could be disrupted in different ways. The first explores the language of solidarity in Rogation traditions by showing that ecclesiastics presented a Church-centered view of community through the festival. Because "community" is an abstract, vague concept, this case study argues that scholars can more clearly define the types of relationships that hold a community together. The second examines an emerging genre of estate management tracts between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Although scientific management is thought to begin under later capitalist industrial systems, this chapter argues that early medieval aristocrats were already experimenting with management science. Texts like *Gerefa* and Walter of Henley's agricultural treatises attempted to codify the knowledge and techniques needed to run an estate by removing it from the realm of orality and experiential learning. The third case investigates the hidden labor of medical practitioners. This chapter argues that medieval medicine depended on labor that is invisible in the textual record. Each case study draws on contemporary theories about labor to show how scholars can broaden the language through which we present the past to students in university classrooms.

Dedication

Dedicated to workers—past and present—who performed their jobs through heartache, pandemic, and terrible bosses.

Acknowledgments

I first want to acknowledge my dissertation committee: Drew Jones, for his incisive feedback and encouragement through these six years; Merrill Kaplan, for her keen insights on tradition and medieval folklore; and Leslie Lockett, for her substantive feedback and knowledge about all things cheese-related. I would also like to thank Nick Hoffman for his support throughout this process, without which I would certainly not have finished.

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Preface

I am finishing my dissertation amidst a global pandemic. Thousands have already died. The global economy is almost certainly ruined. Employers are cutting back hours, sending workers home or firing them; already, ports, bakeries, and travel agencies have begun laying off staff.[1] Professional sports are suspending operations.[2] Universities are moving all courses online. Mass gatherings are being cancelled. Those living paycheck to paycheck are unsure if they will have the resources needed to survive the coming months. As this global crisis unfolds, the United States is realizing that our healthcare infrastructure is inadequate: many people lack health insurance, employers provide minimal paid sick leave, and medical bills can lead to bankruptcy.[3] Low wage workers like service workers, immigrant laborers, and domestic care workers are among the most vulnerable because their jobs are often insecure, and these industries lack union protection. These workers are even more vulnerable since their jobs bring them into

[1] Abha Bhattarai, Heather Long, and Rachel Siegel, "The first U.S. layoffs from the coronavirus are here," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2020, accessed March 12, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/11/layoffs-coronavirus/.

[2] Dakin Andone, "Major Sports Leagues in the US Halt Play or Exclude Fans Over Coronavirus Outbreak," *CNN*, March 13 2020, accessed March 14 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/12/us/us-sports-coronavirus-response/index.html.

[3] The Editorial Board, "Opposing Paid Sick Leave Risks Lives," *The New York Times*, March 14 2020, accessed March 14 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-paid-sick-leave.html. Only 13 states and some cities like New York and Chicago legally require companies to provide paid sick leave. A survey by *The New York Times* estimates that McDonald's has 517,000 employees without paid sick leave, Walmart has 347,000, Kroger 189,000, which is just a sampling of some larger corporations.

contact with people, so getting sick means that income diminishes. Since health insurance is often tied to employment, missing work could be devastating. If the story of twenty-first century global capitalism is supposed to be one of progress and enlightenment, how did we allow workers—the backbone of our economy—to be so vulnerable? Part of the answer is that certain types of labor are valued more than others in our society. Salaried employees belonging to the professional managerial class are more likely to have generous benefits like paid sick leave and high enough incomes to afford medical care. Another answer is that workers have always been vulnerable even before the rise of capitalism. As the pandemic intensifies, we can use this moment to imagine what workers living in the Middle Ages experienced after suffering physical injury, sickness, or other disability conditions that removed them from work.[4]

This dissertation examines interfaces between contemporary labor issues and medieval work. My central argument is that scholarship on medieval work needs to expand its theoretical apparatus to deal with the diversity of medieval labor. In doing so, we can better attend to contemporary labor conditions in which research is produced and disseminated to students. The global pandemic is relevant precisely because it shows what happens when labor is disrupted. Medieval scholarship about work tends to ignore the labor conditions of the "peasantry" by focusing on representations of labor in textual sources.[5] My dissertation shows that medieval labor was also disruptive in ways that challenge earlier readings of the early medieval peasantry. I offer three case studies to

[4] Irina Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: Cultural Considerations of Physical Impairment*, Routledge Studies in Cultural History 20 (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[5] Herbert Applebaum, *The Concept of Work: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (Albany: SUNY, 1992).

illustrate the reality of medieval labor: first, I examine the Rogation festival to show how origin narratives centered an ecclesiastical worldview concerning work and leisure. Next, I turn to the reeve of the manorial estate to explore early stages of management science. In this chapter, I trace the development of a new genre of writing that disrupts the traditional flow of management knowledge: instead of learning how to manage an estate through experience, administrators could draw on teaching guides that codified what was once oral knowledge. Finally, my last chapter investigates medical practitioners and cunning folk through the lens of invisible labor. Here, I argue that care for the sick required a vast amount of preparatory work—gathering ingredients, preparing remedies, attending the sick—that is overlooked in modern scholarship. The workforce was literally disrupted through illness, injury, and death. Reframing medieval work around the language of management, solidarity, and invisible labor demonstrates that the workforce experience was diverse, so scholars need to expand our theoretical language to account for this reality.

Another argument implicit in my dissertation is that many features attributed to capitalism, such as unfair labor relations and laws that benefit the wealthy rather than the poor, actually began in the Middle Ages. The ideological and legal groundwork for later capitalist developments was laid over several centuries. In their book, *Law & the Rise of Capitalism,* Michael E. Tigar and Madeleine R. Levy argue that the medieval merchant class—the predecessors of today's bourgeois—shaped a "system of laws which over the

centuries has put these people in the center of economic activity."[6] Tiger shows that the medieval merchant class arose as an insurgent movement against feudal lords. From the eleventh-century onwards, this insurgent bourgeois reshaped legal institutions to accommodate trade, which also meant establishing institutions of commerce like ports, banks, and stores that directly competed with the customs on which feudal lords earned their power.[7] As the merchant class rose to power, it also created legal institutions to sort out disagreements within this class: "The process of bourgeois lawmaking saw the creation and application of specific legal rules about contracts, property, and procedure; these rules of law were fashioned in the context of a legal ideology which identified freedom of action for businessmen with natural law and natural reason."[8] The legal power of the bourgeois laid the foundations of modern labor law; by the nineteenth-century, the power balance between employees and employers was so asymmetric that workers began lobbying for legal protections. As a result, courts in Europe and the United States established labor regulations, like the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which allowed for collective bargaining and instituted minimum wages, thereby creating a "floor" "below which workers should not fall."[9] As positive as these developments are, one American billionaire has described the post-2008 economy as "neo-feudalism,"

[6] Michael R. Tiger and Madeleine R. Levy, *Law & the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 19.
[7] Tiger and Levy, *Capitalism*, 21.
[8] Tiger and Levy, *Capitalism*, 21.
[9] William B. Gould IV, *A Primer on American Labor Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 29. Interestingly, Gould notes that early attempts at collective bargaining were regarded as "conspiracies" by the courts of England and America because the workers threatened free competition and trade.

calling attention to the power of corporations to control the housing, income, and legal protections of contemporary workers.[10]

The echo of the medieval economy in "neo-feudalism" reminds us that history does not follow a linear pathway towards a more progressive society. This reality is made clearer when we consider that medieval pandemics like the Bubonic plague killed millions between 1347-1350. Our relationship with the past should not be one of observation alone because the Middle Ages are still relevant today, so scholars have an obligation to bridge these historical gaps in ways that are interesting and meaningful to non-academic, public audiences. This task is made easier when we recognize that the diverse conditions in which medieval people worked mirror experiences many have today in the workforce. Asking students and researchers to reflect on economic conditions of the university brings us closer to understanding the situation of medieval workers since early medieval people also saw themselves as part of economic systems. Work was a curse brought about by the Fall: Eve must "bring forth children" while Adam should "labor and toil" the rest of his life.[11] The physical labor of peasants and clerics mirrored Christ's suffering.[12] But work could also be dignified. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Condition of Workers"), which was a response to growing industrial capitalism. Leo wrote about the need for unions and worker rights:

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[10] Nick Hanauer, "The Pitchforks are coming…For Us Plutocrats," *Politico,* August 2014, accessed March 14, 2020, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-pitchforks-are-coming-for-us-plutocrats-108014.
[11] Genesis 3.16-17 (Douay-Rheims).
[12] John W. Budd, *The Thought of Work* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 20-22.

> The Most important of all are workingmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were brought about by the artificer's guilds of olden times. They were the means of affording not only many advantages to the workmen, but in no small degree of promoting the advancement of art, as numerous monuments remain to bear witness. Such should be suited to the requirements of this our age—an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life. It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, consisting of either workmen alone, or of workmen and employers togethers, but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. We have spoken of them more than once, yet it will be well to explain here how notably they are needed to show that they exist of their own right and what should be their organization and their mode of action.[13]

As a parting thought, consider how gift-giving has been represented as economic exchange. Stephanie Clark notes that scholarship "on almsgiving and donation further shows that many medieval people imagined a basic fungibility between material and spiritual goods—material wealth could be transferred to the spiritual realm by being giveng away."[14] *Beowulf* and other heroic literature depict gift-giving as a type of community formation: the aristocratic lord, sometimes God, gives out treasure in

[13] Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, accessed March 14, 2020, Vatican, 49, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.
[14] Stephanie Clark, *Compelling God: Theories of Prayer in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 23.

exchange for loyal service. The gift exchange in the mead hall was a performance that strengthened social relationships among the *comitatus*; however, there was "a gap between discourse and praxis."[15] Although heroic literature represented gift-giving as a utopian economic system, the reality is that the gift exchange could be messy. The giver might hide their political intentions or bungle the exchange; the receiver might misread these intentions and act inappropriately.[16] Early medieval writers therefore imagined an ideal economic system that did not exist. The *comitatus* populated the mead hall, consumed alcohol, feasted, fought when necessary, and performed little meaningful work. As popular texts for new students of Old English literature, the heroic corpus misrepresents the economy most people inhabited. In the following chapters, I want to show why scholars should broaden our gaze beyond the mead hall and bring students to the festivals, the sick-beds, and the manorial estate instead.

[15] Clark, *Compelling God*, 27.
[16] Clark, *Compelling God*, 32.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In a 2017 book called *Conservatism: An invitation to the Great Tradition,* Roger Scruton laments the rise of populist movements and the death of the conservative political tradition. Scruton argues that conservatism is about attachments to the familiar:

> Social membership goes hand in hand with individual attachment. Human beings begin life in a state of attachment to the mother and to the household that shields and nurtures her. As they grow to adulthood the bond of attachment loosens and widens. The young adult needs the mother and the family less, but friends and cooperation more. In the course of a lifetime customs, places, networks, institutions, shared ways of being all amplify our attachments, and create the sense that we are at home in the world, among familiar and trustworthy things. That sense of the familiar and the trustworthy is precious to us, and its loss is an occasion of anxiety and mourning. The most important input into conservative thinking is the desire to sustain the networks of familiarity and trust on which a community depends for longevity. Conservatism is what its name says it is: the attempt to conserve the community that we have—not in every particular since, as

> Edmund Burke put it, 'we must reform in order to conserve', but in all matters that ensure our community's long-term survival.[1]

For Scruton, conservatism conflicts with a liberalism that believes communities "define their identity for themselves, regardless of existing norms and customs."[2] Conservatives are the true heirs of Western civilization because they respect the laws, institutions, and customs handed down from one generation to the next. Furthermore, conservatives see community "not as an organic network bound by habit and submission, but as a free association of rational beings, all of whom have, and cherish, an identity of their own."[3] Scruton argues that these ideas about community and institution arose in the Enlightenment as people realized that reason alone could not govern society. Put simply, reason can guide people astray if customs and institutions are not grounded in shared principals.

But what happens when the "sense of the familiar and trustworthy" is not felt by everyone? What happens when the customs, laws, and institutions of the past are harmful to people in the present? The conservative worldview presented by Scruton seems reasonable until we dig past political abstractions into the concrete realities it creates. Scruton assumes that institutions are trustworthy when they have managed to survive decades of changing culture, which indicates they are a stable force in society. When people attain high status in these institutions, it is because they work hard and provide

[1] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* (New York: All Points, 2017), 6.
[2] Scruton, *Conservatism,* 6.
[3] Scruton, *Conservatism,* 14.

important social services. However, laws and institutions are also capable of oppression. Examples like the prison industrial complex, corporate media, and contract law show that inherited institutions sometimes contain racial hierarchies and power differentials that are carried along into the future. When institutions survive, the underlying ideologies do as well. Eventually, these ideologies seem inevitable because people lack the ability to challenge established power.

Folklorists have learned that custom and tradition, while meaningful aspects of communal identity, are also capable of transmitting harmful ideologies and hierarchies. Tradition is never inevitable; it is the product of decisions made by social agents. Like Scruton, political commentators today evoke tradition when arguing against institutional or legal change.[4] The editor of the Leftist magazine *Current Affairs* argues that conservative defenses of tradition use vacuous, unproven phrases that fall apart under scrutiny:

> Everything depends on what we're actually talking about, beneath these pleasant-sounding abstractions. Suffering can be useful. Okay, but what do we mean? Are we saying that it's rewarding to do something hard? Or are we saying that unsafe working conditions are somehow better than safe working conditions? Hierarchy is good. Are we saying that it's useful when meetings have facilitators, or are we

[4] Yoram Hazony, "Jordan Peterson and Conservatism's Rebirth," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2018, accessed March 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/jordan-peterson-and-conservatisms-rebirth-1529101961.

saying that autocracy is acceptable? We should 'preserve' things we have 'inherited.' Are we talking about classical music or residential segregation?[5]

Robinson's point is that conservative appeals to tradition are often devoid of empathy for people who might be harmed or marginalized by inherited institutions. Oppression and inequality are never inevitable even if they are normalized in society. This chapter will show that the institutions, hierarchies, and customs of the past are not merely "the way things are;" instead, tradition is a political category often used to resist threats to established power.

Tradition

As a medieval folklorist specializing in occupational culture, I investigate similar interfaces between traditional institutions and occupational identity in agricultural work, medical practice, and communal ritual. By examining occupational folklore of secular clerics, agricultural administrators, and cunning folk, this project demonstrate that these groups used the language of tradition to create a sense of shared cultural identity within occupational groups that could transcend geographic and temporal boundaries. This introduction will first examine the dynamics of tradition to show how harmful ideologies and oppressive practices can be transmitted under the pretext of cultural preservation.

[5] Nathan J. Robinson, "Conservatism on Paper," *Current Affairs*, June 19 (2018), accessed March 2020, https://www.currentaffairs.org/2018/06/conservatism-on-paper.

Afterwards, I turn to occupational folklore, which folklorists define as the uncodified, non-institutional knowledge shared among members of specific occupations by means of technique imitation, song, proverb, oral narrative, and other folkloric genres.[6] Throughout this dissertation, I contend that the patterns of early medieval work resonate closely with issues facing contemporary labor activists such as solidarity, management hierarchy, and invisible labor.

The fact that early medieval scholars often frame their research with the term *tradition* is evident from book titles alone: Martin Puhvel's 1979 *Beowulf and the Celtic Tradition,* Paul Cavill's 2004 essay collection, *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England,* Catherine Karkov, Michael Ryan, and Robert Farrell's 1997 *The Insular Tradition,* and Charles Wright's 1993 *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* are just a few representative examples. While each of these texts offers a careful exploration of their subject matter, none are critical of "tradition." In these scholarly works, "tradition" implicitly refers to a sense of a shared cultural lineage (i.e. Christian, Celtic, Irish, Insular). This usage reflects the folklorist Dan Ben-Amos' observation that tradition is often used synonymously with "culture" in American folklore studies: "Through this approach, *tradition* in folklore, like *culture* in anthropology, has become a defining and identifying aspect of social life […] Through experience, interaction, language, and

[6] Occupational folklore, also called "laborlore," was popularized by folklorist Archie Green's work on factory jobs, logging, and mining. See Archie Green, *Wobblies, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes: Laborlore Explorations* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Laura R. Marcus and Marianne T. Marcus, "Occupational Folklore," in *The Emergence of Folklore in Everyday Life: A Fieldguide and Sourcebook,* ed. George H. Schoemaker (Bloomington: Trickster Press, 1990), 121-132; Robert McCarl, "Occupational Folklore," in *Folk Groups and Folk Genres: An Introduction,* ed. Elliot Oring (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), 71-89.

history, a society builds up a tradition, which, in turn, functions as its complex identifying mark."[7] If we push this association between tradition and culture further, we might expect that each of these cultural groups have rules governing legitimate and illegitimate practices while providing a sense of shared cultural identity.

This approach is not necessarily problematic even if it is misleading. By framing "tradition" as an abstract, even super-organic entity, scholars risk conflating the etic—an outsider's objective viewpoint—with the emic—an insider's understanding of social practices. A few examples from Anglo-Saxon scholars illustrates not only tensions between the etic and emic but also the various meanings assigned to "tradition." In his introduction to the collected essays of *The Insular Tradition,* Robert T. Farrell notes that the

> Definition of tradition was deliberately left open to allow speakers to come up with their own traditions, as well as to allow them to deal selectively with the various traditions that form a part of Insular art and the study of Insular art. Chapters, therefore, deal with the Late Antique tradition and how it was preserved and modified by Insular artists…the "Celtic" tradition […] the "Anglo-Saxon" tradition […] the biblical tradition […] methodological traditions […] technical traditions […] the overturning of traditions […] it is obvious from this list that a

[7] Dan Ben-Amos, "The Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," *Journal of Folklore Research* 21.2/3 (1984), 121. Although Ben-Amos speaks directly to the American Folklore academy, I believe that his assertions are also relevant to the larger field of medieval studies.

number of the papers deal with the assimilation of, rejection of, or conflict between traditions.[8]

This explanation is notably open: it frames "tradition" as the site of conflict between cultural groups while permitting contributors to create their own "traditions" out of the material. But on what grounds are new traditions identified? Although this question is not explicitly answered, Farrell's explanation depicts "tradition" as a bounded, reified entity that exists outside of and beyond individual bodies; it is a "thing" containing rules or patterns that can be assimilated or rejected by capable persons.

Another example demonstrates additional complexity underlying scholarly use of "tradition." In Tom Williamson's *Shaping Medieval Landscape: Settlement, Society, Environment,* the author argues that social organization was influenced by the various types of landscape on which people lived. Williamson posits that different settlement patterns arose partially as rational responses to complex environmental conditions such as soil quality and seasonal variations. However, he also notes that environmental factors alone did not create regional variations:

[8] Catherine Karkov, Michael Ryan, and Robert T. Farrell, eds, *The Insular Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1-2. Concluding the volume, Rosemary Cramp writes about the complexity of "Insular culture" in the material record at 283: "Although the term 'Insular' has a very wide semantic field in modern scholarship, I shall try to use the term with as radical a meaning as possible, referring to the distinctive cultural traditions of that group of islands to the west of the European and Scandinavian land masses, occupied by those peoples who today call themselves English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh, or sometimes Irish and British. It is, as I see it, the distinctiveness of the material culture of these islands rather than a consideration of every type of activity which occurs in these islands which is the concern of this overview.".

> Of course, this does not mean that tradition and custom had no part to play in the emergence and maintenance of regional variations. On the contrary: custom was the single most important articulating force in the organization of early medieval peasant communities, and impacted on the management of the land and the structure of the landscape not only directly but also indirectly […] Yet custom did not come from nowhere. Customary practices were moulded by the environment, and by the relative strengths and particular interests and needs of lords and communities—which were themselves, in large measure, probably a consequence of environmental factors.[9]

Although Williamson suggests that both tradition and custom contributed to regional settlement variations, these terms are neither clearly defined nor differentiated. Moreover, it is unclear why Williamson thinks that custom played a larger role than tradition in shaping settlements. This issue is not simply semantic since scholars have already interrogated the differences between these categories. For instance, E.P. Thompson points out that "custom" has been affiliated with both the ambience of "culture" and historical developments of common law. For Thompson, custom is "the rhetoric of legitimization for almost any usage, practice, or demanded right" that operated

[9] Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Bollington: Windgather Press, 2004), 192. Williamson adds (at 193): "Tradition and custom thus played their part in the formation of landscape regions, and in the practice of medieval farming. But in addition, and over a longer time period, the landscape itself—the layout of farms and fields, the pattern of settlement—could have a determining influence on the development of agrarian life. Indeed, perhaps the greatest fascination of landscape lies in the way that spatial patterns and relationships (and associated institutional forms) can persist, as an active and structuring force in social and economic organization, long after the circumstances the engendered them have changed beyond recognition."

in "a field of change and contest, an arena in which opposing interests made conflicting claims."[10] By contrast, tradition implies stability and permanence. Complicating matters further, Gerald Sider suggests that although customs are rooted in "the material and social realities of life and work […] they are not simply derivative from, or reexpressions of these realities."[11] Sider's point is that customs actively shape social life by reinforcing differences across class and regional boundaries. In collapsing tradition and custom, Williamson assumes that these categories are basically the same; however, even my cursory glance at these terms should illustrate the need for more critical awareness if only because these categories are so popular among medievalists.

Tradition in Folklore Studies

In the century since Sydney Hartland's proclamation that "folklore is the science of tradition," scholars have debated both the methods through which tradition is studied and the conceptual limitations of this term.[12] In his 1984 article, "The Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," Dan Ben-Amos

[10] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 6.
[11] Gerald Sider, *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 94.
[12] Edwin Sidney Hartland, *Folklore: What it is and What is the Good of it?* (New York: AMS Press, 1904; repr. 1971), 6-7.

unravels the multiple, shifting meanings conveyed by American scholarly use of the term tradition. Ben-Amos identifies seven prominent "semantic strands" into which most discussions of tradition fall: (1) tradition as lore; (2) tradition as canon; (3) tradition as process; (4) tradition as mass; (5) tradition as culture; (6) tradition as language; and (7) tradition as performance.[13] Although Ben-Amos does not define tradition, his taxonomy reveals the complicated nature of the term; more importantly, his semantic strands imply that, because tradition is so conceptually loaded, efforts to define the word are fruitless. However, just because the term has a large semantic range does not mean it is arbitrary or useless. Furthermore, medievalists invoke tradition often enough that more critical awareness is not only methodologically necessary but also historically relevant. Put another way, medievalists tend to use tradition uncritically, often assuming it means something like "stability" or "culture." I do not believe that these definitions are wrong, only limited in scope. To demonstrate this point, I will first survey research by folklorists who have challenged common definitions of tradition through ethnographic work. After reviewing several of these folkloric viewpoints, I will show that, although medievalists have applied some insights from folkloristics, there is room to be more critical in applying tradition to early medieval societies, especially in occupational environments.

The etymological history of "tradition" shows why the term has multiple meanings. Tradition comes from the Latin *tradere*, "to hand over, bequeath, surrender." As historian David Gross points out, the Roman sense of *trader*e meant "not only to transmit or give over, but also to give something to someone for safe-keeping, as in

[13] Ben-Amos, "The Seven Strands of Tradition."

giving one a deposit."[14] Gross further observes that Roman laws of inheritance codified this latter sense of *tradere* so that *traditio*—the process of transmission—implies a gift-giving exchange in which valuable things are given to another person who is "expected to keep it intact and unharmed out of a *sense of obligation* to the giver."[15] By handing over a material inheritance, the *traditum*—the thing handed over—reflects a "surrender" to the authority of the giver.[16] Over time, this legal sense of tradition gave way to a more general understanding of practices, beliefs, and customs transmitted from one generation to the next. Although the word existed in Latin, the earliest English attestations of tradition occur in the late fourteenth-century (1384), during which time it had two attested meanings: (1) the beliefs and customs passed on through oral transmission or (2) an authoritative but non-biblical Church doctrine transmitted verbally, from Christ or his apostles onward.[17] The semantic range widened after the fifteenth-century so that it could refer to Christian, Jewish (the *Mishnah*), or Islamic (the *hadith*) oral teachings, general instructions, or established social practices. As previously mentioned, scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries framed traditional societies as those through which civilizations pass on their journey to modernity. It wasn't until the latter half of the

[14] David Gross, *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 9.
[15] Gross, *Ruins*, 9.
[16] Simon Bronner, *Explaining Tradition: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 28.
[17] See John Wycliffe, *Bible*, Matthew 15.1-3, ed. Brett Burner, Lamp Post Inc., 2009: "Thanne the scribis and the Farisees camen to hym fro Jerusalem, and seiden, Whi breken thi disciplis the tradiciouns of eldere men? for thei waisschen not her hondis, whanne thei eten breed. He answeride, and seide to hem, Whi breken ye the maundement of God for youre tradicioun?"

twentieth-century that scholars began challenging the "givenness" or objective quality of tradition.

One of the earliest attempts to complicate "tradition" is Eric Hobsbawn's and Terence Ranger's notion of "invented" traditions. In 1983, these scholars posited that *some* traditions are not nearly as old as their proponents claim: having been established over the course of only a few years, such invented traditions take on an aura of historical continuity even though they are relatively new.[18] Invented traditions might draw from or reference the past, but any sense of continuity is basically imagined. Although historical continuity might be fictitious, invented traditions can still impose repetitive behavior on their adherents and quickly take on an aura of authenticity. For example, Prys Morgan notes that Welsh writers from the Elizabethan period and beyond created a remote past and populated it with songs and heroes such as Madoc, the Welshman who sailed to America in 1170 before returning to the homeland and leading his countrymen back to the new world.[19] In this case, Welsh history was invented to legitimize national identity at a time when other nations were romanticizing their recent past. For the contributors of *The Invention of Tradition*, traditions are often created in situations where current practices are incapable of responding to new social needs. In short, Hobsbawn and

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[18] Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-2. The contributors to this volume examine such invented traditions as the Scottish Highland tradition, Welsh Ossian legends, and colonial situations in Africa and India. The editors suggest (at 4-5) that colonialism creates situations where traditions are more likely to be invented: "we should expect it [the invention of traditions] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social pattern for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated…such changes have been particularly significant in the past 200 years."

[19] Prys Morgan, 78-88. Although this legend was later disputed, is likely served as a driving force for actual Welsh immigration.

Ranger suggest that tradition is not always genuine since it could be created for political or nationalistic purposes.

In claiming that certain traditions are invented, one obvious implication is that these are somehow less authentic than those arising through other means.[20] However, Hobsbawn and Ranger do not explain how traditions are formed through other means, even though they suggest that tradition should be differentiated from alternative methods for incorporating the past into the present, such as custom.[21] In response to the ensuing debates about authenticity, Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin argued that traditions are neither authentic nor invented. Instead, the authors argue that

> Tradition is a symbolic process: "traditional" is not an objective property of phenomena but an assigned meaning. When we insist that the past is always constructed in the present, we are not suggesting that present-day acts and ideas have no correspondence to the past. But we argue that the relation of prior to unfolding representations is symbolically mediated not naturally given […] thus we can no longer speak of traditions in terms of the approximate identity of some objective thing that changes while remaining the same. Instead, we must

[20] This issue reflects Richard Dorson's distinction between "fakelore" and folklore: see Richard Dorson, *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays Toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). Dorson defines "fakelore" as artificial folklore, often created in new contexts, like Native American paraphernalia found in American roadside attractions.

[21] Hobsbawn and Ranger, *Invention*, 2: "The object and characteristic of 'traditions', including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition. 'custom' […] does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitations on it. What it does is to give any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history." The authors further suggest that custom is "what judges do" and tradition includes that formal outfit and rituals they perform.

> understand tradition as a symbolic process that both presupposes past symbolisms and creatively reinterprets them. In other words, tradition is not a bounded entity made up of bounded constituent parts, but a process of interpretation, attributing meaning in the present through making reference to the past.[22]

Handler and Linnekin complicate authenticity by suggesting that traditions are ever-changing interpretations of history that reflect contemporary political or cultural dynamics. These scholars argue that tradition is not "a core of inherited culture traits whose continuity and boundedness are analogous to that of a natural object."[23] Thus, tradition cannot be a mass of material handed down through generations because practices and beliefs are never the same from one person to the next. Imitation does not reproduce an *exact* performance even if actions appear similar from one iteration to the next; likewise, multiple people might "believe" in the power of the Eucharist but hold different understandings of what it means to them personally. Such interpretations could change over the course of one's life in the same way that Mass itself could be adapted to local circumstances. In defining tradition as an interpretive process, Handler and Linnekin remind us that the past is continually reimagined in the present. In short, culture involves continuity and discontinuity. For ethnographers and medievalists alike, this insight is valuable because it prioritizes the social situations in which the past is

[22] Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *The Journal of American Folklore* 97.385 (1984), 286.
[23] Handler and Linnekin, "Tradition," 273.

interpreted. More importantly, Handler and Linnekin suggest that tradition is not a natural object since it cannot exist outside of power dynamics inherent in social interaction.

Building on the work of Handler and Linnekin, Henry Glassie notes that history—the "artful assembly of materials from the past"—is closely related to tradition in that both "exclude more than they include and so remain open to endless revision."[24] For Glassie, tradition is not the opposite of innovation or change because it is a temporal concept meant to influence future behavior. Although traditions might appear stable, they inevitably incorporate subtle changes that go unnoticed. These changes reflect the needs of those who wish to establish continuity with their past. In other words, tradition is neither stable nor innovative unless there are competing visions of the future at stake, such as during periods of colonialism or military invasion. Glassie even suggests that the opposite of tradition is not change but *oppression* since people will typically transmit their own traditions unless some other power disrupts or supplants this process entirely.[25] Nonetheless, since tradition is always created anew in response to contemporary values, Glassie posits that it is the mediating agent between culture and history.[26]

Over the past several decades, folklorists have further expanded and challenged these portrayals of tradition. In critiquing Glassie, ethnomusicologist Barry McDonald suggests that discussions of the term often fail to clarify the actual dynamics of tradition and instead rely on amorphous ideas about cultural expression. McDonald notes that Glassie never clarifies the ontological status of tradition: is tradition constructed by

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[24] Henry Glassie, "Tradition," in *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture,* ed. Burt Feintuch (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 176-97.
[25] Glassie, "Tradition," 177.
[26] Glassie, "Tradition," 180-81.

people in a particular society, by scholars studying that society, or does it exist as an independent reality?[27] Although McDonald believes that scholars need to carefully differentiate their own sense of tradition from that of the practitioners being studied, he also argues that tradition is a transcultural category with a certain "core character."[28] Accordingly, the two most important aspects are (1) repeated activities and (2) the "generation of a certain spiritual/emotional power in the relationship of those involved in the collaboration."[29] For McDonald, such personal relationships are the foundation for the continuation or re-creation of activities that we call tradition. Emotional commitment to the people participating in shared practices is thus the central catalyst through which traditions are passed on from one generation to the next.

As the previous examples demonstrate, scholars since the 1970s have been searching for totalizing or transcultural theories of tradition while acknowledging the polyvalence of the concept. This trend is further exemplified in a series of books by Simon Bronner: *Following Tradition: Folklore in the Discourse of American Culture* (1998) and *Explaining Traditions: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture* (2011). In his earlier monograph, Bronner notes that tradition becomes increasingly problematic as value judgments are assigned to the term. Since the concept is already vague, "whether one wants the future to break with or continue the pattern of tradition dictates judgments of tradition as negative or positive."[30] For example, tradition might be ascribed a great deal

[27] Barry McDonald, "Tradition as Personal Relationship," *The Journal of American Folklore,* 110.435 (1997): 47-67.
[28] McDonald, "Relationship," 58-9.
[29] McDonald, "Relationship," 58.
[30] Bronner, *Following,* 10.

of authority by those for whom the past is a source of comfort; from such a perspective, tradition should be "followed" or "obeyed," perhaps unwittingly. Even whole societies might be framed as "traditional," implying that its people depend on the past as a source of authority. Alternatively, Bronner points out that modernist scholars often frame tradition as a "guide" or a choice, something that can be "selected" if continuity with the past is desirable and abandoned if innovation is more meaningful.[31] Building on these insights in his 2011 book, Bronner observes that folklore scholarship has typically objectified tradition without framing it as an ambiguous or ethereal concept.[32] More importantly, Bronner believes that folklorists should attempt to explain tradition due to its apparent ambiguity: "If folk logic often proceeds according to the idea of handy knowledge in pragmatic response to local conditions, folkloristic logic generalizes the process into a fundamental behavior that is necessary to being human […] tradition in folkloristics is revealed as both continuous and changing, obvious and elusive, and therefore in need of explanation."[33] At this point, Bronner theorizes about the scientific process in folklore research, which he sees as a necessary step in explaining tradition. Drawing on Dundes' guide for folklorists, Bronner outlines several stages through which research should be presented: *identification, annotation, analysis, explanation,* and *implication.*[34] This structuralist approach, argues Bronner, offers a framework for cross-

[31] Bronner, *Following,* 11.
[32] Bronner, *Explaining,* 92.
[33] Bronner, *Explaining,* 92.
[34] Bronner, *Explaining,* 88-91. In Bronner's method, identification involves careful description of the material or genre; annotation situates the material in its historic context; analysis demonstrates patterns or uncovers hidden structures; explanation attempts to show how meaning can be made from the material; implication is essentially the conclusion, which shows how any research has wider applications. In a lengthy explanation, Bronner also notes that traditions should not be analyzed only according to their

cultural investigation of tradition. While performance-centered approaches analyze how traditions affect people, this structuralist method attempts to discover how the tradition originated and why it persisted.[35] In offering a framework for investigating tradition, Bronner shows that the polyvalence of the concept can be an advantage for researchers as it allows for transcultural—and historical— interpretation of a particular "mode" of social interaction.

Even as folklorists debate the empirical status of tradition, evolutionary biologists have introduced the theory of "mimetics" into the conversation. The "meme" was first introduced by Richard Dawkins in a short chapter of his famous book, *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins believes that genetic evolution is analogous to cultural evolution: just as the gene is the smallest unit of genetic replication, so too is the meme the tiniest packet of cultural transmission. A meme could be a proverb, a joke, a way of making chairs, or a popular tune that "leaps" from one brain to the next via imitation.[36] For example, if someone tells a "knock knock" joke, that meme enters the brain of everyone in the audience. People unfamiliar with this style of joke will learn a new formula while those familiar with the formula might discover an additional variant. Every person who knows

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"immediate" context (90): 'Partly as a response to Victorian evolutionary models, analysis as it was pursued in the 1960s concentrated on the 'immediate' context of the moment rather than reaching back into the past […] this analysis was not just ahistorical but also antihistorical, preferring the idea of folklore as unique performances emerging from the social situation to the idea of folklore as a sequence of events in time. This presentist tendency shows, at least in part, a discomfort with tradition being construed as a bygone or survival, but in constructing a modern conception of tradition as a living force, it misses the significance or precedence to the notion of tradition as prescriptive. An important 'context' I advocate for arriving at explanation is consideration of the continuities of practices and settings back in time, especially when they involve the diffusion of ideas and cultural adaptation in different places and conditions. In an orientation on tradition, the role of the past in the present should be ascertained, in addition to determining historic sources for, and reactions to, cultural practices" (90).

[35] Bronner, *Explaining*, 91.

[36] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 192.

this type of joke can pass it on through imitation; its survivability in the larger "meme pool" depends on factors analogous to those used by natural selection.[37] If a meme is particularly effective at being imitated (for whatever reasons), it might have more longevity by connecting with other memes. For instance, Dawkins suggests that the fear of hellfire and priestly celibacy are both reinforced by "meme complexes" that include devotion to God and marriage, respectively.[38] Although Dawkins does not explicitly discuss mimetic theory's relationship to tradition, his claims about the similarity between cultural and genetic evolution suggest that tradition should play an important role in the imitative process.[39] This line of reasoning is evident in Michael Drout's *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Cultural Poetics of the Anglo-Saxon Tenth Century,* which I will return to shortly.

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[37] Dawkins, *Gene*, 194.

[38] Dawkins, *Gene*, 198-9: "Memes and genes may often reinforce each other, but they sometimes come in opposition. For example, the habit of celibacy is presumably not inherited genetically. A gene for celibacy is doomed to failure in the gene pool […] [However] a *meme* for celibacy can be successful in the meme pool…the meme for celibacy is transmitted by priests to young boys who have not yet decided what they want to do with their lives. The medium of transmission is human influence of various kinds, the spoken and written word, personal example and so on. Suppose, for the sake of argument, it happened to be the case that marriage weakened the power of a priest to influence his flock, say because it occupied a large proportion of his time and attention. This has, indeed, been advanced as an official reason for the enforcement of celibacy among priests. If this were the case, it would follow that the meme for celibacy could have greater survival value than the meme for marriage."

[39] Theories of cultural evolution have also been advanced by Daniel Dennett, another evolutionary biologist: see Daniel Dennett, "The Evolution of Culture," Charles Simonyi Lecture, Oxford University, 17 February 1999; Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life,* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1984; repr. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). In response to Dennett's *Darwin's Dangerous Idea,* Stephen J. Gould challenges the analogy between cultural and genetic evolution, suggesting that memes are a problematic metaphor. Gould notes that "cultural (or memetic) change manifestly operates on the radically different substrate of Lamarckian inheritance, or the passage of acquired characters to subsequent generations. Whatever we invent in our lifetimes, we can pass on to our children by our writing and teaching. Evolutionists have long understood that Darwinism cannot operate effectively in systems of Lamarckian inheritance—for Lamarckian change has such a clear direction, and permits evolution to proceed so rapidly, that the much slower process of natural selection shrinks to insignificance before the Lamarckian juggernaut;" Stephen Jay Gould, "Evolution: The Pleasures of Pluralism," *New York Review of Books* (June 26, 1997).

As scholars like Bronner attempt to frame tradition as an ontological category of human communication, others have shied away from this structuralist approach, focusing instead on the semantic elements of tradition. Francisco vaz de Silva points out that tradition inevitably involves the betrayal of the past since the Latin root *trader*e means both "to hand over" and "to betray."[40] Since the transmission of tradition always involves some kind of selective process, the teacher, tradition-bearer, or the *traditor* are responsible for transferring the past faithfully while appealing to contemporary audiences. Since performances are never perfect, identical copies of past practices, repeated actions will always be slightly different from one iteration to the next even if stability is the desired outcome. De Silva also points to oral traditions with multiple, regional versions as evidence for betrayal: in such an environment, the versions of one group might seem different or even wrong in the eyes of another community.[41] This type of betrayal is more evident when we consider transmission as a kind of translation that inevitably distorts the very material it attempts to replicate; in Italian, this paradox is captured by the proverb "*traduttore, traditore*" ("translator, traitor").[42]

Finally, other scholars have noted that the transmission of tradition is closely related to other concepts such as heritage, mimesis, reproduction, and habitus. Reminding us that "all culture is recycled," Dorothy Noyes argues that heritage "recuperates a dead tradition of the lifeworld or even kills off a living one in order to bring it to a second life

[40] Francisco vaz de Silva, "Tradition Without End," in *A Companion to Folklore*, eds. Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 40-54, 42.
[41] De Silva, "Tradition," 42.
[42] De Silva, "Tradition," 42.

in print, in the museum, or onstage."[43] Once given that status of "heritage," a tradition is removed from its living social context and put on display in a new environment. According to Noyes, heritage "freezes" the tradition in time by protecting it from additional change or corruption.[44] Although "heritage" might seem less relevant to early medieval studies, UNESCO added *The Exeter Book* to its *Memory of the World* register in 2016, calling it "the foundation volume of English literature."[45] According to UNESCO, *The Exeter Book* deserves this status because it is not only older and better preserved than other poetic manuscripts but also unique, as it contains texts not found elsewhere.[46] As scholars continue to examine what Michael Dylan Foster calls "the UNESCO effect," medievalists should also pay attention to the impact that modern designations of "heritage," "tradition," and "custom" might have on our understanding of the material.[47] Indeed, UNESCO outlines the objectives of the *Memory of the World* register as follows: (1) to facilitate preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's documentary heritage, (2) to assist universal access to documentary heritage,

[43] Dorothy Noyes, *Humble Theory: Folklore's Grasp on Social Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 107 and 109. See also Lauri Honko, "The Second Life of Folklore," in *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko,* eds. Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2013).
[44] Noyes, *Humble,* 109.
[45] Alison Flood, "UNESCO lists Exeter Book among 'world's principal cultural artefacts,'" *The Guardian* (22 June 2016).
[46] Flood, "UNESCO." The fact that Auden, Ezra Pound, and J.R.R. Tolkien were all "inspired" by poems from this manuscript likely helped legitimize its status as a "foundation" volume even though it was not seriously studied until the nineteenth-century.
[47] Michael Dylan Foster, "The UNESCO Effect: Confidence, Defamiliarization, and a New Element in the Discourse on a Japanese Island," *Journal of Folklore Research,* 48.1 (2011): 63-107. In this article, Foster returns to a Japanese island to continue his research on a New Year's Eve ritual called the Toshidon, which was recently placed on UNESCO's list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." Foster suggests that this designation might impact that islander's perception of their own ritual; paradoxically, recognition from an outside, authoritative body like UNESCO gave the islander's more confidence in their ritual while also making them defensive, as they grew more concerned about its future flexibility.

and (3) to increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage.[48] How this language of *preservation*, *access*, and *awareness* will affect the presentation of Anglo-Saxon culture has yet to be seen; nonetheless, even its designation as a "foundation volume of English literature" should challenge scholars to assess the "literariness" of its contents and its status as a "foundation" volume in English classrooms throughout the world.

So far, my survey of folkloric work on tradition has shown several trends. As scholars challenged nineteenth-century social Darwinism—partially through fieldwork and face-to-face communication with the "folk"—tradition was no longer a social level through which cultures passed on their march towards civilization; instead, tradition was framed as the mass or body of cultural material transmitted across generational lines. The so-called performance turn of the 1970s and 80s implied that tradition was a "thing" that only exists in performative situations, which means that it could be adapted, innovated, inherited, or invented through new performances. During this same period, conversations in folkloristics about authenticity brought new focus on the "genuineness" of traditions and folklore itself. In responding to the problem of authenticity, some folklorists argued that tradition is always created anew through social performances. By locating tradition in performativity, these scholars showed that tradition is often used for either political purposes or as a means of differentiating one group from another. In other words, tradition is an interpretive process taking place in the present, which often reflected power dynamics throughout a community.

[48] UNESCO, *Memory of the World,* https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow.

Folclar and Knowledge

Of course, collaboration between folklore and medieval studies is nothing new. However, both fields in the American academy have undergone important methodological and theoretical shifts since the 1970s that call for reevaluating the way these disciplines interact.[49] Over the last half century, folklorists have turned a critical eye towards concepts such as *performance*, *tradition*, and *heritage*, while challenging conventional boundaries of folklore research. For instance, what constitutes "lore" and who are the "folk?" These questions are especially pertinent for medieval folklore because they ask us to challenge ambiguous terms like Aron Gurevich's "popular culture" or simple binaries such as Peter Burke's "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition."[50] Indeed, identifying the "folk" is a crucial step for exploring early medieval occupational folklore in Anglo-Saxon England because very few named individuals left traces in the material record. Several medievalists have already taken this step. Asking who the "people" were in the later Middle Ages, D.W. Robertson, Jr. noted that the question is difficult to answer because English medieval society contained so much local variation that general trends across social groups are difficult to identify.[51] For example, tenants in one region might face harsh bailiffs and have more customary duties than

[49] Similar paradigm shifts were already underway in Europe, especially in the wake of World War II.
[50] Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. Janos M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1994).
[51] D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Who were "The People"?" in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985): 3-29. See also Carl Watkins, "'Folklore' and 'Popular Religion' in Britain during the Middle Ages," *Folklore* 115.2 (2004): 140-150.

tenants in another locality; moreover, ecclesiastical estates were often supervised more closely than those run by secular lords.[52] For Robertson, such local variation means that occupational categories like manorial lord, peasant, and bailiff, inadequately describe on-the-ground circumstances. While Robertson correctly notes that all social categories might be "the people," he seems to associate "popular" expressive culture mainly with agricultural workers, the peasantry.[53] Nonetheless, even though he treats the peasantry as bearers of the pastoral countryside, Robertson recognizes that "the people" includes everyone, not just the uneducated or the lay.[54]

Prior to the nineteenth-century, the "folk" were the object of research by antiquarians who thought that authentic earlier stages of culture, including customs, beliefs, and practices, were better preserved among rural peasant communities than among educated urban dwellers, who "were thought to be immune to folklore or beyond its limitations."[55] The "folk" were thus imagined as illiterate, quaint peasants living in the countryside; they were thought to be part of a homogenous group among which scraps of an earlier culture were hiding, waiting for discovery by their more sophisticated urban

[52] Robertson, "The People," 4-5.
[53] For instance, Robertson, 11, writes: "It is undoubtedly true that peasant mothers often sang to their infants or children, or told them stories, about which we know very little, although there is reason to believe that they may have included ghost stories. And men in the countryside, like men anywhere else, probably relished jocular stories, or, as folkorists call them, "merry tales." Later (11) Robertson notes that "Chaucer was fortunate in having a court audience that included noblemen, ecclesiastics, clerks, and officials about the royal court. These are, of course, 'people' too, although their tastes were not exactly 'popular.'"
[54] Despite his attention to local variation, Robertson seems comfortable presenting this generalization, 23: "I think we should remember that there was then nothing like the large homogenous audience available for writers today, when tastes are largely Epicurean in nature and when reactions to song and story are predominantly emotional. As has often been observed, medieval people were practical rather than sentimental, an attitude made more or less natural by the fact that life was then often more difficult, a great deal shorter, and not very rich in opportunities for leisure, which was not regarded then as something to be cultivated in any event but as an invitation to irrational behavior."
[55] Toelken Barre, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), 1.

brethren.[56] Strangely enough, this image of the folk resonated closely with Old English terminology. While William Thoms is famously credited with having coined the compound "folklore" in 1846, the Old English *folclar* was used to render *omelia* in both translations of Gregory's *Dialogues*. The compound also occurs in the Latin-English glossary in Cotton Cleopatra A.III while a similar phrase, *folclic lar*, glosses *omeliae verba* in Ælfric's *Glossary* in the margins of British Library Additional 32246.[57] In context, *folclar* meant the "instruction of the people." *Folc* denotes the "common people" or the "nation" while *lar* usually means "teaching," "knowledge," or "cunning." It is thus possible that the compound *folclar* denoted "common knowledge" as opposed to *boclar*, which referred to knowledge derived from books.[58]

Such divisions between "specialized" and "common" learning would have resonated with early antiquarians. In 1777, for instance, the Rev. John Brand published *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, which was an expansion and revision of the 1725 *Antiquitates Vulgares; or, the antiquities of the common people. Giving an account of several of their opinions and ceremonies. With proper reflections upon each of them; showing which may be retain'd, and which ought to be laid aside*, by the Rev. Henry Bourne, who was the Curate of All Saints at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Brand's collection

[56] Barre, *Dynamics*, 2, points out that "this basic assumption [that rural people preserved earlier stages of culture] for the normal habit of folklore still exists today in many European and South American countries where folklore is understood to be, by definition, the traditions of rural people, who are ethnically and regionally homogenous…in tune with the feeling of the countryside in which the materials were sought, the accompanying descriptions were markedly bucolic: folklorists spoke of reaping rich harvests of lore, gleaning last remnants of song, plowing narrow fields of folklore, tracking elusive genres in the nooks and byways of the back country; one heard about small eddies of ethnic groups, song catching in the mountains, and, inevitably, the nurturing of a field considered ripe for the picking."
[57] Jeffrey Alan Mazo, "A Good Saxon Compound," *Folklore* 107 (1996): 107-8; Thomas Wright, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 2 vols., ed. Richard Wülcker (London and Marburg: Trübner, 1884).
[58] Mazo, "Compound," 108.

was chronologically arranged by the calendar, beginning with New Year's Eve and ending with Christmas practices. In addition to calendar customs, Brand records a wide range of practices that are not determined by the year such as "Betrothing Customs" or "Wells and Fountains." Finally, he turns to omens, charms, and "vulgar errors" that populated the countryside, like the "the Wandering Jew" or the "Bishop in the Pan." In the preface to his collection, Brand states that "tradition has in no instance so clearly evinced her faithfulness as in the transmittal of vulgar rites and popular opinions. Of these, when we are desirous of tracing them backwards to their origin, many may be said to lose themselves in the mists of antiquity."[59] Noting that the true origins of such customs are unattainable, Brand lays out his goal:

> The reader will find, in the subsequent pages, my most earnest endeavors to rescue many of those causes from oblivion. If, on the investigation, they shall appear to any to be so frivolous as not to have deserved the pains of the search, the humble labourer will at least have the satisfaction of avoiding censure by incurring contempt. How trivial soever such an inquiry may seem to some, yet all must be informed that it is attended with inconsiderable share of literary toil and difficulty. A passage is to be forced through a wilderness, intricate and entangled: few vestiges of former labours can be found to direct us in our way, and we must oftentimes trace a very tedious retrospective course, perhaps to return at last,

[59] John Brand, *Observations of Popular Antiquities: Including the Whole of Mr. Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgares, with Addenda to Every Chapter of that Work: As Also an Appendix Containing Such Articles on the Subject As Have Been Omitted by that Author* (London, J. Johnson, 1777), vii.

> weary and unsatisfied, from researches as fruitless as those of some ancient enthusiastic traveler, who, ranging the barren African sands, had in vain attempted to investigate the hidden source of the Nile.[60]

According to Brand, while the quest for origins is impossible, the researcher is cast in near-heroic light as the explorer toiling through a wilderness of peasants. Tradition is the vehicle through which these peasants pass along their rites and opinions, apparently having no understanding about the value of the things they do. In sum, Brand conceives of the "folk" as a "multitude" of "common people" who have "faithfully" preserved antique practices; tradition is the vehicle through which superstition and vulgar customs have been preserved. In this framework, the "folklorist" is one who "discovers" value among rural, illiterate peasants. This task was all the more important because the "little ones" share a common origin with the educated elite and thus preserve material that sheds light on earlier levels of social development.[61]

The term "folk" was thus juxtaposed against the civilized: the folk were rural peasants who passed along earlier cultural customs through oral transmission. By contrast, the elites were educated, literate urbanites no longer constrained by "tradition."

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[60] Brand, *Antiquities*, ix.

[61] Brand, *Antiquities*, xvi: "The antiquities of the common people cannot be studied without acquiring some useful knowledge of mankind; and it may be truly said, in this instance, that by the chemical process of philosophy, even wisdom may be extracted from the follies and superstitions of our forefather." Brand justifies his approach as follows, xviii: "The well-known beautiful sentiment of Terence—'Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto'—may be adopted, therefore, in this place, to persuade us that nothing can be foreign to our inquiry, much less beneath our notice, that concerns the smallest of the vulgar; of those little ones who occupy the lowest place, though by no means of the least importance, in the political arrangement of human beings."

Responsibility for salvaging the past fell to folklorists, who were often "civilized" clergymen like Brand. However, fieldwork by anthropologists and folklorists during the early to mid-twentieth century challenged this type of social stratification to such a degree that in 1965 Alan Dundes famously asked, "who are the folk?" in an essay by the same name.[62] For Dundes, the "folk" were "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor […] a member of the group may not know all other members, but he will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity."[63] The implications of his definition are important: the "folk" are not only peasants but also office workers and scholars; more significantly, the "folk" are not a level of civilization but rather groups to which people belong, like occupations. A single person might be part of multiple groups that each have their own "lore," such as a university student who plays basketball or an African-American living in New York. Although this definition may rightly seem too broad, it initially offered a counterpoint to the idea of a homogenous "folk" by suggesting that anyone can be engaged in the folklore process not merely as "bearers" but as "makers" of tradition.[64]

Since 1965, scholars have continued to debate the identity of the "folk." Responding to Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" and Dan Ben-Amos' definition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups," Dorothy Noyes argues that terms such as "group" and "community" simplify the complex interactions

[62] Alan Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1965.
[63] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, 2.
[64] Noyes, *Humble*, 22.

that form the social base of folklore. According to Noyes, groups are created and defined based on various factors such as (among others) territory, lineage, ethnicity, common interest, religious vocation, or political representation.[65] Yet groups that seem unified or homogenous to an outsider may come to be less cohesive or more socially fragmented upon further investigation. For example, individuals living on the social periphery like beggars, the poor, or the narrator of *The Wanderer* may better understand how their society marginalizes people than someone living in close proximity to institutional power. Nonetheless, both "group" and "community" avoid the pejorative connotations of "folk" and allow us to consider the dialogue "between the empirical network of interactions in which culture is created and moves, and the community of the social imaginary that occasionally emerges in performance."[66] For Noyes, the "group" is not a natural object but a cultural creation—it is *imagined* or *invented* through social interactions.[67] It is also possible for scholars to reify a group by applying categories or boundaries that people interacting in spaces do not recognize themselves.[68] Noyes points out that people identify with a group through performance, which might include everyday activities like acting out gender roles, wearing certain types of clothing, speaking in a particular language or dialect, or participating in a ritual.[69] As such performances are

[65] Noyes, *Humble*, 21.
[66] Noyes, *Humble*, 21.
[67] Noyes, *Humble*, 39.
[68] For an early medieval example of such reification, the terms "monastic" or "monastery" are often anachronistically applied to a wide range of people and institutions. As Sarah Foot has demonstrated, such terms suggest that monasticism was an unchanging concept applicable across temporal and geographic boundaries. See Sarah Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England c. 600-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[69] Noyes, *Humble*, 41.

repeated and formalized, the shared experiences of "feeling together" and what Noyes calls "co-presence"—the reality of bodies inhabiting shared spaces and undergoing similar experiences—make communities real for individual participants.[70]

In framing occupations as folk groups, the idea of "co-presence" accurately describes how shared experiences can foster a sense of identity across time and space. All folk groups have varying degrees of institutional and folk culture. This reality allows us to see how both priests and farmers have employed folklore in their respective occupations without reducing occupations to simple binaries like "elite" and "popular" or "official" and "unofficial." As John McNamara and Karen Jolly have observed, learned monastic communities in early medieval England were the very groups that recorded charms in manuscripts or miracle stories related to saints in *vitae* or homiletic writings.[71] But how do we account for these incongruities and messy social realities? Any writing about the distant past requires scholars to categorize the people, classes, and practices we encounter in manuscript sources; unfortunately, categories like "elite" may distort the very social relations they seek to explain even as they help us grapple with the fact that nearly all manuscripts copied in early medieval England originated in ecclesiastical

[70] Noyes, *Humble,* 47, further argues that empirical social networks exist alongside—and depend on—the imagined community: "The community of the social imaginary coexists in a dialectical tension with the empirical world of day-to-day network contacts. The imagined community offers a focus for comparison and desire, and, at the same time, is itself subject to re-visionings in the light of everyday experience."
[71] John McNamara, "English Tradition: Anglo-Saxon Period," in *Medieval Folklore: A Guide to Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs,* eds. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, and John Lindow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114-117. McNamara warns (116): "Those who think that there was a sharp division between elite culture and folklore in Anglo-Saxon England would do well to consider that such prescriptions [charms found in Bald's *Leechbook* or the *Lacnunga*] were commonplace in learned works at the time." Similar points have been made by Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Anglo-Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

establishments, likely from the hand of an educated male scribe.[72] Faced with similar problematic categories such as elite, popular, folk, oral, literate, folklorists turned to the concept of the "vernacular" (i.e. "vernacular religion," "vernacular architecture") to describe *lived* rather than *ideal* experiences.[73] In outlining what he calls "the philology of the vernacular," Richard Bauman argues that the vernacular is "the informal, immediate, locally grounded, proximal side of the [communicative] field."[74] Put simply, folklore emerges within and is transmitted through "vernacular" culture. The advantage of this perspective is that it avoids assigning value to an individual's practices and beliefs. Instead of categorizing an individual's practice as folk or elite, official or unofficial, vernacular implies that each person is the creator and bearer of their own folklore. A vernacular viewpoint might better be seen as the ways that people think, act, and

[72] Such distortions might be most problematic among works of public academics or in introductory courses on medieval Europe. In both spaces, the complexity of social relations might be overlooked in favor of useful interpretive categories. My own interest in this topic began while taking a course on "Popular Religion in Medieval Europe" at Wheaton College, Massachusetts.

[73] Noyes, *Humble*, 66: "Rather than a stable layer, the vernacular is now described as the immediate sphere of engagement in which actors negotiate between the tradition, professional, and alternative discourses available to them, drawing on multiple resources to create a practical repertoire…we might now imagine the strata as reversed, with the vernacular growing up from the cracks in the institutional layer." This use of "vernacular" differs from the more common linguistic sense familiar to medievalists, i.e. the local language (English, French, German) instead of the *lingua franca* of Western Europe, Latin. Having coined the term "vernacular religion," Leonard Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife," *Western Folklore* 54.1(1995): 37-56, adds that "a vernacular religious viewpoint shows that designations on institutionalized religion as 'official' are inaccurate. What scholars have referred to as 'official' religion does not, in fact, exist. The use of the term 'official religion' as a pedagogical tool has helped explain scholarly perspectives to the uninitiated, but remains an inadequate explanation for the nature of religion. While it may be possible to refer to various components within a religious body as emically 'official,' meaning authoritative when used by empowered members within that religious tradition, such a designation when used by scholars is limited by the assumption that religion is synonymous with institutional or hierarchical authority" (45).

[74] Richard Bauman, "The Philology of the Vernacular," *Journal of Folklore Research* 45.1 (2008): 33. Bauman suggests that the vernacular is the opposite of the cosmopolitan, which "pulls toward the rationalized, standardized, mediated, wide-reaching, distal side [of the communicative field]." See also Noyes' summary, *Humble*, 85.

communicate beyond organized groups.[75] For the ethnographer, this perspective is advantageous because it prioritizes the experiences of every person regardless of the institutions with which they associate.[76] In other words, "vernacular" asks the fieldworker to treat seriously everyday experiences, thoughts, and feelings as a vital part of someone's engagement with their own culture. While this approach might seem most appropriate to the lived experiences encountered by an ethnographer, it is also a useful category for medievalists because it cuts across social groups and institutional affiliation. A vernacular perspective essentially asks us to first take an emic—an insider's—view of medieval society before turning to scholarly categories, which might distort our data by framing it in a way that is less relevant to our goals.

My discussion about the "folk" is not simply an attempt to replace one set of problematic categories with another; rather, there is a larger methodological issue at stake. After all, conceptual categories simultaneously obscure and illuminate; they legitimize our focus on one thing instead of another. By categorizing medical practitioners and reeves as folk groups, I imply that any member of these groups might have shared similar experiences with other members on account of their occupational circumstances. However, the fact that folk healers are harder to identify suggests that certain occupations were not legitimized or recognized by ecclesiastical authorities. But

[75] Primiano, "Vernacular Religion," 42.
[76] Primiano defends his use of vernacular as follows (41): "when I speak of 'vernacular religion' I am not imply substituting the word 'vernacular' to remove connotations that I do not like in 'folk' or 'popular.' I am, rather, attempting to redress a heritage of scholarly misrepresentation, in what I see as the necessary methodological reflexivity on the ethnographic process. Understanding religion as 'vernacular religion' does justice to the variety of manifestations and perspectives found within past and present human religiosity."

since my goal is reconstructing the culture of work in medieval England, how can this be achieved when our evidence for these occupational roles is inconsistent, fragmented, or limited?

Since the nature of the evidence differs among different workplaces, in both the type of sources and the quantity, one solution is to consider a *long-term* perspective of these occupational settings. Called *retrospective methodology,* this comparative approach stipulates that evidence from more recent periods can help us interpret older material. Of course, this methodology is nothing new to either medievalists or folklorists: early work by oral-formulaic theorists like Milman Parry (1902-35) and Albert Lord (1912-91) in the 1920s studied Serbian poets in performance to illuminate Homeric composition techniques; more recently, John Niles has employed similar methods among Scottish ballad singers in his exploration of Anglo-Saxon oral performance.[77] Likewise, the *historic-geographic method* pioneered by Kaarle Krohn (1863-1933) and expanded on later by Antti Aarne (1867-1925) and Stith Thompson's (1885-1976) famous motif index held that a folktale found in one place and time preserves specific features of that tale type; all folktales of a particular type are therefore related across geographic, historic spaces. The longevity of retrospective methodologies is reflected by a substantial

[77] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1960); Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); John Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Niles explains his method as follows: "These Scottish vernacular materials should not be regarded as a second body of "literature" to complement the literature of early England. Rather, I make use of them here to illustrate what can be learned by direct observation of singing and storytelling practices. They also help one understand the interface or oral tradition and literary culture. With the early English materials, we have texts but no performers or performances. With the Scottish materials, we have performers and performances by not necessarily any texts" (6).

scholarly corpus debating its limits and proper applications. While each of my case studies deals with these limitations, for now I suggest that retrospective methods actually provide avenues into early medieval occupational folklore that would be otherwise unavailable. More specifically, I believe that there are firm methodological grounds for reading occupational folklore retrospectively because of the continuity of knowledge, environment, and experience. Moreover, since all our evidence is limited in some capacity, scholars should not hesitate to use later material as long as they maintain a critical awareness of its limitations. In the following case studies, I draw frequently on post-1066 material because this evidence shows how "co-presence" was negotiated in similar occupational environments where there is more evidence available. In bringing chronologically later material into conversation with early medieval evidence, I will challenge medievalists to be more comfortable with imaginative, speculative approaches to group identity.

A central goal of this project is to reframe medieval work using the lens of contemporary labor politics. I investigate three case studies through theories about solidarity, management hierarchy, and invisible labor to show how Marxist scholars can update our language to discuss labor history. Since tradition politicizes the past, meaning that the past is made a battleground for contemporary political discourse, the language of labor politics is appropriate. The labor conditions that we inherited were not inevitable, they were constructed over generations by conflict between workers and capitalists, or those who owned land, business, and banks (capital) and those whose labor was exploited

to make concentrations of wealth and power possible.[78] As labor historians write the next chapters of worker history, it is important to grapple with the ways in which occupational conditions have been traditionalized. Tradition can be a positive force that brings people together, but it can also carry on harmful ideologies and oppressive systems that go unchecked because people argue "that's the way it's always been." Once normalized, harmful traditions can be difficult to overcome as they seep into mainstream political discourse.[79]

Tradition in Early Medieval Scholarship

Unfortunately, few medieval scholars have explored the ways in which the early medieval world is politicized in our scholarship. Although tradition is the subject of many studies, it tends to have a range of meanings that coalesce around notions of continuity, stability, genre, or even cultural groups. To speak of the influence that the "Germanic Tradition" has on charms, for instance, is problematic in so far as it reifies certain practices or beliefs as "Germanic" when such terminological distinctions would not have been shared by our historical subjects. Tradition is a social category, which is often utilized—strategically or otherwise—by communities seeking to identify with or evoke

[78] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Matt Stoller, *Goliath: The 100-Year War Between Monopoly Power and Democracy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).
[79] For example, debates about Confederate monuments or political "revolution" often hinge on tradition. Conservatives argue that institutions develop over generations, so sudden changes that threaten to dismantle them swiftly are thought to harm all of society, especially those vulnerable people who depend on such institutions.

the authority of the past. In short, tradition politicizes the past. However, early medieval scholars have tended to downplay the social contexts through which the past is summoned and negotiated, focusing instead either on matters of textual transmission or the reach of institutional power. For example, Clare Lees frames vernacular religious prose as a selective process through which historical continuity is established by ecclesiastical authorities. In a similar vein, Renee Trilling argues that the Old English poetic corpus expresses a type of selective nostalgia for the past. Taking a materialistic perspective on tradition, Michael Drout applies mimetic theory to uncover the cognitive and biological features of imitated, repetitive actions. Although these studies are informative and provocative, they are understandably focused on the interface between manuscripts and their composers/scribes. Less attention has been given to traditions that would have circulated within specific occupational groups.

In her 1999 monograph *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England,* Clare Lees examines vernacular religious prose, arguing that composers drew on traditional ecclesiastical genres and beliefs in creating new, practical guidelines for their audiences. Although Lees does not clearly define "tradition," she grounds her discussion on Raymond Williams' notion of "selective tradition." Lees writes: "The process by which a tradition is handed down from generation to generation is a selective one, however much it is formed and guided by past experiences, ideas, or artifacts that present themselves to the present as natural and universal […] tradition does not mean that everything stays the same; traditions selectively reproduce the past in order to evoke

an impression of sameness."[80] In this framework, the conventionality of prose religious texts is a deliberate, ideological choice by elite composers such as Ælfric. In substantially augmenting a corpus of vernacular preaching material, Ælfric attempted to frame Christian rituals and beliefs as longstanding English traditions. Thus, homilies are not merely derivative as they respond to the contemporary needs of clerical authorities. Lees' book explicitly theorizes the selectivity of tradition. For Lees, tradition in early English religious texts was transmitted by hegemonic forces in the Church. Although Lees reminds us that tradition involves selectivity, her approach naturally focuses on the large body of texts produced during the late tenth and early eleventh-centuries by Wulfstan and Ælfric, who were both well-connected ecclesiastical authorities. Of course, prioritizing these homilists makes sense given that they composed a significant amount of the surviving, pre-1066 texts. However, this viewpoint emphasizes the role that a small number of institutionally powerful people played in shaping hagiographic and homiletic genres. While these genres certainly involve selectivity, it is less clear that all traditions were shaped by hegemonic elites alone.

[80] Clare Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28. In Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 114-5, the author defines selective tradition as follows: "From a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are neglected or excluded. Yet, within a particular hegemony, and as one of its decisive processes, this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as 'the tradition', 'the significant past'. What has then to be said about any tradition is that it is in this sense an aspect of contemporary social and cultural organization, in the interest f the dominance of a specific class. It is a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of predisposed continuity." Lees (115-20) frames her argument on Williams' ideas about institutions and formations. For Williams, institutions like the Church can powerfully impact the lives, values, and practices of people. Such institutions play important roles in establishing and selecting traditions; however, they are not the only socializing force. Formations are essentially "conscious movements and tendencies" in artistic or intellectual spheres that shape the direction of society. Formations might be adopted by formal institutions but also exist in the wider social sphere.

In a series of books, Michael Drout creates a theoretical framework through which the mimetic underpinnings of tradition are explained. Drawing on a growing body of research into memes—"the smallest unit of cultural replication; the thing that is transmitted when one person imitates another"—Drout argues that a mimetic theory of tradition is actually better at describing the workings of culture than other theoretical approaches popular in the humanities.[81] Drout thus frames tradition as any type of imitative behavior: "[tradition] is an unbroken train of identical, non-instinctual behaviors that have been invariably repeated after the same recurring antecedent conditions […] the successful practice of a traditional behavior depends upon the previous successful practice of that behavior, and the continued maintenance of the tradition depends upon a series of successful enactments of the behavior in question."[82] Drout evidently believes that any repeated or imitated act can retrospectively be identified as a tradition, although this fact does not mean that every repeated behavior is necessarily "traditional." According to Drout's theory, any tradition can be broken down into three basic memes: (1) *recognitio* (recognizing antecedent conditions for a tradition), (2) *actio* (the behavior, activity of a tradition), and (3) *justificatio* (the explanation of a tradition).[83] These three central memes dictate both the likelihood of transmission and the adaptability of any tradition to its cultural contexts in what Drout calls the Word-to-World fit conditions. For example, a *justificatio* that a certain salve has cured toothache since time immemorial

[81] Michael Drout, *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Cultural Poetics of the Anglo-Saxon Tenth Century* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 4 and 58.
[82] Drout, *Tradition*, 9.
[83] Drout, *Tradition*, 13.

would face a conflict if that salve actually intensified the pain.[84] As the *justificatio* becomes more specific, the Word-to-World Fit will also seem more rigid since the likelihood of its conditions being violated increase, which means that this particular meme-plex (a collection of various memes) might vanish. However, as the *justificatio* becomes more vague, violations of the Word-to-World Fit conditions are less probable, which increases the survivability of the meme-plex. To explain this relationship, Drout posits that the "Universal Tradition Meme" ("because we have always done so") can parasitize other *justificatio* and essentially out-compete them.[85] In applying this tripartite model of tradition to the Benedictine Reform, Drout postulates that mimetics allows us to sidestep opaque terminology like "cultural formations" and focus instead on the reasons specific textual elements were used, adapted, and recombined in a monastic culture that relied heavily on textual rules.[86]

Offering a different perspective on the relationship Anglo-Saxon poets had with their history, Renee Trilling argues that Anglo-Saxon poetry was nostalgic for a heroic but imagined past. Trilling believes this nostalgic perspective reflects a contemporary understanding of the past; put differently, nostalgia attributes meaning in the present to a history that has been lost. In representing this vanished past, historical poetry conceals its own ideological basis "behind a mask of 'tradition,' glossing over the fact that 'tradition' itself is a product of present writings and rewritings."[87] The heroic world of *Beowulf*, for

[84] Drout, *Tradition*, 16.
[85] Drout, *Tradition*, 18-22.
[86] Drout, *Tradition*, 294-5.
[87] Renee Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 6.

instance, is simultaneously created and mourned by the poem; likewise, this imagined, lost past is recreated by the poem's adherence to the traditional alliterative line in what Trilling calls the "aesthetics of nostalgia." Since Anglo-Saxon poets saw themselves "as the heirs to two great cultural traditions [the biblical and Germanic]," we might expect them to not merely address such cultural heritage but incorporate it into their sense of history.[88]

A similar point was made by Nicholas Howe, who argued that Anglo-Saxon elites fashioned a "migration myth" through which their heritage was explained: "After their conquest of the island, the Anglo-Saxons developed a myth of migration that captured the interplay between their geography and history. As they understood, the movement from continental origins to island home embodied the movement from past to present."[89] Howe further examines the rhetorical contexts of the migration myth in such poems as *Beowulf* and *Exodus* as well as chronicles like Gildas' *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*—essentially arguing that Anglo-Saxons "invented" this migration narrative as a means to civilize their past while legitimizing their conversion to Christianity. While Trilling builds on Howe's thesis, she also maintains that the form and structure of texts reveal competing visions of history: whereas Bede offers a linear teleology, *Beowulf* is highly nostalgic in both alliterative form and historical content.[90] Although Howe's argument is not explicitly about tradition,

[88] Trilling, *Nostalgia*, 27.
[89] Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, Revised edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 34.
[90] Trilling, *Nostalgia*, 21.

it suggests that ideology is also a powerful force through which the past is reshaped and recontextualized in the present.

As Howe and Trilling demonstrate, medieval writers often wrote about their cultural heritage without clearly marking practices or beliefs as tradition. These scholars show that our relationship with the past can take various forms, which means that a range of descriptive terminology including—but not limited to—*nostalgia, past practices, history, custom, tradition, romanticization, myth, legend, heritage, revival,* and *memory* are necessary to articulate the complex ways in which people relate to and politicize the past. For example, we might agree that a term like *past* differs from *history* in that the former refers to an abstract sense of "things that came before" while the latter implies a narrative of events, even a material record of what transpired in a particular place or time. Folklorists demonstrated that continuity with the past is often evoked to reinforce both identity and power within folk groups of a given society. In other words, practices are rarely identified as tradition unless there is some social, political, or economic reason to do so in the eyes of practitioners. Yet early medieval writers were rarely kind enough to identify their traditions for future audiences. Instead, scholars have to look for variants of a particular text or repeated ideas, images, and motifs. The methodological assumption is that practices are more likely to become traditions when they are repeated; thus, textual repetition and variation seem like good starting points for further research. However, manuscripts were costly objects requiring specialized training to make and use; therefore, the existence of a manuscript implies that some kind of social network necessitated its production. Since most manuscripts were created in monastic scriptoria, it is generally

assumed that early medieval insular texts more closely reflect the worldview of male ecclesiastical authorities than any other social group.

As a medieval folklorist, I want to know about the traditions of people who worked outside the scriptoria, those who never had the ability to record their worldview. While such a task is difficult given limited, often fragmented source material for early medieval England, I believe that source issues are not insurmountable. In fact, the last few decades of scholarship have already provided methods for understanding the wider cultural environments in which texts were produced. An obvious—but older— example is the focus on the longevity of *mentalités* in the *Annales* school of historical research. Scholars like Jacques Le Goff and Marc Bloch argued that collective *mentalités*—attitudes towards things like relics, saints, or the supernatural—are often inscribed in medieval texts because they do not necessarily change rapidly. According to Le Goff, medieval society was shaped through two ideological systems: thus, the ambiguity and ambivalence of *folklore* was challenged by the rationality and institutionalism of *ecclesiastical* culture.[91] The *Annales* school thus offered a "two cultures" model of the medieval world in which the high culture of the Church actively resisted and repressed the "low culture" of folklore. However, this model implied that the "low culture" was somehow less rational than the "high culture" of the Church and its educational apparatus. In reality, these two cultures were never entirely separate: ecclesiastical authorities might have been born and raised among the same people they would later

[91] Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 153-8.

admonish in chronicles, sermons, or penitentials. Additionally, the walls of ecclesiastical spaces in Anglo-Saxon England were not impermeable: people used church alters to store stuff while minster communities were closely networked with the secular nobility. Even the "Church"—simultaneously a physical structure and an institution—could serve as a social gathering place, a market, or a ritual center. Although surviving manuscripts from Anglo-Saxon England provide a worldview shaped by ecclesiastical institutions, we need not assume that other perspectives were less rational.

However, I am less interested in the worldview or *mentalités* of the laity than the social networks through which occupational knowledge was transmitted. As I've shown, the transmission of tradition involves complicated social interaction; as such, it is never a one-time event but a process through which certain elements of a society's past are inscribed with both meaning and permanence by certain people. Thus, tradition is rhetorical and retrospective in that practices are rarely categorized as such until there is some social need to do so after the fact. The following chapters investigate three different occupational environments through which ancestral knowledge was maintained and transmitted—these occupational settings are the manorial estate, the Rogation festival, and the service industry of medical practitioners. Each setting contained social networks that are only partially identifiable in the textual record. To varying degrees, these occupational environments were shaped by "tradition bearers" who were expected to carry a body of knowledge relevant to their social responsibilities. For example, a priest should know how to perform Mass, a reeve must be familiar with the *folces gerihtu* ("the rights of the people"), and the medical practitioners were thought to know healing rituals.

Through case studies of different occupational settings, I will show how work was politicized in the early medieval period. I believe we can better understand early medieval social dynamics through the representation of occupations like priests, reeves, and medical practitioners. These representations reveal significant anxiety about the knowledge and performative competency of priests and reeves. Depending on the source, cunning folk are depicted as ambivalent figures: they might equally be criminals, healers, or even priests in some communities. By examining the depiction of these occupations, we can better understand how authorities attempted to regulate knowledge transmission among people who were further down social hierarchies. For instance, although reeves and priests were both institutional representatives, they were expected to "oversee" larger communities of lay people. By contrast, medical practitioners had less institutional authority but were nonetheless thought to influence the rest of society through verbal incantations or helpful rituals.

There is another reason I have decided to focus on occupational settings: each case study deals with an important aspect of labor organization that is still relevant today. For example, the chapter on manorial estates deals with management training and worker control, which resonates closely with service industry workers today. Likewise, medical practitioners performed labor that has been rendered invisible by scholars who transpose our own assumptions about "work" onto the past. Finally, the Rogation festival was a solidarity-building ritual that imbued agricultural work with meaning. The longevity of these occupational themes—management, invisible labor, and solidarity—means that each has accumulated cultural baggage over the centuries. In other words, the very

existence of these themes across time reflects structural continuity with the past. In his well-known preface to *Genesis* (actually a letter to Ælfric's patron, Æthelward), Ælfric laments the lack of learning among priests because it gives rise to erroneous interpretations of scripture:

> Those unlearned priests, if they understand only a little of those Latin books, soon think that they may quickly be great teachers; but they do not know the spiritual meaning in them, and how the old law was a sign of things to come […] Priests are set up as teachers of unlearned people. Now it is fitting that they understand the old law spiritually and what Christ himself, and his apostles, taught in the New Testament so that they might guide those people well to belief in God and set an example with good works.[92]

For Ælfric, priestly learning was important due to their proximity to the unlearned. An uneducated or badly trained priest might pass along knowledge considered erroneous by ecclesiastical authorities. Since the priest was often the primary point of contact lay people had with the Church, Ælfric was worried that their knowledge and

[92] Ælfric, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo,* ed. Richard Marsden, EETS o.s. 330, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), *Prefatio Genesis*, lines 25-30: Þa ungelæredan preostas, gif hi hwæt litles understandað of þam Lydenbocum, þonne *þincð* him sona þæt hi magon mære lareowas beon; ac hī ne cunnon swa þeah þæt gastlice andgit þǽr to, and hu seo ealde æ wæs getacnung toweardra þinga oððe hu seo niwe gecyðnis æfter Cristes menniscnisse wæs gefillednys ealra þæra þinga, þe seo ealde gecyðnis getacnode towearde be Criste and be hys gecorenum Preostas sindon gesette to lareowum þam læwedum folce. Nu gedafnode him þæt hig cuðon þa ealdan æ gastlce understandan and hwæt Crist silf tæhte and his apostolas on þære niwan gecyðnisse, þæt hig mihton þam folce wel wissian to Godes geleafan and wel bisnian to godum weorcum."

ritual competence did not sufficiently live up to the standards established in by church councils and prescriptive texts. Ælfric's anxiety reflects deeper concerns about uncodified, unofficial practices among those who had the power to organize communities or speak from a pulpit, face-to-face with the audience.

The manorial reeve was also expected to perform an organizational role best mediated through face-to-face contact with agricultural workers. Traditionally elected at Michaelmas, the reeve was assigned to oversee the day-to-day workings of a manorial estate by keeping accounts, managing crop production, and enacting the decisions of the local court. Reeves were thus obligated to know both the local customs of their estate and the law of the land itself. In addition to knowledge about customary practices, reeves were expected to know the agricultural cycle, seasonal activity, and other tasks necessary for the functioning of a manor, like procuring farming utensils or repairing equipment. These duties meant that the obligations of a reeve required experience with agricultural work and organization. Both literary and documentary sources highlight this range of experience: whereas Chaucer's reeve embodies the coldness of managerial efficiency, the *Domesday Book* shows specific instances in which reeves collected fines for bad beer, sold sokemen, or testified in court about the value of land.[93] In accomplishing such tasks, a reeve would have to communicate face-to-face with the very people who might elect him to office, which suggests that certain actions would have made a reeve more or less trustworthy in the eyes of his peers. Indeed, the *Domesday Book* witnesses numerous

[93] Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," in *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Robin Fleming, *Domesday Book and the Law: Society and Legal Custom in Early Medieval England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

reeves acting in their own interest or that of their superior rather than for the concerns of the agricultural workers whom they oversaw. Nonetheless, this power dynamic was not always one-sided as reeves were also known to have acted illegally or incompetently, which might hint at divided loyalties or complicated social networks that remain unrecognized. Loyalties aside, a responsible reeve was expected to enforce and transmit the established customs of an estate. Since customs theoretically shaped the day-to-day happenings of a manor, the reeve was an agent of tradition; if a reeve performed poorly, not only might he fail to keep his position in the coming year, the social order would be threatened.

Unlike the reeve, the early medieval service industry was populated by ambiguous figures like witches and cunning folk. Of course, the term cunning folk is anachronistic to the Anglo-Saxon period. Although the term *cunning* ("knowledge," "experience") occurs in Old English, from *cunnan* ("to know"), its meaning was more restrictive. It was not until the fourteenth-century that "cunning" was recorded in reference to magical skill or knowledge; however, it is feasible that this semantic shift happened even earlier (perhaps much earlier) but remained unrecorded. Nonetheless, cunning folk has come to mean a class of people capable of performing—among other things—healing rituals, charms, or divinatory practices. In this sense, *cunning folk* refers to those possessing greater knowledge than their surrounding community; more precisely, it indicates that work was not always centered on institutions. In the words of historian Owen Davies, cunning folk were "individuals who stood out in society for possessing more knowledge than those around them, knowledge that was acquired either from a supernatural source, from an

innate, hereditary ability, or from being able to understand writing."[94] Even though "cunning folk" was not used in any surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, the type of magical practitioner to which it refers appeared frequently. Old English writers used various terms that fall into the semantic field of cunning folk: *wicce* ("a witch"), *scinlǽce* ("sorceress"), *galdorgalend* ("enchanter"), and *wyrmgaldere* ("serpent charmer"). Scholars generally posit that folk medical practitioners were a source of anxiety for the early medieval Church because they drew on unsanctioned sources of power like spirits or demons. Although this idea has some validity, cunning folk in Anglo-Saxon England worried ecclesiastical authorities even as practices commonly attributed to these "folk"—like charms, incantations, or nature worship—were recorded in medical texts and manuscript margins and flyleaves. Additionally, members of the secular clergy would have encountered "unofficial" practices in the communities they served; however, such proximity was not always met with hostility but with acceptance, as some medical remedies in the *Lacnunga* attest to the presence of priests. In practice, the cunning folk were not a homogenous or clearly delineated group; nonetheless, ecclesiastical authorities were concerned that certain people possessed both knowledge and social influence that escaped the gaze of the Church. While a charm for stolen cattle required the performer to stand in a field—a visible location—other practices, such as medicinal remedies administered in a house or charms uttered while collecting herbs, could be performed without observation. Since the line between "official" and "unofficial" practices was

[94] Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), viii.

blurry in Anglo-Saxon England, cunning folk were simultaneously a discursive formation and an actual person—secular or ecclesiastic—who knew how to perform charms, make amulets, or provide medical care. Cunning folk would have thus earned their authority not from ecclesiastical or secular institutions but from their immediate community instead.

In examining secular clergy, agricultural administrators, and cunning folk, I hope to reframe the problem of tradition by focusing on people who, by means of institutional or social authority, could influence the livelihood of other individuals. Unfortunately, face-to-face social dynamics can only be approximated from textual material. We will never know if an anonymous reeve failed to police illegal behavior out of sympathy for the criminal; we will never know if a priest was loved by his parishioners for helpful guidance or if a certain person was labelled a *wicce* and shunned by the community on account of some social transgression. However, ecclesiastical and secular authorities often mentioned these occupations, which suggests that elites were deeply concerned with the conduct of less powerful figures like priests and reeves. By contrast, medical practitioners did not fulfill an official occupational role since they would have worked outside of institutional hierarchies. Despite occupational differences, I contend that institutional authorities wished to control the *politics of the past*, which required careful regulation not only of institutional representatives like priests and reeves but also people who could hand over uncodified practices such as the cunning folk. Such regulation was necessary because these three social groups interacted with the larger community and could influence either perceptions of the past or current practice.

Medieval Folklore

I began this chapter with Roger Scruton's *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* to show how appeals to tradition are often part of larger political projects to preserve social arrangements of the past while diminishing calls for social justice. At this moment, the work of the medieval folklorist is its own political project. Medieval studies is undergoing a paradigm shift as new theoretical lenses break into the field, supplementing traditional methods of research with new theoretical language.[95] Medieval scholars have an obligation to keep the field alive, which means that it needs to speak to people's working conditions today since it is this environment where research and teaching begin. The themes we discuss in our undergraduate classrooms directly impact future scholars: teachers might find that topics like medieval diversity are more welcoming to students from less privileged backgrounds. Folklore studies is not without its own skeletons, but the field's focus on marginalized communities requires an ethical framework that centers the informant's voice. Even though it is easy to study history without any ethical lens, professional academics still have an ethical relationship with students that needs to be treated in a similar way.

In a 2018 article, John Lindow offers a similar, but pragmatic, challenge for medievalists to better grapple with the oral background of manuscript sources. After

[95] For example, see Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

noting that medieval studies was methodologically similar to folklore in the nineteenth-century, Lindow suggests that the 1970s "performance turn" offered new methods for analyzing texts. The "performance turn" argued that folklore is not a set of "items" from the distant past; rather, "within tradition itself, "items" exist only as part of a process of performance."[96] Thus, any performance situation, like preaching a homily or uttering a charm, took place in a cultural environment different from our own. To understand these environments, medievalists have to reconstruct the worldview that actors and audiences would have brought to such performances. This type of work is particularly illuminating when multiple versions of a text survive, for each would be treated by a folklorist as a unique performance. However, early medieval insular texts often resist this analytic method because few variants exist. Due to the nature of the available evidence, any attempt to understand why the representations of reeves, priests, and cunning folk were deeply concerned with authority, conduct, and knowledge requires us to set aside our cultural framework of rising inequality within the neoliberal university.

In her book, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution,* Wendy Brown defines the neoliberal university as follows:

> [A]s a normative order of reason developed over three decades into a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality, neoliberalism transmogrifies every human domain and endeavor, along with humans themselves, according to a

[96] John Lindow, "The Challenge of Folklore to Medieval Studies," *Humanities* 7.15 (2018): 4.

> specific image of the economic. All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal reason and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus,* which itself has a historically specific form. Far from Adam Smith's creature propelled by the natural urge to "truck, barter, and exchange," today's *homo oeconomicus* is an intensely constructed and governed bit of human capital tasked with improving and leveraging its competitive positioning and with enhancing its (monetary and nonmonetary) portfolio value across all of its endeavors and venues. These are also the mandates, and hence the orientations, contouring the projects of neoliberalized states, large corporations, small businesses, nonprofits, schools, consultancies, museums, countries, scholars, performers, public agencies, students, websites, athletes, sports teams, graduate programs, health providers, banks, and global legal and financial institutions.[97]

As the neoliberal university prioritizes economic interest above all else, the lines between school and corporation are blurry. Monetizing all aspects of university life impacts teaching and research by turning pedagogy into management and English departments into corporate feeding systems that teach students how to be "productive"

[97] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 9-10.

writers for the business world.[98] Medieval studies is threatened in this environment because university administrators might slash funding or hire fewer medievalists since our field is less able to train future teachers of Rhetoric and Composition, which is the dominant subdiscipline in English departments. I am not suggesting that we reshape medieval studies to better service the neoliberal university; instead, I believe that conversations about labor have a place in the medieval studies classroom so that students can better reflect on the conditions in which teaching and research take place.

Politics of the Past, Politics of Otherwise

As a graduate student entering an academic profession during the era of mass adjunctification of university faculty, I realize that the future of this occupation is uncertain.[99] Of course, universities will always need English teachers (hopefully), but under what conditions will we work? Will we struggle through overloaded semesters with relatively minor monetary compensation and benefits? Will we instead seek new occupations, selling our "skills" to alternative careers? Who do we stand with in solidarity? These concerns are not related to university faculty alone: the rise of the "gig" economy and growing wealth inequality are reshaping the nature of work in twenty first-century America, sparking fears of social alienation and the end of "traditional," career-

[98] Leo Parascondola, "Write-to-Earn: College Writing and Management Discourse," Mark Bousquet, Tony Scott, and Leo Parascondola, eds., *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing Instruction in the Managed University* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 209-219.
[99] As of late 2018, roughly 70 percent of university faculty nationwide are contingent, which means they are considered non-tenure track, part time employees. Such positions have limited benefits, often coming with low pay and semester or year-long contracts. See Dan Edmonds, "More Than Half of College Faculty are Adjuncts: Should You Care?" *Forbes*, 2015. The AAUP found similar numbers in a recent 2017 overview: https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts.

track work. It is under these circumstances that people are scouring history for answers, asking: how did we get here? Could things be *otherwise*? Medievalists are not alone in recognizing the stakes of historiography: contemporary political rhetoric is saturated with language of "progress," "heritage," and a return to "traditional" ways of living. Yet I believe that the past is neither a place for refuge nor futility; instead, the case studies of my project will show a world that is at once familiar and otherwise. Through historical investigation, I believe that we can better understand how our own occupations simultaneously shape group and individual identity, connecting us to laborers long dead. This project thus has two main objectives. First, my central goal is to explore how folkloric elements of early medieval occupational culture shaped group identity. Second, through retrospective case studies, I will show that medieval occupational groups were constituted by the language of tradition, which suggests that occupational identity was a kind of genealogical exercise.

Chapter 2 argues that the Rogation festival was a solidarity-building ritual. Scholarship that deals with community formation and identity often use abstract notions of community. Drawing on Noyes' theory of "co-presence," I argue that solidarity was one concrete axis through which social ties that make up a community are sustained. A sense of solidarity might bring villagers together against a deceitful reeve even if all parties lived in the same community. Solidarity was also central to representations of Christian identity: the faithful stood together under God's protection. The Rogations were one of the few occasions when lay people were expected to participate in liturgical ritual. This three-day festival called for communal penance so that the fields could be blessed

for the coming agricultural season. In this chapter, I explore Rogation homilies to show how various origin narratives were incorporated into the ritual's sense of solidarity. Early medieval homilists did not seem to understand the festival's history because their source material contained different origin narratives. In most authoritative accounts, the Rogations were instituted by Bishop Mamertus in the fourth-century. One homily claims that it was established by Saint Peter while another suggests that the Roman *ambarvalia* festival was appropriated by the Church and turned into the Rogations. Other homilies do not even mention its origin. I argue that these origin narratives fostered a Church-centered sense of solidarity that connected living Christians to their ancestors who instituted the festival. These homilies framed hardships like pestilence, crop blight, and natural disasters as the forces of Christian oppression brought about by a sinful populace. The Christian community must stand together and do penance so that future generations would be protected. The long history of the Rogations, however, suggest that ecclesiastical solidarity was one competing theme among many: the festival also celebrated warmer weather, agricultural work, and parish boundaries. Other customs arose during the Rogations like feasting, drinking, dancing, and horseback racing. One nineteenth-century account even notes that young boys were turned upside down while others were beaten at boundary markers.[100] Given the festival's dynamics, I argue that early medieval homilists imbued it with an ecclesiastical sense of community that was at odds with practical concerns like boundary marking and merriment.

[100] Steve Roud, *The English Year: A Month-by-month Guide to the Nation's Customs and Festivals, from May Day to Mischief Night* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 176-9.

In chapter 3, I will explore the representations of reeves during the tenth and eleventh-centuries to show how literate authorities theorized about effective administrators. During this period, Anglo-Saxon England underwent important political and cultural shifts. While tenth-century Benedictine reformers established new administrative standards for pastoral care, Wulfstan wrote about proper social arrangements in his *Institutes of Polity*, admonishing reeves for their deceitfulness and corruption while also noting that reeves used to be productive members of society. Likewise, England was conquered twice during the eleventh-century: first by Cnut in 1016 and more famously by William in 1066. Since William saw himself as England's rightful king—the heir to Edward the Confessor—he decided to not make substantial changes to certain administrative roles with English heritage, such as the reeve. Nonetheless, post-conquest legal compilations like Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 383 contain legal codes stipulating the duties of administrators and other workers on manorial estates. One text in this compilation, called *Gerefa,* shows that the responsibilities of reeves were actively traditionalized during a time of changing manorial structure and administrative oversight. I will further illustrate that the reeve was transposed onto historical texts like *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* and the *Old English Martyrology* as part of an effort to legitimize contemporary social and legal arrangements. While Anglo-Saxon statutory and historical texts typically reveal institutional, elite perspectives, such documents were not totally divorced from on-the-ground social conditions. After all, reeves did not have the same level of bureaucratic power that would later characterize out-of-touch administrators in twentieth-century

industrial capitalism; instead, manorial reeves had to administer the very agricultural workers who voted them into office. Thus, this chapter will show that the social environment in which reeves worked necessitated "unofficial" knowledge, such as how to build bonds among agricultural laborers or how to properly plow a field. Because this knowledge was economically valuable, *Gerefa* represented an early attempt to codify management techniques for dissemination to wider audiences. This chapter shows that the roots of modern capitalist hierarchies are even older than commonly acknowledged.

In chapter 4, I turn to medical practitioners and cunning folk to show how twenty-first century conceptions of labor have impacted our understanding of early medieval service work. Unlike the priest or reeve, cunning folk were not charged with any type of administrative or organizational duties. This chapter first examines various representations of folk medical practitioners to show how ecclesiastical authorities responded to vernacular practices like medicine and child-birth. Although scholars like Valerie Flint and Karen Jolly have argued that the early medieval Church responded to "magical" practitioners with negotiation rather than suppression, I demonstrate that early medieval authorities worried about the influence of people who were simultaneously knowledgeable and well connected with their local community. Since cunning folk were thought to possess greater knowledge than other lay people, it is no surprise that homiletic and legal sources tend to align folk practitioners with heathendom. However, I show that cunning folk also operated in competitive social networks that relied on symbolic capital, someone's ability to gain recognition and status in their community. These practitioners performed labor that is not evident in textual sources such as herb

gathering, forming client networks, and healing the sick. While scholars often dwell on the symbolic meaning of charms, I argue that these rituals were fundamentally about labor. Someone had to gather the materials and perform the ritual; likewise, many healing remedies dealt with physical infirmities that would have prevented people from fulfilling agricultural duties. I argue that our own conceptions of "work" have caused scholars to prioritize symbolic, philological interpretations of medical texts. As a result, medical practitioners did not perform "work" since their activities were subsistence-based, which means that we read charms as para-liturgical tools rather than worker-centered rituals. This chapter provides an alternative framing by showing that early medieval workers depended on larger service networks that are all but invisible today.

Chapter 2: Walking with Ancestors: Ritual Solidarity in Rogation Processions

> "So early in the year 550, Claudius Mamertus, bishop of Vienne in France, extended the object of Rogation Days, before then solely applied to a preparation for the ensuing festival of the Ascension, by joining to that service other solemnities, in humble supplication for a blessing on the fruits of the earth at this season blossoming forth. Whether, as is asserted by some authors, Mamertus had cause to apprehend that any calamity might befall them by blight or otherwise at this particular period, or merely adapted a new Christian rite on the Roman *terminalia,* is a matter of dispute."[1]

Introduction

The excerpt above, from John Brady's 1815 *Clavis Calendaria; or, a compendious analysis of the calendar*, explains the origins of the Rogation Days, which is a liturgical celebration that takes place on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day.[2] Brady tells us important information concerning the Rogations: having begun in the year 550, the festival blessed crops while preparing people for the coming Ascension. Although this account seems straightforward at first, Brady suggests

[1] John Brady, *Clavis Calendaria* (London: Printed by Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1813), vol. 1, p. 348.
[2] For discussions of the Rogations in the Middle Ages, see: Bradford M. Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (New York: Boydell Press, 2002), pgs. 190-210; Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pgs. 180-82 and 326, n. 18; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pgs. 136-39; André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, trans. Margery J. Schneider, ed. Daniel E. Bornstein (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pgs.129-135. For the Rogations between the Reformation and present day, see: A.R. Wright, *British Calendar Customs* (Glasgow: Robert Maclehose and Co. LTD, 3 vols), vol 1., pgs. 129-148; John Brand, *Observations of the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions* (London: George Bell, 1849. Reprint, Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1969, 3 vols.), vol. 1, 197-212; T.F. Thiselton Dyer, *British Popular Customs, Present and Past: Illustrating the Social and Domestic Manners of the* People (London: George Bell, 1876. Reprint, Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), 204-9; Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Steve Roud, *The English Year* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 176-183.

that the influence of Roman (pagan) elements on the festival is still disputed. As I will show, historical sources complicate his account in additional ways. For instance, the Rogations were likely instituted as a response to natural disasters in the latter half of the fifth-century (c. 470), nearly eighty years before 550. Additionally, near-contemporary writers such as Gregory of Tours, Sidonius Apollinaris, and Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus tell us that it was Saint Mamertus, not his brother Claudianus Mamertus, who *established* the Rogations.[3] The saint did not merely *extend* them to include the "fruits of the earth," as Brady claims, since the festival was not initially concerned with crops but with the welfare of the country. Furthermore, the Roman *Terminalia* would be an unlikely source since Rogation processions between the fifth- and eleventh-centuries were not only about marking out land parish boundaries; in fact, the ritual "beating the bounds" commonly associated with the Rogations is not attested in any early medieval texts.[4] Thus, Brady's account is historically inaccurate as it transposes a nineteenth-century understanding of the Rogations onto the past. Historical inaccuracies are not uncommon in nineteenth-century scholarship, but why is this one notable?

[3] There were, in fact, two Mamertus brothers who both joined the Church in Vienne: Saint Mamertus and Claudianus Mamertus. The former became bishop in the early 460s until his death c. 475, while the latter wrote a theological treatise on the soul: *De statu animae.* See Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems and Letters,* trans. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 65. Among Sidonius' letters, Epistles II and XI from Book IV show the author's relationship with Claudianus Mamertus. Later sources attribute the Rogations to "Mamertus" without specifying which brother.

[4] John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 487: "there is not the slightest hint that late Anglo-Saxon Rogation processions already involved 'beating the bounds,' that is perambulating the hedges, ditches, rivers, and roads which marked parish boundaries…the overwhelmingly secular nature of the landmarks suggest that boundary perambulation was still, in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, an essentially secular activity which had not yet been assimilated into liturgical ritual."

This chapter investigates Rogation origin stories during the early Middle Ages (c. 470-1150) to show that solidarity was one of the central forces holding Christian communities together. Solidarity can be felt with people who experience similar hardships. Solidarity can also connect the living and the dead, and it can bring ancestors into relationship with those living in the present. These origin narratives also legitimized the Gallican liturgical tradition rather than the Roman; additionally, they provided the Spring celebration with a distinctly ecclesiastical rather than indigenous history. This chapter assumes that origin narratives surrounding the Rogations do not necessarily reflect actual historical events; instead, these stories show different ritual traditions battling over their sense of history. Since the Rogations were an agricultural ritual designed to bless fields and protect them through harvest, it would have been one of the first meaningful celebrations of the agricultural year. Thus, the meaning of this festival might be felt differently by farmworkers, ecclesiastics, and townsfolk. The origin narratives also reveal a conflict between leisure and work, exuberance and solemnity—these tensions were exacerbated by both the changing seasons and shifting patterns of work as the weather became warm again. Before turning to early medieval England, I will first offer an example of a Rogation origin narrative from the Reformation. As this narrative demonstrates, the question of origins was not simply historical trivia; rather, the past was an instrumental force shaping communal identity in the present.

In his *Actes and Monuments*, John Foxe (1516-1587) writes an imaginative dialogue between Friar John Brusierd and M. Thomas Bilney about the use of saintly

images in worship.[5] As Foxe tells us, Thomas Bilney has been accused by the Catholic Church for challenging the authority of the saints during the Litany: "First, he [Bilney] sayd, pray you only to God, & to no Saintes, rehearsing the Letany, and when hee came to Sancta Maria ora pro nobis, he said, stay there."[6] In this exchange, Friar Brusierd confronts Bilney by defending devotion towards saints along with their intercessory power. After Bilney argues that saints are not present in the Bible and are merely a creation of the Catholic Church, Brusierd implores Bilney to discover the origin of the Rogations, a festival in which litanic prayers were commonly performed:

> O most pernicious and perilous heresie of all that euer I heard. Thus you flying the smoke, fall into the fire, and auoyding the daunger of Scylla, you runne vppon Carybdis. O hart of man wrapped in palpable darkness. I wishe Maister Bilney, that you would but once search and set out the first origine of these Rogation dayes: For so we read in the Churche story, that they were first ordained by Pope Gregory, with fastyng, prayers, and holy processions, against the pestilence, by the infection of the ayre then reigning among the people. At what tyme, the people then goyng in the procession, a certaine Image like to our blessed Lady,

[5] For an overview of Foxe's relationship to Anglo-Saxon culture, see Benedict Scott Robinson, "John Foxe and the Anglo-Saxons," in *John Foxe and His World*, eds. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 54-72. Robinson notes that the turn towards Anglo-Saxon study during the sixteenth-century "brought with it the possibility that the first truly English church was a Catholic church, and not the pure, primitive religion of the Britons" (55). See also Timothy Graham, ed., *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).

[6] John Foxe (*The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online*, HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011, 1570 edition), Book VIII, 1177. As Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints* Henry Bradshaw Socieity Publications 106 (London: The Boydell Press, 1991), 1, notes, invocations to Mary were usually followed by invocations to apostles, martyrs, confessors, archangels, and virgins. Each invocation ended with the phrase "*ora pro nobis."*

> painted with the hands of S. Luke the Euangelist, did go before them […] to the whiche Antheme the Pope also adioined this: Ora pro nobis Dominum &c. pray to the Lorde for us. Wherefore, seyng the Angels did worship the Image of the glorious virgine Mary in the honor of her: and seing moreouer, the holy father Pope Gregory, with all the clergie, did pray for corporall infirmitie, it appeareth manifestly that we ought to worship the Saintes, and also to giue honor, in a maner, to their Images.[7]

Brusierd's argument is rhetorically clever: the parts of the Rogations that Bilney seems uncomfortable performing are historically connected to Pope Gregory's successful use of both Mary's image and the litanic prayer *ora pro nobis Dominum*. Brusierd reasons that if esteemed authorities such as Pope Gregory, his clergy, and even angels brought about divine intercession through these tools, we should surely follow their example and pray to the saints for *corporall infirmitie.* In the aftermath of this discussion, Bilney is accused of heresy by the Bishop of London and imprisoned in the Tower. After recanting, he was released in 1529 and once again started preaching against the veneration of the saints, which led to his eventual execution in 1534 and his subsequent elevation to the status of a martyr.[8]

If we read this dialogue in the context of Reformation England, Friar Brusierd represents the orthodox Catholic Church while Bilney is the reform-minded Protestant.

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[7] John Foxe, *TAMO,* Book VIII, 1178.
[8] Hugh Chisholm, "Thomas Bilney," in *Encyclopedia Britannica,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911): 945-6.

Yet beneath the debate about the veneration of saints, Brusierd implies that Bilney does not properly understand the history of the very festival he preached about: the Rogation days. The friar's rhetorical move undermined Bilney's credibility. Nonetheless, by mentioning the origin of this ecclesiastical celebration, Brusierd inserts himself into conversations stretching back into the early medieval period concerning the establishment of the Rogations. Brusierd tells us that he read about the origins in the "Churche story." In the 1570 edition, a marginal comment clarifies the meaning of this term: "By this church storye, he meaneth belyke, Legenda aurea, otherwise called the legend of lyes."[9] Compiled in the thirteenth-century, the *legenda aurea*—better known as Jacobus da Varagine's *The Golden Legend*—notes that the "litanies" are performed twice a year.[10] According to this account, the "Greater Litany" occurs on Saint Mark's feast day (April 25th) while the Lesser Litany takes place on the three days prior to Ascension day. Varagine states that the Greater Litany is so-called because it was named after pope Gregory the Great (540-604), who established the celebration in response to a pestilence that struck Rome in the late sixth-century. The Lesser Litany was instituted by the bishop of Vienne, Mamertus, during Emperor Leo's reign (457-474).[11] Varagine claims that this festival is "lesser" because "it was inaugurated by a lesser bishop, in a less distinguished place, and on account of a less grave situation than the above-described plague."[12]

[9] Foxe, *TAMO*, Book VIII, 1178. The 1563 edition also contains a similar marginal note. Interestingly, of the four editions (1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583), only the early two contain this dialogue between Friar Brusierd and Thomas Bilney, which suggests that the passage was censored out in later printing.
[10] Jacobus da Varagine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[11] Varagine, *Legend*, 286.
[12] Varagine, 286.

Although perhaps less severe than pestilence, Vienne was shaken by earthquakes, the palace of the king was destroyed by fire, and demon-possessed beasts ravaged the city. These calamities ended only after Mamertus ordered a three-day fast along with the performance of litanies. Later, the Lesser Litany became known as the "Rogations" because people asked for the aid of saints, the end of wars, the flourishing of crops, control of sexual desire, and "for help in preparing to receive the Holy Spirit."[13]

In composing the dialogue between Bilney and Brusierd, Foxe clearly drew from sources beyond *The Golden Legend.*[14] In fact, both the Greater and Lesser Litanies were important subjects for Protestant writers who resisted the seemingly superstitious elements of Catholic practice. In his preface to the 1570 edition, Foxe included the Rogation days in a list of ceremonial observances that have no spiritual purpose. He argues that common Rogation practices such as carrying banners, following the cross, and perambulating fields are "corporall exercises," mere repetitious behavior devoid of inner faith.[15] For Foxe, salvation was possible only through faith in Christ, not through the performance of ceremony. Yet the religion of England was not always so corporeal. In his critique of the Catholic Church, Foxe argues that Bede and other early English people practiced a form of Christianity that came not from Rome but from eastern

[13] Varagine, 287.
[14] Although Foxe mentions the *Legenda aurea,* his account of the procession includes details not found in the medieval text. For instance, Varagine says nothing about the image of the Virgin or the anthems sung by angels.
[15] Foxe, 15, 1570 edition.

sources.[16] This Christianity had not yet turned to superstition and corporeal ceremony.[17] Foxe believed that Christianity in early medieval England must have looked more like his contemporary Protestantism than Roman Catholicism. In the intervening period between tenth- and sixteenth-century England, the papacy had essentially corrupted Christian practices by emphasizing outward appearances and routine motions rather than inward faith and a sense of solidarity with the spiritual community.

John Foxe's interest in the origin of the Rogations reveals the stakes of interpreting history. More precisely, it shows that the origins of this liturgical festival spoke to concerns about communal identity and trans-generation solidarity. This chapter will move past the sixteenth-century to consider how origin narratives of the Rogations were adapted by early English ecclesiastical authorities between the eighth-and early twelfth-centuries. Interestingly, the origins of the Rogations was not clear even to early medieval authors; indeed, the "established" historical narrative concerning Mamertus cannot be identified in England prior to the introduction of Amalrius's *Liber Officialis* in the early tenth-century. Additionally, ecclesiastical authorities often made no terminological distinction between the pre-Ascension Rogations and those on April 25th, which suggests that these two separate occasions were not clearly differentiated for early medieval communities. Even in the homiletic corpus we find several identifiable origin

[16] Foxe, Book II, 158: "[Bede] affirmeth that in hys tyme, and almost a thousand yeare after Christ, here in Britaine: Easter was kept after the maner of the East church, in the full moone: what day in the weeke so euer it fell on, and not on the sonday, as we do now. Wherby it is to be collected, that the first preachers in this lande, haue come out from the East part of the world, where it was so vsed, rather then from Rome."
[17] Foxe, Book II, 184. Tracing the development of Christianity in England, Foxe paraphrases the 16th canon of the Council of Clovesho (held in 747) as follows: "That the rogation dayes both the greater and lesser should not be omitted." Next to this entry, a marginal note reads: "The rogation dayes had not then that superstition in them as they had afterward."

stories: Ælfric claims that the festival was instituted by Mamertus, while the *Vercelli Book* attributes the origins to both St. Peter and Mamertus. Based on such historical uncertainty, this chapter argues that Rogation origin narratives reflected competing ideas about leisure, work, and ritual. Rhetorically, origin stories endow the festival with the force of ecclesiastical tradition: it is represented as a practice as old as the Church itself. Yet if we take homiletic sources seriously, we see a festival that is anything but a solemn Christian procession: the Rogations involved drinking, dancing, horseback riding, and debauchery. These conflicting values were apparent even in post-medieval Rogation celebrations as participants "beat the bounds" of the parish, perambulating the parish boundaries while hitting certain important markers (trees, fences, stones) with sticks to literally "beat" the parish boundaries—and a sense of community—into the inhabitants. In the early Middle Ages, Rogation narratives attempted to standardize the meaning of communal solidarity but were never truly successful.

Much scholarship about medieval society focus on community formation and identity. Scholars such as Ellen K. Rentz discuss the "spiritual community" that was constituted by preaching, processions, and ecclesiastical ritual in the parish.[18] Other scholars write about communities of poets or clerics, of warriors or worshippers.[19]

[18] Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2015).
[19] For poets, Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 88 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For clerics, Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For warriors, John M. Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000). For worshippers, Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England: Theology and Society in the Age of Faith* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013).

Community formation is a central topic in medieval scholarship, but what does it mean? In a chapter called "Group," from her book *Humble Theory,* Dorothy Noyes shows that neat definitions of "group" or "community" are impossible.[20] Communities are often formed through face-to-face interaction rather than imagined or idealized notions of belonging.[21] Since every individual occupies a social position determined by status, race, and gender, "any individual or geographic community can be seen as a nexus in a variety of relationships and social ties: some intimate and long-lasting, others temporary but influential."[22] What Noyes means is that abstract representations of community overlook the social networks through which groups are constituted on the ground. Put differently, we cannot talk about "spiritual community" without considering power and identity differentials among the people who regularly interact. Since community is built on social networks, we can look more closely at how these relationships are established. Within any community, the strength and value of social relationships are not always identical from one person to the next. In a festival, for example, not all participants share the same experiences or feel a shared sense of community even if the festival's organizers established its meaning through official documents, pamphlets, or names (i.e. the "Italian Festival").[23] Due to these issues, I believe that the language used in contemporary

[20] Dorothy Noyes, *Humble Theory: Folklore's Grasp on Social Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).
[21] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983).
[22] Noyes, "Group," 27.
[23] Noyes, "Group," begins her chapter with an anecdote demonstrating this point. An "Italian Festival" might serve as a communal gathering site for a multiracial city in which local items are sold and art is showcased; the participants might not even refer to the festival as an "Italian Festival" even though this name is provided in official documents.

solidarity discourse helps us better understand acts of community formation found in early medieval Rogation literature.

Solidarity is a central organizing principle in contemporary movements for social justice. Conceptually, solidarity is a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling that one's experiences—conditioned by identity and status—connect them to others living in the same conditions. Solidarity is not just about helping others or feeling charitable; rather, it is a deeply felt connection to hardships inflicted on other people. According to political organizers Astra Taylor and Leah Hunt-Hendrix, solidarity "demands we not just recognize and sympathize with the plight of others but also join them as equals, reaching across differences without erasing them. Solidarity in its sublime form shatters the boundaries of identity, connecting us to others even when we are not the same."[24] Nathan J. Robinson, the founder of the Leftist magazine *Current Affairs,* writes that millennial socialists begin "not with economic theory, but with a sense of solidarity, a deep understanding of, love of, and sympathy with your fellow human beings in very different circumstances, and wanting nothing for yourself that you do not also want for them."[25] In social justice movements, solidarity is represented as a process or struggle; it is a sense of togetherness that inspires collective action. Put simply, solidarity requires action, not just sympathy. However, appeals to solidarity are sometimes met with skepticism because the people involved do not always share the same experiences of hardship or trust that

[24] Astra Taylor and Leah Hunt-Hendrix, "One for All: To Avert Global Catastrophe, We Need to Resurrect the Ancient Ideal of Solidarity," *The New Republic,* August 2019, accessed March 2020, https://newrepublic.com/article/154623/green-new-deal-solidarity-solution-climate-change-global-warming.
[25] Nathan J. Robinson, *Why You Should be a Socialist* (New York: All Points Books, 2019).

everyone in the coalition has the same goals.[26] Black activists have challenged white allies to consider how calls for solidarity flatten out racial differences. Socialists advocate for class solidarity, but the working class and professional class are further divided by identity differentials. Recent political movements have tried to use the language of equity rather than equality to acknowledge these differences: a policy that provides $1000 to white, Black, and Latino service workers would not lead to equal financial outcomes since white families tend to have more generational wealth than those of color.[27] The language of solidarity is also limiting. Dean Spade created a syllabus about "mutual aid" for his course "Queer and Trans Mutual Aid for Survival and Mobilization" that examines "why mutual aid projects are often under-celebrated in contemporary narratives of social change, when compared with media advocacy and law and policy reform work."[28] Mutual aid is similar to solidarity in that it demands material action, not just

[26] See Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016). Davis writes a chapter (actually a speech given in Turkey) about the potential for "transnational solidarity" among indigenous and people of color in the United States with Palestinians and residents of Turkey. Davis suggests that transnational solidarity can be built by recognizing shared struggles against a militarized police state, not just bad individuals. For examples of other critiques of solidarity from feminist and scholars of color, see: Cricket Keating, "Building Coalitional Consciousness," *NWSA* 17.2 (2005), 86-104; Audre Lord, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007); Ann Russo, *Feminist Accountability: Disrupting Violence and Transforming Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

[27] Andrea Flynn, Susan R. Holmberg, Dorian T. Warren, Felicia J. Wong, eds., *Hidden Rules of Race: Barriers to an Inclusive Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017). At 2, the authors describe these inequalities: "at every level of education, black Americans are paid less than their white counterparts. At every level of income, black Americans have fewer assets than their white counterparts. Compared to white Americans, black Americans have higher rates of unemployment, accrue less wealth, and have lower rates of homeownership. But just as critically, even middle-income black Americans have unequal access to the quality-of-life goods—education, health, and safety—that economic success is expected to guarantee."

[28] Dean Spade, "Queer and Trans Mutual Aid for Survival and Mobilization," Big Door Brigade, August 2019, accessed March 2020, https://bigdoorbrigade.com/2019/08/29/first-draft-of-mutual-aid-syllabus/. Spade defines mutual aid as "work that directly addresses the conditions the movement seeks to address, such as by providing housing, food, health care, or transportation in a way that draws attention to the politics creating need and vulnerability."

kind thoughts. Since solidarity asks that people recognize and act on shared struggles to improve material conditions, it is an aspect of community formation that is rarely discussed in pre-industrial societies.

In this chapter, I will show that Rogation performances were actually rituals of solidarity. According to the legendary history of the Rogations, the festival was established in response to traumatic events like earthquakes, animal attacks, and pestilence that nearly destroyed whole cities. As the festival spread through western Europe, the homiletic corpus shows deliberate efforts to retell origin narratives and connect audiences to this historical trauma. These homilies provide a Church-centered understanding of solidarity: Christian lay people should see their condition as part of a larger, unbroken spiritual community that reaches back to the early Church. This community included ancestors as well as clerics and lay peoples since the Rogations were designed for communal participation across all social groups. Over the three Rogation days, the community performed multiple acts of solidarity. People were told to fast and attend preaching sessions. Processions led all able-bodied participants around the fields and the parish, which inscribed a map of the parish limits into memory, creating mental boundaries. The focus on penance was about solidarity since the community had to atone for their collective sins or face tribulations like Mamertus. Even preachers spoke the language of solidarity according to Clare Lees, who argues that "the homiletic voice is the authoritative and universal 'we'—the pluralized voice of the preacher, who speaks on

behalf of the ideal Christian community."[29] These activities brought people together for a common cause and placed them in proximity to one another so that their experiences of suffering would be shared as a community. However, homiletic sources suggest that church-centered solidarity was not felt by everyone: during the Rogations, people were also drinking, dancing, and feasting into the night. Festive activities were also attested in post-medieval Rogation celebrations. Although the festival was rarely performed by the twentieth-century, it experienced a slight revival in the 1990s in southern England as rural communities stood in solidarity against European legal interventions that threatened local property rights.[30] The Rogations survived even when ecclesiastical control diminished, which suggests that the Church was not always the organizing force behind the festival. The idealized Christian community found in the homiletic corpus attempted to establish a set of social relations between the past and present that was never fully realized.

In a recent monograph, *Christianization and Commonwealth in Early Medieval Europe: A Ritual Interpretation,* Nathan J. Ristuccia argues that Rogation celebrations

[29] Clare A. Lees, *Tradition ad Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 51.
[30] Eve Darian-Smith, "Beating the Bounds: Law, Identity and Territory in the New Europe, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 18.1 (1995), 63-73. Darian-Smith argues that beating the bounds was revived to combat shifting legal and demographic realities: "Over the past decade, anxieties about land and its nationalist symbolism have been heightened by the growing power of the EU and most particularly the Maastricht Treaty. Intensifying the desire to preserve a heritage is the increasing presence of Europe, which threatens to undermine the isle of England and a particular sense of Englishness grounded in an idealized rural countryside. Nothing embodies this threat more vividly than the Channel Tunnel between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calias which has intensified popular emotions about a declining countryside, emotions which predate the 1987 Channel Tunnel Agreement […] The Channel Tunnel conveniently provides a common enemy for which a range of English people, across various political and socio-economic groupings in Kent and elsewhere, can blame the coming of rapid change. In short, the Tunnel symbolically and ideologically represents the penetration of Europe by the 'ancient homeland.'"

were ritual performances that demarcated the borders of the Christian community.[31] Ristuccia shows that Rogation processions during the early Middle Ages Christianized people without imparting a rigid system of beliefs and practices; instead, the ritual performance presented a narrative of belonging and community that largely depended on the proper performance of mandatory ritual.[32] In the early medieval period, "preachers, liturgists, and lay people understood the annual procession as Christian unity and solidarity embodied. By marching together and removing themselves from those who did not join, the local congregation fixed the borders of the Christian commonwealth."[33] As a ritual of solidarity, the Rogations served to constitute communities that were loosely tied together by their proximity to local baptismal churches; in the early period, the legal and administrative apparatus that defined "community" was relatively weak compared to the post-1200 parish structure.[34]

This chapter will first examine Rogation terminology in both the early medieval period and contemporary scholarship. Rogation terminology shows that the festival was not always clearly identified with a single term. More importantly, the people writing about the Rogations used various words throughout its history, which complicates any historical reconstruction. After this terminological overview, I will investigate the early medieval origins of the festival. The origin narratives reveal a complicated story of pagan and Christian relations, which persists in attempts by scholars to sort out one tradition

[31] Nathan J. Ristuccia, *Christianization and Commonwealth in Early Medieval Europe: A Ritual Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[32] Ristuccia, *Christianization,* 15.
[33] Ristuccia, *Christianization,* 97.
[34] Ristuccia, *Christianization,* 101-07.

from another. Such efforts overlook the rhetorical purposes underlying stories of origin. Finally, this chapter will turn to the Rogations in early medieval England by chronologically overviewing surviving sources such as the Council of Clovesho, the *Old English Martyrology*, Ælfric's Rogation homilies, and the anonymous homilies from the *Vercelli Book* and other manuscripts. This overview will demonstrate that ecclesiastical authorities between the eighth-and mid-twelfth centuries were concerned not only with the origin and transmission of the Rogations but also with what counts as acceptable practice during the festival. I show that these authorities drew on the past to legitimize ecclesiastical rather than popular or "pagan" practices that arose around the celebration. In doing so, these origin narratives prioritized textual lines of transmission and ecclesiastical themes rather than embodied performance and leisure. Put differently, I argue that Rogation homilies represented an ecclesiastical sense of community that connected participants to their Christian ancestors. Furthermore, this solidarity—a feeling of shared struggle that inspires others to act as one—laid the foundations for social ties on which communal work was built. These stories influenced how agricultural work was connected to history; in effect, origin narratives imbued farm work with ecclesiastical themes and practices that were never totally accepted by the populace. While empirical reconstruction of practices is complicated by fragmented evidence and uncooperative sources, the Rogations provide us a great opportunity to examine the symbolic uses of origin stories. At the symbolic level, these stories were part of wider efforts to shape practice by grounding communal actions, beliefs, and customs in a *seemingly ancient* ecclesiastical lineage.

Rogation Terminology

A central issue in studying the history of the Rogations is that there are few authoritative, book length studies of the celebration. The fact that the festival evolved in an urban setting—fifth-century Vienne—before spreading into rural geographic arenas in France, Italy, Germany, and England only adds to this difficulty. In this section, I will trace the history and transmission of the Rogations on the continent before turning to England. As the festival spread throughout western Europe, it was adapted by ecclesiastical authorities into new cultural contexts. As I will demonstrate, the result was that a procession that began in the fifth -century as an act of communal penance gradually morphed into a significant agriculturally-oriented ritual of the Church by the later Middle Ages. The transmission of this ritual through Church councils and homiletic material between the fifth -and twelfth -century illustrates the tradition process. More importantly, I contend that the Anglo-Saxon vernacular texts demonstrate subtle but consistent attempts to justify present practice as an unbroken historical tradition. By locating Rogation origins in a distant, vague past, ecclesiastical authorities could more effectively claim that certain practices were legitimate while others were transgressive during this ritual. However, as I will show, such rhetorical moves belie the unclear history of this tradition and even obscure other cultural elements that became attached to the festival as it was adopted into new geographic arenas.

Before diving into the historical record, we should briefly examine Rogation terminology as it appears in liturgical documents and canons of church councils. As the discussion about John Foxe demonstrated, there are two distinct periods during which the

Rogations were celebrated by the Reformation. The first was on April 25th, called the *litania maior* (Greater Litany), which was adopted during the sixth-century into the Roman Rite.[35] The second was called the *laetaniae minores* (Minor Litany), which took place during the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday prior to Ascension Thursday. However, this terminological distinction was not clearly recognized by homiletic writers during the early Middle Ages. In fact, the term *rogations* did not enter English usage until the late Middle Ages. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* the earliest English attestation is found in John Trevisa's *Polychronicon* in 1387. The term etymologically derives from the Latin *rogare* (to ask, to request, to question, to invite) and was not commonly used prior to the fifteenth-century.

In English language contexts from the fifteenth-century onwards, the meaning of *rogations* broadens beyond its Latin roots, which reflects the changing social circumstances of the festival. The following definitions reveal the web of meaning surrounding the term:[36]

1. *Rogations* as a proper noun that refers to the three pre-Ascension days of processions, often as part of the liturgical calendar.
2. The litanies that are performed as supplicatory acts during the three pre-Ascension days.
3. The act of begging for alms

[35] F Cabrol and H. Leclerq, eds, *Dictionnaire d'archeologie chretienne et de liturgie* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1920-1953), vol. 14.2 cols. 2459-2461.
[36] I've adapted and supplemented these definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary* with my own research on the term. *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "rogation," (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

4. In references to Roman history and jurisprudence, *rogations* is the act of submitting a law for popular acceptance
5. A formal request

The addition of compound words further expands the usage of *rogation*. *Rogation days*, along with *gang days,* refers to both the April 25th celebration when in the singular and the pre-Ascension days in the plural. The fifth Sunday after Easter was called *Rogation Sunday,* while *rogationtide* and *rogation week* marked out the three-day festival and the week in which it was celebrated, respectively. Interestingly, the *rogation flower*—milkwort (*polygala vulgaris*)—was first mentioned in J. Gerard's *Herball* in 1597 and later became a dialect name for the flower.[37] Having blossomed by the time of the Rogation days, it was worn as garlands and carried during processions.[38]

While *rogation* has Latin roots, *gang days* is a distinctly English term derived from the vernacular *gangdagas* ("walking days"). In the Old English corpus, *gangdæg* occurs 47 times in sources such as the *Vercelli Homilies*, *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* and the *Rules for Finding Movable Feasts*.[39] Most commonly, *gangdæg* appears in homilies concerning the *litania maior.* In other instances, the term was used as a temporal reference point around which important events were measured. This latter use is interesting since movable festivals are vague time-keepers. Nonetheless,

[37] E.M. Wright, *Rustic Speech and Folk-lore* (Detriot: Gale Research Co., 1968); John Gerard, *The Herball or general historie of plantes* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1974), 450.
[38] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "rogation."
[39] See the *Dictionary of Old English: A to H online,* ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell, Antonette dePaolo Healey *et al.* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016) and the *Old English Corpus.*

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle uses *gangdæg* no less than eight times, which suggests that the word added some precision to the dating of events.

The rubrics of Ælfric's first series of *Catholic Homilies* refer to the pre-Ascension Rogations as *Letania maiore*, which is the correct term for the April 25th Rogation Day. In her examination of Rogation terminology and texts in early medieval Europe, Joyce Hill argues that early medieval authors did not differentiate between the *Letaniae maiores* and *Letaniae minores*.[40] Since Ælfric's understanding of orthodoxy was inspired by the Carolingian homiliary of Paul the Deacon, this terminological error was already present in his textual models.[41] Among Carolingian authors Ælfric considered authoritative, Smaragdus (760-840), Hrabanus Maurus (780-856), and Haymo of Auxerre (d. 865) all refer to the pre-Ascension Rogations as the *Letania maiore*.[42] Additionally, the Council of Mainz (813) declared that all Christians should celebrate the *laetania maiore* in Canon 33: "It has seemed good to us that the Greater Litany be observed by all Christians on three days, as we find in our reading to have been done, and as our holy fathers instituted, not on horseback, nor in costly garments, but with bare feet, and in sackcloth and ashes, unless sickness shall hinder."[43] Even other anonymous English homilies with Latin

[40] Joyce Hill, "The *Litaniae maiores* and *minores* in Rome, Francia and Anglo-Saxon England: terminology, texts and traditions," *Early Medieval Europe* 9.2 (2000): 211-46.
[41] Joyce. Hill, "Ælfric and Smaragdus," *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): 203-37. Joyce Hill further notes that the rubrics in the homiliaries of Paul the Deacon were altered in pre-11th century manuscripts. Early copies of Paul the Deacon's homiliary do not indicate that the *Letania maior* fell on the three days prior to Ascension Day. Nonetheless, Hill identifies four manuscripts in which the Paul's homiletic material for the *Letania maior* have been relocated to Ascension week. These manuscripts are as follows: (Gneuss 129) Pembroke College, Cambridge 23, (Gneuss 16) Cambridge University Library Ii.2.19, (Gneuss 222) Durham Cathedral Library A. III. 29, (Companion to Gneuss 763, MS F92) Worcester Cathedral F93.
[42] Hill, "*Litaniae*," 214-16; Bazire and Cross, xvii.
[43] *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, I, ed. A Werminghoff, MGH, Legum Section iii, Concilia (Hanover and Leipzig, 1906), 269. Translation by Bazire and Cross, xvii.

rubrics refer to the pre-Ascension days as *De letania maiore*.[44] Based on this evidence, Hill concludes that the Gallican tradition was promoted and transmitted more widely than the Roman April 25th observance. In fact, she suggests that these two festivals were not clearly differentiated in liturgical material from Gaul and England. Hill argues that the Roman nomenclature (*Letania maior*) was combined with the Gallican dates (days before the Ascension) in Frankish sources copied between the sixth and ninth-centuries.[45] Since Benedictine Reformers drew widely on Frankish material, this terminological conflation had already become part of the authoritative Rogation tradition.[46] Hill's careful survey of liturgical material from England and Francia demonstrates that terminology from later time periods should not be transposed uncritically on early medieval texts.

This terminological overview reflects the complex history of the Rogations and leaves us with two important methodological caveats. First, Rogation observances were in continuous flux. As the festival spread throughout western Europe, it accumulated new elements and meant different things to people over the centuries. Although post fifteenth-century English Rogation material is abundant, we need to use this material carefully so that we do not transpose elements from later periods onto the early Middle Ages. Second, while I use the term "Rogation" throughout this chapter in reference to the pre-Ascension

[44] Hill, "*Litaniae,"* 224.
[45] Hill, "*Litaniae,"* 233-241.
[46] Hill, "*Litaniae,"* 238. Hill, p. 25, further adds that communities in Francia and England likely performed only the Gallican rather than the Roman Rogations: "the Gallican observances remained dominant, despite the romanizing reforms of Pippin and Charlemagne; and the contrastive terminology of Major and Minor Litanies was not in operation. Romanizing influences are apparent in Anglo-Saxon England also, as for example in the Council of Clovesho, but in terms of texts, terminology and observance it was the Gallican/Frankish practices which prevailed, being introduced at an early date, and being powerfully reinforced by the Benedictine Reform."

Day festival rather than the April 25th celebration, this terminology was not used in ecclesiastical sources from early medieval England. Given that the Anglo-Saxons and their continental authorities conflated the Gallican and Roman observances, how accurately was the history of these festivals transmitted? As my next section demonstrates, the textual record does not offer a cohesive narrative concerning the origins of either the Gallican or Roman observances.

Origin Narratives

The geographic origin and chronological transmission of the pre-Ascension Rogations has become established ecclesiastical history. In a late fifth-century letter (472-3) to Aper, Sidonius Apollinaris notes that "it was Mamertus our father in God and bishop who first designed, arranged, and introduced the ceremonial of these prayers, setting a precedent we should all revere."[47] Sidonius observed that although events of public prayer were already practiced, they typically asked for changes in the weather, which meant that appeals from farmers for rain would be more fervent and beneficial than those who worked in other occupations. In asking his friend Aper to attend the Rogations, Sidonius revealed that the festival already had local importance in Clermont by 472. Roughly two years later in 474, Sidonius writes to Mamertus about the invading Goths. In this letter, he attributes the hope of the people of Clermont to the Rogations and thanks Mamertus for instituting the festival. Speaking about the bishop as an exemplary

[47] Sidonius Apollinaris, *The Letters of Sidonius,* trans. O.M. Dalton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), 2:67. Book V, Letter XIV: "Quarum nobis solemnitatem primus Mamertus pater et pontifex, reverentissimo exemplo, utilissimo experiment, invenit, instituit, invexit," (144-5).

figure, Sidonius summarizes the calamities facing Vienne: "Now it was earthquake, shattering the outer palace walls with frequent shocks; now fire, piling mounds of glowing ash upon proud houses fallen in ruin, now, amazing spectacle! Wild deer grown ominously tame, making their lairs in the very forum."[48] These letters indicate that the Rogations were instituted by a high-ranking bishop who brought together elements of late Roman worship—processions and public litanic prayer—to unite the community against natural disaster.

Over the sixth-century, homilies, church councils, and letters further documented the origins and spread of the Rogations. For instance, Avitus (494-523), the bishop of Vienne after Mamertus, offers what seems like a first-hand account of the creation of the celebration. Recalling the natural calamities afflicting Vienne—fires, earthquakes, nocturnal sounds, and the invasion of wild animals—Avitus describes secret meetings in which Mamertus discussed both the political ramifications and the practical details of the new festival:

> Bishop Mamertus conceived of the whole Rogation in that holy night of the vigils of Easter, as we have described above. And there, silently, with God, he outlined what the world intones today in psalms and prayers. When the solemnity of Easter was over he considered at first in a secret meeting not now what should take place, but how or when it should [...] the present span of three days was chosen, to

[48] Sidonius, p. 96, Book VII, Letter 1: "Nam modo scenae moenium publicorum crebris terrae motibus concutiebantur; nunc ignes saepe flammati caducas culminum cristas superjecto favillarum monte tumulabant; nunc stupenda foro cubilia collocabant audacium pacenda mansuetudo cervorum" (171-4).

> be bounded by the feast of the holy Ascension and Sunday, as if by a certain border of its own opportunity, with the solemnities surrounding it.[49]

According to Avitus, Mamertus spearheaded the creation of this public prayer by determining what would be said and when it would be performed. The first procession was so successful that ecclesiastical authorities in other urban centers seem to have adopted the celebration. While Mamertus thought its performance around the Ascension was symbolically meaningful, other churches were less strict. Yet as enthusiasm for this new type of public prayer spread quickly throughout Gaul, ecclesiastical authorities at the Council of Orleans (511) fixed the celebration to the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday prior to Ascension Thursday.[50]

In his *Historia Francorum,* Gregory of Tours (538-594) also described the origin of the Rogations, noting that his source was the homily by Avitus. Staying true to this homily, Gregory described the earthquakes, stags, and wolves that plagued Vienne during the weeks before Easter. On the eve of that holiday, the royal palace caught fire and was saved only by the tears of Mamertus. In the following weeks, the bishop instituted new practices that included fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, at which point the calamities

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[49] Avitus, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi Opera quae supersunt,* ed. Rudolfus Peiper (Berlin: Drockerei Hildebrand, 1961), 108-12. "Homilia in Rogationibus, lines 20-35: "Praedecessor namque meus, et spiritalis mihi a baptismo pater, Mamertus sacerdos, cui ante non paucos annos pater carnis meae accepto, sicut Deo visum est, sacerdotii tempore successit, totas in ea quam supra diximus vigiliarum nocte sancto Paschae concepit animo Rogationes; atque ibi cum Deo tacitus definivit quidquidd hodie psalmis et precibus mundus inclamat […] eligitur tempori triduum praesens, quod inter Ascensionis sacrae cultum diemque dominicum, quasi quodam opportunitatis propriae limbo circumpositis solemnitatibus marginaretur."

[50] Avitus, 385, stipulates that "as love for Rogations grew along with concord among the priests, a concern for universal observance agreed to a single time [before the Ascension]" (Tamen cum dilectione rogationum, etiam sacerdotum crescent concordia, ad unum tempus, id est ad praesentes dies, universalis observantiae cura concessit).

ceased and the Rogations spread throughout the provinces of Gaul.[51] Gregory's *Historia* demonstrates that the spread of the Rogations throughout Gaul over the sixth-century reflected a desire to imitate the "faith" of Mamertus. Thus, the festival's origin story was already serving a rhetorical purpose: through the performance of the same rituals instituted by Mamertus, large scale disasters can be averted.[52] The fact that Gregory draws primarily on the homily by Avitus may indicate that the origin narrative had not entered popular consciousness. Since the festival began almost seventy years before Gregory's birth, Avitus was likely the most authoritative *ecclesiastical* source in which an origin story was contained. The fact that Gregory's *Historia* was used as a source for the origin narrative by later authors such as Jacobus da Varagine (1228-98) and Amalarius of Metz (c. 775-850) suggests that it in turn became an authoritative source for Rogation history.

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[51] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. O.M. Dalton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 74: "In a homily composed on the Rogations, he [Avitus] relates that these solemnities which we celebrate before the triumph of our Lord's Ascension were instituted by Mamertus, bishop of Vienne (his own see when he [Avitus] wrote), at a time when the city was alarmed by many portents. For it was frequently shaken by earthquakes, and wild creatures, stags and wolves, entered the gates, wandering without fear through the whole city" (Refert enim in quadam homilia, quam de Rogationibus scripsit, has ipsas Rogationes, quas ante Ascensionis dominicae triumphum celebramus, a Mamerto ipsius Viennensis urbis episcopo, cui et hic eo tempore praeerat, institutas fuisse, dum urbs illa multis terreretur prodigiis. Nam terrae motu frequenter quatiebatur: sed et cervorum atque luporum feritas portas ingress, per totam, ut scripsit, urbem nihil metuens oberrabat).

[52] Gregory, *History*, 468, describes another instance in which the rogations were used to avert natural disaster: "In April of this year [591] a terrible pestilence destroyed the people in the territory of Tours and in that of Nantes; the attack in each case was followed by a slight headache, soon after which the patient died. But Rogations were held with rigid abstinence and fasting, while alms were also given to the needy; thus the fierceness of the divine anger was averted and there was relief" (Hoc anno mense secundo, tam in Turonico quam in Namnetico gravis populum lues attrivit, ita ut modico quisquis aegrotus capitis dolore pulsatus, animam funderet. Sed factis rogationibus cum grandi abstinentia et jejunia, sociatis etiam eleemosynis, adversus divini furoris impetus mitigatus est [526]). The fact that this specific rogation was held in April might suggest that Gregory was referring to the *litania maior*, although the April 25th celebration might not have reached Tours and Nantes by 591.

The origin narrative becomes more complicated when we look beyond Gregory of Tours, Sidonius, and Avitus. Sometimes, early medieval homilies did not explain the history of the celebration. The three rogation homilies by Caesarius of Arles (470-542), for example, offer no information concerning its origin.[53] Other sources provide different origin theories. Vercelli homily XII suggests that St. Peter instituted the Rogations. Centuries later, both Guiseppe Antonio Sassi's *Archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium* (1675-1751) and the *Acta Sanctorum* (updated continuously between 1643 and 1794) attributed the origins of the celebration to St. Lazarus. These origins are further obscured by tantalizing links between the Rogations and both the *Ambarvalia* and *Robigalia*. This pagan connection is strengthened by Old English and continental sources that mention heathen practices around its celebration. For instance, an anonymous tenth-century sermon from Corbie directly stated that the festival arose out of the Roman agricultural festival *Ambarvalia.* Because the Rogations developed into an agriculturally-oriented ritual over the course of the Middle Ages, this pagan past is worth exploring.

It should be no surprise that the Rogations drew on elements of ritual practice familiar to inhabitants of fifth-century Gaul. For instance, both litanic prayers intended for supplication or petition and public processions imitating Christ were common elements of the early medieval liturgy.[54] These prayers were integrated into the western Roman mass and Divine Office from the Greek-speaking eastern Church between the first and fifth-century. More importantly, litanic prayers became an integral aspect of

[53] See Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons*, trans. Sister Mary Magdaleine Mueller (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 66, 1973), sermons 207, 208, and 209.
[54] Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, 2-13.

penitential processions during the late fourth-century.[55] According to John F. Baldovin, such public processions were probably not held in Rome until the late sixth-century; in other cities, tolerance of Christianity would have been a significant factor in public displays of worship.[56] Even Sidonius notes that such public prayers occurred before the Rogations were established; however, their focus on changing the weather rarely appealed to the whole community at once.[57] Thus, although early medieval sources indicate that the Rogations were closely associated with pre-Christian ritual, the influence of these pagan practices is less clear.

A homily in a tenth-century manuscript, Bibliotecque Nationale in Paris, *MS 18296*, claims that the pre-Ascension Rogations were Christianized versions of the *Ambarvalia* and *Amburbium*:

> Hence, the festival of the Rogations, for the purpose of praying for the fertility of the fields, was invented by the ancients. For the two greatest festivals among them were held, which they called the Amburbium and Ambarvalia. They named the

[55] In the eastern Church, Lapidge (8) notes that John Chrysostom led such a procession in 398. In Constantinople in 430, Emperor Theodosius and the Patriarch Proclus also led a procession after an earthquake.

[56] John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 228 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium 1987), 158: "In the first place it is extremely unlikely that public processions would have been held by Christians on a regular basis prior to the Constantinian settlement. Even though there were periods of relative tolerance, public processions would have been too antagonistic in a city that did not really become Christian until the beginning of the fifth century."

[57] Sidonius, Book V, Letter XIV, p. 218-19: "Before this the public prayers (with all respect to the faith, be it said) were irregular, lukewarm, sparsely attended, and, so to speak, full of yawns; their purpose was frequently obscured by the disturbing interruptions for meals, and they tended to become for the most part petitions for rain or for fine weather" (Erant quidem prius (quod salva fidei pace sit dictum) vagae, tepentes, infrequentesque, utque sic dixerim, oscitabundae supplications; quae saepe interpellantim prandiorum obicibus hebetabantur, maxime au timbres, aut serenitatem deprecaturae [144-5]).

> Amburbium after the perambulation of the city. Indeed, they circled their own cities, cleansing them with certain sacred rites, just as the custom was of heathendom, and they did this every fifth to ask for peace. We carried that solemn observance over to the second day of February every year in honor of the blessed Mary. In truth, they celebrate the Ambarvalia every year by walking around the cultivated land for their fertility, as it was said. We, encircling our own fields, imitate that festival with these Rogations, not so much for their fertility than for other necessities of the soul and body.[58]

According to this homilist, the Rogations arose from the pagan *Ambarvalia* in the same way that Candlemas was adapted from the *Amburbium*. The *Ambarvalia* was a ceremony performed to ask for favorable intercession from Ceres in the coming agricultural year. In the ritual, victims were sacrificed after being led three times around fields while a host of celebrants followed. Although the *Ambarvalia* was performed in Rome on May 29th, other localities in Italy might celebrate the ceremony on a different, fixed day.[59] Geoffrey Nathan argues that there are two important similarities between the *Ambarvalia* and the Rogations.[60] First, the ritual required its participants to be purified so

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[58] Edited first by D. de Bruyne, "L'Origine des Processions de la Chandeleur et des Rogations: a propos d'un sermon inedit," *Revue Benedictine* 39 (1922), 14-26; later by Geoffrey Nathan, 299-302. My translation: "Hinc et ipsa festa rogationum pro fertilitate agrorum roganda ab antiquis inventa sunt. Duo enim apud illos maxima habebantur sollemnia quae ipsi vocabant amburbale et arvambale. Amburbale dicebant ab ambitu urbis. Circuibant enim civitates suas lustrantes eas sacris quibusdam suis, sicut mos erat gantilitatis, et hoc pro pace pentenda faciebant in quinto anno. Quam sollempnitatem singulis annis transtulimus in honorem beate Mariae quarto nonas Februari. Arvambale vero celebrant omni anno ab ambitu arvorum pro fertilitate eorum, ut dictum est. Quam sollempnitatem istis rogationibus imitamur nostros circumeuntes agros, non tam pro fertilitate eorum quam pro ceteris necessitatibus animae et corporis."

[59] Thurston Peck Harry, *Harpers Dictionary of Classical Antiquity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1898).

[60] Geoffrey Nathan, "The Rogation Ceremonies of Late Antique Gaul: Transmission and the Role of the Bishop," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 49 (1998): 275-303, at 281-3.

that the country could also be cleansed. Second, it was performed in both public and private ceremonies, which reflects Sidonius's observation that public prayers were infrequently performed before Mamertus formalized them in the Rogations. Although Nathan reads this homily as definitive proof that the Rogations emerged from the *Ambarvalia,* it is equally possible that the homilist copied a trusted origin theory from now lost sources.[61] The fact that this homily offers a different origin story proves that there was no single master narrative concerning the festival's institution.

Besides the *Ambarvalia,* Nathan believes that the *Robigalia* was another possible pagan source for the Rogations. Both the *Ambarvalia* and the *Robigalia* were agrarian celebrations meant to protect crops from calamities, although each was performed under different circumstances. The *Robigalia* took place during the Spring and attempted to appease Robigus, a deity embodying wheat-destroying forces, so that crops would not be ruined during the summer months and harvest season.[62] While the *Robigalia* served a similar disaster-averting function as the Rogations, Geoffrey Nathan persuasively argues that this ceremony was performed only by the local cult in Rome; there is no clear evidence that the *Robigalia* travelled to other Italian cities.[63] However, Nathan suggests that the Rogations in Rome (the Greater Litany), which are first mentioned in the late sixth-century, may have arisen from the Christianization of the *Robigalia*.[64] Although the

[61] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 283: "This ceremonial etymology may have been fabricated, but it makes a great deal of sense. As Dom de Bruyne points out, there is no good reason to doubt the author's explanation, especially since it is the only clear one we have […] the Ambarvalia, then, must be unquestionably the source for the Rogations."
[62] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 280-1.
[63] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 281.
[64] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 283-4.

evidence is slim, Nathan argues that the Roman Rogations were performed on April 23rd and 24th rather than on the three days before the Ascension.[65] This origin theory implies that the Greater Litany (held on April 25th) arose from the *Robigalia* while the Minor Litany originated from the *Ambarvalia.* In fact, Nathan believes that the *Ambarvalia* likely had a greater influence on the form and function of the pre-Ascension Rogations due to its informal nature and need for participant purification.

Although Nathan's analysis of this pagan history is informative, the *direct* influence of these pre-Christian rituals should not be overstated. For instance, Nathan points out that the *Ambarvalia* was still being performed at Anaunium in Northern Italy in 393. Noting that provincial Roman colonies were established for husbandry, Nathan argues that the ritual could have travelled to these regions.[66] While this assumption is credible, evidence for performance of the *Ambarvalia* nearly eighty years later in Vienne is not clearly established. Rather than locating an exact ceremony from which the Rogations descended, we can safely say that the Christian celebration drew on ritual elements circulating during the fifth- and sixth-centuries in Gaul.[67] As already noted, elements used in the *Ambarvalia* such as communal processions, litanic prayers, purification rites, and even bishops as community protectors were already features of

[65] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 283.
[66] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 282.
[67] Baldovin, *Urban Character*, 164, makes a similar point about the April 25th celebration: "Even though there are pagan precedents for the *Litania Major* (*Robigalia*) and Hypopante (*Amburbalia*) processions, these seem to have developed late enough to rule out any immediate influence of pagan observance in Christian practice. This is not to argue that there was no continuity at all between the pagan and Christian practices; this there must have been because, after all, they fell on the same days. But that does not necessarily prove that imitation of pagan practice was the original motive in adopting processions."

worship in late antique Gaul.[68] Interestingly, the Rogations are also similar to the *Amburbium,* another ritual in which processions around a city led to its purification.[69] Thus, the establishment of the Rogations may represent an act of ritual creation in which a high-ranking bishop (Mamertus) formalized a new ceremony by drawing on forms of worship shared by both Christians and pagans. In sum, the Rogations may not represent a Christianized *Ambarvalia* even though elements of the latter ritual were used in the former.

As this section demonstrates, early medieval sources offer multiple, vague origin theories. By attempting to fill in historical gaps and sort out pagan from Christian elements, scholars evaluate origin narratives based on the data contained within each one, essentially asking how every story fits into a master narrative. These narratives show that the Rogations were meaningful because they conveyed a sense of shared, historical struggle. Although the various narratives provide differing accounts, we should not read these for their historical value because they were not written to preserve history but to persuade participants that the ritual celebration was an ancient practice. In the following sections, I argue that these origin stories were used to create a vision of communal solidarity around labor. The Rogations brought together whole communities—rich and poor, farmer and weaver—to celebrate the new agricultural year. This festival did not

[68] Nathan, "Ceremonies," 289.
[69] The relationship between the *Amburbium* and the *Ambarvalia* is not straightforward. Since ancient calendars do not contain the *Amburbium,* it was likely a moveable festival that was rarely performed. Furthermore, the *Amburbium* seems to have purified cities via circumambulation while the *Ambarvalia* purified fields and crops. See C. Robert Phillips III, "Amburbium," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and "Amburbium," in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities,* ed. William Smith (London: John Murray, 1875), 78.

prioritize certain occupations (i.e. the farmers desired rain while other workers hated getting rained on) but showed that the community could find shared values in agricultural work. Next, I examine the festival's treatment in insular sources such as the Council of Clovesho, the *Old English Martyrology*, and homilies by Ælfric and anonymous writers to show that this sense of solidarity was rhetorical rather than practical. Ecclesiastical authorities represented solidarity as a connection with tradition; meanwhile, the acts of resistance mentioned in these sources suggest that the symbolic force of tradition was not felt by everyone.

Insular Sources

The Gallican Rogations were likely brought to the British Isles by Augustine of Canterbury or other early missionaries. According to the earliest insular account, Bede's (672-735) *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Saint Augustine sang the litany "Deprecamur te, Domine" as he approached Canterbury in the year 595.[70] Although Colgrave and Mynors believe this antiphon is part of the Gallican liturgy, both Joyce Hill and Ian Wood caution us against reading this scene as historical truth; instead, "it was Bede who put the antiphon into Augustine's mouth as a text which was symbolically

[70] Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, ed. and trans., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 76. "It is related that as they approached the city [of Canterbury] in accordance with their custom carrying the holy cross and the image of our great King and Lord, Jesus Christ, they sang this litany in unison: 'We beseech thee, O Lord, in Thy great mercy, that Thy wrath and anger may be turned away from this city and from Thy holy house, for we have sinned. Alleluia'" (Fertur autem, quia adpropinquantes ciuitati more suo cum cruce sancta et imagine magni regis Domini nostri Iesu Christi hanc laetaniam consona uoce modularentur: "Deprecamur te, Domine, in omni misericordia tua, ut auferatur furor tuus et ira tua a ciuitate ista et de domo sancta tua, quoniam peccauimus. Alleluia).

appropriate for the occasion."[71] Cuthbert's letter on the death of Bede further confirms that the pre-Ascension Rogations were performed in Northumbria during the early eighth-century. The letter states that Bede passed away on Ascension Day (Thursday, May 26th) after a sickness lasting the entire Easter season. His attending pupils took a break on Wednesday to carry relics in procession "as the custom of that day required."[72] The fact that Cuthbert calls the Rogations a "custom" (*consuetudo*) suggests that the Gallican observance was an established practice at Wearmouth-Jarrow, which was founded in 674. Although the Rogations likely spread to other important ecclesiastical centers between Augustine's mission and Bede's *Historia,* it was not until the Council of Clovesho in 747 that the festival was officially recognized as part of the *temporale* and its observance promoted throughout the English Church.

This section examines the origins of the Rogations in insular texts between 747-1150. Neither the Canons of Clovesho nor the *Old English Martyrology* provide much information on the festival's history; nonetheless, these texts illustrate that the Rogations were not merely a habit or a custom but a tradition in the eyes of ecclesiastical writers.[73]

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[71] J. Hill, "*Litaniae,"* 235. See also Ian Wood, "Augustine's Journey," *Canterbury Cathedral Chronicle* 92 (1998): 28-44. Colgrave and Mynors, 75-6, n. 1.

[72] Colgrave and Mynors, 584-5: "We were at it until nine o'clock; at nine o'clock we went in procession with the relics, as the custom of that day required" (A tertia autem hora ambulauimus cum reliquiis sanctorum, ut consuetudo illius diei poscebat).

[73] Simon Bronner, *Defining Tradition* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 35-6: "Habit and custom also rely on precedent, but they are distinguished from tradition by their relative lack of emphasis on intergenerational connection and symbolic connotation. A habit is an action, often a mannerism, that is regularly repeated until it becomes involuntary. Rather than constituting a connotative message, habit is often considered 'routine' by being unvarying, an addiction, or a rote procedure for an individual. Its manifestation in individual behavior is often differentiated from custom, which is a repeated social occasion. Although traditional and customary are often used interchangeably to refer to the prescriptive repetition of activities based on precedent, customary activities do not have the degree of consecutiveness and connotation expected of tradition. One does not hear of the chain or authority of custom in the way these terms are applied to tradition. Indeed, an event may be intentionally referred to as a custom to imply

Over the tenth-century, the use of origin narratives by Ælfric and anonymous homilists reveal competing theories about the festival's establishment. Instead of reconstructing history through origin stories, I show that such narratives created an imagined, shared history. In doing so, these homilists argued for solidarity across material differences: in this world, the rich and the poor come together for collective salvation while blacksmiths pray for the ploughman's success. As the following texts demonstrate, however, English ecclesiastical authorities positioned themselves as the arbiters of solidarity that never truly manifested in ritual practice.

The Council of Clovesho

In 747, the Council of Clovesho attempted to reform pastoral care, liturgical worship, and monastic practices.[74] By the middle of the eighth-century, the English Church was not a homogenous entity. Ecclesiastical authorities faced diverse conditions on the ground: religious celebrations were not yet standardized, the liturgy was influenced by elements from Rome, Francia, and Ireland, and the line between legitimate Christian practice and transgressive behavior was unclear.[75] In fact, what counted as acceptable Christian practice varied not only between lay and clerical communities but

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that it does not have as strong a consecutive hold on its participants as tradition or that it is regularly enacted."

[74] Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 99-100.

[75] Cubitt, *Councils*, 119-22. For tensions between acceptable and transgressive practices, see: Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Although ecclesiastical authorities attempted to define legitimate practices in their pastoral care, the impact of such efforts on any given community depended on the quality of preaching, the degree of ecclesiastical organization, and the proximity of churches and minster establishments. For the dynamics of on-the-ground lay-cleric interactions, see: Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England;* John Blair and Richard Sharpe, eds., *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1992).

also within different regions, as Christian conversion was a gradual process.[76] The 747 council thus sought to standardize the timing of and acceptable behavior at feast days and other liturgical celebrations while also stressing clerical duties in matters of pastoral care.

The council, led by Archbishop Cuthbert, agreed on thirty canons that provided a platform for ecclesiastical reform. Several canons called for the selection of educated and capable priests who understood the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and knew how to perform both Mass and baptism. Other canons focused on life in minster communities and interactions between lay people and clerics. While the canons call for increased education of lay people in fundamental aspects of the faith, "they also aimed at creating a division between the life of the seculars and that of the religious (clergy, monks and nuns) and at creating a church separated from the world and its ways."[77] Still other canons attempted to standardize liturgical practice including Mass, feast, fast days; additionally, both the Ember Days and the Major Litany should be celebrated according to the Roman rite.[78] In sum, the canons of Clovesho "aimed to bring about greater discipline and uniformity, deepen the understanding of the Christian life among clergy and laity alike and to tackle outstanding abuses and tensions."[79]

[76] Cubitt, *Councils,* 113-15, notes that different kingdoms adopted Christianity at varying speeds. Large dioceses with scattered inhabitants were less susceptible to rapid conversion. Likewise, Wessex adopted Christianity in the mid-seventh century but returned to Paganism when Cenwealh took the throne.
[77] Cubitt, *Councils,* 101. My summary of the canons comes from Cubitt, 99-101. For the text from the canons, see: Arthur West Haddan and William Stubbs, eds., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-1878: reprint 1964), 3: 362-76.
[78] Cubitt, *Councils,* 125.
[79] Cubitt, *Councils,* 123.

Canon 16, *De Diebus Laetaniorum*, depicts the Rogation days as a long-standing custom of the Roman Church:

> In Regard to the Days of the Litanies. With the sixteenth canon, they ordained [as follows]: That the Litanies, that is, the Rogations, be performed by the clergy and all the people with great reverence on these days, that is, the seventh day of the Calends of May, according to the rite of the Roman Church, and which is called by [the church] 'Greater Litany'. Moreover also, following the custom of our forefathers, that the three days before the Lord's Ascension into the heavens be honored with a fast until the ninth hour and with the celebration of Masses, [and] with no vanities intermingled, as is the custom with many who are either negligent or ignorant, that is, in gambling and horse racing and great feasts; but rather with fear and trembling, with the sign of Christ's Passion and of our eternal redemption, and with the relics of his saints carried before, the whole people, genuflecting, humbly prays for divine forgiveness for offences.[80]

This canon differentiates between the "Greater Litany" (April 25th) and the three Rogation days prior to the Ascension. As noted above, such distinction was not always

[80] Latin text from Hadden and Stubbs, eds., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, 3: 368. Translation from Johanna Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2014), 189-90. "Sexto decimo condixerunt capitulo: Ut Laetaniae, id est, rogationes, a clero omnique populo his diebus cum magna reverential agantur, id est, die septimo kalendarum Maiarum, juxta ritum Romanae Ecclesiae: quae et Laetania major apud eam vocatur. Et item quoque secundum morem priorum nostrorum, tres dies ante Ascensionem Domini in coelos cum jejunio usque ad horam nonam et Missarum celebratione venerantur: non admixtis vanitatibus, uti mos est plurimus, vel negligentibus, vel imperitis, id est, in ludis et equorum cursibus, et epulis majoribus; sed magnis, cum timore et tremore, signo passionis Christi nostraeque aeternae redemptionis, et reliquiis sanctorum Ejus coram portatis, omnis populus genu flectendo Divinam pro delictis humiliter exorat indulgentiam."

clear to Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical authorities.[81] Additionally, the canon states that both fasting and Mass celebration are two *proper* Rogation practices, while gambling, horse racing, and feasting are distractions, even signs of ignorance and negligence. Likewise, the three Rogation days should include relic processions, participation from both clergy and laity, and humble prayer.

By distinguishing between the custom of their forefathers and the customs of the negligent and ignorant, this canon prioritizes ecclesiastical practices over games, horse racing, and feasting. According to Filotas, continental clerics also denounced playful behavior at Rogations such as horse riding, feasting, and heroic songs. Rabanus Maurus, for instance, thought that his parish "treated the Rogations as an opportunity to ride out on bravely caparisoned horses and gallop across fields roaring with laughter, encouraging each other with word and gesture to race. They ended the day's doings with their friends and neighbours in an all-night feast, during which they engaged in drinking contests to the accompaniment of musicians."[82] These actions were problematic for ecclesiastical authorities because they likely reflected customs originating from the ground-up among those who were deemed "ignorant" or "negligent." Yet these activities were already community-building practices that promoted solidarity as people came together for feasting, dancing, and drinking. Thus, the proscriptive—and pejorative—language of

[81] See J. Hill, "*Litaniae*," 237. Hill points out that "the Gallican observance, but not the Roman, was well established in England at this time [747] […] [In canon 16] *laetania maior* is used for the 25 April but that the *letaniae* preceding Ascension are not correspondingly described as *minores*, even though Cubitt repeatedly refers to them as the Minor Litanies." Hill, 243, n. 88, also points out that a reforming council like Clovesho differs from liturgical rubrics in that the former describes ideal practice while the latter details actual practice.

[82] Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures*, Studies and Texts 151 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005), 184-5.

Canon 16 suggests that the Council thought that the theological purpose of the Rogation days was threatened by a network of secular actors who used the festival for their own entertainment.

Although we do not know whether such festive practices were widespread during or prior to the eighth-century in Britain, there is some evidence that communities were already celebrating the changing seasons during April and May. In *De Temporum Ratione*, Bede writes about annual festivals that English people used to perform before conversion:[83]

> Hrethmonath is named from their goddess Hretha, to whom they sacrificed in it. Eosturmonath, which now is interpreted as the paschal month, formerly had its name from their goddess who was called Eostre, and for whom they celebrated a feast in it. From whose name now they name the paschal time, calling a festival of new solemnity with the accustomed name of a former observance. Thrimilchi was so named because in it the herds were milked three times a day; for such was once the productiveness of Britain or Germany, from where the English nation invaded Britain. Litha is said to be pleasant, or navigable, because in each of those months the gentleness of the winds is pleasant, and they are accustomed to navigate the calm seas. Weodmonath is the month of weeds, because then they flourish very greatly. Halegmonath is the month of sacred observances. Winterfilleth can be called by a name of new composition Winterfullmoon. Blotmonath is the moth of

[83] Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, ed. and trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999). Bede discusses these festivals in chapter XV, "The English Months."

> sacrifices, because in it they dedicated the herds which were to be killed to their gods. Thanks to you, good Jesus, who, turning us away from these vanities, has granted that we offer the sacrifice of praise to yourself.[84]

These months were named according to the type of festivals performed during that time, so the ritual year was closely connected to the agricultural seasons. Meaney notes that January or February festivals might have included ploughing ceremonies like the *Ærcerbot*. The following month was named after Hretha, whose name might mean "fierce, cruel, rough," which would be appropriate for both the sacrifices Bede mentions and the weather.[85] The final Spring month was named after Eostre. This goddess was celebrated with bonfires and feasting throughout England as life returned with Spring weather.[86] The increasingly warm weather meant that Spring ploughing could commence; communal fields would again become sites of active work. Interestingly, while warmer weather allowed people to spend less time in smoky, damp houses, malnutrition and disease due to insects breeding in waterlogged fields was also a danger during the Spring months.[87] Surplus food stored during the Winter might also be running low, meaning that Rogation fasting was not only practically important but also reminded people that their material interests were tied together. If the harvest was poor, everyone suffered. The fact that textual sources from the centuries after the Norman Conquest attest to attitudes of

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[84] Quoted in Audrey Meaney, "Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism," *Parergon* 3 (1985): 1-29, at 2-3.
[85] Meaney, "Anglo-Saxon Paganism," 6-7. Meaney notes that Hrethe might have been an early medieval Nerthus since the name's etymology is not clear.
[86] Meaney, "Anglo-Saxon Paganism," 7.
[87] M.L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5. Cameron calls attention to the fact that domestic living conditions directly impacted physical health.

celebration and merriment during the Spring months makes it easier to overlook challenges in nutrition, disease, and labor conditions facing those who occupied the lower strata of society.[88]

Canon 16 does not speak directly to such labor conditions, but it does discuss appropriate and inappropriate practices during the three-day festival, which took place within local churches and their surrounding communities, including fields and other holy sites. Moreover, by stating that appropriate practices come from the "customs of our forefathers," Canon 16 depicts the Rogations as a connecting link to the community of ancestors. Its performance thus brings together the people of both the past and future under a shared sense of community. Johanna Kramer notes that "the pre-Ascension rogations are perceived as a long-standing native practice, passed down through generations and associated with a firm sense of tradition. When it comes to regulating the *Litaniae minors*, therefore, the council merely confirms what already exists by tradition, with which Anglo-Saxons already strongly identify."[89]

Although Kramer suggests that Canon 16 "merely confirms" the traditional character of the Rogations, I contend that the council's decision to codify appropriate practices over and against transgressive customs indicates that an ecclesiastical understanding of the festival was not necessarily shared by all people participating in the celebration. Thus, this regulatory language responded to communal celebrations that lay

[88] In fact, sources from the later Middle Ages tend to over romanticize rural life and work, perhaps reflecting the desires of wealthier, aristocratic urban inhabitants.
[89] Kramer, *Earth and Heaven*, 153.

people might have seen as part of their seasonal "tradition." In other words, Canon 16 demonstrates not negotiation between the Church and the laity but the creation of a distinctly "English" Rogation tradition in Southumbria. While it is impossible to assess the discourse through which lay people made meaning out of the Rogations in eighth-century Britain, the fact that ecclesiastical authors respond to similar, contemporaneous practices on the continent indicates that such celebrations were both widespread and meaningful. As already mentioned, Caesarius of Arles discusses similar practices in late fifth- early sixth-century France, while Rabanus Maurus (late eighth- to mid-ninth century) and Burchard of Worms (mid-tenth to early eleventh-century) also condemn similar customs in Germany.[90] Thus, these playful, communal customs already taking place during the Rogations challenged the Church's push for uniform practice in a manner thought to be consistent with former ecclesiastical authorities such as Bede. In a sense, it is irrelevant whether Canon 16 influenced subsequent Rogation practice. What matters is that ecclesiastical authorities selected the Gallican Rogations as the "official" tradition that should be recognized by religious establishments and followed by lay practitioners.[91]

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[90] See Filotas, *Survivals,* 185-192, for descriptions of communal celebrations. Celebrations included ritual drunkenness, feasting, games, and dancing. Filotas notes that, "with the exception of Caesarius of Arles, our authors generally ignored the celebratory assemblies of lay people. They concentrated on clerical assemblies at commemorative banquets and regular diocesan meetings. Clerics' customs as to eating and drinking, offering of toasts and entertainment allow us to form a picture of lay gatherings by inference" (185).

[91] J. Hill, "*Litaniae,"* 245, notes that "the Gallican observance remained dominant, despite the Romanizing reforms of Pippin and Charlemagne; and the contrastive terminology of Major and Minor Litanies was not in operation. Romanizing influences are apparent in Anglo-Saxon England also, as for example in the Council of Clovesho, but in terms of texts, terminology and observance it was the Gallican/Frankish practices which prevailed, being introduced at an early date, and being powerfully reinforced by the Benedictine Reform."

In this context, Canon 16 organized various competing customs and clearly asserts that ecclesiastical practices are the true, legitimate "tradition" to be followed during Rogation celebrations. More specifically, clergy organizing the Rogation days should follow the Roman rite rather than any of the other liturgical traditions existing in eighth-century England. Thus, the canon states that the Greater Litany comes from the Roman—not Gallican—rite while the minor Rogations were practiced by the "forefathers" of the Anglo-Saxons. Likewise, the customs of those who are "negligent or ignorant" are rendered inferior to the ecclesiastical tradition. Finally, the canon provides general performance instructions: people should fast until the ninth hour and celebrate Mass "with fear and trembling," carrying relics, crosses, and saying humble prayers. These details were not meant to provide clergy with step-by-step instructions. Instead, by organizing information concerning the liturgy, history, and practice of the Rogations, Canon 16 reflects a landscape where local custom (and even local, secular authoritative figures) were thought to compete with and challenge the administrative control of the Church. In other words, this canon is part of a long tradition process that seeks to institutionalize "solidarity" around an ecclesiastical understanding of the Rogation days while dismissing other interpretations.

Old English Martyrology

The *Old English Martyrology* is an encyclopedic prose text that records information about local and foreign saints. The *Martyrology* was transmitted for over 200 years, surviving in six fragmented medieval manuscripts and a single early modern

copy.[92] Based on evidence from the two earliest manuscripts, London, BL Add. 23211 (s. ix ex) and London, BL Add. 40165 A2. (s. ix / x), the *Martyrology* was most likely composed between c. 800 and c. 900.[93] Ambiguous dialectal features suggest that the earliest texts were probably composed in the ninth-century by someone living in or travelling through border regions where Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish dialects intermingled.[94] The text itself is divided into short calendrical entries explaining either the feast day of a specific saint or describing an important date in the liturgical year, such as March 25th, both Annunciation Day and The Crucifixion.[95]

Despite uncertain provenance and composition date, the *Martyrology* contains two Rogation references. On April 25th, the text reads:

> On the twenty-fifth day of the month is the feast in Rome and in all of God's churches which is called *Litania Maior*, that is the day of the greater litany. On those days all the people of God shall ask God with humble processions that he may grant them during that year a peaceful time and tranquil weather and fruitful

[92] Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013); see pg. 1 for a general introduction and 18-25 for a summary of the manuscript evidence. The early modern witness, London, BL Cotton Vitellius D. vii, fols 131r-132r, is a transcript of a late eleventh-century manuscript (CCCC 196) made by John Joscelyn (1529-1603).
[93] Rauer, *Martyrology*, 1-4. Rauer suggests such a broad date range due to problems surrounding source material and distinct lines of manuscript transmission. In fact, the two earliest manuscripts come from different branches of transmission, which suggests that "it is therefore possible to say that the text had already experienced an eventful transmission history, and perhaps even a systematic stylistic revision, by the time the two earliest witnesses were copied out, These early manuscripts already present the characteristic structure and wording which the text displays in its later and fuller copies, and there is no reason to doubt that the *Old English Martyrology* existed in what we now know as its full length and detail at the end of the ninth century" (2).
[94] Rauer, *Martyrology*, 5-6, notes that Anglian features decrease as West Saxon increase over the course of the text's transmission.
[95] Rauer, *Martyrology*, 73.

> crops and firmness of their bodies. The Greeks call this day [*Exomologesis*], which is the day of repentance and penance.[96]

The second reference occurs between May 3rd, the Discovery of the Holy Cross, and May 5th, The Ascension of Christ:

> Around these days, sometimes before, sometimes after, are the three days on which God's churches and the people of Christ celebrate the litanies, that is the prayers and relic processions before Christ's Ascension. On those three days both men and women shall come to God's Church, both old people and the young ones, both male and female servants, to ask favor with God, because Christ's blood was equally poured out for all men. On those three days Christians shall abandon their worldly work at the third hour of the day, that is at 'undern,' and go forth with the relics of the saints until the ninth hour, that is 'non.' Those days are rightly for fasting and for the use of those foods which are used during the fast of forty days before Easter. During these days it is not permitted that blood be let or purgative drinks be drunk, or that one should travel at all far for worldly affairs from the place where one is supposed to serve God. These three days are the medicine of man's soul and a spiritual potion; they are therefore to be kept with compunction of the heart, that is, with weeping prayers and with generous alms

[96] Rauer, *Martyrology*, 86-7: "On ðone fif ond twentegðarr dæg ðæs monðes bið seo tid on Rome ond on eallum Godes ciricum seo is nemned Laetania Maiora. Þæt is þonne micelra bena dæg. On ðæm dæge eall Godes folc mid eaðmodlice relicgonge sceal God biddan þæt he him forgefe ðone gear siblice tid ond smyltelico gewidra ond genihtsume wæstmas ond heora lichoman trymnysse. Ðone dæg Grecas nemnað zymologesin, þæt is þonne hreowsunge dæg ond dædbote." In her commentary, Rauer, 254, notes that this section has no identifiable source although "zymologesin" is attested twice in the Second Corpus Glossary. All translations from Old English are mine.

and the complete benevolence of all human enemies, because God will spare us his anger, if we forgive our people.[97]

These two entries reflect a ninth-century ecclesiastical understanding of both Rogation celebrations. The April 25th entry stresses that humble processions will directly impact crop yields, weather, and even physical health.[98] It also notes that there is a similar day of penance in the Greek church (called *exomologesis*), which suggests that the Greek theological term was meaningful in the mind of the composer.[99] Indeed, this brief cultural reference connects the Church in Anglo-Saxon England to the wider Christian world, which further legitimizes the traditional aspects of the Greater Litany: this festival occurs not only in Rome but also in the Eastern Church, implying that it crosses both cultural and linguistic boundaries. The fact that "all people of God" should celebrate the

[97] Rauer, *Martyrology*, 94-7: "Ymb þas dagas utan, hwilum ær, hwilum æfter, beoð þa þry dagas on ðæm Godes cirican ond Cristes folc mærsiað Laetanias, þæt is þonne bene ond relicgongas foran to Cristes uppastignesse. On ðæm ðrym dagum sceolon cuman to Godes cirican ge weras ge wif, ge ealde men ge geonge, ge þeowas ge þeowenne, to ðingianne to Gode, forðon ðe Cristes blod wæs gelice agoten for eallum monnum. On ðæm þrym dagum Cristne men sceolon alætan heora ða woroldlican weorc on ða þriddan tid dæges, ðæt is on undern, ond forð gongen mid þara haligra reliquium oð ða nigeðan tid, þæt is þonne non. Ða dagas syndon rihtlice to fæstenne, ond þara metta to brucenne ðe men brucað on ðæt feowertiges nihta fæsten ær eastran. Ne bið alefed on ðyssum dagum ðæt mon blod læte oððe clænsungdrenceas drince oððe aht feor gewite for woroldlicre bysgunge fram ðære stowe ðe he sceal Gode ætþeowian. Ðas ðry dagas syndon mannes sawle læcedom ond gastlic wyrtdrenc; forðon hi sendon to healdanne mid heortan onbryrdnesse, þæt is mid wependum gebedum ond mid rumedlicum ælmessum ond fulre blisse ealra mænniscra feonda, forþon ðe God us forgyfeð his erre, gif we ure monnum forgeofað." Rauer, 257, points out that part of this entry drew from two sermons by Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 207, *De letania*, and 208, another untitled Rogation sermon.

[98] Interestingly, the term *relicgang* is typically translated as "processions" but literally refers to the act of visiting or processing with relics. This term is used in both Rogation entries in the *Martyrology*, and, to my knowledge, appears in no other text.

[99] In Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, VI.xix.75-xix.82, Isidore distinguishes between *litania* and *exomologesis*: "Litanies (*litaniae*) are the Greek names for what are called 'rogations' in Latin. But between litanies and *exomologesis* is this distinction, that *exomologesis* is performed only for the confession of sins, whereas litanies are ordained for beseeching God and procuring his mercy in some case. But nowadays either term designates one thing, and commonly there is no distinction whether 'litanies' or *exomologesis* is spoken of."

feast further emphasizes its universality. This entry also suggests that future communal welfare is dependent on humble penance. More importantly, such penance directly impacts the political and physical stability of a community. For a ninth-century participant, then, the Greater Litany appears to have been an important gateway into the coming year. Peace, mild weather, abundant crops, and physical health were all significant factors influencing communal solidarity. By simplifying the feast to these elements, the composer of the *Martyrology* illustrates how a ninth-century ecclesiastically trained person might have understood the fundamental theological aspects of the Greater Litany.

The second entry deals with the three pre-Ascension Rogation days, which is not given a title in the text. Although placed in the manuscripts between May 3rd and May 5th, the composer notes that these days could fall on earlier or later dates, depending on the time of Easter. Interestingly, this entry implies that the most basic elements of the Rogation days are the "prayers and relic processions," which differs slightly from the emphasis on fasting and Mass celebration in Canon 16 of the Clovesho Council. Although such details are likely minor, the *Martyrology* entry provides more pointed instructions than the Council's canon. It states that Christians should come to church to process with relics from the third to the ninth hour on these three days. Although the *Martyrology* says nothing about the vanities of the "negligent or ignorant," it does prohibit bloodletting, the consumption of cleansing drinks, and travel for worldly matters. These proscriptions suggest that users of the *Martyrology* were more concerned with practical matters such as travel and medicinal practices rather than with issues of

ecclesiastical authority. It should be no surprise that the composer draws from Caesarius of Arles' Rogation sermon, which depicts these days as spiritual medicine: "[the Rogation days] are medicine for our souls, and so whoever wants to heal the wounds of his sins should not despise the salutary potion."[100] The *Martyrology* thus constructs the Rogation days as an antidote for sin. Medical practices should be abandoned in favor of alms, prayer, and forgiveness of all "human enemies" in preparation for Christ's ascension the following Thursday. By providing instructions regarding the timing of processions and the avoidance of worldly medicine, this entry offers practical information while illustrating a distinctly ecclesiastical perspective: Christians should abandon worldly concerns and practices and prioritize Church matters rather than worldly affairs.

Ælfric's Rogation Homilies—London, British Library Royal 7 C. xii

Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* contain two cycles of homilies intended for preaching on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Rogation week. In total, Ælfric composed nine separate pieces for Rogation week.[101] Generally, these homilies reflect Ælfric's attempts to standardize and systematize Rogation preaching, emphasizing the demeanor by which a lay Christian should participate in this three-day period of penance, fasting, and prayer. Produced at Cerne under Ælfric's supervision, both London, British Library Royal 7 C. xii and Cambridge, University Library Gg. 3.28 contain the earliest attestations of the

[100] Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 207 (*PL* 39.2076-78): "dies sancti et spirituales adveniunt, et animabus nostris medicinales: et ideo quicumque voluerit peccatorum suorum sanare vulnera, non despiciat medicamenta salubria."
[101] Bazire and Cross, xvii.

First Series of *Catholic Homilies* (CH I).[102] These manuscripts contain three pieces labeled with the following rubrics: "In Letania Maiore," "De Dominica Oratione," and "De Fide Catholica." These three homilies were to be read on Rogation Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, respectively. This cycle demonstrates Ælfric's efforts to simplify important tenets of the Christian faith as it elucidates the origins of the Rogation, the importance of the Lord's Prayer, and the more complex, mysterious aspects of the Creed, such as the nature of the Trinity and the omnipresence of God.

His second series also contains three Rogation homilies. The first is labeled "Letania Maiore" while both the second and third are marked "In Letania Maiore." Interestingly, the homily intended for Rogation Tuesday deals almost entirely with the vision of Furseus, a Scottish priest. Between the Tuesday and Wednesday homilies, Ælfric included two other pieces that might have been intended for Rogation preaching. The first, called "Alia Uisio," describes the vision of Drihthelm, while the second, marked "Hortatorius Sermo de Efficacia Scae Missae," is a short translation of Bede's account of Ymma's bondage and subsequent release on account of holy masses performed by his brother, a mass-priest named Tunna. This section will focus on Ælfric's first series of Rogation homilies because the second series, while fascinating, offers no information concerning the establishment of the festival. By situating the origin narrative within the first Rogation cycle of *Catholic Homilies*, I will show that Ælfric framed the festival as a longstanding ecclesiastical tradition, which was part of a broader effort to

[102] See Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), nos. 11 and 472.

connect the English Church to tenth-century continental reforms. In doing so, Ælfric created a solidarity network that extended beyond the insular world; more importantly, his homilies illustrate the complicated dynamics of solidarity.

The first cycle of Ælfric's Rogation homilies offer an origin narrative that connects the audience to catastrophic events in two urban centers: fifth-century Vienne and the biblical Nineveh. The first homily of the cycle, "In Letania Maiore," opens with a brief explanation of the origins of Rogations as understood by Ælfric. After noting that the Rogations are called "letaniae" or "prayer days" (*gebeddagas*) during which the community should pray for health, forgiveness, and plentiful crops, Ælfric turns to the establishment of the festival:

> We read in books, that this observance was established at the time when a great earthquake happened in a city, which is called Vienna, and churches and houses fell, and wild bears and wolves came, and devoured a great portion of the people, and the king's abode was burnt with heavenly fire. Then the bishop Mamertus commanded a fast of three days, and the affliction then ceased; and the custom of the fast continues everywhere in the faithful church.[103]

[103] Text of Ælfric's homilies from Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series,* Early English Text Society, s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Homily XVIII, lines 5-11: "we rædað on bocum, þæt ðeos gehealdsumnys wurde aræred on ðone timan ðe gelamp on anre byrig, ðe Uigenna is gecweden, micel eorðstyrung, and feollon cyrcan and hus, and common wilde beran and wulfas, and abiton ðæs folces micelne dæl, and þæs cynges botl wearð mid heofonlicum fyre forbærned. Ða bead se biscop Mamertus þreora daga fæsten, and seo gedreccednys þa geswac; and se gewuna þæs fæstenes þurhwunaþ gehwær on geleaffulre gelaðunge."

This introductory passage affirms a fifth-century origin of the Rogations at the command of Mamertus. Furthermore, Ælfric legitimizes this history by stating that it comes from books, thereby emphasizing—at the beginning of the three-day festival—the importance of continuity with the past and the authority of literacy. Ælfric also indicates that this origin story was acquired not through revelation or oral transmission but through manuscript sources, which makes the story seem like an established fact of ecclesiastical history. However, as I have suggested, there was not a definitive origin narrative circulating in early medieval Europe. In England, Rogation sources prior to the tenth-century make no mention of Mamertus instituting the festival.[104] One of the earliest textual attestations of the Mamertus story in England would have been Amalarius' *Liber Officialis*, which was transmitted into insular manuscripts during the early and mid-tenth century.[105]

In Book I, Chapter 37, *De Laetania Maiore,* Amalarius paraphrases the origin account found in Gregory of Tours' *Gestis Francorum*:

> Gregory of Tours reveals where this fast originated in *The Deeds of the Franks*, writing as follows: "In these times there was a great earthquake in the city of Vienne, where many churches and the houses of many people were shattered and upended, where many beasts roamed about; wolves, bears and stags entered

[104] The *Peterborough Chronicle* devotes one entry to the Rogations under the year 490: "At this time the blessed Mamertus, bishop of Vienne, instituted the solemn litanies of the Rogations" (Hoc tempore beatus Mamertus episcopus uiennensis solennes letanias instituit rogationum). This entry likely reflects a later tenth- or early eleventh-century understanding of fifth-century history.
[105] Christopher A. Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz,* Henry Bradshaw Society Publications, Subsidia 2 (London: The Boydell Press, 2001).

through the city gate and ate many people; for a whole year they did this. Now as the feast of Easter approached, and while Saint Mamertus, who was bishop in the city, was celebrating the Mass of Easter vigil, the royal palace in that city was set alight with divine fire. And as these things were happening and as the feast of the Lord's Ascension approached, the holy man of God prescribed a three-day fast with mourning and contrition among the people." And a little later: "Then this tribulation and destruction came to an end. Afterward all the churches and priests of God followed his example, and they observe these three-day litanies solemnly everywhere, down to this day."[106]

Although this account is more descriptive than Ælfric's, the narrative arc between both passages is similar. Each author begins by locating the events at an imprecise time when the city of Vienne was struck by natural disasters. Afterwards, churches and houses are said to have fallen while animals consumed the city's inhabitants. Finally, the royal palace was set ablaze, which prompted the bishop Mamertus to institute a three day fast. This fast was subsequently adopted by churches everywhere, which suggests that it became a meaningful ecclesiastical ritual. The similarity of these passages implies that

[106] Amalar of Metz, *On the Liturgy,* ed. and trans. Eric Knibbs, DOML 35 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 332-38. Latin text from Amalar of Metz, *Liber Officialis,* 1-37, in *Amalarii Episcopi Opera Liturgica Omnia*, ed. Jean-Michel Hanssens, 3 vols., Studi e Testi 138-40 (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948-1950). "A quo primo initium praesens ieiunium sumeret Gregorius Turonensis manifestat in Gestis Francorum, ita dicens: In his temporibus fuit in Vienna urbe terrae motus maximus, ubi multae ecclesiae et domus multorum concussae fuerunt et subversae, ubi bestiae multae oberrantes, lupi, ursi ac cervi ingress per portam civitatis, devorantes plurimos, per totum annum hoc faciebant. Nam veniente sollempnitate sancti paschae, sanctus Mamertus, qui in ea urbe erat episcopus, dum missarum sacrificial ipsa vigilia caelebraret, palatium quoque regale, quod in ea civitate erat, divino igne succensum est. Cumque haec agerentur, adpropinquante ascensione Domini, indixit ieiunium vir sanctus Dei triduanum in populo cum gemitu et contritione. Et Paulo post: Tunc cessavit ipsa tribulatio et subversio. Deinceps omnes ecclesiae Dei et sacerdotes hoc exemplum imitantes, usque ad praesens ipsas triduanas laetanias ubique celebre colunt."

Ælfric trusted the historical legitimacy of Amalarius' account. For the purposes of a homily, precise historical details are both unnecessary and distracting. What is more important is that the homily appeals to a contemporary, late tenth-century audience. When we move beyond the symbolism of fire and brimstone, these narratives speak of trauma and tragedy: homes destroyed, people eaten by wild animals, the royal palace set ablaze. For a tenth-century audience, anyone who had experienced crop blight, horrible weather, or even animal attacks would have seen their plight in these older cities.

Since Rogation celebrations anticipated both a lay and clerical audience, Ælfric's origin story rhetorically connects these communities to people with whom they could imagine as living in similar circumstances. While this rhetorical move reflects Ælfric's efforts to reform and standardize vernacular preaching in late tenth-century England, it also establishes continuity between past and present practices. Thus, the dramatic content is noteworthy: Vienne was hit by earthquakes that toppled both houses and churches while bears and wolves devoured the city's inhabitants. This imagery pits city-dwellers against wild animals from the surrounding countryside and seemingly insurmountable forces from below (earthquake) and above (heavenly fire). Beset on all sides by calamity, the city is saved only after Mamertus institutes the fast. For the homily's audience, Mamertus' intervention demonstrated the efficacy of this fast while simultaneously reminding people that they lived a transitory existence that could be snuffed out if their faith was not true. By calling the Rogations a "custom" (*gewuna*), Ælfric suggests that the festival has been a permanent fixture of annual worship since its origins. More

importantly, the origin story is presented as the key that unlocks the theological meaning of the Rogations.

The theological explanation for these catastrophes would be that the citizens of Vienne were sinful, which brought about divine retribution on a grand scale. Indeed, Ælfric makes this point by explaining the calamities that befell another city, Nineveh. According to Ælfric, the fast of the Ninevites was said to have inspired Mamertus in fifth-century Vienne: "They took the example of the fast from the people of Nineveh. That people was very sinful: then would God destroy them, but they appeased him with their penitence."[107] This story connects the festival to sacred history and demonstrates that communal fasting can appease the anger of God, which again reflects the penitential emphasis of the Rogations: building solidarity first requires the remission of all sin. Furthermore, the tale of the Ninevites adds even more depth to the origin story by demonstrating that the Rogations were grounded in biblical precedent. Mamertus did not invent the ritual fast out of thin air: when his city was struck by disaster, the bishop found in sacred texts an example that resonated with the current circumstances of his people. Thus, Ælfric began his Rogation cycle with the origin story for a similar rhetorical reason: since Mamertus looked to sacred history for salvation and solidarity, fellow Christians should understand their own participation in the Rogations as a continuation of the Bible story itself.

[107] Ælfric, *CH I*, XVIII, 12-14: "Hi namon þa bysne ðæs fæstenys æt ðam niniueiscan folce. Þæt folc wæs swiðe fyrenful: þa wolde God hi fordon, ac hi gegladodon hine mid heora behreowsunge."

The previous paragraphs have focused on only the origin story in Ælfric 's cycle of Rogation homilies. However, Ælfric clearly thought that this preaching occasion was one of the best times to reiterate fundamental practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. After laying out the festival's origin, Ælfric states the type of practices that will carry on the celebration's legacy. The following two homilies in Ælfric's first cycle—"De Dominica Oratione" and "De Fide Catholica"—are written like introductory treatises on prayer and Christian tenets, which suggests that Ælfric composed for an audience that included people with little knowledge of Christian belief. In fact, this homiletic cycle strives to collapse social differences and unify the community in both practice and belief. Indeed, "In Letania Maiore" concludes with an appeal to the value of spiritual welfare over material wealth. Ælfric reminds his audience that "if someone opens the graves of dead men, you know not whether that is the bone of the rich man or of the poor […] it is one thing that someone be rich if his parents have bequeathed him property; it is another thing, if anyone become rich through covetousness."[108] For Ælfric, both the poor and the rich have an important function in the salvation of the other social class, they should stand in solidarity with one another. He notes that "the rich and the poor benefit from each other. The wealthy one is made for the poor one, and the poor for the wealthy. It is fitting that the wealthy spend and distribute; it is fitting that the poor pray for the distributor."[109] Since the Rogations involved lay participation, Ælfric surely thought it

[108] Ælfric, *CH I*, XVIII, 191-3 and 196-8: "Gif man openað deaddra manna byrgynu, nast ðu hwæðer beoð þæs rican mannes ban, hwæðer þæs ðearfan…oðer is þæt hwa rice beo, gif his yldran him æhta becwædon; oðer is, gif hwa þurh gytsunge rice gewurðe."
[109] Ælfric, *CH I*, XVIII, 205-8: "Se rice and se þearfa sind him betwynan nydbehefe. Se welega is geworht for ðan ðearfan, and se ðearfa for þan welegan. Þam spedigum gedefanað þæt he spende and dæle; ðam wædlan gedafenað þæthe gebidde for ðane dælere."

was necessary to reaffirm social arrangements because both poor and rich people might be listening. The poor prayed for the rich, while the rich offered bread and sustenance to the poor. Thus, just like Mamertus and the Ninevites before, communal participation played a vital role in the spiritual welfare of the entire community. By concluding this homily with a statement about the ephemerality of material wealth, Ælfric provides basic commentary on social divisions that were surely a reality for many listeners. As the introductory homily for the Rogation cycle, "In Letania Maiore" suggests that the Christian community is tied to its ancestors through shared tradition; however, this homily acknowledges that social strata could impact solidarity-building practices because the wealthy pursued interests that conflicted with the poor. We do not know how audiences received Ælfric's rhetoric. Was it persuasive? Did poor people actually see themselves as part of this harmonious order? While we can only speculate about the audience's reaction, we can safely say that Ælfric encountered the shortcomings of solidarity discourse because communities are never homogenous. By representing the Christian community as a balanced, ordered group, Ælfric avoids discussing the real, material differences between those who owned estates and those who worked its fields.

The homily for Rogation Tuesday, "De Dominica Oratione," opens with a brief exposition on apostolic authority: "those [the twelve apostles] were afterwards with him [Jesus], and he taught them all the wisdom which stands in holy books, and through them established all Christianity."[110] After providing a vernacular translation of the Pater

[110] Ælfric, *CH I*, XIX, 6-8: "Þa wæron mid him æfre syððan, and he him tæhte ealne þone wisdom ðe on halgum bocum stent, and þurh hi ealne cris tendom astealde."

Noster and again affirming that social status is meaningless before the eyes of God, Ælfric launches into a line-by-line explanation of the seven prayers in the Pater Noster. Ælfric juxtaposes worldly and heavenly life before calling for the unity of all Christian people: "Christ set this prayer, and thus enclosed it within a few words, so that all our needs, both ghostly and bodily, are therein enclosed; and he composed this prayer for all Christian men in common."[111] The homily concludes with a metaphorical description of the Christian community: just as Christ is like the head of a body, so all Christians are like its limbs. Each limb serves and depends on the rest of the body in the same way that the lord requires the labor of servants to produce food. In light of this metaphor, the origin narrative makes more sense: Vienne was saved because each person in the community fulfilled their Christian duty as the "limbs" of the Church.

The final homily for Rogation Wednesday builds on the instructions of these previous two days by explaining the spiritual meaning of the creed itself. "De Fide Catholica" is an ambitious explanation of the Trinity. In this homily, Ælfric attempts to distill the theological meaning of the Creed for an unlearned audience. It begins with an explanation of the body and soul in various creatures: angels have a soul but lack a body, humans have both a soul and body, while cattle and other animals have bodies but no souls. Next, Ælfric expands on each aspect of the Trinity, emphasizing that the three aspects are not separate gods but distinct parts of a greater Godhead: "Each of the three is God, however they are all one God, because they all have one nature, and one divine

[111] Ælfric, *CH I*, XIX, 213-15: "Crist gesette þis gebad, and swa beleac mid feawum wordum, þæt ealle ure neoda, ægðer ge gastlice ge lichamlice ðæron sind belocene; and þis gebad he gesette eallum cristenum mannum gemænelice."

nature, and one essence, and one purpose, and one work, and one majesty, and similar glory, and a coeternal kingdom."[112] Ælfric concludes the homily with an appeal to the relationship of body and soul: "The soul is nowhere existing previously, but God creates it straightaway, and sets it in the body […] nevertheless it ever needs God's support so that it may avoid sins, and again come to the Creator through good merit."[113] This final appeal to proper belief and practice reminds the audience that they should follow teachers who can accurately steer them away from sin. By asserting reformed ecclesiastical authority in this first cycle of Rogation homilies, Ælfric presents Benedictine Reformers as the only legitimate experts for community formation.

Anonymous Rogation Homilies

Besides Ælfric, anonymous homilists also wrote about Rogation origins. These homilies further demonstrate that there was no master narrative concerning Rogation history. Nonetheless, the Mamertus story also emerges in some anonymous homilies, which implies that this narrative's sense of community was legitimized by centers of manuscript production.

The Vercelli Homilies—Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare MS CXVII

[112] Ælfric, *CH I*, XX, 136-9: "Ælc ðæra þreora is God, þeah hwæðere hi ealle an God; forðan ðe hi ealle habbað an gecynd, and ane godcundnysse, and ane edwiste, and an geðeaht, and an weorc, and ane mægenðrymnysse, and gelic wuldor, and efen ece rice."
[113] Ælfric, *CH I*, XX, 263-8: "Ne bið seo sawl nahwar wunigende æror, ac God hi gescypð þærrihte, and beset on ðone lichaman…Þeah hwæðere heo behofað æfre Godes fultumes, þæt heo mæge synna forbugan, and eft to hyre scyppende gecuman þurh gode geearnunga."

The *Vercelli Book* contains two cycles of Rogation homilies, attesting to the popularity of this festival as an important occasion for preaching and edification.[114] In the first cycle, Homily XI opens with a call for prayers and fasting during both shrine visits and processions.[115] Immediately afterwards, the composer notes that "Saint Peter, the chief apostle, first established for us to celebrate these days and to process on account of heathen men's error, because they venerated and worshipped their idols and their devil-images on those days."[116] This origin story makes no mention of Mamertus; rather, it claims that Saint Peter instituted the celebration as a corrective measure for heathen practices. Not surprisingly, this story offers no information about the place or time of origin. Attributing the festival's establishment to Saint Peter suggests that the homilist drew on manuscripts that no longer survive.[117] However, since this origin is attested in the *Vercelli Book* alone, it is impossible to determine if this narrative reflects an unknown tradition of origins circulating in ninth- or tenth-century ecclesiastical establishments.

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[114] Bazire and Cross, xviii-xix, identify homilies XI, XII, and XIII as the first group and homilies XIX and XX as the second. Although the former group exists only in the *Vercelli Codex*, the second set are copied in several additional manuscripts. Homily XIX was copied in three other manuscripts, one of which contains a heading for Rogation Monday, the second contains the heading "In letania maiore," while the third notes that it was intended for the Sunday before Rogation week. A version of Homily XX is found in two other manuscripts, which both note that it was for Rogation Tuesday, although the scribe may have drawn from two different exemplars in composing the Vercelli homilies. See Paul Szarmach, ed., *Vercelli Homilies IX-XXIII* (Toronto: University of Toronoto Press, 1981). While I rely on Szarmach's edition for line numbers, for a more recent edition, see Donald G. Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts,* Early English Text Society, o.s. 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[115] For a discussion about the implied audiences of Vercelli XI-XIII, see Charles D. Wright, "Vercelli Homilies XI-XIII and the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform: Tailored Sources and Implied Audiences," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages,* ed. Carolyn Muessig (Boston: Brill, 2002), 203-227. For Homily XI, see Rudolf Willard, "Vercelli Homily XI and its Sources," *Speculum* 24 (1949): 76-87.

[116] Vercelli XI, 4-6: "Forþan sanctus Petrus se ealdorapostol ærest us gesette to healdanne ðas dagas and to beganganne for hæðenra manna gedwilde, forþan þe hie hiera wiggild and hiera diofulgild on ðas dagas weorðedon and beeodon."

[117] Szarmach, *Vercelli,* 19, notes that the only clear sources for this homily are Caesarius of Arles' Sermo 207 (*De letania*) and Sermo 215 (*De natale Sancti Felicis*). Neither homily makes any mention of Saint Peter as the founder of the Rogations.

Nonetheless, attributing the festival to Saint Peter makes sense considering the apparent confusion between the Greater and Lesser Litany. If the homilist thought that the pre-Ascension Rogations originated in Rome, it seems plausible that Saint Peter, the traditional founder of the Roman Church, could have instituted the festival. Thus, this narrative suggests that the Rogations were an established Christian practice since the early days of the Church, which not only legitimized its continued performance in England but also connects participants to both the chief apostle (*ealdorapostol*) and the center of apostolic authority (Rome).

Following Saint Peter's story, the homilist elaborates further on apostolic authority by mentioning gospel books and teachers of the faith. In fact, the homilist writes that humanity has been granted both books and "spiritual candles" to guide people towards the truth. These candles are the "patriarchs and prophets and apostles and bishops and mass-priests and sacred teachers and many churches of God. And we have a great need that we obey those true teachings and those holy commands and that we hear the holy gospel solemnly and establish it securely in our hearts."[118] Here, the homilist asserts that truth depends on obedience to a lineage of authoritative teachers; moreover, all other illegitimate instructors lead people down the same type of heretical pathways that Saint Peter had to correct. By challenging heathen customs and supplanting them with the teachings of a prominent Christian apostle, the homilist asserts that some people

[118] Vercelli XI, 13-17: "Đæt syndon heahfæderas and witigan and apostolas and bisceopas and mæssepreostas and þa[re] godcundan lareowas and manege Godes cyrican. And þam rihtum larum and þam halegum bysenum we habbað mycle nydþearfe þæt we hyrsimien and ondrysenlice we þæt halige godspel gehyren and fæste we hit on urum heortum gestaðolian."

do not belong in the Christian community on account of their practices. While a lay person's interpretation of the festival is difficult to assess from surviving textual sources, the homilist's anxiety suggests that "vernacular" customs were also performed during the Rogation period, so it was not only a time of penance and prayer but of feasting, dancing, and merriment.[119]

Moving forward, homily XII for Rogation Tuesday further illuminates the origin story from the previous day's homily. Homily XII begins:

> [Yesterday] we were taught, dearest men, the celebration of these days. We learned that the heathen people had three days set apart before their other days as a custom that they gave an offering to their gods for their crops, cattle, and all their possessions. They offered to their god—that was the Devil himself, because they had made their gods of wood and of stone and of other various materials. When they bowed down to such images and offered sacrifice to them, then the Devil went into the image and from it spoke out […] then, afterwards, Saint Peter and elders of the other churches established for us [against that devil-worship] the three holy *gang days* so that we should serve God Almighty with our fitting

[119] See Leonard Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method," *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995), 37-56. Primiano defines "vernacular religion" as lived experiences "as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (44). On the notion of official vs. unofficial religion, Primiano notes that "a vernacular religious viewpoint shows that designations of institutionalized religion as "official" are inaccurate. What scholars have referred to as "official" religion does not, in fact, exist. The use of the term "official religion" as a pedagogical tool has helped explain scholarly perspectives to the uninitiated, but remains and inadequate explanation for the nature of religion. While it may be possible to refer to various components within a religious body as emically "official," meaning authoritative when used by empowered members within that religious tradition, such a designation when used by scholars is limited by the assumption that religion is synonymous with institutional or hierarchical authority" (45).

> procession and with song and with attendance at churches and with fasting and with almsgiving and with holy prayers. And we must bear our relics around our land and the worthy sign of Christ's Cross, which we call the sign of Christ, on which he himself suffered for the redemption of mankind.[120]

The homilist also instructs worshippers to carry gospel books and relics during processions to offer thanks to God for cattle, land, timber, and the salvation of the community.

This origin narrative echoes the tenth-century Corbie homily in which the Rogations are described as a Christianized *Ambarvalia*. Although the pagan festival is not mentioned by name, references to three days of celebration with the goal of increasing material wealth offer few possibilities besides the *Ambarvalia*. Furthermore, the homily reflects other Anglo-Saxon and continental admonitions against worshipping the natural world and confusing trees and stones with relics. Such worship of inanimate objects was proscribed by ecclesiastics including Caesarius of Arles (c. 502-542), Martin of Braga (572), Burchard of Worms (950-1025), and Ælfric himself. In describing pagan references throughout early medieval pastoral literature, Bernadette Filotas notes that

[120] Vercelli XII, 1-14: "Girsandæg we wæron manode, men þa leofstan, þissa haliga daga bigangnes <se>. Liornodon we þæt geo hæðene liode hæfdon þry dagas synderlice beforan hira oðrum gewunan þæt hie onguldon hira godum and hiera ceapes wæstma and ealle hira æhta. Hie hira gode bebudon—þæt wæs dioflum sylfum, forþon þe hie hira godu hæfdon geworhte of treowum and of stanum and of oðrum antimbrum missenlicum. Ðonne to ðam onlicnessum swylcum hie onluton and þam lac onsendan, þonne eode þæt dioful in <n>on þa anlicnesse and þanon it wæs sprecende, þonne tealdon men þæt þæt wære God sylfa; wæron þæt þonne þa wyrrestan hellegæstas, nalas God sylfa, ælmihtig eallra gesceafta scippend. Þonne wið þon gesette us sanctus Petrus syðþan and oðerra cyricena ealdormen þa halgan gangdagas þry to ðam þæt we sceoldon on Gode ælmihtigum þiowigan mid use gedefelice gange and mid sange and mid ciricenasocnum and mid fæstenum and mid ælmessylenum and mid halegum gebedum. And we sculon beran use reliquias ymb ure land <and> þa medeman Cristes rode tacen, þe we Cristes mæl nemnað, on þam he sylfa þrowode for mancynnes alysnesse."

these ecclesiastical authors were especially concerned with prayers, vows, and offerings made to or in the vicinity of trees, springs, stones, and groves.[121] Caesarius of Arles, for instance, lamented those who worshipped "fanatical trees" and thought that such devotees saw trees as divine or spirit-filled objects.[122] Additionally, the Toledan councils of 681 and 693 labeled devotees of stones, springs, and trees as idolaters.[123] For clerical writers, the worship of stones, springs, and trees was a source of great anxiety as it represented a clear misunderstanding about God's presence in the world. More importantly, such worship reflected customs pre-dating, even competing with the Church. The composer of Homily XII thus sets up Saint Peter as the corrector of these heathen customs. Instead of worshipping inanimate objects, Saint Peter instituted "proper" practices such as processions, songs, church attendance, prayer, and fasting.[124] Both the Cross and relics should be carried around the land because these objects are animated by divine presence, unlike trees and stones, the focal points of heathen worship. Although it is difficult to determine whether the Vercelli homilist was responding to contemporary nature worship or drawing on a lost textual tradition, the homilist uses the caricature of idol-worshipping heathens to legitimize an ecclesiastical lineage for the Rogation days. By providing a

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[121] Filotas, *Survivals,* 145-151 and 195-200.
[122] Filotas, *Survivals,* 146.
[123] Filotas, *Survivals,* 148. Filotas, at 195, also notes that in early medieval pastoral literature, proscriptions against "trees and water appear to have been the most popular. They maintained their importance, at least in the thoughts of clerical writers, from Caesarius of Arles to Burchard of Worms, in all parts of Western Europe except Ireland. Separately or together, they appear in some form in about eighty-five percent of the nearly one hundred passages dealing with cultic practices performed in the vicinity of natural objects. Stones come far behind them, appearing in about twenty percent."
[124] See Clare Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 128-9. Lees reads this passage from Vercelli XII as a statement concerning communal incorporation in ritual action. In other words, the homily serves a didactic function by listing appropriate ritual behavior for the congregation (alms, fasting, prayer, processions, relic-carrying).

clear story of origins, the homilist effectively challenges any oral traditions that might have narrated a heathen rather than ecclesiastical history of the Rogations.

Homily XIII, for Rogation Wednesday, is unfortunately fragmented and offers no further explanation concerning the origin narrative.[125] However, the homilist does speak to the manner in which worshippers should attend the Rogation days and the deeds each person should practice: "This is the third day, dearest men, of this holy time when it befalls us exceedingly well that we all must humbly serve the lord and perform well at this time that which we were previously taught on those days. It is very praiseworthy that someone should freely fare and go on the good path of God's decree and not let him slacken in holy deeds."[126] The worshippers should *humbly* serve the Lord and continue performing holy deeds, for to do so is commendable in the eyes of both the Church and God. After a missing folio, the homilist examines the relationship between the soul and body. In an image resonating with the dialogue poems *Soul and Body I & 2,* the bones of a deceased body speak to a living person, warning him to avoid sinful desires (*fyrenlust*) since the body will inevitably decay and rot. Only through cleanness (*clænnesse*) can the soul achieve salvation, for all bodies will eventually decay in the ground. Through this dramatic dialogue, earthly life is portrayed as preparation for the soul's judgement, so it should be spent in holy deeds, not sinful desires.

[125] Szarmach, *Vercelli,* 26, notes that at least part of this homily was copied from Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 31, *De elemosinis*. He also notes that, at line 15, a folio is missing from the manuscript, which means it contains only 38 lines in its present form.
[126] Szarmach, *Vercelli,* XIII, 1-5.

The next set of Rogation homilies—Homily XIX and XX—provide additional information about the festival's origin and theological meaning. Before discussing the festival's origins, Homily XIX instructs worshippers to process barefoot and strictly avoid vain speech, dice playing, feasting, and blood-spilling. Interestingly, this homily attributes the establishment of the Rogations to Mamertus instead of Saint Peter, suggesting that the scribe likely used multiple exemplars in composing these Rogation homilies.[127] After an exposition on the creation of the cosmos, the story of Adam and Eve, and the meaning of the Rogations, the homilist discusses the origins of the festival:

> Also we read in holy books that in a certain city which was called Vienne there was a certain bishop named Mamertus. About that one, it is written that those people whom he presided over were severely consumed with sudden death. And that sickness and that sudden death was so great over all the people whom he presided over that when they bore the others to earth for burial, certain ones of them fell dead over the graves of the dead in which they buried them. And certain ones died on the way home so that none of those who bore another to the earth came home with his life. Then bishop Mamertus commanded all those bishops who were in that country with a weeping voice that they all and their people fast three days and pray to their Lord that they all be delivered from that great and that sudden death. And so they all did this, and they established among themselves that people must ever afterwards observe fully those three *gang days* with fasting and with almsgiving and with church attendances and with humble procession,

[127] Bazire and Cross, xix.

> and with shrine visits, and with all good works. And they immediately earned from God eternal health and the removal of that sudden death.[128]

Changing course from the previous set of homilies, this account links the institution of the Rogations to Mamertus rather than Saint Peter, which echoes Ælfric's understanding of its origins. Yet as Szarmach notes, this excerpt attributes calamities to sickness or plague, which differs from the earthquakes, wild animals, and flames of Ælfric's "In Letania Maiore," which suggests that the homilist drew from a different textual tradition.[129] The dramatic details paint a grim picture in which the people of Vienne are struck by calamity so great that the only recourse is divine intervention, brought about by communal fasting. Once again, this narrative provides vague details concerning the place and time of origin. It is hard to imagine that the audience knew of Vienne or Mamertus from other non-Rogation sources, so these names merely confirm that these events occurred in a bishop's see. By rhetorically linking contemporary Anglo-Saxon Rogation ceremonies to the festival's origins, the homilist suggests that these three days of fasting, church attendance, and good works are necessary for avoiding sudden sickness. In this homily, the festival's origin narrative suggests that communal health depends on

[128] Vercelli XIX, 117-129: "Eac we ræddon on halegum bocum þæt on sumere ceastre þe wæs Uienna haten on þære wæs sum bisceop se wæs nemned Mamertus. Be ðam is awriten þæt ðæt folc þe he bewiste wearð þearle mid færlicum deaðe fornumen. And swa mycel wearð seo untrumnes and se færlica deað ofer eall þæt folc þe <he> bewiste þæt þe oðre to eorðan bæron þæt sume hie feollon deade ofer þæs deadan byrgenne þe hie þonne byrgdon. And sume hamweard be wege forðferdon swa þæt nan þara þe oðerne to eorðan bær ham mid þam life ne com. Þa bæd se bisceop Mamertus ealle þa bisceopas þe on ðam eared wæron mid wependre stefne þæt hie ealle and hira folc þry dagas fæston and bædon hira Dryhten þæt hie ealle alysde fram þam myclan and þam færlican deaðe. And hie ða ealle swa dydon, and gesetton þa him betwinan þæt man a syððan sceolde þas þry gangdagas healdan fullice mid fæstenum and mid ælmessylenum and mid cyricsocnum and mid eadmodlicum gange and mid reliquiasocnum and mid eallum godum weorcum. And hie sona æt Gode geearnodon ece hæle and þæs færlican deaþes afryrrednesse."
[129] Szarmach, *Vercelli*, 75.

continued performance of ecclesiastical ritual. Just as Mamertus and his fellow bishops established this fast to save the country (*eard*), so too should worshippers carry on this tradition for the sake of the whole community. The festival's origin provides a model for trans-generational solidarity; however, this solidarity is almost threatening because divine retribution will fall on anyone who wanders from the community.

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303, pages 223-6, In uigilia ascensionis

Originating from Rochester Cathedral Priory, CCCC 303 is a mid-twelfth—century manuscript that mostly contains homilies from Ælfric's first series. This homily provides a unique explanation concerning the origins of the Rogations. Unlike the homilies discussed above, this homilist grounds the festival's establishment in the story of Elias from III Kings. The homily begins by paraphrasing III Kings 17-18, in which Elias prays for rain. In the following excerpt, the homilist describes the origins of the three-day fast:

> Dearest men, these are holy days and a spiritual ministry among men, because these days were established neither for avarice nor for pride but they were established on account of the great need of all people. It was in those days, dearest men, when these days were established, that all people were so hostile against God and as exceedingly careless that they neither cared for God nor kept the commands of God, they neither observed mass nor did they seek churches. At that time there were many prophets and wise men. At that time there was a prophet called Elias. With a pure heart, he then embraced Christ and asked Christ that he

send some terror (awe) to them so that the people would know that he was God in heaven and there was no other god except the one over heaven, no lord or creator, except him alone. Then God made his great might known and sent them those tokens to earth so that they might perceive that he was the true God in heaven. He sent them, as a token, three winters and six months in which rain did not come from heaven; dew neither struck the earth nor did mist arise again in that place with a heavenly drought. Then there was great terror among men so that death quickly seized all mankind and all the crops perished on this earth. Then the wise man Elias felt pity and afterwards felt sorrow for the prayer which he previously asked from God. Then he collected together all those wise men who were in that land and discussed among them how they should humble Christ so that he sends those tempests to them that may grow their crops and, at the same time, they may please God on this earth."[130]

[130] Bazire and Cross, Homily IV, 2-22: "Men þa leofstan, þis syndon halige dagas and gastlice þenunge mid mannum; forþi þe þas dagas næron for gytsunge geworhte ne for nanum rence, ac hi wæron geworhte for micelre neode eallum folce. Hit wæs on þam dagum, men þa leofstan, þe þas dagas wæron geworhte, þæt eall folc wæs swa wiðerweard wið God and swa swiðe gymeleas, þæt hi ne rohtan ne ne gymdon naðer ne God ne Godes beboda, ne hi mæssan ne gymdon ne hi cirican ne sohtan. Þa wæron manega prophetan and witegan.Þa wæs þær an propheta Helias gehaten. Þa clypode he mid hluttre heortan to Criste and bæd Crist þæt he sumne ege to heom asende þæt þæt folc wurde gecnæwe þæt he wære God on heofonum and nære nan oðer god buton him anum ofer heofonum, wealdend ne sceppend, buton he ana. Đa cydde God his mycelan mihte and sende heom þa tacna to eorðan þæt hi mihton ongyton þæt he wæs soð God on heofonum; sænde heom þa to tacne þæt þrim wintrum and six monþum ne com nan ren of heofonum on eorðan ne deaw up ne sloh ne mist up ne aras ongean þære heofonlicum druhþan. Đa wæs mycel ege mid mannum swa þæt eal mancyn wearð acweald swiðe gehende and ealle weastmes forwurdon on þyssere eorðan. Đa ofhreaw þam witegan Helian eft and him ofðuhte þa seo bene þe he ær æt Gode gebæd. Þa gesamnode he ealle þa witegan þe on þam lande wæron on ræddon heom betweonan hu hi sceoldan Criste geeadmedan þæt he heom asende þa gewideru þæt heora wæstmes mosten weaxan and hi þærmid mosten Gode gecweman on ðyssere eorðan."

This account locates the festival's origin at an unspecified time and place in the story of III Kings. Interestingly, the homilist states that the Rogations were not created due to pride or avarice but were established *for all people*, which reflects ecclesiastical expectations that both clergy and laity would participate and necessitates solidarity among different members of Christian communities. The homilist also claims that the three Rogation days were created by a council of Elias and other wise men to both please God and call for favorable farming weather. Thus, this homily provides an agriculturally oriented origin narrative. Instead of a city in flames, the homilist imagines a crop-killing drought that could strike again if people do not perform the Rogations. The trauma and fear was still present and real. In situating the origins in III Kings, the homilist rhetorically collapses the temporal distance between the biblical past and contemporary practices. The Rogations were framed as an ancient custom, which imbues them with a sense of stability and historical continuity.[131] More importantly, this homily illustrates how community formation had to respond to local needs.

[131] This sense of stability is further exemplified by the homilist's admonitions against those men who broke fast, went hunting or horse riding, and departed mass before taking the Eucharist. Such anachronistic interpretations collapse the temporal distance between the past and present, which permits the homilist to criticize bad behavior without calling attention to it directly. The voice of Christ spoke to those fast-breakers in the distant past and may do so again to those who do not follow Church custom, warns the homilist: "Then the voice of Christ came from the heavens to earth and caused it to resound over all those men who broke his fast on those three days before those holy relics came again into the temple, and over every man who walked shod even a single step with holy relics or with linen vestments or with a weapon or rode on a horse or those who began to hunt within those three days or those who went from mass before he had received the bread from the hands of the priest" (Þa com Cristes stefn of hefenum to eorðan and let dynian ofer ealc þære manna þe þas þry dagas his fæsten abræc ær þa halgan reliquias eft into þam temple common, and on ælc þæra manna þe an fodspor gesceod eode mid þam halgan reliquium oððe mid linenum hrægle oððe mid wæpne oððe on horse geride oððe huntian ongunne binnan þysum þreom dagum oððe fram mæsse gange ær he hæfde hlam genuman æt þæs prestes handum), 31-37.

Local community formation is further substantiated by the manuscript context of this homily. Having likely originated in the mid-twelfth century in southern England, CCCC 303 contains 73 items, 63 of which are homilies or *vitae* by Ælfric.[132] Out of the manuscript's five Rogation homilies, only two are by Ælfric and three are anonymous. Both Ælfrician homilies are reworked texts of his *De Dominica Oratione* and *In Letania Maiore*; likewise, two of the anonymous homilies are variants of *Vercelli* XIX and XX. As we have seen, Ælfric's *In Letania Maiore* and *Vercelli* XIX both trace the festival's origin to Mamertus, which means that the scribe could have had access to these origin narratives. However, closer inspection of *In Letania Maiore* reveals that lines 2-43 were omitted in this manuscript, which means that Mamertus was not included.[133] Thus, CCCC 303 contains two attestations of the Rogation origin story. Although the scribe may not have cared about these minor differences (or even noticed them), such incongruities merit explanation. Since *In uigilia ascensionis* expands on the epistolary reading for the Rogations, James 5:16-20, its origin theory is not entirely without biblical precedent.[134] In fact, both Ælfric and the anonymous homily in Hatton 114 (discussed next) also cite James 5:16-20. Based on this evidence, one possibility is that the Mamertus story was still not the "official" or "legitimate" ecclesiastical explanation by the mid-twelfth century. The fact that the Rogations occurred annually as part of the *temporale* suggests that minor inconsistencies within homiletic material could go unnoticed or uncorrected

[132] Orietta Da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan, and Elaine Treharne eds, *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220* (University of Leicester, 2010; last updated 2013), http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/em1060to1220, ISBN 095323195X.
[133] See Ælfric, *CH I*, XVIII, ed. Clemoes 317.
[134] See Bazire and Cross, 29-30, n. 17. The authors note that other homilists such as Smaragdus, Hrabanus Maurus, and Haymo of Auxerre name James 5:16-20 as the epistolary reading for *In letania maiore.*

for years. Since *In uigilia ascensionis* has no known Latin or Old English exemplar and produced no recognizable variants, it is safe to say that the homily was not continuously copied beyond the mid-twelfth century. Alternatively, assuming there was no master narrative, the composer of *In uigilia ascensionis* might have seen the story of Elias as a legitimate origin story. Indeed, even Ælfric suggests that the Rogations had biblical precedent as Mamertus was inspired by the fast of the Ninevites. Yet there is another explanation that considers this homily in its manuscript context. By expanding the story of Elias, our homilist rhetorically appealed to rural communities in which Rogation processions brought people into close contact with crops and fields. In framing the Rogations as a petition for favorable crop-growing weather, this homily could have served as one tool for pastoral care among other possibilities in CCCC 303. In other words, the manuscript's five Rogation homilies provided options for a preacher, depending on the needs of the local community. In rural communities, this homily offered a narrative more familiar to the audience than the calamities that befell Vienne, an urban environment. In sum, the Rogation homilies of CCCC 303 demonstrate increasing attentiveness to the pastoral needs of local communities. Having multiple variants allowed preachers to connect with their audience by drawing from narratives that represented "community" in ways that were meaningful.

Bodleian MS. Hatton 114, folios 97v-102v, De letania maiore

Hatton 114 contains four anonymous Rogation homilies interspersed among Ælfrician and Wulfstanian texts.[135] This manuscript was bound together with Hatton 113, which almost exclusively contains homilies by Wulfstan. Originating between 1064 and 1083 in Worcester, this compilation demonstrates the continued transmission of both Wulfstan's and Ælfric's homilies from that ecclesiastical institution. The following excerpt describes the origins of the Rogations:

> And we read in books that the custom of these gang-days were established in that time in which it came to pass in a city-boundary, which was called Vienne, that a great earthquake occurred and the holy churches of God and many houses fell to ruin, and wild animals came and tore and devoured everyone through the anger of God. And the dwelling of the king was burned with heavenly fire and many misfortunes occurred on account of the sins of the people. And then the bishop Mamertus commanded a fast for three days and that holy men should worthily move and eagerly make God glad with alms-offerings, and that each man should humbly follow with unshod feet those holy relics and everyone should eagerly call to Christ. And immediately as that was done, then it was plainly visible that God afterwards allowed peace and mercy. Afterwards, such affliction never again

[135] Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, nos. 637-638.

came forth within that land but those gang-days set an example far and wide that men held as custom from thence forth.[136]

This narrative once again attributes the Rogations to Mamertus in Vienne at an unspecified time. Interestingly, the homilist's account is syntactically similar to Ælfric's *In Letania Maiore*, which suggests that the scribe closely followed an Ælfrician exemplar. However, Dorothy Whitelock argues that this origin narrative is an Ælfrician piece reworked by Wulfstan.[137] She points to various lexical changes between the two homilies as well as Hatton 114's use of Wulfstanian expressions. For instance, the composer of Hatton 114 changed *gecweden* to *genamod*, *abiton* to *tosliton ond abiton*, and added *georne god gladian, unsceodum fotum,* and *ealle to criste geornlice clipian*, which Whitelock characterizes as Wulfstanian language.[138] While noting that the homily is likely a compilation of various texts, Whitelock believes that the compiler drew on a lost Wulfstanian piece that included a lengthier description of the festival's origin.[139] Thus, Hatton 114 commands people to follow relics with unshod feet; likewise, it

[136] Bazire and Cross, Homily 8, 4-17: "And we rædað on bocum þæt se gewuna þissa gangdaga wurde aræred on þone timan þe gelamp on anre burhscire, þe Uigenna is genamod, þæt wearð mycel eorðstyrung and feollon gehalgode Godes cyricean and manega hus hruran, and common wilde deor and tosliton and abiton ealles to fela þurh Godes yrre; and ðæs cyninges botl wearð mid heofonlicumm fyre forbærned and fela ungelimpa gewearð for folces synnan. And þa bead se biscop Mamertus þreora daga fæsten and þæt man halidom sceolde wyrðlice styrien and mid ælmeslacum georne God gladian, and þæt manna gehwylc unsceodum fotum þam halidome sceolde eadmodlice fylian, and ealle to Criste georнlice clypian; and sona swa þæt gedon wæs, þa wæs swutele gesyne þæt heom God syðþan uðe lisse and miltse. Ne wearð næfre syððan þanon forð eft swylc gedrecednys innan þam lande ac wearð þæt to bysne wide and side þæt man þanon forð þa gangdagas on gewunan hæfde."
[137] Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (London: Methuen, 1963).
[138] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*,22-3.
[139] Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi*, 23.

attributes the calamities of Vienne to the sins of its people and even calls the festival the "walking-days" (*gangdaga*), a term which does not appear in Ælfric's passage.

The changes made to Ælfric's homily by the compiler of Hatton 114 (whether Wulfstan or an anonymous scribe after him) do not drastically change the origin narrative. In both homilies, the Rogations were instituted in Vienne by a bishop, Mamertus, in response to earthquakes and wild animals intruding into the city. However, both narratives are brief and offer few details, which implies that tenth- and eleventh-century scribes in southern England knew little about Rogation history besides that which was contained in the accounts of Ælfric and Amalarius. Even Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum* is not attested in England until after the Norman Conquest.[140] By implying that this practice occurred during the first Rogation procession, Hatton 114 imagines an unbroken continuity with the past. This continuity is further substantiated by the scribe's command "that each man should humbly follow with unshod feet those holy relics and everyone should eagerly call to Christ," which likely reflects contemporary Rogation observances since this detail does not occur in Amalarius, Aper, or Avitus. The lexical and thematic continuity between Ælfric and Hatton 114 illustrate that ecclesiastical scribes trusted the older rhetoric of community formation; indeed, copying one origin story actually amplifies its traditionality.

[140] Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, identify three manuscripts in England prior to 1100 that contain excerpts from the *Historia Francorum*: Hereford, Cathedral Library O.VI.11 (Gneuss 264); Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale, 29 (Gneuss 782); Citta del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg.lat. 489, fols. 61-124 (Gneuss 915). There are no surviving complete copies of Gregory's work prior to 1100.

Conclusion

This chapter traced Rogation origin stories from fifth-century Vienne to twelfth-century England. I have demonstrated that historical accuracy was less important than the sense of trans-generational solidarity represented by these narratives. Additionally, I have shown that there was no consensus among Anglo-Saxons regarding the festival's origin because such information was not widely available in ecclesiastical centers until the early tenth-century. Despite early medieval confusion and uncertainty concerning Rogation history, the story of Mamertus, as told by Gregory of Tours, has become the authoritative account down to the present day. This narrative likely won out because it situated trauma experienced by English audiences in a long genealogy of Christian oppression. The story was rhetorically powerful because it provided an *exemplum* for communal ritual that connected people with their ancestors.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the Rogations were a solidarity-building ritual that called for the abandonment of economic divisions within the community and inspired them to collective action over three days. This chapter also shows that medievalists should be careful discussing "community" because every community is held together by different types of relationships, so some bonds are stronger than others, and some are constituted by textual rather than face-to-face encounters. Solidarity is a particular type of relationship that transcends identity differences and calls for action on behalf of others. In a sense, solidarity is built into early medieval Christian practice through the cult of saints, veneration of the dead, and homiletic rhetoric that represents the Christian community as oppressed, beset of all sides

by malevolent forces. However, this chapter has also argued that solidarity was not experienced by every Christian in the same way, so relying too much on textual material might obscure our sense of relationships between clergy and laity, rich and poor.

The next chapter investigates social divisions on the manorial estate around the Norman Conquest of 1066. This chapter shows the reality of estate hierarchies that were built around efficiency and power, not solidarity. Medieval estates were overseen by a class of administrators and accountants; among these, the reeve controlled daily operations like managing labor, collecting rents, and penalizing insubordinate workers. The next chapter explores an emergent textual genre that attempted to codify management techniques so that less experienced administrators could perform these duties.

Chapter 3: Codifying Tradition: Walter of Henley, *Gerefa,* and the Social Base of Estate Management

In *The Canterbury Tales,* Geoffrey Chaucer's portrayal of a fourteenth-century reeve illustrates various folkloric elements of this occupation. A "sclendre colerik man," Chaucer's reeve is as knowledgeable as he is shrewd:

> Wel koude he kepe a garner and a bynne;
> Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
> Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn
> The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
> His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
> His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye
> Was hoolly in this Reves governynge,
> And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,
> Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.
> Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
> Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
> That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;

They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.[1]

According to this passage, Chaucer's reeve well understands the practical knowledge necessary for maintaining an estate. He knows how to calculate the impact of weather on crop yields and is completely trusted with animal husbandry. Likewise, the reeve is so effective at discovering trickery and managing labor efficiently that his workers fear him like the plague. Chaucer's reeve is simultaneously feared and trusted, efficient and observant. However, beneath this intimate portrait of social life lies an occupational culture of tension and surveillance.

In his book *Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales*, Carl Lindahl offers an ethnographic reading of Chaucer's pilgrims, arguing that fourteenth-century social realities were inscribed into the text. In other words, we can read Chaucer's portraits as if his *Tales* were detailed ethnographic fieldnotes (well-written, poetic fieldnotes, of course!). For example, the reeve's appearance is clearly significant:

His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;
His top was docked lyk a preest beforn.
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Ylyk a staf; ther was no calf ysene.[2]

[1] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson, 587-605.
[2] Chaucer, *Tales*, 588-592.

And later:

> A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
> And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
> Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
> Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
> Tucked he was as is a frere aboute,
> And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.[3]

Dressed in a dark blue outer coat, the reeve is clean shaven, fashions his hair like a priest, and wears a belt rope in the manner of a friar. The reeve's clothing and hairstyle suggest that he wants to appear like a member of the clergy, which might reflect his social aspirations. Kristen Carella argues that Chaucer's reeve "embodies the stereotype of a ridiculous, would-be social climber" in both appearance and behavior.[4] Since reeves were relatively low status officials compared to the educated religious, such clerical pretenses could be read as deliberate efforts to elevate his own social status, which was seemingly constrained by his upbringing as a carpenter. Susan Gallick adds that the reeve's speech uses preaching metaphors and themes like old age and decay.[5] In *The*

[3] Chaucer, *Tales*, 617-622.
[4] Kristen Carella, "The Social Aspirations and Priestly Pretense of Chaucer's Reeve," *Neophilologus* 94 (2010): 523-529.
[5] Susan Gallick, "A Look at Chaucer and his Preachers," *Speculum* 50.3 (1975): 456-76, at 461-3.

Reeve's Prologue, the reeve takes on a sermonizing tone as he responds to the Miller's tale with a moralizing description of old age:

> Foure gleedes han we, which I shal devyse—
> Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;
> Thise foure sparkles longen unto eelde.
> Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,
> But wyl ne shal not faillen, that is sooth.
> And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
> As many a yeer as it is passed henne
> Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.[6]

The reeve compares old age to the hot embers of coal, breaking this state into four parts with the categorical eye of a preacher: avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise. He also uses metaphorical language to describe his yearning for youth (coltes tooth) and the course of life (syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne). In response to the reeve's speech, the Host interjects:

> Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,
> He gan to speke as lordly as a king.
> He seide, "What amounteth al this wit?

[6] Chaucer, "Reeve's Prologue," 3883-3890.

What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?

The devel made a reve for to preche,

Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche.[7]

The Host not only recognizes the reeve's preaching tone but also admonishes him for stepping outside his social place in the same way a cobbler could never be a shipman or a physician. Thus, the reeve's appearance and speech both suggest that he aspires to be part of a higher social class than the one he's occupied for most of his life.

Yet I believe that the reeve's social aspirations are a direct response to his occupational role as the overseer of a manorial estate. While it is tempting to interpret the reeve's speech and appearance as symbols of greater social status, we should remember that he is somewhat an outsider among the pilgrims since he is from the north, which carried pejorative connotations in the fourteenth-century. Besides the Miller, most of the other pilgrims would never have worked closely with a reeve or understood the occupational environment of an estate. Thus, what seems like social aspirations to his fellow pilgrims may actually reflect occupational folklore that the reeve had internalized over a lifetime working as a manager. In serving as an estate's overseer, the reeve would have learned various tricks of the trade, like how to spot laziness or deceit among the peasants. The fact that the reeve rides in the very back of the group suggests that he views his fellow pilgrims with as much suspicion as agricultural workers and wants to be in the best observational position. His spat with the Miller—the only other pilgrim who would

[7] Chaucer, *Tales*, 3899-3904.

have worked directly with reeves—reflected deeper occupational tensions between a manorial overseer and a laborer. Chaucer's portrait of the Miller implies that this character was the very kind of thieving worker that the reeve knew how to spot:

> He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
> And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
> Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
> And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.[8]

In responding to the Miller's drunken ramblings, the reeve's tale depicts the miller Symkyn as someone accustomed to stealing grain and meal.[9] This terse exchange between miller and reeve is not simply personal but occupational due to power imbalances on a manor. The reeve effectively calls out the Miller's deceit, which might have gone unnoticed by the other pilgrims, thereby demonstrating his awareness of behind-the-scenes trickery.

I contend that the reeve's clerical appearance and sermonizing speech grew out of his occupational role. As managers of manorial estates, reeves were placed in difficult social situations. They had to oversee the very people who voted them into office while appeasing the estate's lord, which created conflicting interests and explains why Chaucer's reeve has his own fair dwelling and rides behind the group. Not quite a liminal

[8] Chaucer, *Tales*, 560-563.
[9] Chaucer, *Tales,* 3939-3940: "A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele, / and that a sly, and usaunt for to stele."

figure, the reeve takes on tasks that require close observation, accounting, and penalizing the labor of agricultural workers; any reeve learning this role would have needed practical knowledge for managing his peers in such a way as to balance the lord's concerns with those of the peasants. Since Chaucer's reeve has secretly amassed more wealth than his lord, he had good reason to play by the books while avoiding intense scrutiny from auditors or other officials. In this occupational context, his dress and speech seem like reasonable responses to managerial work. The reeve's clerical appearance is less a matter of social aspirations than it was a reflection of his status as the secular overseer of the people in the same way that priests were their sacred shepherds. By dressing like a cleric, the reeve legitimizes his mediating role between the lord and the people. Furthermore, the reeve's efficiency is matched only by his surveillance of workers' tricks and deceit, which mirrors priests' penitential obligations to know the private sins of his parishioners. Even the language of *pastoral* care draws on agricultural metaphors: the priest is a *shepherd* to his *flock*. However, Chaucer's reeve also steals from his lord and has made the peasants fear him like death, which reveals that his outward appearance conceals underlying, unethical workplace realities.

As I will show, associations between priests and reeves—the sacred and secular overseers, respectively—began long before Chaucer. In drawing out this relationship, Chaucer unwittingly transmits a fragment of the reeve's occupational folklore. Since reeves managed agricultural workers, they had ample cause to dress like their sacred counterparts as a means to stand apart from other low status laborers. By the fourteenth-century, reeves had also earned a reputation for thievery and dishonesty, which implies

that clerical garb could subvert cultural expectations while granting the reeve some authority and trust. Through experience and observation, Chaucer's reeve would have learned how to balance cultural expectations with difficult occupational duties. Evidently, one tactic was to dress like a cleric and imitate the moralizing speech of a preacher. This strategy challenges negative expectations by situating the reeves' authority in the past. In other words, drawing on clerical authority reinforces the image of the archetypal stable, ordered, productive Christian community. By dressing like a cleric, Chaucer's reeve carries onward a symbolic, longstanding relationship between secular and sacred overseers.

In this chapter, I explore the social conditions that gave rise to the kind of managerial folklore seen in Chaucer's reeve. First, I examine two "didactic" agricultural treatises from the thirteenth century: Walter of Henley's *Husbandry* and the anonymous *Seneschaucy* as sources of occupational knowledge. These treatises were created to serve a growing class of professional estate administrators who needed information about estate structure and divisions of labor. Instead of learning through first-hand experience, professional administrators could turn to "didactic" literature for legal and organizational help. However, these treatises also showed potential administrators that effective management required constant surveillance of the workers and an ear to the social networks that existed on estates. As I will show, there existed a larger—and older—discourse about the morality of agricultural workers: immoral administrators could levy unjust fines whereas slothful ploughmen might hinder sowing. In both cases, the overall productivity of the estate could be harmed by self-interested actors. Thus, agricultural

treatises offered practical advice for uncovering and policing the moral character of workers so that overseers could determine whether or not tenants were as productive as possible. Since this knowledge would have only been available through face-to-face interaction—for instance, through observation, inquiry, or even gossip—any analysis of medieval reeves and the occupational culture underlying agricultural treatises should rely on folkloric theory to better understand uncodified social processes. To illustrate this point, I investigate Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* and Anglo-Saxon legal texts. These statutory texts show that ecclesiastical authorities of the tenth and eleventh centuries grappled with the moral dimensions of the work carried out by priests and reeves. Having laid out the social conditions in which agricultural work was performed, I finally turn to a short, unique text called *Gerefa*, which was copied into the legal encyclopedia Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 383. This text reveals the type of folkloric discourse that surrounded the Anglo-Saxon reeve. I argue that *Gerefa* represented an early attempt to codify folkloric knowledge that was later realized by Walter of Henley and other medieval agricultural writers. By collecting information that would have been passed on through unwritten methods, *Gerefa* and later didactic texts brought what was once folk knowledge into new, professional environments. Collectively, these texts represent early efforts to experiment with effective management practices and offer this knowledge to the aristocracy.

Walter of Henley and Traditions of Estate Management

To better understand the conditions in which Anglo-Saxon reeves worked, we must first examine the institution that was the English manorial estate. The estate was not simply a legal institution for managing agricultural production but also a place of learning and work. Whether they were beekeepers, woodsmen, ploughmen, or reeves, agricultural laborers had to learn the tools of their trade. Most workers would have learned through some combination of first-hand experience and training: younger, less seasoned laborers would have worked alongside experienced farmers. In this environment, practical knowledge could be handed on by word of mouth and internalized through repeated activity. However, estate administrators had to understand the duties of every worker while knowing how to maximize productivity. By the thirteenth -century, England witnessed a rise in literature dealing with estate administration. Supplementing court rolls, accounting treatises, and estate surveys, writers like Walter of Henley and Robert Grosseteste created didactic literature aimed at university-trained lawyers. This type of didactic literature reflected the professionalization of estate administrators. Dorothea Oschinsky points out that "treatises on estate management belonged to that group of legal texts which began to be written after Bracton by men who, ignorant of the Roman and Canon law traditions of scholarship, were themselves practicing lawyers and wished to transmit the details of their knowledge to their professional pupils."[10] One of

[10] Dorothea Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971): 3.

these professional positions was the reeve. Although we should be cautious using thirteenth-century agricultural tracts to better understand the culture of late Anglo-Saxon England, I contend that estate management relied on knowledge that was largely uncodified. Due to these circumstances, it is not ahistorical to bring thirteenth-century agricultural treatises into conversation with earlier texts; indeed, Walter of Henley's *Husbandry* and *Seneschaucy* might contain occupational wisdom—otherwise unavailable in written records—that was continuous with the type of knowledge that tenth and eleventh-century reeves handed on to each other. Because much of the knowledge about running estates was experiential, agricultural treatises were an experimental genre that attempted to standardize the "best practices" that were otherwise unavailable in written sources. Since estates were complex institutions with many specialized workers and annual obligations, they had to be run by knowledgeable, competent people. Agricultural treatises were therefore an early experiment in what would later become the study of scientific management.

Folk knowledge was not handed on in a static agricultural world. Cnut's conquest in 1016 and William's in 1066 reshaped agricultural practice and economic systems. In the immediate decades following the Battle of Hastings, many estates were reshaped by Norman management.[11] Since royal estates were well documented in the *Domesday Book*, Pauline Stafford notes that their structure was dynamic throughout the eleventh-century.[12] Royal estates sought to extract as much cash rents from the peasantry as

[11] J. Hamshere, "Domesday Book: Estate Structures in the West Midlands," *Domesday Studies*, ed. J.C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1987): 155-82.
[12] Pauline Stafford, "The Farm of One Night and the Organization of King Edward's Estates in Domesday," *Economic History Review* 2.33 (1980): 491-502.

possible while smaller estates desired peasant labor to work the fields.[13] Some royal estates were not even that old. The estates of the Godwine family can be traced back to 1017, which suggests that the "traditional" character of these estates should not be assumed.[14] Ecclesiastical estates were also not static. Land grants between the mid tenth-century and 1086 show that many of these estates were relatively new, some were even lost by the time the *Domesday Book* was recorded.[15] At the local level, many English reeves were maintained after 1066 even as estate structures changed. Although we should recognize that estate structures were not static, Stafford argues that certain attitudes towards estate management continued into the twelfth-century: "A desire to maximize profits whilst minimizing the risks of direct farming was widespread. By 1066 the trend was away from demesne farming (i.e. the landlord's direct involvement in agricultural production) and toward the leasing of estates for a fixed rent […] Short-term attention to profit and convenience was paramount."[16] Even as the mentality towards estate management responded to changing economic systems, I argue that the management techniques in *Gerefa* would be useful over many centuries because they were applicable to the type of face-to-face encounters that occupied overseers.

In their book, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming,* Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith argue that much agricultural skill and knowledge was somewhat continuous even as

[13] Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 205.
[14] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 206.
[15] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest,* 206.
[16] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 206-7.

the estate system changed over centuries.[17] Romano-British farmers used tools and techniques that were probably similar to eleventh-century methods because technological change was not substantial enough to alter these practices; in fact, natural materials available to farmers "imposed some longstanding continuities."[18] Even after the invention of the fixed mouldboard, many farmers continued to use the ard plough instead. There is also evidence that the same fields were cultivated generation after generation, which left visible boundaries on the landscape itself.[19] Depending on the region, not all practices were continuous. Some farms moved due to erosion or centuries of ploughing that rendered fields infertile.[20] Other farms experimented with open-field farming, a system in which large common fields were divided into small strips for use by individual families.[21] Still, the fact remains that agricultural practices like haymaking required cooperation between multiple families, who would have likely shared resources and techniques to help one another as part of a larger "moral economy."[22]

The social climate of the tenth and eleventh-centuries reveals more about the reeve's place on the estate. In the tenth-century, the great estates of the king were broken

[17] Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[18] Banham and Faith, *Farming*, 270: "They [Romano-British farmers] were also probably farming in a way not radically different from their eleventh-century successors. Later medieval Breckland farmers and their lords practiced an intensified form of close folding, where the sheep were gathered together and folded on part of the fallow each night. In face, manure became such a precious commodity that lords claimed rights over the output of their tenants' sheep. Local people then believed that the system had existed 'from time immemorial' and they were right, for in some form or other it probably had."
[19] Banham and Faith, *Farming*, 271-2.
[20] Banham and Faith, *Farming*, 288-9.
[21] Banham and Faith, *Farming*, 284.
[22] Banham and Faith, *Farming*, 296.

apart into smaller landholdings.[23] As a result, the reeve's role became more important because these smaller estates needed to maximize resource production and organize workers more efficiently.[24] To support themselves on these smaller estates, lords "needed to adopt appropriate management policies," which led to increased interest in management tracts among the aristocracy.[25] As I show later, *Gerefa* was an experimental text that was created during a time of increased worker exploitation to service needs of wealthy landowners who sought better control and surveillance of their servants.[26]

By the thirteenth century, the manorial estate was the centerpiece of agricultural production in England.[27] The estate was an institution organized around legal contracts, topographical features, and a hierarchy of workers.[28] Although the characteristics of individual manors varied, there were general administrative and topographical features shared among most estates. Topographically, a manor was composed of various buildings such as the barn, granary, the lord's residence, mills, a church, a manorial court, a stable, and other lodging. The land was also organized: some land was given to peasant tenants who paid rent and provided labor services. Other land was reserved for the lord: the

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[23] Chelsea Shields-Mas, "The Reeve in Late Anglo-Saxon England," (unpublished PhD diss., University of York, 2013), 160-3.
[24] Shields-Mas, "Reeve," 164.
[25] Rosamond Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 168-70.
[26] Shields-Mas, "Reeve," 174-5.
[27] Christopher Daniell, *From Norman Conquest to Magna Carta: England 1066-1215* (New York: Routledge, 2003); George Caspar Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941).
[28] For general overviews of the English manorial system, see the following: Mark Bailey, trans., *The English Manor: c. 1200-c.1500* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002); P.D.A. Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire circa 1200-1359*, Oxfordshire Record Society 50 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976); N.E. Stacey, ed., *Charters and Custumals of Shaftesbury Abbey 1089-1216*, Records of Social and Economic History, new ser. 39 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Charles McLean Andrews, *The Old English Manor: A Study in English Economic History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1892).

demesne land included pasture and arable land that could be rented out or kept by the landowner for personal use. The manor was also held together by a system of legal rights and obligations. As Mark Bailey notes, "a lord enjoyed a 'package' of customary and legal rights over the manorial land and resources. Hence the manorial peasantry was bound to the manor and its lord by a range of personal ties and obligations, and not merely by the basic rent rendered for its land."[29] Woods, waterways, minerals, and other natural resources were also under the legal jurisdiction of the manor. Specialized laborers could extract these resources either for common use or for services owed to the manorial household. Of course, the estate was also a place of work: raw materials were collected, fields were ploughed, crops were harvested, and animals were reared and slaughtered. To accomplish all necessary tasks, manors relied on both free and unfree workers. Free workers held more legal rights than unfree workers; the former paid dues and provided services whereas the latter were bound to the land and had less control over their assigned duties. These workers—free and unfree—were also organized according to a strict hierarchy. At the top of the manorial hierarchy stood the landowner: a wealthy individual granted land rights by a charter from the king. A landowner possessed one or more estates; each estate was typically run by a team of administrators. Since the landowner could not manage every estate, a steward would be charged with overseeing individual estates, checking each one two or three times a year while recording rents, productivity, and land use. A single estate was managed by a bailiff, who supervised all labor throughout the year. The reeve worked directly under the bailiff, sometimes taking on

[29] Bailey, *Manor*, 3.

similar duties like managing accounts and organizing work. Reeves were usually elected by the tenants who worked the land, so their position would be renewed annually if they were loyal and effective. The landowner also employed auditors, who would keep account of all transactions, goods, and raw materials for every estate, essentially "checking" the work of bailiffs, reeves, and stewards for accuracy. Below these administrators were various specialized workers who were charged with daily tasks such as animal husbandry, farming, cheese making, running the mill, and repairing equipment. These workers were given titles appropriate to their job: swineherd, hayward, shepherd, and plough-keeper, for instance. Depending on the manor, some workers faced more onerous conditions than others; likewise, rent was dictated by custom, which varied from one manor to the next. With this manorial structure in mind, we can turn to Walter of Henley's agricultural treatises, which were meant to advise and teach prospective estate administrators how to properly run a manor.

Henley's didactic literature—*Walter*, the *Rules*, and the *Husbandry*—became important, widely copied agricultural manuals during the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries. In fact, fifty manuscripts produced between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries contain at least one of these treatises; however, by 1400, few new copies of these texts were produced.[30]

[30] Oschinsky, *Treatises*, 56-60. Oschinsky notes that only three monasteries are known to have copied *Walter* and the *Husbandry*; other treatises do not appear to have been copied on monastic estates. Oschinsky offers several reasons for this development: "The Benedictine estates had reached the peak of their development before the treatises appeared; they had developed their own administrative systems and they could draw on their own staff of monks, trained in an already established tradition, when the texts began to circulate. They had developed their own forms of account and accounting and thus had no need for specimen forms." Furthermore, monastic estates had different administrative systems since lords were

Henley's treatises frequently deal with the status and responsibilities of estate administrators. Even though a lot of this information likely reflected technical knowledge of late thirteenth to early fourteenth-century agricultural practice, Henley also advises lords and administrators on proper social techniques. In *Husbandry,* Henley offered practical advice for lords selecting and managing servants:

> If youe bee to choose a bayly or servaunt choose him not by parentage nor comlynesse nor otherwise unlesse he bee of good reaporte and be loyalle and well advised and can skylle of husbandrye and of stoare <cattaile>. And take no reeves nor mowers <overseers of husbandrie> but of youre owne homage—or tenantes—if you have any suche and that by the election of your homagers <tenantes> for if they doe amysse you shall recover it of theim. At the beginning of fallowing, styrring and sowing lette the bayly, mower <overseer> or reeve bee the whole day with the ploughe to see that they doe theire woorke [truly and well. And at the end of the day see how much they have done and for so much they shall answer for each subsequent day unless they can show some good reason preventing them]. And bycause that servauntes customarily doe loyter in theire woorke it is necessarie to lye in a wayte against theire frawde. Besides this it is nedefull that the mower oversee theim <overseer of husbandry looke to theim> everie daye.

usually present on lay estates; indeed, only large, well-staffed estates would have been able to put these agricultural treatises into practice.

> And on the other side the bayly ought to oversee theim all that they doe welle and if they doe not well that they bee reproved and corrected.[31]

Here, Walter suggests that lords should select overseers based not on kinship or friendliness but on their knowledge of cattle and husbandry. Additionally, these overseers should ideally come from the lord's own loyal servants and be elected by the tenants of the estate. These provisions illustrate one of the central tensions that any manager has faced: overseers have to control their subordinates without becoming too friendly and undermining their own power. According to Walter, servants also need to be watched closely because they neglect their work. The reeve should also communicate with workers to determine if they are maximizing their daily output or slacking off for some legitimate reason. By including this advice, Walter reminds his audience that manorial agriculture depends on well-managed social networks. Put simply, the lord plays a political game with administrative appointments. In fact, Walter concludes this treatise by warning prospective lords that servants do not always share the eye of the master. He even provides a short list of four guiding principles that servants should follow; this list may well be proverbial, which suggests that unequal relations between servants and masters was part of the social fabric of estates:

> Suche as have other mens things in theire custodie ought by good reason to knowe <learne> theise fowre things: to love theire maister and to feare him; and in

[31] Oschinsky, *Treatises, Walter,* c33-35.

> making of profite they ought to thynke that the thing is theire owne but in making expence they should thynke it an other mans. But fewe servauntes or reeves bee theare which have alle theise iiii things together. Yea, many theare bee which have loste the first three and doe reteyne and fourthe but yet have turned it out of his right course. And knowing that the thing is an other mans and not theire owne they take <catche> it with the right hand and the lefte as they may best extort it and theire unfaithfulnes not be perceived. Looke upon your things often and cause theim to be looked upon and then suche as serve you will so muche the rather eschewe to doe evell and wille endevoure to doe the better.[32]

As these examples show, Walter understood that an estate's productivity depended on social networks that were inherently difficult to manage. According to Walter, one reason these networks were partially troublesome was because workers and even low-level administrators like reeves did not necessarily share the lord's priorities. Walter even suggests that few reeves understood all of the lord's moral code, practicing only the parts that are beneficial to them personally. Thus, reeves could profit from their master's possessions through theft or deceit since their position gave them access to accounting information and valuable items. A disloyal reeve could readily steal from his lord and blame another, less powerful servant.[33]

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[32] *Walter,* c.111-c.113.

[33] *Walter,* c.110: "And if any arrerages happen upon the final accompt let it be quickelye levyed. And if thaccomptant name any parson which oweth that arrerage then take youe the name of that man, for often tymes it chunceth that the servauntes and reeves be the debtors themselves and yet do make other men the debtors which neyther can nor ought to paye it. And this they doe to cover theire unfaythfulnesse withal."

In addition to moral differences, Walter also notes that practical agricultural knowledge was not centralized on estates. Equally significant, technical knowledge was typically held by the people responsible for performing specialized tasks like ploughing or field maintenance. In an environment where experiential knowledge was dispersed, administrators would have to contend with people who understood agricultural tasks better than themselves. Didactic literature was thus one method through which experiential knowledge could be compiled and standardized.[34] Writing about the proper use of dung, for example, Walter offers careful instructions concerning the production of manure and its application. According to Walter, dung must be mingled with earth and stored on sandy ground because this mixture lasts twice as many years as dung alone while avoiding the tendency to get pushed into the ground from ploughing and be wasted.[35] To apply this mixture, Walter provides information about the most effective method: "If you lay your doung upon the fallowe it wilbe alle tourned in under the ground at the styrring and at the sowing turned up againe and mingled with the earthe; but if it bee layed upon the land at the styrring then at the sowing tyme it wilbe for the most parte turned downe unmingled with the earthe and that is not good."[36] As we can see, Walter provides information that would have been acquired through observational

[34] Didactic literature could also be used by landowners to pass along management manuals to their descendants.
[35] *Walter*, c.67: "Youre doung which is myngled with earthe lay it upon gravelly ground, if you have any. And I will tell you why. The tyme of summer is whoate and the gravell is whoate also [and the dung is hot] and when theise three heates doe meete together by theire great heate they vexe and burne, after midsomer, the barlie that growth in gravell; as yowe may see as you goe along by the fieldes in many places. In the evening the earth which is myngled with the doung cooleth the gravel and nourisheth a certeine deawe and thearby the corne is muche saved."
[36] *Walter*, c.73.

experience and oral teachings. Younger, less experienced farmers would have learned these dung-handling strategies by working alongside seasoned workers. It is entirely feasible that landowners did not understand the technical aspects of running their estates. Put simply, knowledge learned through "on the ground" experience rarely reached lords or professional administrators, so Walter's didactic manuals also laid bare the knowledge that was predominantly held among people who worked the fields.

In addition to codifying knowledge and morality, Walter also presents the estate as an ordered, organized community. In fact, productive estates demand structure: "Yowe see a sorte of men which have landes and tenementes and yet they be not able to lyve and whye? I wille telle youe, bycause that they lyve without setting downe any order at alle, and without making any provision before hande and doe dispend and waste more then theire landes be woorthe yearely."[37] The disordered estate wastes its own value, so lords should survey their own land and learn effective diplomacy with their servants and neighbors.[38] However, Walter also recognized that administrators and workers were not always loyal servants. To this end, Walter even recommends that landowners verify the accounts of their reeves: "if your reeves say upon theire accompt: so many quarters sowed upon so many acres, then goe to your said extent, and you may chaunce to fynd fewer acres then they telle you of, and more quarters sowed then neede was."[39] Although

[37] *Walter*, c.6.
[38] *Walter*, c.11: "Withe good men and wise acquainte youe, the love of your neighbours have youe, for it is sayed in French: He that hath a good neighborowe he hathe also a good morowe. Keepe youre mouthe discreetlye so that by reason you bee not reprehended."
[39] Walter, c.22.

the estate should be an organized community, Walter's provisions imply that tenants could be deceptive or fraudulent in practice.

In *Seneschaucy* we find additional detailed commentary on the estate's administrators, including the reeve. This treatise was closely related to Walter's *Husbandry*. Not only did both texts have wide circulation among secular estates, but they were also found together in the many of the same manuscripts. According to Oschinsky, Walter's *Husbandry* was "designed as a commentary to certain chapters in the *Seneschaucy.*"[40] Oschinsky continues: "As a result of the difference in purpose and plan *Walter* [*Husbandry*] lacks the detailed descriptions of the duties and qualifications of the officers found in the *Seneschaucy,* while the latter has none of the practical advice on farming which became the reason for the wide circulation of *Walter* [*Husbandry*]."[41]

Seneschaucy is entirely devoted to laying out the responsibilities of an estate's administrators. Following the order found in manuscripts, the treatise describes the following positions: steward, bailiff, reeve, hayward, carter, plough-keepers, cowherd, swineherd, shepherd, dairymaid, auditors, and lord. In describing the duties of reeves, the treatise illustrates additional social relationships that overseers had to navigate. For example, *Seneschaucy* recommends that the reeve should be elected by the whole township; this person should be "the best husbandman and farmer[…]the most suitable person for looking after the lord's interests."[42] As I've already noted, such advice was politically useful since it provided workers with the semblance of democratic control. By

[40] Oschinsky, *Treatises, Walter,* 76.
[41] Oschinsky, *Treatises,* 77.
[42] *Seneschaucy,* c.35.

electing their reeve, workers might have greater respect for the individual who would manage their labor and penalize them if necessary. The workers might feel more incentivized in electing a reeve who would give them the benefit of the doubt when assessing their productivity.

However, in suggesting that this reeve should also be the most experienced husbandman and farmer, *Seneschaucy* reveals what must have been an important aspect of a reeve's social capital: practical knowledge. More precisely, the skills of experienced, knowledgeable workers would have been recognized by their community so they could be "presented" as the most suitable candidate.[43] Yet why were husbandry and farming necessary skills for potential reeves? A good husbandman and farmer would have understood how to care for livestock and how to manage the estate's farmland. In fact, a good husbandman would have knowledge of the local landscape most suitable for pasture while also understanding the breeding and eating habits of sheep, cattle, and pigs. Even though early medieval people lived in close proximity to livestock, caring for animals was no simple task. Animals had to be fed, taken to pasture, and bred. On larger estates, heavy mouldboard ploughs were pulled by as many as eight oxen; these oxen had to be fed enough food to maximize their energy. Likewise, injured or diseased oxen had to be replaced so that arable farming was not threatened.[44] Depending on the locality, pastures

[43] *Seneschaucy*, c.35: "The reeve ought to be elected and presented by the common assent of the whole township as the best husbandman and farmer and as the most suitable person for looking after the lord's interests."

[44] Peter Fowler, *Farming in the First Millenium AD: British Agriculture Between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 222, suggests that large estates probably kept more than eight oxen so that plough teams could be rotated. For example, the estates in West Overton and East Overton had eleven ploughs in 1086, which would mean that the manors could have had nearly eight-eight or more oxen, assuming every plough had its own team of eight animals. Of course, the

might be some distance from the arable land and shared by various communities. Thus, a good husbandman might need to organize grazing across several communities, which likely required some knowledge of local, uncodified customs in addition to legal grazing rights. Even land management was a systemic process: an increase in arable land one year might lead to a decrease in pasture the next. On the local scale, animal grazing had to be organized so that pasture was not depleted during the Summer. The process called "transhumance" involved "taking animals—a herd of cattle, or more often a flock of sheep—to graze during the summer on distant pastures away from the 'home' fields."[45] These "away" fields might be unproductive land on the margins of the estate or a more distant field that required farmers to move with the animals and live in a temporary home. Transhumance allowed farmers to exploit land that was otherwise unused in arable farming while preserving local pasture "which would have fed the stock in the spring and from which a hay crop was essential in June/July."[46] Given the knowledge needed to care for animals and manage pasture, an experienced husbandman and farmer would have already understood the economic and social foundations of the estate. This individual would also have known how to read the local landscape—already dotted with legal boundaries, settlements, and fields—as a map of traditional organizational practices. Experiential knowledge was thus a means for currying favor with the lord while standing apart from other less capable workers. In fact, *Seneschaucy* advised lords to surround themselves with "men of experience, honest men of mature age, who have seen much and

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estates might have rotated or shared oxen, but these animals still required care during the parts of the year where their labor was not needed.

[45] Fowler, *Farming*, 228.

[46] Fowler, *Farming*, 228-9.

have wide knowledge."[47] A knowledgeable, experienced farmer could leverage these skills for greater access to the lord, which would allow certain individuals to ascend the manorial hierarchy. However, we should not assume that higher administrative positions were always socially beneficial; indeed, managerial work permitted reeves to use legal power in service of the lord. A reeve who punished people severely or forced them to labor under unworkable expectations might have a difficult time being accepted back into the peasant community after their year-long tenure expired. Likewise, the life of a reeve could be isolating since reeves tended to live apart from the surrounding community, often taking up their own residence away from both the manorial household and the village itself to create spatial separation from the peasantry.

Although reeves should be good husbandmen and farmers, other tasks demanded specialized knowledge that most reeves did not possess. As a result, reeves had to "check" the productivity of workers in ways that could be threatening or intrusive. The case of the dairymaid illustrates the kind of invasive relationship that existed between reeves and specialized workers. *Seneschaucy* assumes that reeves were unfamiliar with the technical aspects of dairy production. By contrast, the dairymaid should know how to make cheese, preserve the vessels used in production, and understand the correct day "on which to begin making cheese and of what weight, when to begin making two cheeses and the days when number and weight ought to be changed."[48] Since dairy work required

[47] *Seneschaucy,* c.78: "He ought to take advice from men of experience, honest men of mature age, who have seen much and have wide knowledge, who have been and are men of honour and distinction, who have never been accused or convicted for deceit or wrong-doing, and who will not for love or hate, fear, threats, profit or loss divert from the truth to advise their lord knowingly to his disadvantage or to taking the worse course."
[48] *Seneschaucy,* c.67.

specialized knowledge, *Seneschaucy* provided overseers with a brief checklist by which to evaluate a dairymaid's work: "Bailiff and reeve ought to inspect frequently the dairy and the cheese when they increase and decrease in number, what their weight is, and that no loss or theft occurs in the dairy whereby the weight must suffer. They ought to know, find out, and watch how many cows give a stone of cheese and butter and how many ewes yield a stone of the same, so that they can confidently answer in their account."[49] This advice did not ask that reeves understand the production process; instead, they should be careful observers of dairy work. The reeve should check the amount of cheese to protect against theft while also making note of the most productive cattle. Although this advice seems like an innocuous "check" on the workers, its language of surveillance suggests that reeves were invasive observers in certain spaces on the estate. The overseers—both bailiff and reeve—were to "frequently inspect" the work of the dairymaid by checking the quantity and weight of cheese products. This type of inspection meant that the reeve had to enter the dairymaid's place of work and observe her day to day production. Even the text's language suggests that reeves had prying eyes since they should "know, find out, and watch" the dairy output of cattle and sheep. One of the only feasible ways a reeve could learn this information would be to carefully follow the dairymaid in her routine work, thus placing her movement under the surveillance of her male overseers.[50] Of course, such intrusive observation seems

[49] *Seneschaucy,* c.68.

[50] The text provides no clear advice for the reeve on this account. Of course, overseers might have already been familiar with the estate's dairy animals or simply asked the workers to "find out" which livestock were most productive. Still, the text's nuanced language suggests that the reeve had several options available to ascertain the necessary information.

practical given the perspective of *Seneschaucy* because reeves had to keep track of the estate's production and value, which required them to look for waste or inefficiency. However, this advice reveals a deeper anxiety about women who possess specialized knowledge that could impact an estate's productivity. Although the reeve's intrusiveness seems like a practical "check" on the work of dairymaids, it had the added effect of bringing her character—even morality—into continued surveillance. *Seneschaucy* recommends that dairymaids should be "loyal, of good repute, and clean."[51] But how could reeves assess these qualities without having some connection to the social networks to which she belonged? More precisely, recommending that dairymaids be "of good repute and clean" implies that overseers listened to gossip, rumors, or merely asked other workers what they thought of the dairymaid in a fashion similar to modern day references, a common feature on job applications. Even the anxiety surrounding "unclean" dairymaids suggests that reeves could pry into the sexual activity of workers. Of course, cleanliness was important because unclean dairymaids might introduce harmful microorganisms into butter, milk, and cheese, ruining the product. But even in this situation, the reeve was still observing the maid and watching her cleaning habits.

The case of the dairymaid demonstrates that writers of agricultural treatises saw the "character" of workers as a practical concern, not simply a theoretical question. The other entries in *Seneschaucy* show similar concerns about the character and social connections of workers. For example, the steward "ought to be knowledgeable and loyal"

[51] *Seneschaucy,* c.66.

and capable of giving "confidence to the bailiffs who are under him."[52] The bailiff should be independent and knowledgeable for he is "worth little in his office who knows little and depends on other men's knowledge."[53] The hayward should be "active and sharp" while the plough-keepers "ought to be men of understanding who know how to sow, how to mend and repair broken ploughs and harrows, and how to cultivate and crop the land well."[54] Auditors "ought to be loyal and prudent" since they directly handle the estate's account.[55] Finally, lords "ought to be fair and true in word and deed, he ought to love God and honesty, and he ought to hate sin, wrong, and wickedness."[56] Although the dairymaid is the only worker whose "cleanliness" was called into question, *Seneschaucy* illustrates that intellectual, moral qualities were practical issues; thus, lords, stewards, bailiffs, and reeves had to be able to discern loyalty from disloyalty, prudence from carelessness, and knowledge from ignorance.

As I've shown, both *Seneschaucy* and Henley's *Husbandry* were "practical" agricultural manuals. However, these treatises reveal that both social networks and the moral code of workers were as "practical" considerations as farming knowledge, such as

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[52] *Seneschaucy,* c.1. The instructions for the steward also state that he should visit every manor to learn about its productivity. He should do this by simultaneously observing local practices and asking the local officers about the conduct of their fellow workers: "In the same way he ought to inquire into the offices of the reeve, hayward, stockkeeper, and all the other servants and how each of them conducts himself," c.14.
[53] *Seneschaucy,* c.17. Under the entry for auditors, c.73, the text sheds more light on the hierarchy between reeves and bailiffs: "It would not be right if the reeve, who is his lord's chattel and naturally knows much less than the bailiff, were punished or made to answer for the doings of the bailiff; after all, the bailiff is in the pay of the lord, it is he who receives the orders, he has a superior position, has access to the lord, and is the reeve's chief and superior, and he ought by his good sense and improvements to guide and supervise the manor, the reeve, and all belonging to the manor."
[54] *Seneschaucy,* c.47 and c..53.
[55] *Seneschaucy,* c.70.
[56] *Seneschaucy,* c.77.

proper sowing techniques for different soils.[57] At one point, Henley's instructions suggest that a shepherd's vices can negatively impact animal husbandry: "Looke that your sheapherd be not to testye <angrie> for thorow anger some of the shepe may be harassed wherof they may die. Looke wheather your sheepe goe feading with the shepheard going amongst theim, for if the sheepe goe shunning <avoiding> him it is no signe that he is gentle unto theim."[58] This advice captures the type of surveillance that reeves were expected to perform: they should watch workers closely, paying attention to seemingly innocuous things like sheep avoiding their shepherd.

However, conflating the moral with the agricultural was not an endpoint itself but part of a larger pattern that came with the increasing professionalization of an overseer class. These agricultural treatises did not necessarily provide new information or innovative techniques; instead, they codified knowledge that was previously dispersed among various groups inhabiting the estate. In doing so, these treatises utilized a textual method for transmitting knowledge rather than more "traditional" practices such as observation, orality, and experiential learning. Of course, traditional methods were not suddenly interrupted by the creation of didactic texts. Rather, *Husbandry*, *Seneschaucy*, and other agricultural treatises represent the codification of traditional knowledge. The proliferation of didactic estate literature during the thirteenth-century attests to the growing demand for guidebooks among professional lawyers, stewards, and

[57] *Husbandry*, c.49: "Two sortes of groundes which are for lenton corne see that thow sowe theim tymelye; that is the chalkye <white claye> and the Chilterne <stony> lande; and I will telle you whye. If the season be drye in the tyme of Marche then it hardeneth the chalky <white claye> land verie muche and the stony land dryeth faste, but yet so that it openeth for drynesse; for which cause it is needful that those groundes be tymely sowen so that the corne may be nourished in the wynter seasone."
[58] *Walter*, c.96.

accountants.[59] As Oschinsky notes, bailiffs and stewards likely received a well-rounded legal education in the university; however, many estates would have lacked professional administrators and turned to Common Lawyers if legal disputes arose or if specialized knowledge was lacking.[60] Although Common Lawyers were not trained in technical agricultural practices, didactic treatises were archives of practical information—some of which would have been helpful on understaffed estates.[61] In this cultural environment, agricultural treatises became a commodity that could provide otherwise unavailable information to a class of professional lawyers and administrators. Both *Seneschaucy* and Henley's *Husbandry* represented a legal tradition that codified practical knowledge for consumption, transmission, and training among literate professionals. In other words, these treatises "extracted" information from the working populace, effectively creating a different context through which knowledge about agricultural practices could be codified and transmitted.

These treatises essentially supplemented non-textual methods of transmission and learning; while ploughmen would still learn their trade by working with more experienced laborers, reeves and bailiffs could now "check" this work by relying on authoritative texts. As a result, estate officers had documents offering "standardized"

[59] Oschinsky, *Treatises*, 61. Between the mid thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, fifteen copies of *Seneschaucy* were produced, thirty-five of *Walter*, fourteen and *Rules*, and twelve of *Husbandry*. These texts were often copied into larger legal compilations or estate books that recorded surveys or accounts of a single manor.
[60] Oschinsky, *Treatises*, 63.
[61] Oschinsky, *Treatises*, 63: "Even elementary information in the treatises such as when and how to plough, weed, and sow may have been of value to them, although it is doubtful whether these Common Lawyers or even the lords and their estate officers can have understood, let alone applied, all the technicalities, especially in *Walter*, of assessment of cost, accounting, and checking. These may have been intended to be learnt under the guidance of teachers in the same way as, it has been suggested, was the case with legal texts."

visions of estate hierarchies, best practices, and legal advice. These recommendations were probably not followed to the letter on every estate, a fact that is supported by variations in the manuscript copies of these texts; nonetheless, didactic treatises represented an idealized occupational culture in which the manorial hierarchy functions properly and everyone works with maximum efficiency. This occupational culture was—on the whole—literate, professional, legal, male-centered, and textual. However, claiming that these treatises moved folk knowledge into new contexts would be oversimplifying both the oral/literate relationship and the extent of the knowledge contained within didactic literature. A professional administrator could not learn to plough by reading *Seneschaucy* but he could determine whether the ploughmen were doing their job reasonably well. Instead, we should see *Walter* and *Seneschaucy* as management textbooks that promoted—even professionalized—a culture of observation and surveillance. Of course, this culture did not suddenly arise in the thirteenth-century. Discourse about the moral character of overseers and ideal social arrangements was already taking place hundreds of years prior to Henley's writing. In the next section, I turn to early medieval material concerning the moral character of the reeve and his place within society.

The Biblical Reeve and Moral Exegesis

In *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, an Old English translation of the fourth century *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem,* an imaginary Alexander describes the political tactics used in his Eastern conquests. Alexander writes that he placed reeves throughout eastern lands to manage conquered territory: "In the month of May, we overcame and conquered the Persian king Darius there at the river Ganges and slew all those in power in his region. And there we set and appointed our reeves for those eastern people and we were made rich with many royal favors."[62] In setting reeves throughout the land, Alexander draws from the colonial playbook in which conquered territory is overseen by administrators from the invading nation. Since these administrators were theoretically loyal to the colonizers, local populations could be more readily managed by implementing familiar political hierarchies. From Alexander's perspective, appointing his own troops to oversee colonized land was strategically necessary. However, in translating *praepositos* as *gerefan,* the Anglo-Saxon writer has participated in a type of ideological colonization. The Latin title *praepositus* has been supplanted by the English *gerefa* in an act of cultural translation that transposes Anglo-Saxon political arrangements onto the wider world. Such acts were similar to cultural translations found in poems like *The Dream of the Rood* in which Biblical stories are rewritten in heroic, Germanic contexts as a way to make these narratives more accessible. Throughout the Old English corpus, the

[62] R.D. Fulk, ed. trans., *The Letter of Alexander the Great to Aristotle,* in *The Beowulf Manuscript: Complete Texts and The Fight at Finnsburg* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Lines 20-22: "On Maius þæm monþe Persea se kyning Darium æt Gande þære ea we hine oforcwomon ond oferswyðdon ond us þær in onweald geslogon eal his lond-rice. Ond we þær settan ond geendebyrdedon ure gerefan þæm east- þeodum, ond monegum cynelicum weorð-myndum we wæron gewelgode." Fulk translates *gerefan* as "viceroys," which is an appropriate term for the colonial encounter described in this passage. However, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, "viceroy" was not attested in English sources until the sixteenth century.

reeve is part of a similar pattern: non-English administrative roles are translated from Latin terminology with Anglo-Saxon *gerefa*. Just as Alexander wanted to replace local rulers with his own men, Anglo-Saxon writers transposed their own social realities onto the imaginative worlds of the East. Finding "reeves" in biblical translations, saints' lives, and homiletic texts illustrates the extent to which different cultural environments were seen through a distinctly English lens. However, in many of these texts, *gerefa* refers to unjust, immoral actors like Pontius Pilate or Olibrius, the Roman Prefect in *The Old English Life of St. Margaret* who prosecutes the saint. On one level, these representations portray reeves as traditional, even universal figures, who populate the known world across geographic, temporal boundaries. On closer inspection, portrayals of morally corrupt, deceitful reeves must have spoken to the lived experiences of people who actually worked with them. Put simply, reeves were traditional figures for Anglo-Saxon writers. As traditional figures, however, their ambiguous representations reveal a larger discourse about the moral responsibilities of the powerful.

Ecclesiastical writers frequently inserted reeves into historic, sacred texts. In the Old English *Heptateuch,* translations of both *Genesis* and *Exodus* refer to administrative figures as *gerefa* and *weorcgerefan*. The Old English is even more standardized than the Latin Vulgate, which uses several terms: *praefecti, praefectus operum, dispensatore, praepositos, and seruum.*[63] In *Genesis,* Abraham "then called his oldest reeve to him, who governed all his property, and said 'now set your hand under my thigh.'" Later in Chapter 41, Pharaoh tells Joseph: "'I appoint you as reeve over all the land of Egypt.'

[63] This information is taken directly from the helpful table compiled by Shields-Mas, "Reeve," 282.

And he took his ring on his own hand and put it on his hand, and he dressed himself with a linen robe and put a chain of gold about his neck. And he set him on his other chariot and the herald proclaimed that all the people should bend their knees before him and know that he was made reeve over all the land of Egypt."[64] Interestingly, the Vulgate text does not mention the name of the position that Pharaoh gives to Joseph; instead, the Old English translator has inserted *gerefa* into the narrative to clarify this detail. In verse 43, the Latin *praepositum* has been faithfully rendered as *gerefa*, which further suggests that reeves could trace their ancestry through sacred texts. Of course, the semantic range of Old English *gerefa* encompassed not just manorial overseers but also judges, shire administrators, stewards, and counts. It is entirely possible that Anglo-Saxons understood the semantic nuances of *gerefa*; nonetheless, the fact remains that reeves were important administrative figures who would have impacted the lives of agricultural workers, lords, and even inhabitants of ecclesiastical estates. Given the occupational difficulties that actual reeves would have faced—keeping honest accounts, managing workers, and enacting legal customs—translating various Latin terms with *gerefa* spoke directly to the conditions of people working around reeves. More specifically, the appearance of reeves in ecclesiastical literature illustrates a larger discourse about the moral character of estate administrators.

The Roman Prefect Olibrius in *The Old English Life of Saint Margaret* demonstrates how the seemingly innocuous title *gerefa* could speak to immoral

[64] *Genesis*, 41-43. "Ic sette þe ofer eal Egypta land to gerefan ond eal folc hyrþ ðe. Ond he nam hys hring on hys agenra handa ond dide on his hand, ond scrydde hine mid linenum reafe ond dide gyldene healsmyne ymbe hys swuran. Ond sette hyne on hys oþer cræt ond se bydel bead ðæt eal folc bygdon heora cneowa beforan him ond wiston ðæt he wære gerefa ofer eal Egypta land."

occupational conditions. Throughout both vernacular versions of her *vita,* Olibrius is consistently identified as a *gerefa,* which translates the Latin *prefectus*. The title "Prefect" encompassed various administrative roles in the Roman regions of Late Antiquity; furthermore, post-Conquest Latin custumals typically identified reeves as the *prefecti* of a locality. It is quite possible that the translator had no idea that a Roman Prefect was a different type of administrator. In fact, the translator likely thought that *prefectus* in the Latin *vita* referred to some kind of Roman reeve. In one instance, Olibrius is even called a *heahgerefa* ("high reeve"), a title that suggests the translator thought Olibrius was more powerful than a simple estate reeve. Despite this one exception, Olibrius is called *gerefa* in every other instance throughout both vernacular versions of the text, so the translator found that this term sufficiently described his occupation.

Throughout the rest of the Old English corpus, other representations of reeves offered equally fascinating social critiques. Throughout *The Old English Martyrology*, prosecutors of Christian marytrs are typically identified as reeves.[65] This trend also appeared in other texts. For example, in Ælfric's *Passio Sancti Launrentii* from the first series of his *Catholic Homilies,* a reeve (called a *tungerefa, heahgerefa, gerefa*) prosecutes the saint. Similarly, his *vitae* of Saint Cecilia and Valerian as well as Saint Chrysanthus and Saint Daria depict cruel *heahgerefan* who wants to kill and torture Christians. Anonymous vernacular homilies also follow this pattern: *Vercelli Homily* I identifies Pontius Pilate as a reeve whereas *Blickling Homily V* states that reeves are

[65] Christine Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary* (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2013).

evildoers. Even the reeve in *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre* finds himself involved in a minor murder conspiracy. Granted, reeves were not always represented as prosecutors, murderers, or general malefactors. Charters and law codes remind us that reeves were one of the most visible parts of larger administrative hierarchies. However, their position in this hierarchy—agents of lords, overseers of workers—placed additional burdens on their social standing. Texts like *The Old English Life of Saint Margaret* and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* created imaginative worlds in which reeves lived beyond the confines of the Anglo-Saxon realm. However, by creating continuity between reeves of the ancient world and reeves of the present, Anglo-Saxon writers grappled with the reality that traditional society was built on unequal, problematic social arrangements. Tradition could be a force of stability for ecclesiastical authors; yet, this stability also carried social inequalities along with cultural anxieties about powerful, secular people abusing their status. As I've argued, Chaucer's reeve symbolized one response to this dynamic: his clerical garb and sermonizing speech warded off potential criticism of his deceitful, fear-inspiring character. The work of Wulfstan represents another response: reeves should be associated with priests since each faced similar responsibilities as overseers that the populace would most likely encounter.

The *Institutes of Polity* and the Priestly Connection

In the *Institutes of Polity,* Archbishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023) lays out the fundamental duties of every stratum in an ordered, sacred society. The text depicts a

hierarchical, secular society that has been "remade according to a divine plan."[66] Starting with heavenly and earthly kings, Wulfstan lays out the social orders according to their status and communal responsibilities. For example, Wulfstan includes kings, bishops, nobles, reeves, and judges in his section on the people's counsellors (*ðeodwitan*).[67] He also writes about monks, nuns, lay people, and the place of the Church in a sacred society. In Wulfstan's society, all Christian people should "properly uphold their Christian faith, and live the life appropriate to them according to the law of God and the customs of the world."[68] Once baptized, a Christian citizen is morally and legally obligated to follow precepts set forth by the Church and taught through wise counsellors. Since Wulfstan believed that secular officials should govern according to sacred principals, his terminology occasionally conflates sacred and secular roles: "The church is properly the spouse of the priest, and if a man has been ordained to [pastor] a church, no one who heeds God's law ought to remove him from that [church] unless he [scil, the priest] foully degrades it by [committing a major offense; and then must the shire-reeve (*scirgerefa*) of Christ take notice of that and resolve it and judge it just as the books instruct."[69] The *scirgerefa* of Christ is surely the bishop, whose control of a diocese mirrors the secular shire-reeve's administration of the shire. In his *Institutes*, Wulfstan

[66] Andrew Rabin, trans. *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
[67] Karl Jost, ed. and trans., *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical: Ein Werk Erzbischof Wulfstans von York*, Schweizer angelistische Arbeiten 47 (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), 62.
[68] Wulfstand, *Institutes*, 154. "Riht is, þæt ealle cristene men heora cristendom rihtlice healdan and þæm life libban, þe heom to gebyrað æfter Godes rihte and æfter woruldgerysenum."
[69] Wulfstan, *Institutes*, 144. "Cyrice is mid rihte sacerdes æwe, and se ðe to cyrican weorðe gehadod, nage hine ænig man, ðe Godes lage recce, þanon to donne, butan he [hi] mid heafodgylte fullice forwyrce. And ðonne sceall Cristes scirgerefa þæt witan and ymbe þæt dihtan and deman, swa swa bec tæcan."

thus recognizes structural similarities between the responsibilities of secular and sacred administrators. More importantly, such terminological conflation reflects the *Institutes* political message: the three estates of society—those who pray, those who fight, those who work—must all collaborate to bring about a stable polity under a Christian king. However, Wulfstan's pastoral terminology could have had another practical purpose: since reeves had earned a reputation for thievery, Wulfstan's language attempts to redeem the position by locating reeves in a historical lineage shared by priests. In doing so, Wulfstan calls on reeves to understand—and live up to—the moral obligations of their sacred brethren during a period of political instability.[70] Since reeves and priests were both responsible for face-to-face engagement with their community, Wulfstan believed that the two roles are susceptible to corruption: reeves stole from the poor while priests took money without offering penance. By comparing these roles, Wulfstan thought that the secular elements of society complemented the sacred and could be reformed in such a way as to strengthen the English nation against the Danish threat.

Wulfstan's *Institutes* presented a Christian society in which secular and ecclesiastical institutions were intertwined. To show how he imagined this relationship, I have provided his lengthy entries about the role of priests and reeves. In earlier manuscript versions, the passage on reeves directly follows the entry about priests:

On Reeves

[70] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 11-15.

It is right that reeves toil assiduously and always provide for their lord properly. But now, since Edgar died, just as God willed, it has come to pass all too much that there are more thieves than righteous people, and it is a terrible thing that they are thieves who should be the shepherds of the Christian people. At times, they steal from those who are poor through no fault of their own and torment the flock which they should protect, and abuse the unfortunate with evil slander, and promote unjust laws in every way to exploit the needy and rob widows again and again. But formerly, these men were chosen widely as shepherds for the people and they dared not behave dishonestly nor obtain anything unjustly because of worldly shame and the fear of God; instead, they acquired things properly. Yet afterwards, this has been pursued most eagerly of all by those who understood how to cheat and swindle most cruelly, and to harm the unfortunate with deceit, and to extract money from the innocent most swiftly. Since then, God has been provoked again and again. And woe unto that man who has acquired most of his wealth through injustice, unless he turn aside and repent all the more deeply before God and the world.[71]

[71] Wulfstan, *Institutes*, 81. "Riht is, þæt gerefan geornlice tylian and symle heora hlafordan strynan mid rihte. Ac nu hit is geworden ealles to swyðe, syððan Eadgar geendode, swa swa God wolde, þæt ma is þæra rypera þonne rihtwisra, and is earmlic þing, þæt þa syndon ryperas, þe sceoldan beon hydras cristenes folces. Hy rypað þa earman butan ælcere scylde oðre hwile and hynað þa heorde, þe hi sceoldan healdan, and mid yfelan holan earme men beswicað and unlaga rærað on æghwlce wisan earmum to hynþe and wydewan bestrypað oft and gelome. Ac hwilum man ceas wislice þa men on þeode folce to hyrdum, þe noldan for woruldsceame ne ne dorstan for Godes ege ænig ðing swician ne strynan on unriht, ac stryndan mid rihte. And syððan hit man sohte be þam ealra geornast, þe nearwlicast cuðan swician and befician and mid leasbregdum earmum mannum derian and of unbealafullum raþost feoh geræcan. Syððan man gremede God swyðe þearle oft and gelome. And wa þæs gestreones þam þe his mæst hafaþ on unriht gestryned, butan he geswice and ðe deoppor gebete for Gode and for worulde."

On Priests

Priests in their parishes must wisely and sensibly lead and instruct the spiritual flock which they are to protect. They must both preach well and set a good example for others; and at God's judgment, they must render into God's hand an account both of their own deeds and of those people they are to oversee. And if they shall have done anything they must not hesitate, neither out of fear nor love of any person, to proclaim justice and forbid injustice. The shepherd will be of little use to the fold who will not protect the flock, which he must defend with an outcry if he can do nothing else, if the corruptor of the people begins to raid […] Should any of our shepherds overlook even one sheep, we will require that he pay for it […]

Alas, alas, there are many of those who, as it may seem, seek the priesthood wrongfully, most for idle glory and worldly wealth, and they do not know that which they should know. About them the prophet spoke and said thus: woe unto the priests who eat the sins of the people, etc. that is, in English: Woe to the priests, he said, who devour and consume the people's sins. Those are the ones who will not or cannot or dare not warn the people against sins and punish sins, but nonetheless desire their money in the form of tithes and all Church dues […]

instead, they scavenge people's possessions for whatever they can grab, just as gluttonous ravens do from a carcass wherever they can.[72]

According to Wulfstan, reeves shared some of the same occupational responsibilities as priests. Both were called the "shepherds" (*hirde*) of Christian people because they oversaw uneducated laity. Of course, *hirde* implies guardianship in matters of both pastoral care and care for living cattle, which suggests that this phrase is political, not simply metaphorical. Just as the priest is the shepherd to the uneducated flock, the reeve is the literal shepherd for the animals (and workers) on which the ideal Christian society depends. Thus, it is the duty of priests and reeves to protect their "flock" and guard the most vulnerable against exploitation. Wulfstan used this pastoral imagery because he recognized that reeves and priests could exert a great deal of power over the material conditions of the populace. He warned about thieving reeves and those who might "promote unjust laws" to extract money from both widows and the needy. Likewise, he worries that lazy or ignorant priests take money from parishioners while

[72] Wulfstan, *Institutes*, 81-103. "Sacerd scel on his scrifscire wislice and wærlice lædan and læran þa godcunde heorde, þe he healdan scel. Æiþer he sceal, ge wel bodian ge wel bysnian oþrum mannum. And ægðer hi scylon æt Godes dome gescead agyldan, ge heora sylfra dæda ge ealles þæs folces, þe hi to Godes handa healdan sceolan. And gyf hi aht gedon scylon, ne magon hi wandian naþer ne for ege ne for lufe æniges mannes, þæt hi riht ne bodian and unriht forbeodan. Wace byð se hyrde æt falde nyt, þe nele þa heorde, þe he healden sceal, midhreame bewerian, butan he ells mæge, gif þær hwylc þeodsceaða sceaðian onginneð[…]
Eala, eala, fela is þæra, þe sacerdhades on unriht gyrnað, swa hit þincan mæg, swyðost for idelum gylpe and for gitsunge woruldgestreona, and ne cunnon na, þæt hy cunnon sceoldan. Be þam cwæð se witega and ðus cwæð: Ue sacerdotibus qui comedunt peccata populi et reliqua. Wa þam sacerdum, he cwæð, þe fretað and forswelgað folces synna. Þæt syndon þa, ðe nellað oððe ne cunnon oððon ne durron folc wið synna gewarnian and synna gestyran, ac gyrnað þeah heora sceatta on teoþungum and on eallum cyricgerihtum[…]ac læccað of manna begeatum, loc hwæt hi gefon magan, eallswa gyfre hremnas of holde doð, þær þær hi to magon."

offering no penance, preaching, or intercessory prayer in return. By prioritizing their "worldly pride and idle vanity" ("*to woruldwlence and to idelre rence*"), these priests distract congregants from either worshipping God or providing goods for more deserving causes.[73] In both cases, Wulfstan feels that priests and reeves have taken advantage of their institutional authority; priests, because they enriched themselves without offering pathways to God; reeves, because they deceived workers into paying unjust dues.

In practical terms, Wulfstan worries that estate management has been taken over by deceptive, self-interested people. His entry on the reeve is telling in that it deals entirely with moral character rather than practical issues, like how a reeve should act to achieve a more just society. His language is also vague, which probably means that Wulfstan knew little about the occupational conditions under which reeves worked. Of course, the *Institutes* are not intended to serve as a practical guide. Nonetheless, Wulfstan realized that reeves could exercise their power through speech itself, either by lying about local laws or spreading slanderous ideas (*yfelan holan*) concerning workers. Such unregulated speech was harmful to the Christian polity since it competed with pastoral endeavors of the Church. If the three estates of society are to be arranged according to sacred principals, deceitful reeves threaten a priest's ability to "proclaim justice and forbid injustice."

However, Wulfstan believed that the moral character of reeves was not always bad. As a result of Edgar's death, the English kingdom fell into disarray, which permitted unsavory people to become reeves. Here, Wulfstan admonishes reeves by using the

[73] Wulfstan, *Institutes*, 101.

language of tradition: "But formerly, these men were chosen wisely as shepherds for the people and they dared not behave dishonestly nor obtain anything unjustly because of worldly shame and fear of God."[74] For Wulfstan, the degradation of England's moral code destabilized the social orders by relaxing the standards on which reeves were judged, thus allowing sinful people to exploit the reeve's institutional advantages. To remedy this moral degradation, Wulfstan appeals to an idealistic past, reminding his audience of a time when reeves were God-fearing, socially responsible people. Wulfstan's rhetoric implies that the issue was not only the type of people who become reeves but also the institutional structure through which they were selected and held accountable. Since reeves were often elected officials, the voting estate workers were partially responsible for the selection of deceitful reeves, which is why Wulfstan adds that these men were once chosen "wisely" (*wislice*). These rhetorical moves connect early eleventh-century reeves to occupational ancestors prior to and during King Edgar's reign (r. 959-75), suggesting that it is still possible to return to this relatively recent state of affairs.[75]

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 383: *Gerefa* and Folk Knowledge

In CCCC 383, a mid-twelfth century legal encyclopedia, there are two texts that deal with customs and social arrangements on manorial estates. In a basic sense, these

[74] Wulfstan, *Institutes*, 82.
[75] Although this viewpoint romanticizes Edgar's reign and should not be taken too literally, its rhetorical purpose was to suggest that society of the recent past was more harmonious and ordered than Wulfstan's current situation.

texts—*Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* (RSP) and *Gerefa*—both describe legal obligations of various occupations on a manor. RSP deals with the duties of thanes, cheesemakers, ploughmen, cowherds, and other agricultural workers; *Gerefa* lays out the responsibilities of reeves alone. However, the relationship and purpose of these texts is less clear. Scholars have argued that *Gerefa* was an extension of the longer RSP, composed independently and copied into CCCC 383, as the latter text does not include a section about reeves. Likewise, P.D.A. Harvey has argued that *Gerefa* is a "literary" text rather than a practical manual, a product not of the field but of the scriptorium.[76] While questions of provenance and composition history are important, I believe that *Gerefa* was meant to serve as a guide for prospective reeves. According to that view, it was a kind of experimental "managerial handbook" that recorded the fundamental knowledge a reeve should have to fulfill their obligations. The fact that *Gerefa* survives in a single manuscript suggests that this text had little application. However, I will show that it was neither a practical agricultural manual nor a colloquy-like literary exercise but rather a portrait of an ideal reeve, one who is wise and knowledgeable, hardworking and diligent. *Gerefa* thus represented an early attempt to codify traditional knowledge by creating a standard text through which reeves should be judged.

Because *Gerefa* follows RSP, these texts should be considered together. RSP is an Old English legal text that was translated into Latin as part of a larger legal compilation called the *Quadripartitus.* For this reason, variants of RSP appear in five manuscripts

[76] P.D.A. Harvey, "Rectitudines Singularum Personarum and Gerefa," *The English Historical Review* 108.426 (1993): 1-22.

dating from the early twelfth to early thirteenth-centuries. However, not only does CCCC 383 contain the earliest version of RSP, but it is also the only manuscript in which *Gerefa* exists. Both texts were copied by the same hand, which implies that the scribe may have seen *Gerefa* as a quasi-legal text worthy of standing alongside RSP. Harvey even suggests that the scribe attempted to connect these texts by inserting similar phrases that would have been absent from whatever original source the scribe used. At the very least, this evidence suggests that both RSP and *Gerefa* contained applicable information about local customs even if they did not possess legal force. In this section, I investigate how these texts reflect occupational conditions of late Anglo-Saxon and early Norman manorial agriculture. I argue that *Gerefa* blends various statutory genres together—customals, legal codes, and calendars—in an effort to standardize the qualities of a good reeve. In doing so, *Gerefa* codifies power dynamics, workplace expectations, and the competency of reeves in an accessible format that could theoretically be used on other estates. Thus, *Gerefa* is simultaneously a guidebook and a repository of traditional knowledge: a prudent reeve should follow these guidelines, an effective lord should hold reeves to these standards. The fact that *Gerefa* exists in a single manuscript does not mean it was an obscure document at the time it was copied into CCCC 383; on the contrary, evidence for emerging literacy among reeves and other administrators suggests that *Gerefa* could have reflected early attempts to systematize the bureaucratic efficiency of a manorial estate during a time of social change.[77]

[77] See M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307,* 3rd edition (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Clanchy, 32, notes that agricultural treatises from the thirteenth-century recommend some type of record keeping: "*Husbandry* recommends the bailiff in the autumn to list everything that remains on the manor, such as tools and horsehoes, great and small, so that he will know what to buy for

Gerefa

At first glance, *Gerefa* is a confusing text. There is no other Anglo-Saxon text offering a detailed description about the knowledge and duties of reeves. In his nineteenth-century edition of Anglo-Saxon laws, Liebermann presented both texts as a single unit, although he was initially unsure about their relationship. Today, most scholars follow Liebermann's conclusion that the scribe of CCCC 383 copied both texts from a manuscript in which they had already been combined at an earlier date. Expanding on Liebermann's initial hypotheses, Harvey argues that RSP and *Gerefa* contain at least three layers of composition: "the original composition of each text, the revision that brought them together in the early eleventh century, and the partial modernization of grammar and spelling in the late tenth or early eleventh century that gave us the Old English text of MS 383."[78] Furthermore, Harvey notes that the occurrence of certain phrases in both compositions was a scribal effort to blend the texts together.[79] In fact, a copyist might have had good reason to believe that the two texts were related since there is no clear effort to distinguish one from the other and the heading *be gesceadwisan gerefan* echoes the entries of RSP (*be oxanhyrde, be kuhyrde*).[80] The fact that both texts

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the coming year. The same book mentions in passing, as if it were commonplace, *la respounse del issue de let*—the record of yields of milk from the cows. Such a record may have been a notched wooden tally, and not parchment. Even so, it shows that some manorial bailiffs and reeves used records, other than their memories, for day-to-day management[…]one of the treatises, *Seneschaucy*, assumes that the bailiff or reeve can read (in French if not in Latin), as it warns him to admit no one and hand over nothing from the manor to any person whatsoever 'without the warrant of a writ' under pain of repaying the loss from his own purse."

[78] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 8.

[79] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 4. Harvey points out two reoccurring phrases: "hede seðe scire healde" and "fela ðinge ðe ic ge tellan ne meig."

[80] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 3-4.

deal with the social arrangements of an estate could have also convinced the scribe who brought the pieces together that they served as a unit. If these layers of composition are correct, both RSP and *Gerefa* would have existed in at least two other non-extant manuscripts.

The structure of *Gerefa* is also perplexing. The text can be broken into several thematic parts: (1) introductory material pertaining to the reeve's character and moral qualities; (2) a calendar outlining the seasonal duties of a reeve; (3) two lists of various agricultural implements; and (4) a concluding remark on the composer's humbleness. Harvey thought that its composer might have drawn on earlier agricultural treatises, perhaps even translating parts of the text from a Latin exemplar. However, Roman agricultural handbooks like Cato's *De agricultura*, Pliny's *Nauturalis historia*, and Columella's *De re rustica* bear little resemblance to the style or content of *Gerefa*. For instance, Columella's *De re rustica* is a comprehensive, multipart treatise on everything from the qualities of a good overseer to the kinds of soil best suited for vine plants. Although the composer of *Gerefa* might have been inspired by earlier agricultural treatises, there is no surviving manuscript from which the Old English text was obviously copied. Of course, it is possible that the composer knew at least one of these longer agricultural tracts, as Virgil's *Georgicon* and Pliny's *Naturalis historia* circulated in Anglo-Saxon England.[81] Both Cato and Columella discussed the attributes of good workers. Columella even states that effective agricultural labor requires both knowledge

[81] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 11.

and a strong work ethic, which echoes the introductory lines of *Gerefa.*[82] Using Cato, Pliny, or Columella for inspiration, *Gerefa's* composer set about creating a shortened, accessible document about the duties of an overseer. However, Harvey thinks that *Gerefa* was composed as a literary exercise by someone with only passing knowledge of actual agricultural processes, which means that the text tells us little about practices on an estate. Since Harvey's observation has shaped all subsequent interpretations of *Gerefa*, it is worth considering the evidence on which the "literariness" of the text stands. Mark Gardiner has also suggested that the literary qualities of the text do not necessarily mean that it had no practical application since the composer could have used a literary style for rhetorical effect. Moreover, depending on what we mean when we call an early medieval text "literary," this term can have vastly different impacts on subsequent interpretations.

According to Harvey, *Gerefa* is a late tenth- early eleventh-century literary text with stylistic echoes of glossaries and colloquies. Harvey justifies its literary qualities with several pieces of evidence: (1) practical inconsistencies, (2) use of rhythm and alliteration, (3) and references to literary themes. For practical inconsistencies, Harvey notes that this text, if followed, would have never been helpful for actual reeves: "we are shown an estate where grass was mown in the autumn but not in the early summer, where madder and vines were planted and bans, flax, and woad were sown, but not wheat, rye,

[82] Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, *On Agriculture*, ed. Harrison Boyd Ash (Cambridge, 1941), 27: "One who devotes himself to agriculture should understand that he must call to his assistance these most fundamental resources: knowledge of the subject, means for defraying the expenses, and the will to do the work. For in the end, as Tremelius remarks, he will have the best-tilled lands who has the knowledge, there wherewithal, and the will to cultivate them" (Qui stadium agricolationi dederit, antiquissima sciat haec sibi advocanda: prudentiam rei, facultatem impendendi, voluntatem agendi. Nam is demum cultissimum rus habebit, ut ait Tremelius, qui et colere sciet et poterit et volet).

barley, or oats."[83] Likewise, the utensil lists are "neither systematic nor comprehensive," which means they could not have served as guides for less knowledgeable reeves.[84] Turning to rhythm and style, Harvey observes multiple alliterative phrases. For instance, in the calendar section we find the following sentence on the duties between May, June, and July: "*sceap scyran, bytlian, boteatan, tynan, tymbrian, wudian, weodian, faldian, fiscwer ond mylne macian*" ("one should […] shear sheep, build, repair, set hedges, build, cut wood, weed, construct sheepfolds and make fish weirs and mills"). Likewise, in utensil list B we find this sentence: "*cyfa, cyflas, cyrne, cysfæt, ceodan, wilian, windlass, systras, syfa, sædleap, hriddel, hersyfe*" ("One must have […] tub, bucket, churn, cheese vat, bag, rolled-baskets, basket, pitchers, sieve, seed bucket, course sieve, hair sieve"). Harvey concludes that using alliteration in this manner implied that the composer cared more about the form than content of the writing, leading him to suggest that alliteration shaped content at various points. Of course, form and content are not inseparable in Old English prose, so it is possible that the alliteration reinforces the memorability of these sentences. Lastly, Harvey argues that *Gerefa* references cultural material belonging to the literary realm, such as beginning the year in May: "The starting point we might reasonably expect on general grounds would be either the beginning of the agricultural year at the end of harvest, or else the turn of the year, the start of the calendar year in January[…] Virgil and Pliny both start their year after harvest; Varro, Columella, and Palladius in January or early February."[85] The composer may have begun the year in May

[83] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 8.
[84] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 8.
[85] Harvey, "Rectitudines and Gerefa," 10.

to prioritize the Easter season and other Springtime festivities, like the Rogations. Pointing to a final piece of evidence, Harvey suggests that the phrases *mus fella* (mouse trap) and *hepsan pinn* (a peg for a hasp [a metal plate used for fastening a door or lid]) were literary allusions that the audience would recognize, even though their sources have been lost. Drawing on this evidence, Harvey concludes that *Gerefa* was composed and copied—possibly as an exercise in Latin to Old English translation—by people with little practical agricultural knowledge. Despite the usefulness of his discussion, Harvey never fully articulates what "literary" means in this discussion. Afterall, could an early medieval "literary" text also have practical value? What does it mean to differentiate between the literary and practical?

In the following discussion, I argue that *Gerefa* codified and preserved occupational traditions that were typically passed on through non-textual methods. It was not an agricultural guide but rather an early attempt to create the kind of didactic literature we find in the work of Walter of Henley. In this framework, occupational traditions bridge gaps between "literary" and "practical," between the scriptorium and the field. *Gerefa* thus codified information that was primarily folkloric, which is partially why scholars have struggled to understand its significance. To demonstrate this point, I will first show that evidence for *Gerefa's* "literariness" is rather limited. While the text might not have been a guide for agricultural work, it could still have practical applications for relationships between lords, reeves, and workers.

To better understand why *Gerefa* was not merely a literary but also folkloric text, let's return to Harvey's evidence. In arguing that *Gerefa* offered inconsistent, impractical

advice Harvey assumes that it was an agricultural manual rather than another genre entirely like an occupational checklist: here are the general things a reeve should know, do, and possess. Its length alone suggests that it was not a source of agricultural information to be used by a novice reeve; indeed, *Gerefa* provides few specific details about fieldwork, dealing instead with general statements concerning agricultural obligations. Although Harvey correctly points out inconsistencies such as the type of crops that were sown (beans, flax, and woad instead of wheat, rye, barley, or oats) and the agricultural calendar, he calls less attention to some of the text's accurate information. For example, the reeve's Summer duties include shearing sheep, constructing fences, and weeding fields; likewise, his winter tasks involve making stall for cattle, roosts for hens, and indoor work. The fact that the text calls for mowing in the Autumn but not early Summer is hardly consequential since these vague descriptions fit the overall tone and perspective of a text that was never meant to serve as a field guide for agricultural work. Of course, reeves might have had little need for practical manuals since most people serving as overseers would have learned agricultural practices over years of fieldwork. *Gerefa's* composer even recognized their own knowledge limitations: "It is difficult to speak of everything that he who holds the shire must consider. He must not neglect anything which might be useful, not even a mousetrap, though it is as insignificant as a fastening pin. The reeve must keep much of the farm and encourage orderliness of men. I declare that which I know; let him who knows better make more [of his knowledge]

known."[86] Given this viewpoint, it is possible that *Gerefa's* literary allusions and style were memory aides or even rhetorical embellishments that made the text an interesting, accessible read. If we read *Gerefa* as a proto-management science text, however, its alliteration can be seen as a practical tool for reeves to identify the various utensils found throughout an estate.

As Harvey notes, *Gerefa's* writing style is often alliterative and rhythmic. At one point, the composer blends alliteration and internal rhyme together: "*rihtan ond weoxian ond grep hegian, disceard betan, heges godian, weod wyrtwalian, betweox husan bricgian, beoddian, bencian, horsan styllan, flor feormian oððe synnes sum ðing ðe to nyte mæge*" (Improve the house or straighten and cleanse it, repair hedges, uproot weeds between the house and the bridge, make benches, stable horses, clean the floor, or if something needs to be done, he should do it").[87] The utensil lists contain similar rhythmic phrases such as "*man sceal habban wængewædu, sulhgesidu, egeðgetigu ond fela ðinga*" ("One must have a wagon-cover, an appurtenance of a plough, the apparatus belonging to a barrow, and many things I cannot name") and "*crancstæf, sceaðele, seamsticcan, scearra, nædle, slic*" ("He must procure many tools for the estate […] a weaver's instrument, a shuttle, a weaver's tool, a wool comb, a needle, and a mallet").[88] Much like Old English poetic meter, alliteration in prose connects words together through sound and form. Both Wulfstan and Ælfric experimented with rhythmic "prose" writing in homiletic

[86] *Gerefa*, 18-19: "Hit is earfoðe eall to gesecganne þæt se beðen can sceal ðe scire healt. ne sceolde he nan ðing. Forgyman ðe æfre to note mehte. ne forða musfellan. ne þæt git læsse is to hæpsan pinn. fela sceal to holdan hames gerefan. 7 to gemetfæstan manna hyrde. ic gecende be ðam ðe ic cuðe. se ðe bet cunne gecyðe his mare.
[87] *Gerefa*, 13.
[88] *Gerefa*, 15 and 17.

and hagiographic texts, which suggests that contemporary distinctions between "poetry" and "prose" are less helpful in determining the "practical" applications of Anglo-Saxon sources. It is also notable that most sentences in *Gerefa* involve no alliteration or internal rhyme, which indicates that the writing style was neither systematic nor consistent. Even the two lists of utensils are erratic: two or three alliterative sounds might be followed either by a totally different alliterative pattern (*sceamelas, stolas, læflas, leohtfæt*) or a list with no sound pattern at all (*flexlinan, spinle, reol, gearnwindan, stodlan, lorgas, presse, pihten*). Since farming involved a large number of tools, the composer could have alliterated more deliberately if sound patterns were desired. One possible explanation is that these utensil lists were not entirely random. Both Mark Gardiner and John Hines suggest that the utensil lists originated from separate sources; thus, a scribe probably brought the lists together during one of the earlier layers of composition, drawing each from a different manuscript. Hines notes that all fifty nouns in List A are accusative, whereas the sixty-four nouns in list B have inconsistent inflexional endings; indeed, List B contains feminine strong nouns ending in both -a and -e, which is somewhat unexpected given that -a gradually became the dominant nominative and accusative plural ending.[89] Based on inflexional endings, Hines concludes that List B may actually

[89] John Hines, "*Gerefa* 15 and 17: "A Grammatical Analysis of the Lists of Nouns," *Notes and News, Medieval Archaeology* 50.1 (2006): 268-70. Hines, 269: "In very early Old English this noun declension appears to have retained a distinction between the nominative plural, in *-a*, and the accusative plural in *-e*. this, however, was levelled out by the time of most written records, with *-a* found for both cases in most dialects but *-e* in a few[…] It would be possible for the *-e* forms to have been intended to represent plurals too, although in that case we should have to concede that *-a* and *-e* spellings had become completely interchangeable at least in inflecting feminine strong nouns, so that the *-a* forms too could as well be read as singulars. However, although we have some cases of phonological decay from the standards of strict or 'classical' literary Old English in the spellings of this text, those quite clearly do not bear witness to a general levelling and confusion of *a* and *e* as the vowel [ə] (*schwa*) in unstressed syllables. Given the

be a composite text itself, perhaps compiled from now-lost glossaries of agricultural implements. Likewise, Gardiner argues that these lists were not entirely unsystematic. For example, List A roughly groups items according to the following logic: carpentry items, ploughing tools, implements for fieldwork and horticultural work, farmyard items, and textile tools. List B groups items that would be found in various locations around later thirteenth and fourteenth-century farmsteads, such as the kitchen, dairy, granary, buttery, pantry, and possibly the bakehouse. Archaeological evidence suggests that smaller farms would have used a single space for multiple purposes, such as storing pantry items in the same place where cooking occurred; nonetheless, Gardiner argues that "the separation of functional areas typically found in 14th-century *curiae* seems to have been already established by 1100 which suggests that there were fundamental and long-lasting ideas about the organization of domestic space on farms."[90] This insight suggests that the alliterative, rhythmic style found in *Gerefa's* utensil lists was shaped by the organization of items on actual farmsteads. Thus, alliterative sounds might have functioned as spatial memory aides, serving as a checklist of important items necessary for performing certain tasks. Alternatively, this writing style could have demonstrated an ear for rhythmic composition since the composer crafted an alliterative, rhythmic text according to real-world limitations, which implies familiarity with both farmstead organization and literary culture. In sum, it is too simple to say that *Gerefa's* perspective

differentiation of spellings within this list, and the absolute regularity of *-e* in List A, it is most reasonable to interpret the *-a* forms as plurals and the *-e* forms as singulars."

[90] Mark Gardiner, "Implements and Utensils in *Gerefa* and the Organization of Seigneurial Farmsteads in the High Middle Ages," *Notes and News, Medieval Archaeology* 50.1 (2006): 260-7, at 267.

is the scriptorium alone because the text is layered with domestic, agricultural, and occupational knowledge.

The tendency to read *Gerefa* as either a literary text or a repository of interesting words has overshadowed historical, folkloric interpretations. Difficulties determining the layers of composition, provenance, and date have further pushed scholars away from speculative readings. However, the shear complexity of this text demands imaginative sympathy. *Gerefa* might not have been useful for agricultural production because this was never its intended purpose. Instead, we should view *Gerefa* as a composite text that was responding to local occupational relationships among reeves, lords, and workers. More precisely, *Gerefa* was a manual of conduct that codified the fundamental knowledge a reeve should possess to perform his duties—it was essentially a management training manual. In this sense, it is more closely related to Ælfrician homilies and other pastoral guides than late antique agricultural tracts. *Gerefa* demonstrates that early medieval agricultural practice was inseparable from the moral and intellectual character of people who oversaw labor and maintained manorial farmlands.

Numerous examples illustrate close relationships between agricultural practice and human morality in Anglo-Saxon culture. In fact, connections between humanity and agriculture permeate ecclesiastical imagery: God is the ultimate herder, humans are his flock. In early medieval Rogation literature, both people and crops were struck with deathly pestilence on account of immoral behavior. Field processions and other intercessory rituals sought divine blessings for all aspects of food production, including

crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and field protection. If the people of any village were sinful, threats of severe weather, flooded fields, or crop blights hung over their heads. Ælfric used agricultural metaphors in his homilies, writing that human devotion was similar to ripening crops, that ploughmen represented the clergy, and that crop cultivation was a sign of repentance. Since nearly every community participated in some agricultural process, distinctions between the "practical" and the "imaginary" would have been less clear for Anglo-Saxon communities. In this framework, *Gerefa* was not a "how-to" manual but a justification for manorial social arrangements in which rationality dominates all other agricultural processes.

From the heading *be gesceadwisan gerefan* onwards, *Gerefa* is a text about the fundamental knowledge and intelligence required to manage an estate. As an adjective, *gesceadwis* refers to some power of the intellect that can be translated as "rational," "prudent," "intelligent," "reasonable," or "discriminating." By contrast, *ungesceadwis* means that one acts without reason, being foolish or irrational. In the vernacular version of Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*, *gesceadwis* translates "reason" ("*ratio*"), which refers to the soul's intellectual capacities.[91] *Gesceadwis* also occurs in the Old English versions of Gregory the Great's *Cura pastoralis* and Augustine's *Soliloquies*. In the *Cura pastoralis, gesceadwis* often refers to the intelligence or prudence of ecclesiastical figures, like priests, tasked with lay outreach and education. The Old English translator of the *Soliloquies* also used the term *gesceadwisnes,* which referred to

[91] Soon-Ai Low, "Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for 'Mind'," *Studia Neophilologica* 73.1 (2001): 11-22; Miranda Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors: 'eagen modes' and 'scip modes'," *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006): 179-217.

the abstract state of knowing difference between things. As these examples illustrate, *gesceadwis* referenced larger discourses about the intellect, including the rational abilities of teachers, priests, or overseers. Since these roles were responsible for the well-being of other people, *gesceadwis* also implied moral authority: the "rational" reeve understood his role in the social hierarchy of an estate. A "*gesceadwis"* reeve was not one with a powerful intellect but rather someone who understood the organization of a farmstead, knew the local customs, and—most importantly—was able to tell if work was done poorly. Put simply, a "rational" reeve could discern differences between efficient and inefficient labor while determining if everything was in its proper place and working productively.

Gerefa was thus created for an occupational setting in which practical knowledge was generally handed on through observation and experience, not through manuscript sources. In fact, the text is full of references to uncodified knowledge, which would have been learned through first-hand experience working farmlands. For instance, *Gerefa* states that an intelligent reeve "must know both the land rights of the lord ["hlafordes landriht"] and the rights of the people ["folces gerihtu"], because the *witan* arranged it from ancient days, and the time of each land work, which pertains to the town."[92] An effective reeve should know both the local customs of the estate he manages (*hlafordes landriht*) as well as the obligations that manor has to the whole nation (*folces gerihtu*). The terms *hlafordes landriht* and *folces gerihtu* carry legal significance. In Old English,

[92] *Gerefa*, 1: "gerefa sceal ægðær witan ge hlafordes landriht ge folces gerihtu be ðam ðe hit of ealddagum. witan geræddan 7 ælcre tilðan timan ðe to tune belimpð."

riht carries some of the same ambiguity found in contemporary legal discourse about "rights." A *riht* refers to "what is in accordance with law," a "rule," "what is due from a person," "what agrees with proper standard," or "an account."[93] In Anglo-Saxon legal documents like RSP, *riht* tends to mean the duties or obligations owed by particular individuals to the lord or king (i.e. *geneates riht* means "the duties of a vassal"), usually in the form of labor or monetary payments. However, Patrick Wormald reminds us that early English legal culture was not standardized, which explains why CCCC 383 is called a legal encyclopedia, as it contained numerous legal or quasi-legal texts. Thus, every manor had its own set of practices and standards, known as "customs" (Latin *consuetudo*). A *custumal* recorded annual services and payments owed by tenants of an estate. These documents were related to other legal texts like manorial accounts—written records of annual transactions and debt owed between the local officer (reeve or bailiff) and proprietor—and surveys—descriptions of the land's resources and duties of its tenants.[94] Custumals, surveys, and accounts were practical tools to document the productivity of manorial estates; prior to the thirteenth-century, local officers memorized yearly transactions and orally recited this information for their proprietor. In noting that the *folces gerihtu* and *hlafordes landriht* were arranged in ancient days (*ealddagum*), *Gerefa* expects reeves to follow oral precedent, which requires good memorization skills and familiarity with the customs of the estate. Given the localized nature of early

[93] Bosworth-Toller, "riht."
[94] P.D.A. Harvey, ed., *Manorial Records,* 1-83.

medieval legal practice, knowledge about the past was not merely a source of social authority but also a practical necessity in running a manor.

Gerefa makes other references to the agricultural knowledge of reeves. The text notes that reeves should be familiar with the land itself "because on some lands obligations are ready earlier than on others: earlier ploughing times, earlier preparation of meadows and also winter pasturage, and each other duty."[95] As Tom Williamson points out, ploughing and planting seasons would have differed throughout the various regions of England: the heavy soils of the East Midlands could only be effectively broken up during a small window in the Spring.[96] In turn, the dense soil quality of this region required heavy mouldboard ploughs that were operated by teams of oxen. Due to the small ploughing window, East Midland communities were typically more tightly organized as to allow quicker mobilization during the ploughing season than regions with lighter soils.[97] In such communities, people lived closely together and had to follow strict organizational hierarchies to manage the ploughing schedule. Furthermore, *Gerefa* states

[95] *Gerefa*, 1: "forðam on manegum landum tilð bið redre ðonne on oðrum. ge yrðe tima hrædra . ge mæda rædran ge winterdun eac swa. Ge gehwilc oðer tilð."
[96] Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Bollington: Windgather Press, 2004). Williamson, 182, notes that "in later Saxon times, manorial tenants came to owe more service labor to their lords, especially in crucial moments of the agricultural year such as ploughing and harvest. The workforce had to be in close proximity to the fields for Spring ploughing on heavier clay soils and during the hay harvest, where many people were needed to cut and turn the hay. Also, the western midlands (Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, and North Buckinghamshire) contained the most nucleated settlements and open fields. These districts became pastures in the post-medieval world, possibly as a consequence of so much ploughing. This region might have also had unpredictable crop yields due to higher rainfall during the Summer months, which would require lords to be able to bring out the labor force without delay."
[97] Williamson, *Landscapes*, 191: "Although the midland region had varied social and tenurial structures by 1086, it was still characterized by abundant meadow land and clay soils, which caused communities to develop cohesively in order to better plough heavy soils in the short span available during Spring. The economy also developed around the hay harvest. West of the midlands, the lighter, well-draining soils led to dispersed settlement patterns and irregular field systems."

that wise reeves should know the weather: "He who holds the shire must take heed that he promotes and furthers each [task] as is fitting, and for that he must know the weather."[98] Knowledge of weather patterns was a helpful indicator of changing seasons; moreover, field conditions could be seriously impacted by excessive rainfall or flooding caused by melting snow in the Spring. Although *Gerefa's* language is so general that it might refer to various environmental conditions, its broad perspective actually allows room for local knowledge. On this estate, a reeve must know how the seasonal cycle and changing weather conditions impact daily tasks; more specifically, this reeve should understand how the land changes over the course of the agricultural year. Simply put, he must be able to discern seasonal differences. This type of local knowledge was important since fields might behave differently depending on factors like drainage, frost levels, and winter snow accumulation. In fact, local knowledge was traditional in that it required someone familiar with these environmental patterns. In stating that effective reeves should have extensive local knowledge, *Gerefa* suggests that the overseer should understand how the estate is connected to the landscape, the environment, and the settlement. This obligation required a great deal of experience working on the various parts of a farm, which means that effective reeves had to be attentive to all things large and small in their occupational setting.

At several points, *Gerefa* stresses that a reeve's local knowledge likely exceeds that of the lord and composer of this text. Since the reeve is the lord's servant, their fates

[98] *Gerefa*, 2: "Hede se ðe scire healde þæt he friðige 7 forðige ælce be ðam ðe hit se lest sy. 7 be ðam he eac mot ðe hine weder wisað."

are intertwined: “Thus a good official should hold his lord’s estate as he would desire if it were his own.” Likewise, a reeve’s attention to detail should always serve the lord’s interests: “He must wisely consider and eagerly think through all the things which may be of help to his lord.” Naturally, the lord of an estate would neither oversee every task nor be familiar with the smallest instruments needed for agricultural production. For this reason, *Gerefa* advises reeves to “take care of both the better and of the worse so that nothing go wrong if he may prevent it; not corn nor sheaf, nor flesh nor morsel of fat, nor cheese nor rennet, not any of those things which may ever be of note.”[99] These lexical pairs each refer to some agricultural process: a sheaf is made by bundling corn stocks together; *flotsmere* was the greasy fat that floated to the top of a vessel in which meat was being cooked; and rennet (*cyslyb*) is a type of by-product from the stomach of suckling mammals used in cheese production. In other words, reeves should be familiar with the process underlying cooking, cheese-making, and harvesting; in all of these processes, by-products like *flotsmere* or less-accessible ingredients like *cyslyb* are as essential as the product itself: cheese, meat, and sheafs of corn. A good reeve knows what is useful and what should be discarded, which meant that a reeve’s observational skills were notable components of a functioning, efficient estate.

In four separate occasions, the composer feels humbled by the knowledge of this ideal reeve. First, after describing the reeve’s Springtime duties, the composer adds that “I cannot recall everything that a good official must buy.”[100] Second, acknowledging that

[99] *Gerefa*, 4: “Ac ic lære þæt he do swa ic ær cwæð. gyme ægðer ge ðæs selran. ge þæs sæmran . þæt naðor ne misfire gyf he wealdan mæge. ne corn, ne sceaf, ne flæsc, ne flotsmeru, ne cyse , ne cyslyb. ne nan ðera ðinga ðe æfra to note mæge.”
[100] *Gerefa*, 12: “Ic eal getellan ne mæig þæt god scirman bycgan sceal.”

the utensil lists are incomplete, the composer notes: "He must know himself what each work requires; there is not any man who may tell about all those tools one must have."[101] Similarly, in utensil list B: "One must have a wagon-cover, the parts of a plough, the parts of a barrow, and many things which I cannot name or now recount."[102] Finally, the concluding passages are worth quoting in full: "It is difficult to say everything that one who holds a shire must remember; he must not neglect anything which might be of note, not even a mousetrap, although it is as insignificant as a fastening pin. Many things must be required of a faithful reeve and a responsible overseer of people. I have spoken about that which I know; he who knows better should make his knowledge known."[103] Taken together, these remarks suggest that one of the composers had limited knowledge of a reeve's actual obligations. Of course, authorial appeals to humbleness are not uncommon and could have been added by the scribe who copied the text into CCCC 383 to make *Gerefa* appear like a legitimate legal text due to its proximity to RSP. Alternatively, the compiler who brought the various pieces of *Gerefa* together might have felt unqualified to report on specific aspects of estate management because reeves were busy with many tedious tasks. However, we can also read these humble statements literally: the composer had limited knowledge of a reeve's managerial work because much of these duties were learned through first-hand experiences. In portraying the reeve as the ultimate authority

[101] *Gerefa*, 16: "Ælc weorc sylf wisað hwæt him to gebyreð. nis ænig man þæt atellan mæge ða tol ealle ðe man habban sceal."
[102] *Gerefa*, 17: "Man sceal habban wænge wædu, sulhgesidu., egeðgetigu. 7 fela ðinga, ðe ic nu genæmnian ne can ge eac mete.
[103] *Gerefa*, 18-19: "Hit is earfoðe eall to gesecganne þæt se beðen can sceal ðe scire healt. ne sceolde he nan ðing. Forgyman ðe æfre to note mehte. ne forða musfellan. ne þæt git læsse is to hæpsan pinn. fela sceal to holdan hames gerefan. 7 to gemetfæstan manna hyrde. ic gecende be ðam ðe ic cuðe. se ðe bet cunne gecyðe his mare."

on agricultural knowledge, *Gerefa* demonstrates that codifying traditional knowledge was not a straightforward task. In other words, *Gerefa* acknowledges a deeper occupational tension among those who write, those who work, and those who rule: although local, folk knowledge was integral to agricultural work, it was simultaneously difficult to write down its fundamental components, especially for people who were not directly involved in estate management.

As I've argued, these limitations partially reflected power dynamics of the estate itself. For instance, occupational relationships through which reeves managed other laborers surely depended on uncodified folk practices. As with Chaucer's reeve, *Gerefa's* overseer was a mediator between the powerful lord and the estate's workers. These relationships could be trusting or fearful, inspirational or damaging. *Gerefa* offered some advice for reeves: "In a similar manner, he must inspire his workers with admonishments according to the need of the lord, and reward each of them what they deserve. He should never let his workers control him, but he should control each with the lord's power and with folk custom. It is better for him to be out of that office than in it if the people he ought to control are controlling him. It will not be the wise lord who allows this."[104] According to *Gerefa,* a reeve is part of unbreakable social arrangements: the reeve wields the lord's power to control his subjects, if the workers transgress this arrangement, the lord himself looks foolish. However, fear of the lord's power was not enough to run an

[104] *Gerefa*, 6-7: "Symle he sceal his hyrmen scyrpan mid manunge to hlafordes neode, ond him eac leanian be ðam ðe hy earnian. Ne læte he næfre his hyrmen hyne oferwealdan, ac wille he ælcne mid hlafordes creafte ond mid folcrihte. Selre him his æfre of folgoðe ðonne on, gyf hine magan wyldan ða ðe he scolde wealdan. Ne bið hit hlaforde ræd þæt he þæt ðafige."

estate since workers might slack off, perform poorly, or actively work against this power structure if conditions are too unbalanced.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* James C. Scott argues that subordinate groups like agricultural workers often resist powerful lords through deceptive tactics, which might range from "breaking" farm equipment, so it appears damaged from work to deliberately harvesting crops at a slow, inefficient pace.[105] Due to unbalanced relationships between the dominant and the subordinate, peasants cannot simply challenge or openly disagree with their lords without fearing retribution. Scott suggests that the powerful and the powerless each maintain a public and private discourse. The public discourse encompasses all things that can be said openly without threatening social arrangements. Likewise, the private discourse refers to things said beyond the reach or understanding of the powerful. More specifically, it is the shared folklore through which power is critiqued using language, symbols, or references that would be understood by subordinate groups but not by members of the dominant class. According to Scott, this private, shared discourse allowed peasants to coordinate feelings of distrust, antipathy, or hostility towards powerful figures without challenging them in public. Of course, powerful people knew that their subordinates worked together—often living in close proximity to one another—and so developed methods to control behavior. *Gerefa* seems to recognize these power imbalances. In calling for reeves to inspire workers with admonishments (*mid manunge*) while passing out rewards, the text implied that reeves should use their power strategically to control the peasant population. Similarly, the reeve

[105] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

should work amongst the peasants to better understand and police their private discourse. As an agent of the lord, a reeve's visibility would have made contractual obligations—known as *folcriht*—more immediate and tangible, a reminder for all workers that the lord's gaze was far reaching. This advice was also a piece of occupational folklore: a wise reeve should move amongst and speak with his workers, not stay indoors out of view, because these social connections allowed reeves better management of the estate. In fact, *folcriht* meant more than contractual obligations alone: it also connoted the "common" duties held by all people.

In addition to management advice, *Gerefa* also provided a short calendar in which the estate's seasonal duties were documented. Although Harvey suggests that the calendar is incomplete and impractical, its seasonal timeframe reflects eleventh-century depictions of the labors of the months found in illustrated manuscripts like Cotton Tiberius B.V and Cotton Julius A. VI. Peter Fowler believes that *Gerefa* was a traditional document because farming practices did not change substantially during the tenth and eleventh-centuries, so people continually drew on the experience of seasoned workers to "hand on" proper techniques.[106] That said, Fowler suggests that both RSP and *Gerefa* illustrate the increasing localization of English agriculture on every individual estate.[107]

[106] Peter Fowler, *Farming in the First Millennium AD: British Agriculture Between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 266-271.
[107] Fowler, *Farming*, 269: "Perhaps the most significant development here, however, in both the *Gerefa* and the *Rectitudines*, is the historical implication that agrarian society in England was more and more being localized within thousands of such estates. For many there was doubtless little change from the way their grandparents had lived, but for all how and when they worked was increasingly tied into a vertical system of rights and obligations which were now being written down and formalized, not just by the king at the top as we have seen earlier but by the local lord who was employing good men as managers with 'performance targets' to achieve as specified in a written brief."

Thus, inconsistencies in *Gerefa's* calendar might reflect local patterns of work rather than an incompetent, unaware composer. David Hill argues that illustrations in Tiberius B.V and Julius A. VI were actually representations of seasonal agricultural work, not just literary depictions of the monthly labors.[108] Some of the agricultural activities in the illustrated manuscripts are also listed under the corresponding month in *Gerefa*. For example, threshing, pruning vines, and ploughing are winter activities in Tiberius B.V, Julius A.VI, and *Gerefa.* Likewise, shepherding occurred in May, harvest in August, and fire-making for warmth in November. However, activities such as ploughing, shepherding, harvesting, and fire-making would have occurred on all functioning estates at about the same time each year. Yet *Gerefa's* calendar expects the reeve to take on building maintenance, animal husbandry, field work, and other necessary tasks:

> In May and June and July in the Summer he should break up the field, drag out dung from a mixen, provide a fence for the sheep-fold, shear the sheep, build, repair, fence [enclosures], cut timber, cut wood, weed [the fields], make sheep folds, and make fish weirs and mills. During harvest he should cut corn, in August, September, and October he mows, digs out the woad with a spittle, gathers many crops for the home, thatch [buildings], cleans the sheep-fold and the cattle-shed, attend to the cow-house and also the pigsty—before a severe winter comes to the town—and he should also eagerly promote the well-being of the earth. During Winter he should plough and cleave wood in great frost, raise an

[108] David Hill, "Eleventh Century Labours of the Months in Prose and Pictures, in *Landscape History* 20.1 (1998): 29-39.

> orchard and labor with much indoor work; he should thresh corn, cleave wood, make a stall for cattle, place swine in a sty, make a kiln on the threshing floor—an oven and kiln and many things must [be made] for the estate—also roosts for hens. During Spring, he should cultivate and graft [inserting twigs into trees to extract sap], sow beans, arrange the vine-yard, make ditches, hew the deer-hedges and soon after that, if it may be fair weather, he should plant the madder, sow the linseed and also the woadseed; he should plant herbs and many things; I may not record everything that a good shire-man must procure.[109]

According to *Gerefa*, a reeve's work never ceases. This calendar reads like a checklist of duties, which would have been useful on a large, busy estate. Yet the phrasing is so vague that this list would have had little practical value; moreover, even a semi-competent reeve probably understood seasonal duties merely from experience. However, *Gerefa* assumed that reeves did not necessarily possess knowledge of specialized tasks. Prior to listing seasonal duties, *Gerefa* states: "At the least, it is most desirable that he learns how he may cultivate the land, what he should do when it is the proper time."[110] Although some reeves will better manage the inner workings of an estate

[109] *Gerefa*, 9-12: "Me mæig inmaio ond iun. ond iulio on sumera fealgian, myxendincgan ut dragan. Lochyrdla tilian, sceap scyran, bytlian, Boteatan, tynan, tymbrian, wudian, Weodian, faldian, fiscwer, ond mylne macian. On hærfeste, ripan in agusto, ond septembri. Ond octobri mawan wad spittan, fela til ða ham gæderian, ðacian, ðecgan, ond fald weoxian, scipena behweorfan, ond hlosan eac swa ær to tune to stið winter cume, ond eac yrðe georne forðian. On wintra erian ond in miclum gefyrstum timber cleofan. Orceard ræran ond mænige inweorc wyrcean. Ðerhsan wudu cleofan. hryðeran styllan. swyn stygian. On odene cylne macian. Ofn ond aste ond fela ðinga sceal to tune ge eac henna hrost. On længene eregian ond impian, beana sawan, wingeard settan, dician, deorhege heawan ond raðe æfter ðam gif hit mot gewiderian, mederan settan, linsed sawan, wadsæd eac swa, wyrtun plantain ond fela ðinga; ic eal getellan ne mæig þæt god scirman bycgan sceal."

[110] *Gerefa*, 8: "Huru is mæst neod þæt he asece hu he yrde mæge fyrme geforðian ðonne ðæs tima sy."

than less-experienced ones, *Gerefa* suggests that the ability to discern differences in seasonal duties is more important than knowing how to perform every task. It is possible that this list of seasonal obligations was meant for the lord rather than the reeve; more specifically, it could serve as a kind of checklist by which lords would evaluate reeves and deem them intelligent or not. However, it is unlikely that lords supervised reeves so closely, especially since *Gerefa* laid out manorial tasks that would have been difficult to observe on a large estate, like threshing indoors or sowing certain crops. Instead, the calendar functioned more like a quasi-legal contract than a step-by-step guide. The reeve should constantly be busy, never faltering or slacking off throughout the year. Shearing sheep was as important a Summer task as repairing hedges or building a mill. In this sense, the reeve's use of time reflected his moral character: a diligent, rational reeve understood that the manor was a place of work and that the year was compartmentalized into different types of labor. Furthermore, a large segment of the seasonal duties involved repairing, maintaining, or constructing things on the estate like cattle-sheds, sheep-folds, and hedges. An intelligent reeve had to understand that the estate was an ever-changing place; its infrastructure required the same type of seasonal cultivation as the fields because these elements changed from year to year. Thus, a reeve who appreciated the unstable nature of agricultural work was best suited to discern differences on the estate.

Conclusion

So far, I have argued that *Gerefa* straddles the line between the practical and the literary. It was neither a how-to manual nor simply an imitation of earlier agricultural tracts. On one level, *Gerefa* depicts the qualities of an ideal reeve: he is observant,

diligent, hard-working, loyal, and intelligent. These characteristics were the foundation on which a well-managed estate was built since poor management threatened the social order as much as it harmed productivity. On another level, *Gerefa* codifies the type of knowledge that an effective reeve should possess: he should understand seasonal tasks, know how to manage workers, and be familiar with the customs of an estate. In describing the ideal character of a reeve, *Gerefa* shows that the outcome of agricultural work was inseparable from the moral, rational qualities of those who managed it. As an agent of the lord, the reeve was responsible for maintaining social order on manorial estates, which meant that he served as a mediator of traditional social arrangements. The reeve was not expected to be an innovator who implemented new managerial techniques but someone who understood both seasonal differences and established customs. Creative, outside-the-box thinkers probably made terrible reeves, unless they devoted all their energy to maximizing the estate's productivity. Yet, in serving as mediators of tradition, reeves had to learn large amounts of uncodified information about the workings of an estate while simultaneously managing workers and keeping accounts. These responsibilities placed social pressure on reeves from both lords—because they could punish or dismiss ineffective reeves—and workers—because they could resist or otherwise make life difficult for reeves. Since reeves were typically selected by their peers, rumors, gossip, or "private discourse" could further undermine or challenge a reeve's oversight. If the workers on an estate came to despise their reeve and did not vote him into office the following year, it might be difficult for him to integrate himself back into his immediate community. Given these conditions, the moralizing discourse

surrounding reeves in late Anglo-Saxon England responded directly to the social environment in which reeves worked. Efforts by Wulfstan and the anonymous compilers of the *Old English Martyrology* to transpose reeves onto historical social settings had a similar effect: for these writers, the office of the reeve was legitimized by tradition. The reeve was depicted as a stable force since ancient times; he was the hub around which all agricultural work circulated. As I have argued, these representations obscured occupational realities that were often messy and complex. More importantly, these representations positioned reeves in longer, ongoing genealogies in which exemplary figures served as models for current behavior and as guides for moral issues.

Yet *Gerefa* demonstrates a mode of discourse that receives less critical attention from scholars: that of theoretical speculation about the characteristics and mental abilities that made reeves effective. Claiming that *Gerefa* was merely a "literary" text overlooks the practical ways that it could have been used to theorize about occupational environments and create standards for future generations. *Gerefa* responded to serious issues that any reeve would have encountered throughout the year: what legal knowledge should he possess? What are his most fundamental duties? How should reeves manage workers? What attitude leads to efficient oversight? By providing cursory answers to these questions, *Gerefa* shows that the story of modern management practices is even older than commonly acknowledged. The fact that *Gerefa* was copied into a legal encyclopedia and attached to RSP further suggests that this management discourse could be codified and applied to reeves on any estate, not just the locality from which it emerged.

In modern management training programs, students might study organizational behavior and industrial psychology to better understand how managers can responsibly oversee workers. Of course, organizations do not always follow ethical management practices. In fact, the story of management training is about better surveillance from the top and increased efficiency and productivity from the actual workers. This story has already been told by Karl Marx and Thomas Piketty since it intersects with the history of capitalism.[111] Yet, as I've shown throughout this chapter, this history is even older than commonly thought. In her book *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management,* Caitlin Rosenthal shows that early twentieth-century management practices drew directly on organizing techniques developed on West Indian and Southern plantations.[112] These plantations created managerial hierarchies that forced enslaved people to serve as overseers. Likewise, plantations experimented with accounting techniques that regulated the exact amount of work that an individual body should perform over a given period of time; these practices are still in use throughout retail occupations today. Rosenthal demonstrates that modern capitalism was literally built on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slavery, which has led to continued material inequalities for workers of color into the twenty-first century.

Although the story of medieval reeves is not nearly as harrowing as plantation slavery in the Americas, the fact remains that medieval English estates were already

[111] Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), trans. Jack Cohen; Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), trans. Arthur Goldhammer.
[112] Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

experimenting with management techniques to maximize productivity and control those who did the work by keeping them in legal bondage. As scholars grapple with the racist heritage of "Anglo-Saxon" studies, we need to be more open about the fact that early medieval agriculture was dependent on slavery, serfdom, and inequality. It is my hope that further research will shed more light on the medieval history of management, perhaps uncovering connections between early English colonists and their medieval heritage. Even if such connections are not apparent, workers today still face unequal labor conditions, long work weeks (i.e. the "grind"), and low pay across the service sector—the largest sector of the North American economy. Throughout the global south, trade agreements favoring industrial, wealthy nations have weakened organizing power and exacerbated working conditions for millions of powerless laborers. As the story of work in the twenty-first century continues to unfold, medieval scholars need to be ready to join these conversations and show that the history of contemporary workplace conditions did not spontaneously arise with industrial capitalism. In doing so, we can show that solidarity extends even to the subjects of history, which might help infuse our classrooms with a sense of urgency proportional to the labor crises we face.

Chapter 4: Cunning Folk and Charms: The Invisible Labor of Medical Practitioners

In accounts of Æthelthryth's death, the East-Anglian saint is said to have died three days after a doctor lanced a tumor on her neck. The exact cause of this affliction is left unstated. However, the hagiographic tradition represented her tumor as divine retribution for the childhood vanity of wearing too many gold necklaces. There are several extant accounts of her final days.

In the *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,* Bede's narrative relates her death:

> When the tomb of the sacred virgin and bride of Christ was opened and the body brought to light, it was found to be as uncorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day. Bishop Wilfrid and many others who knew about it testify to this; but more certain proof is given by a doctor named Cynefrith, who was present at her death-bed and at her elevation from the tomb. He used to relate how, during her illness, she had a very large tumor beneath her jaw. "'I was ordered,' he said, 'to cut this tumor so as to drain out the poisonous matter within it. After I had done this she seemed to be easier for about two days and many thought that she would recover from her sickness. But on the third day she was attacked by her

former pains and was soon taken from this world, exchanging pain and death for everlasting health and life."[1]

Ælfric's Old English *vita* told the same story:

> Then in the eighth year after she was made abbess, she was grievously afflicted, as she herself foretold; for a large tumor grew on her throat just under her chin bone, and she earnestly thanked God in that she suffered a pain in her neck, saying: "I know verily that I am well deserving that my neck should be afflicted with so great a malady, because in my youth I adorned my neck with manifold neck-chains, and now I think that God's justice may cleanse my guilt, since now I have this swelling, which shines instead of gold, and this scorching heat instead of sparkling gems." Amongst that faithful band there was a certain leech named Cynefrith, and some of them said that the leech ought to lance the tumor; he did so right away, and there came out pus. They thought then that she might recover, but she gloriously departed out of this world to God on the third day after the tumor was opened, and was buried, as she herself had asked and bidden, amongst her sisters in a wooden coffin.[2]

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[1] Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 394-5: "Cumque corpus sacrae uirginis ac sponsae Christi aperto sepulchro esset prolatum in lucem, ita incorruptum inuentum est, ac si eodem die fuisset defuncta siue humo condita, sicut et praefatus antistes Uilfrid et multi alii qui nouere testantur ; sed certiori notitia medicus Cynifrid, qui et morienti illi et eleuatae de tumulo adfuit, qui referre erat solitus quod illa infirmata habuerit tumorem maximum sub maxilla. 'Iusseruntque me' inquit 'incidere tumorem illum, ut effluerет noxius umor qui inerat. Quod dum facerem, uidebatur illa per biduum aliquanto Ieuius habere, ita ut multi putarent quia sanari posset a languor. Tertia autem die prioribus adgrauata doloribus et rapta confestim de mundo, dolorem omnem ac mortem perpetua salute ac uita mutauit."

[2] Ælfric, "Ða on þam eahteoðan geare siððan heo abbudisse wæs heo wearð geuntrumod swa swa heo ær witegode swa an gespel weox on hire spuran mycel under þam cynnebane. Heo swiðe þancode gode heo on

The twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*—a chronicle of the monastery of Ely—also narrated her death:

> But now, as the discomfort of her bodily parts increased more and more, people were keen to seek the aid of a medical practitioner, or, if they could, to assuage and remove the discomfort and pain. In actual fact, a certain medical practitioner called Cynefrith was summoned from among the people standing around her, the aim being that the virgin's pain might be relieved by him, and he was ordered to lance that swelling, so that the harmful liquid which was in it might flow out. While he was doing this, she seemed for two days to feel somewhat relieved, with the result that many people thought she could be cured of her illness and could now avert death by this sort of remedy. For indeed, the swelling issued forth liquid, and the inflammation lessened a little for two days. All rejoiced, but the providence of God unexpectedly put an end to their sudden rejoicings.[3]

þam swuran sum geswinc þolode. Heo cwæþ ic þat geare ic wel wyrðe eom min swura beo geswenct mid swylcere untrumnysse forðan þe ic on iugoðe frætwode minne swuran mid mænig fealdum swur beagum me is nu geþuht godes arfæstnyss þone gylt aclænsige þonne me nu þis gespel scynð for golde þæs hata bryne for healicum gymstanum. Ða wæs þær sum læce on ðam geleaffullum heape cynefryð gehaten hi cwædon þa sume se læce sceolde asceotan geswell þa dyde he sona swa þær sah ut wyrms. Wearð him þa geðuht spilice heo gewurðan mihte ac heo gewat of worulde mid wuldre to gode on þam ðriddan dæge syððan se dolh wæs geopenod wearð bebyrged swa swa heo bæd sylf het betwux hire geswustrum on treowenre cyste."

[3] *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E.O. Blake (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1962), book I, chapter 21: "Sed iam ingruente magis ac magis membrorum incommoditate, auxsilium medici inquirere student vel, si possent, mitigantes doloris inportunitatem auferre. Quidam vero a circumstantibus accersitur medicus, Kinefridus nomine, ut per eum virginalis molestia temperetur, iubeturque tumorem illum incidere, ut effluerent noxius humor qui inerat. Quod dum faceret, videbatur illa per biduum aliquanto levius habere, ita ut multi putarent quia sanari posset a languor mortemque tali remedio iam posse declinare. Tumor etenim effluxit, ardor per biduum aliquantulum recessit. Gratulantur universi, sed eorum gaudia subita ex improviso Dei terminavit providentia." All translations of the *Liber Eliensis* are from Janet Fairweather, trans., *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005).

In all of these accounts, there is a curious character named Cynefrith who lances the tumor and afterwards bears witness to the saint's incorruptible body. These narratives provide little information about Cynefrith—he is largely invisible to the authors. According to Bede, Cynefrith was a *medicus* who aided the saint in her final days. Although somewhat ambiguous, the first-person account suggests that Bede might have personally interviewed Cynefrith. Drawing on Bede's account, Ælfric adds that Cynefrith was a leech who was part of the saint's community. In both cases, it seems that Cynefrith was ordered to lance the tumor by members of the saint's community. Afterwards, he remained by her bedside, testifying to her rapid decline three days later. In a lengthy passage, the *Liber Eliensis* explains how Cynefrith was among those who discovered the saint's incorruptible body:

> In addition, countless people who knew and were present witnessed this particular happening; and, moreover—making the fact more certain and the truth more evident—among others present there was the medical man Cynefrith, who was at her side when she was raised from the tomb, just as he was when she was dying, so that he might be a witness to that miracle, so marvelous and precious for its rarity. He was a witness, then, who retained a recollection of the incision which he had once made in her body, and who had been accustomed to report that when she was ill she had a very large swelling beneath her jaw.[4]

[4] *Liber Eliensis*, 1.27: "Atque innumeri qui novere et adfuere id ipsum testati sunt, sed et inter ceteros ad ampliorem rei certitudinem et veritatis evidentiam medicus Kinefridus, qui sicut morienti illi ita et elevate de tumulo presentialis affuit, ut in tam mirando et pro raritate pretiso miraculo testis existerat, memor itaque ille incisure quam quondam fecerat in eius corpore qui referre erat solitus, quod illa infirmata habuerit tumorem maximum sub maxilla."

Although Cynefrith's identity is somewhat obscure, his role in accounts of Æthelthryth's life is more evident. As a medical practitioner, Cynefrith's first-hand account of the saint's death and bodily transformation legitimized the presence of divine intervention. In doing so, Cynefrith confirmed that the incision he had made removing her tumor was healed: "And when the covering of her face was removed, they showed me also that the wound of the incision which I had made, had been healed, in such a way that instead of the open, gaping wound with which she was buried, there appeared at that time the slightest traces of a scar."[5] Cynefrith was thus an expert witness to Æthelthryth's sanctity; his status as a *medicus* or leech made his testimony all the more credible even if we know nothing else about his life. The fact that this same episode was copied both by Ælfric and the composer of the *Liber Eliensis* insured that Cynefrith would become an important part of the legendary material surrounding Æthelthryth.

Despite Cynefrith's insistence on divine intervention, the effectiveness of his medical skill will probably rise doubts in the modern reader. After all, Æthelthryth died merely three days after he lanced the tumor. Even if such surgeries were often unsuccessful in the early Middle Ages, it is reasonable to imagine that Æthelthryth's community saw Cynefrith as bearing some responsibility for her death since his actions contributed directly to her rapid decline. Why, then, would Bede, Ælfric, and the *Liber Eliensis* represent Cynefrith in a positive light, as a witness to the saint's miraculous power, rather than a reckless, unskilled doctor? To answer this question, we need to

[5] *Liber Eliensis*, 1.27: "Et discoopero vultus indumento, monstraverunt etiam mihi vulnus incisure, quod feceram, curatum, ita ut mirum in modum pro aperto et hianti vulnere, cum quo sepulta erat, tenuissima tunc cicatrices vestigia apparerent."

understand how Cynefrith's actions might have been received in a competitive medicinal environment, by people living both inside and outside centers of textual production. I argue that Cynefrith's story illustrates the social dynamics underlying work that will later be ascribed to a class of people called the cunning folk. This work dealt with everyday issues like medicine, bodily protection, love, and theft. It could also deal with important things like childbirth, death, and agricultural production. Cynefrith's appearance in these narratives thus represents a written testimonial culture in which helpful cunning folk could be elevated while ineffective ones could be delegitimized. Since ecclesiastical institutions dominated manuscript production, it was far easier for the clergy to "curate" their own reviews in the textual record than it was for people lacking access to centers of writing. As this chapter demonstrates, specialists in medical, legal, or agricultural knowledge found themselves in a world in which ritual authority was competed over by ecclesiastical and secular institutions.

The folklorist Timothy Tangherlini explored a similar dynamic among cunning folk in Danish legend traditions from the sixteenth through nineteenth -centuries. According to Tangherlini, Danish cunning folk operated in competitive marketplaces for healing skills. In this marketplace, the reputation of a cunning folk was shaped by storytelling and rumor; more precisely, if someone was identified as a witch, and these charges spread through local storytelling traditions, that individual would either be arrested or find their clientele scared away. Tangherlini adds that "community members must have been well aware of the power of storytelling, and while accounts of witchcraft often were an expression of fear, they were also likely deployed in a tactical manner out

of vindictiveness."[6] Witness statements revealed that witches were often charged with economic crimes like theft, bodily harm, or destruction of property, which indicates that witches were seen as threats to the economic order in small, rural communities.[7] Conversely, the cunning folk were not always grouped together with witches because these people were not seen as economic threats but as helpful medical practitioners.[8] To ward off accusations of witchcraft, Tangherlini argues that cunning folk spread counter narratives through their clientele. These narratives were essentially proto-Yelp reviews: a well-established cunning person was already connected to a larger social network so any negative review would likely have little impact.[9] Conversely, a newly established cunning folk was more susceptible to negative reviews, meaning that accusations of witchcraft could be especially harmful.[10] In rural communities with limited access to

[6] Timothy R. Tangherlini, "How Do You Know She's a Witch?" Witches, Cunning Folk, and Competition in Denmark, *Western Folklore* 59.3 (2000): 279-303, at 283.
[7] Tangherlini, "Cunning Folk," 283: "In a fascinating tabulation of witness statements from Danish witchcraft trials, Johansen notes 271 accusations of murder, 510 of causing human illness, 339 of causing cattle's death, thirty-nine of causing cattle's illness, 104 of stealing or spoiling milk, 157 of killing horses or causing illness, thirty-seven of killing sheep, twenty-seven of killing pigs, twenty-one of ruining beer, and eleven of inflicting poverty."
[8] Tangherlini, "Cunning Folk," 284: "Although the possibility exists that cunning folk could find themselves on the wrong end of a witchcraft accusation if one of their cures failed in a spectacular manner, this seems not to have been a terribly widespread phenomenon. In some trials, well-intentioned parishioners would even testify to the folk healing abilities of the accused, not as evidence of the accused's malfeasance, but rather as evidence of their positive character—a tactic that more often than not back-fired since, at the very least, the accused now stood liable for punishment on these lesser charges."
[9] Tangherlini, "Cunning Folk," 286.
[10] Tangherlini, "Cunning Folk," 290-1, points out that the reputation of cunning folk could also change over time. if the community grew to doubt someone's healing abilities, patients might spread stories in which cures failed. Nonetheless, Tangherlini adds that cunning folk were generally valued for their skills (293): "Despite the possibility of using stories as a rhetorical weapon emphasizing the negative aspects of cunning or a cunning person's individual talents or allegiances, given the large number of positively resolved legends concerning cunning folk—well over seventy percent of all such stories have positive resolutions—one must conclude that most tradition participants valued their services. These people would also be inclined to tell stories which described the cunning folk to be more adept at curing than local physicians."

professional physicians, cunning folk would have had greater control of the medical marketplace.

The story of Cynefrith shows how ecclesiastical authorities may have influenced the seventh-century medical marketplace. In doing so, the clergy inserted their own "cunning folk" into Æthelthrythian tradition. Once this oral testimony was inserted into the written record, the limitations of face-to-face interactions could be elided by textual culture. Cynefrith thus bore witness to the healing, regenerative power available to those who were faithful to the Church. Bede's account suggests that Cynefrith actually spread his testimony by word of mouth while he was alive, perhaps speaking to Bede directly: "Bishop Wilfrid and many others who knew about it testify to this; but more certain proof is given by a doctor named Cynefrith, who was present at her death-bed and at her elevation from the tomb. He used to relate how, during her illness, she had a very large tumor beneath her jaw."[11] The *Liber Eliensis* is more direct: "what the sainted Bede wrote was in accordance with what he had learnt from the spoken evidence of Wilfrid, the most holy Archbishop of York, the physician Cynefrith and other truthful people, and the testimony of the general public."[12] Although Cynefrith may have personally testified to Æthelthryth's death and elevation, writing ensured that his account was preserved for future generations. Even Bede's eighth-century account served as a positive review of

[11] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 395: "Cumque corpus sacrae uirginis ac sponsae Christi aperto sepulchro esset prolatum in lucem, ita incorruptum inuentum est, ac si eodem die fuisset defuncta siue humo condita, sicut et praefatus antistes Uilfrid et multi alii qui nouere testantur ; sed certiori notitia medicus Cynifrid, qui et morienti illi et eleuatae de tumulo adfuit, qui referre erat solitus quod illa infirmata habuerit tumorem maximum sub maxilla."

[12] *Liber Eliensis*, 1.12: "Sanctissimi Wilfridi quoque Eboracensis archiepiscopi assertione ac medici Kinefridi aliorumque veridicorum, sed et communis attestatione vulgi, sicut Beda sanctus didiscerat, scrpsit, cuius etiam insigne virginitatis testimonium perhibens ita commendabat."

Cynefrith: rather than frame him as a terrible *medicus*, Bede redeems the doctor in the eyes of the Church. As a result, any responsibility Cynefrith bore for Æthelthryth's death was diminished. Now, future readers would see how divine intervention healed the saint's body, scarred as it was by the medical actions of a human. Cynefrith's legend testified to the healing power of the Church while emphasizing the limitations of worldly medicine. The longer hagiographic narratives found in the *Liber Eliensis,* Ælfric's sermons, and the *Vita S. Ætheldrethe* further expand on Æthelthryth's healing abilities, essentially serving as propaganda attesting to the power of her cult in an English countryside populated by local saints.[13]

Did Cynefrith actually belong to the category of cunning folk? As this chapter demonstrates, cunning folk existed in early medieval England even if the category was not popularized until the sixteenth-century. To identify early medieval cunning folk, we should focus less on specific adjectives and more on the people performing legal or medicinal work in small communities. Unlike our contemporary industrial world, early medieval people had little access to medical or legal institutions like hospitals or law offices. In small villages, healing remedies could have been handed on through close social networks even though many of these would never be recorded. In the event that traditional remedies failed to cure physical pain or sickness, specialists in healing—even those with the social ability to comfort distressed patients—were perhaps the last resort. Local legal authorities might not care enough to search for stolen goods (or simply come

[13] See John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Rosalind Love, ed. trans., *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

up short); alternatively, missing cattle were so valuable that immediate action was required to track them down.

The legal and medical help performed by cunning folk is important to us precisely because it dealt with work that left only traces in the textual record. This work usually went unrecorded, and so finding narratives about competing practitioners is difficult. The textual record tells us more about the work of scribes than medical practitioners. In the famous tripartite division of medieval society into the "three estates," the *laboratores* ("those who work") referred to the peasant class who provided goods and services to the *oratores* ("those who pray") and the *bellatores* ("those who fight"). In this framework, workers were only valuable if they served the spiritual and martial elements of the social order by producing food or other useful items; work performed outside this normative structure was less valuable to the body politic. But the three estates were a theoretical tool for arranging society, not a representation of how labor was valued by early medieval communities.[14] Before discussing medieval culture, I offer this caveat: because the work of folk medical practitioners was mostly invisible in the textual record, I believe that research on contemporary labor struggles provides a helpful framework for understanding why the labor of certain people is valued more than others.

Hidden Labor, Shadow Work

In the United States, work is a valuable marker of self-worth and character. A familiar icebreaker, the question "what do you do?" asks us to prioritize our occupational

[14] T.E. Powell, "The Three Orders of Society in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994): 103-32.

role rather than other parts of our identity. Certain occupations provide more monetary recompense than others (i.e. doctors, lawyers, bankers). Likewise, other jobs are considered socially valuable even though they provide minimal incomes (i.e. teachers, sanitation workers, social workers). As the anthropologist David Graeber notes, work is only considered "valuable" in our society if it is hard, productive, time consuming labor; however, there are many jobs that are demonstrably pointless, taking up time and resources even though the workers know that their job is unnecessary for their organization to function.[15] Factors like declining pay, reduced benefits, and widespread dismantling of the union workforce have pushed more people into difficult, even unsustainable patterns of labor. Yet, many people perform work that is considered illegitimate. These jobs, much like graduate student "work," might be recognized as contingent, transitory positions, which are unworthy jobs in the eyes of society. These are not "real jobs" but stepping-stones on the way to productive careers. Other work like

[15] David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018). In 2013, Graeber published "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs" in a radical magazine called *Strike!* In 2018, he published a book-length study that explored this phenomenon more closely. In his 2013 essay, Graeber tested John Maynard Keynes' 1930 hypothesis that "by century's end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like Great Britain or the United States would have achieved a fifteen-hour work week." After publication, Graeber's essay was translated into over a dozen languages and reprinted worldwide. Awaiting the results in a cabin in Quebec, Graeber received emails from corporate lawyers, academic administrators, and other white-collar professionals confirming his theory that their jobs were pointless. In 2015, the polling agency YouGov asked Britons if their job "[made] a meaningful contribution to the world?" The results found that 37 percent of respondents felt their job was pointless, 50 percent thought it was useful, while 13 percent were unsure. Using these statistics, Graeber categorized "bullshit jobs" into five major varieties in chapter 2 (pages 27-67): (1) flunkies, what Graeber calls "feudal retainers," exist to "make someone else look or feel important;" (2) goons, who are "people whose jobs have an aggressive element, but, crucially, exist only because other people employ them," such as armed forces, private security, or lobbyists; (3) duct tapers, "employees whose jobs exist only because of a glitch or fault in the organization; who are there to solve a problem that ought not to exist," such as many working-class jobs hired to fix organizations that were poorly designed in the first place; (4) box tickers, "employees who exist only or primarily to allow an organization to be able to claim it is doing something that, in fact, it is not doing;" and (5) task masters, employees whose "role consists entirely of assigning work to others" or "to create bullshit tasks for others to do, to supervise bullshit, or even to create entirely new bullshit jobs."

child rearing is hard, time intensive, and emotionally exhausting, but the United States offers few legal protections for this type of labor and even less monetary compensation. The popularization of the term "emotional labor" captures additional, unseen burdens facing employees who have to perform emotions in the workplace.[16] Although performing "hard work" often contributes to a sense of self-worth, not all "work" is legitimized or considered socially valuable.

Due to the realities of contemporary work, many essentially services are invisible to the formal, monetized economy. In their 2016 volume *Invisible Labor*, Winifred Poster, Marion Crain, and Miriam Cherry show various ways in which labor can be erased or hidden from formal employment relationships. The authors define invisible labor as "activities that occur within the context of paid employment that workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit or explicit) from employers and that are crucial for workers to generate income, to obtain or retain their jobs, and to further their careers, yet are often overlooked, ignored, and/or devalued by employers, consumers, workers, and ultimately the legal system itself."[17] Because invisible labor is

[16] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Hochschild argues that human emotions are literally commodified in certain workplaces. Retail workers, flight attendants, and service workers must demonstrate emotional competence on the job, which means, smiling appropriately, acting outgoing and friendly, and even pretending to care about people on the job. In turn, companies commodify the emotions of their employees through advertisements depicting smiling, happy workers or slogans about workers or care and connect with their customers. A simple smile on an employees face becomes a company asset. In reality, workers create artificial emotions that do not always line up with their current disposition. At 5, Hochschild asks, "How can the flight attendant tell when her job is done? A service has been produced; the customer seems content. In the case of the flight attendant, the *emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself,* in a way that loving or hating wallpaper is not a part of producing wallpaper. Seeming to 'love the job' becomes part of the job; and actually trying to love it, and to enjoy the customers, helps the worker in this effort."

[17] Winifred R. Poster, Marion Crain, and Miriam A. Cherry, eds., *Invisible Labor: Hidden Work in the Contemporary World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 6.

often hidden from consumers—through misrepresentation, displacement of workers, or devaluing what counts as work—it is often unregulated and ignored in political discourse.[18] This dynamic is most evident among vulnerable communities including migrant farmworkers, domestic care workers, sex workers, and service workers. In these cases, lack of legal regulations combined with privatization has serious ethical ramifications. Immigrant laborers are especially vulnerable since US immigration law creates categories of desirable and undesirable immigrants; as a result, certain immigrant groups receive more legal protection than others.[19]

The authors identify several trends underlying the proliferation of invisible labor in the twenty-first century. Work has become increasingly precarious. Short-term, low-paying jobs have dissuaded people from organizing to challenge the conditions of their employment. Likewise, "as jobs become fragmented, their parts become increasingly dispersed and hard to see."[20] As service sector jobs increase, employees are evaluated according to their "ability to be invisible—to blend in and do the job fluidly without being noticed."[21] Additionally, the rise of consumerism has led to the proliferation of

[18] Poster, Crain, and Cherry, *Invisible Labor*, 9 and 17. The authors argue that visible workers are just as important as invisible ones. Since workers are often made visible by powerful organizations like Nordstrom or Abercrombie & Fitch, we must also pay attention to the kind of workers that are selected to represent these companies. Friendly employees who greet consumers and well-dressed store clerics obscure the reality that these organizations use sweatshop labor half a world away to manufacture their products. Racial dynamics further obscure unseen work; by misrepresenting the ethnic and national identity of their workers, powerful organizations seek to accommodate potential consumers. For example, clothing stores might require Black workers to dress and talk like middle class white people; these same employees might only be hired if their names sound sufficiently "white."
[19] Silas W. Allard, "A Desired Composition: Regulating Vulnerability through Immigration Law," in *Vulnerability and the Legal Organization of Work*, eds. Martha Albertson Fineman and Jonathan W. Fineman, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 177-193.
[20] Poster, Crain, and Cherry, *Invisible Labor*, 11-12.
[21] Poster, Crain, and Cherry, *Invisible Labor*, 12.

shopping malls and the service sector, which "involves the growing social pressure to buy goods and services even when they are not needed."[22] Finally, increased reliance on technology coupled with globalization has created multinational firms with inordinate political power. Through political lobbying, think tanks, and journalism, these organizations can influence the law and public opinion. As a result, multinational firms can write legislation that outsources jobs, craft regulations favorable to corporations, and shape immigration policies that control the flow of labor.

A common thread throughout studies on invisible labor is that it is a relatively recent development in capitalist societies. With the rise of wage labor during the eighteenth-century, people no longer worked merely to subsist but to generate profit. As productive work was differentiated from leisure, invisible labor became the hidden tasks necessary for performing wage labor. These tasks included domestic work, shopping, traveling to one's job, dealing with Human Resources or other bureaucrats, and caring for the household. The historian of the Middle Ages Ivan Illich offered an early example of this argument in his 1981 book *Shadow Work.* He argued that "shadow work" did not exist in preindustrial societies because the "household itself created most of what it needed to exist."[23] For Illich, medieval societies took care of everyone who was considered a member while those who actually performed wage labor were seen as destitute, having no place in the body politic.[24] However, this interpretation overlooks the range of medical care and domestic work that was conditional for workers to perform

[22] Poster, Crain, and Cherry, *Invisible Labor*, 12.
[23] Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (Boston: Marion Boyers, 1981), 100.
[24] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 102.

their duties. The act of gathering herbs—necessary for many of the remedies contained in the *Lacnunga* and *Bald's Leechbook*—required a trained eye and time commitment. Likewise, specialist medical practitioners took on a great deal of responsibility caring for the sick and wounded as this role made one vulnerable to retaliation, condemnation, or other forms of social exclusion. These activities were not just subsistence labor. While globalization and increasing precarity have created new conditions for devaluing and marginalizing labor, I believe that a similar process was already underway in the early medieval service sector.

I contend that a vast amount of early medieval labor has been rendered invisible by scholarly focus on the philological and symbolic elements of texts. More precisely, scholars have transposed our own contemporary conceptions of invisible labor onto the texts we read, which ends up prioritizing a clerical, elite worldview that fails to represent the actual dynamics of early medieval labor. This oversight has fallen particularly hard on medical and charmic texts because we know very little about practitioners. In early medieval England, there were different types of medical and service practitioners, those who helped others with physical ailments or aided in romantic relations, recovered stolen property, or provided protection for traveling. By the latter Middle Ages, cunning folk performed many of these services, so I will use this category as a starting point. On the ground, cunning folk could be healers, midwives, or local ritual specialists. In the written record, cunning folk were represented more ambiguously as magicians, poisoners, or doctors. The difference between representation and reality ran deep: the presence of charms in manuscript margins was indicative of a notebook; more precisely, these

suggest that the clergy did not merely store charmic material but rather studied it to better prepare themselves for pastoral care. The testimonial culture on display in traditions around St. Æthelthryth thus elevated the healing power of God over that of humanity: Cynefrith's verbal testimony was more valuable than his medical skill. As an individual, his work is rendered invisible by the texts, serving merely as a hagiographic trope that has dutifully been replicated by scholars. In doing so, these narratives legitimized the medical work performed at ecclesiastical institutions. The hand of a leech—untouched by God—was not enough to heal the sick or make the body whole again. Cynefrith's continued survival as a mere rhetorical trope need not persist; scholars have a responsibility to question how our own assumptions and values about labor shape our interpretations of medical and agricultural texts.

This chapter will explore how service work—medical and agricultural—has been rendered invisible both in the eyes of early medieval institutions and on the pages of modern academic texts. I do not pretend that a lot of early medieval labor is invisible simply because manuscripts were produced by a small segment of society; instead, I believe that this viewpoint is replicated by scholarship that focuses on word studies or Christian symbolism at the expense of work itself. First, I turn to recent work on the cunning folk of the late medieval and early modern period. Since these latter eras contain more data, we can start understanding the socio-economic background of folk practitioners. Next, I turn to early medieval law codes and penitentials to show how folk practitioners were categorized by the legal "system." As professional medical practitioners gain more status in later centuries, the services performed by folk

practitioners like cunning folk were gradually regulated by legal systems. Due to this trajectory, it is helpful to illustrate that such regulations were hardly in place during the early medieval period. After laying out this socio-economic and legal context, I turn to two case studies of Old English rituals. The first—*wið lætbyrde*—is found in the medical handbook called the *Lacnunga.* This ritual was designed for women having trouble carrying a healthy baby to term. The second ritual—called the *Æcerbot*—was copied into British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.VIII, fols. 176r-178r. The *Æcerbot* is a lengthy agricultural ritual intended for protecting vulnerable fields from harm. Through these two case studies, I will show that folk practitioners performed extensive planning, organization, and preparation to keep the body healthy and the fields fertile. In the following pages, I make this hidden labor visible again and ask that scholars recognize the material realities beneath our texts.

Cunning Folk Everywhere!

In the last two decades, scholars have expanded our historical understanding of the cunning folk. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth-centuries, cunning folk were regarded as central figures throughout the English countryside. By the early eighteenth-century, Robert Southey remarked that "A cunning-man, or a cunning-woman, as they are termed, is to be found near every town."[25] However, most scholarly work on this proliferation deals with the early modern period due to abundant evidence and the gradual professionalization of the cunning folk. Nonetheless, early medieval legal texts

[25] Robert Southey, *Spectator*, 9 October 1712, Letters from England, 295.

and homilies suggest that cunning folk were also active in this period. In the early 1970s, Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* brought new attention to cunning folk in the archival record.[26] This trend continued in more recent work, as scholars like Emma Wilby and Owen Davies explained the occupational environment in which cunning folk worked. As these scholars demonstrate, academic writing tends to situate the cunning folk in conversations about magic and supernatural belief. For instance, Emma Wilby's *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* argues that supernatural agents aided the work performed by cunning folk. In *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History*, Owen Davies lays out the socio-economic background of cunning folk. By emphasizing their hidden, unseen work, I hope to show that cunning folk studies can supplement labor history in exciting new ways.

In the medieval archival record, cunning folk are hard to identify because they were opposed by ecclesiastical authorities—often the same people who created law codes and proscriptive homilies. For this reason, anyone resembling a cunning folk had no agency to speak against contemporary elites or record their own accounts throughout the medieval period. In fact, the first substantive accounts of cunning folk were recorded in transcripts of witch trials between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scholars like Wilby and Davies have generally focused on this period because evidence abounds in law codes, treatises, and court transcripts; however, earlier periods often receive less attention. This asymmetry is primarily due to historiographic issues that make studying

[26] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971).

cunning folk difficult, even when more evidence is available. As already noted, one obvious reason is that cunning folk were generally left out of the historical record.[27] Another important factor is the confusion among folk medical and legal practitioners. Davies points out that scholars often conflate separate practitioners even though contemporary people would have recognized differences among various types of specialists. For instance, although charmers and astrologers are often categorized as cunning folk, each participated in traditions with their own unique lineage and cultural meaning.[28] Additionally, cunning folk are so tied up in the history of witchcraft that the two groups are sometimes inseparable in written accounts. Whereas witches performed malevolent magic and consorted with demons, cunning folk were "unwitching" experts who provided various helpful services to the community. A final historiographic issue rests in the social status of cunning folk: by Elizabethan England, cunning folk were more likely to come from artisans and craftsmen than manual laborers like farmers. This division was largely the result of literacy spreading among tradesmen, which permitted these social classes to access textual knowledge in medical texts, herbals, and other treatises.[29] Even though the occupational environment in early medieval England was not stratified by literacy so much as by legal contracts, cunning folk from later periods

[27] Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (New York: Hambledon, 2003), viii-ix: "The fact that the terms cunning-man and cunning-woman are absent from the Anglo-Saxon sources does not mean they were not in popular usage, only that they were not used in the formal vocabulary of the time. Likewise in the medieval period we hear nothing of them because Latin was the main written language, particularly for official documents. Instead, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we find terms such as *incantatrix*, *incantatory*, *sortilegus*, and *maleficus* being used to refer to a range of magical practitioners including diviners and cunning-folk."
[28] Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, 83.
[29] Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, 69-71.

illuminate a type of work that social authorities relegated to the shadows, work made invisible because of its unpleasant character.

Accounting for these historiographic issues allows us to better situate cunning folk in their social and occupational environments. In doing so, we may have a better sense of the type of people who performed this invisible labor. During the early modern period and beyond, cunning folk were stratified according to occupational positions. Davies notes that "the social profile of cunning-folk changed surprisingly little" during this period:

> The majority, roughly some two-thirds, were male. Evidence for the early modern period indicates that many were artisans, and a survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cunning-men similarly reveals that over 80 percent were craftsmen, tradesmen, or farmers. To put it in a broader context, cunning-folk came from a stratum of society that was at least semi-literate and which possessed a certain degree of authority in the community[…]one practical reason why the profession was largely closed to the laboring classes was that, whereas craftsmen or tradesmen were often self-employed and could apportion their time between orthodox occupation and magical practice, labourers had little such freedom, making it difficult to provide the round-the-clock service that people expected from cunning-folk[…]the hierarchical nature of social relations may also help explain the exclusion of the laboring classes from wielding magical power. Considering that a significant proportion of those who consulted cunning-folk were farmers, there might have also been a reluctance amongst this important

customer base to consult and pay considerable sums to those deemed below them in the social pecking order.[30]

Professional artisans also tended to be wealthier and more literate than laborers. These privileges afforded them access to textual knowledge about such "arcane 'arts' as astrology, conjuration and the construction of charms and talismans."[31] Of course, literacy was not a strict requirement since cunning folk could learn the trade from a friend or relative. Since cunning folk were expected to be knowledgeable and literate, the mere possession a book—displayed for the clientele—could assuage fears. Some cunning folk were also thought to be naturally skilled healers or herbalists. For example, fortune-tellers were thought to use innate divinatory skills to make future predictions without the aid of books.[32] Cunning women probably had some knowledge of childbirth and infant care. Although midwives were not necessarily cunning folk, they performed services that were often invisible to powerful men. For this reason, it is quite possible that cunning women occasionally served as midwives, even if midwives did not always perform other cunning folk services.[33]

Scholars have identified similar trends among medieval medical practitioners. Faye Getz argues that medical practitioners are hard to categorize: "They might have involved themselves in medicine only on occasion, written about it as a part of general knowledge, or healed as a religious duty. Others were independent tradespeople: nurses,

[30] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 68-9.
[31] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 69.
[32] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 71.
[33] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 72 and David Harley, "Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-Witch," *Social History of Medicine* 3.1 (1990): 1-26.

midwives, toothdrawers, or country practitioners, whose training and methods varied enormously."[34] Getz suggests that we can taxonomize medical practitioners into ordinary practitioners (tradespeople, neighbors, etc.) and elite practitioners (clerics, university trained doctors).[35] While men and women were both medical practitioners, women faced more adversity climbing the ranks of elite practitioners like clerics. For example, on a manor in Worcestershire, one woman named Margery, identified in court rolls as a leech, accused Roger Oldrich of throwing her into a river thinking she was a witch.[36]

Medical practitioners also exchanged goods for services. In the later Middle Ages, monastic establishments kept records of expenses paid to outside practitioners.[37] Elite practitioners like the late eleventh- early twelfth-century Faritius (d. 1117) could even leverage their knowledge and credentials to earn patronage from religious houses.[38] Medical care was not cheap: acquiring ingredients, administering medicine, and providing long-term care costed time and money. Julia Bolotina points out that many ingredients had to be obtained through trade or investments of time and money; for example, pepper was acquired through trade with the East while certain ingredients had to be dissolved in wine, beer, milk, honey, butter, water, or animal fats.[39] Expensive

[34] Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5-6.
[35] Getz, *Medicine*, 6.
[36] Getz, *Medicine*, 10.
[37] Getz, *Medicine*, 10.
[38] Getz, *Medicine*, 13-14.
[39] Julia Bolotina, "Support for the Sick Poor in Anglo-Saxon England," *The Reading Medievalist: A Postgraduate journal* 2 (2015): 4-28, at 4-5. Bolotina's paper is primarily focused on charitable gifts to the poor in the surviving corpus of wills. At 24, Bolotina concludes that charitable gifts were simply too scarce to help the poor: "donations were only a piece of the puzzle of pre-hospital social support for the sick in Anglo-Saxon England, but if so, it was a small one, and could not have offered nearly the same scale of support as the network of one hundred and thirty hospitals that would be built by the Anglo-Normans within one hundred years of the conquest."

ingredients like butter, wine, and oil were probably available only to the upper social classes while honey was more readily available to lower status people.[40] Wealthier individuals had better access to both ingredients and time-intensive labor; however, poorer people "would have had difficulty procuring resources they needed in their illness, and may also have had to make financial sacrifices which would have brought them closer to destitution."[41] Medical practitioners may have also collected fees for their services, which placed additional burdens on the resources of lower class families.[42]

Regardless of their social position, cunning folk provided a range of helpful services. Through charms, palmistry, astrology, or other divinatory techniques, cunning folk provided relationship advice. In matters of love, they could help predict the strength of relationships or reunite estranged lovers. For a cost, written charms or talismans could persuade someone to fall in love with another. Cunning folk also helped find stolen goods and identify thieves. As one of the more common services, cunning folk would gather information about the stolen item and the client before rendering judgment.[43] During this process, cunning folk might utilize local social networks to ask about stolen property or potential thieves; in some cases, the threat of detection could inspire thieves to return goods to avoid legal sanction, although such outcomes were probably rare.[44] Cunning folk might also help with specific occupational concerns by offering protection for

[40] Bolotina, "Support," 5.
[41] Bolotina, "Support," 8.
[42] Lisi Oliver, "Sick-Maintenance in Anglo-Saxon Law," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 107.3 (2008), 303-26; Stanley Rubin, "The Medical Practitioner in Anglo-Saxon England," *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* 20.97 (1970), 63-71. At 65, Rubin argues that the seventh-century Laws of Aethelbert called for compensation for certain medical services in the form of a *læce-feoh*, a leech-fee.
[43] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 96.
[44] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 98.

fishermen or charms for travelers. Since cunning folk often came from the class of professional artisans and tradesmen, most would have supplemented their income through another occupation.[45]

Although cunning folk performed various services, they were best known for combatting witchcraft. As "unwitching" experts, cunning folk would be a last line of defense in the event that someone thought they had been bewitched. Cunning folk were likely consulted only after home remedies failed to alleviate an illness.[46] If someone suspected they had been bewitched, a cunning person could diagnose the problem and carry out a series of treatments. The regime of care followed several possible pathways: "by going straight to the source and tackling the witch either physically or through the law courts; by breaking the spell at a distance via magical rituals; or by using a mix of herbs and charms to expel the witchcraft from the patient's body."[47] These remedies involved both physical and psychological approaches—physical symptoms were treated by herbs, ointments, or charms; psychological issues by assurances that the patient was under magical protection by the skill of the cunning person.[48]

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[45] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 74-5: "There were reasons other than finance why cunning-folk might want to maintain some semblance of a respectable occupation. For one, it kept them in the hub of the community. In their line of work it was important to be familiar with all the latest local gossip, and shops and workshops were focal points where such conversations took place. It is no surprise that a number of cunning-men ran drinking establishments, where alcohol loosened tongues and an attentive ear was bound to pick up useful information."

[46] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 104: "The clergyman Richard Bernard urged those who suspected themselves bewitched to 'enquire not of a devilish wizard, but of learned and judicious physicians to know their disease'. Many followed his advice, and it was only after the 'learned' members had obviously failed that people then sought out cunning-folk[…]over and over again we hear in the sources how people went to cunning-folk as a last resort, after having spent considerable sums of money on orthodox doctors, to no avail."

[47] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 106.

[48] Davies, *Cunning-Folk,* 109-10.

At this point, an important question remains unanswered: how much did early modern cunning folk resemble early medieval practitioners? I take as a starting point that cunning folk existed in early medieval England, even if they went by other names. In fact, the term "cunning" comes from Old English *cunnan* ("to know," "to have power," "to be skilled in"). *Cunnan* implies that these "were individuals who stood out in society for possessing more knowledge than those around them, knowledge that was acquired either from a supernatural source, from an innate, hereditary ability, or from being able to understand writing."[49] The Latin and Old English vocabulary referring to some type of magical practitioner suggests that similar roles existed in the early period. Although references to magical practitioners throughout medieval homilies might have served rhetorical purposes—condemning practices deemed "unofficial" by the Church—we need not imagine that all references to cunning folk were mere literary devices.[50]

The digital thesaurus of Old English has cataloged various terms for medical, magical practitioners. This list is certainly not conclusive, but it does demonstrate the variety of roles that existed in the eyes of contemporary authorities who participated in textual culture—unrecorded terms have simply been lost. Moreover, this list also shows

[49] Davies, *Cunning-Folk* viii.

[50] See Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005). At 42-3, Filotas notes that "most forms of written documents have little or nothing to say about the lives of ordinary persons, who left no written records of their own and to whom others paid scant attention. Histories and chronicles concentrated on the unfolding of God's design through the doings of great men, while the best minds of the age devoted themselves to theological controversy, exposition of the Bible, the means of achieving perfection and the development of the liturgy. The humble appear is hagiography and the Germanic legal codes, but merely as objects of the miraculous powers of the saint and of the demands or punitive force of the law."

why it is difficult to rely only on one-to-one categorical comparisons. Here are various relevant terms from the thesaurus, in no particular order:[51]

"A wizard, magician"

galdorcræftiga—one crafty or skillful in enchantments; an enchanter

*galdorgalend—magician, enchanter

*galdorgalere—an enchanter, soothsayer

*galere—an enchanter

þyrs—a giant, an enchanter, a demon

*wirgunggalere—one whose incantations are curses, a sorcerer

"An enchantress, sorceress"

*Burgrun--sorceress

hægtes(se)—a witch, hag, fury

*heahrun—a damsel having a spirit of divination

hellerune—one skilled in the mysteries of hell, a sorceress, necromancer

*helrynegu—sorceress

[51] Jane Roberts and Christian Kay with Lynne Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow), accessed 2/9, http://oldenglishthesaurus.arts.gla.ac.uk/. I have marked rare words such as those that appear only in glossaries with an asterisk. These words were not necessarily used in everyday life and may have had little currency outside literate circles.

leodrune—a witch, wise woman

“A sorcerer/sorceress, magician”

*scinncræfta—the art of producing deceptive appearances

scinncræftiga—a magician, sorcerer

*scinnere—one who produces deceptive appearances, a magician

scinnlæca/e—a woman who practices magic

“A sorcerer, wizard”

Dry—magician, sorcerer, wizard

drycræfta—magical art, sorcery

dryman—a magician, sorcerer

geog(e)lere—a magician

lyblæca—sorcerer, poisoner

unlybwyrhta—poison-maker, one who prepares poisons for witchcraft

wicca—wizard, soothsayer, witch

wita—a wise man

“A witch, sorceress”

Dryicge—a sorceress

hægtes(se)—witch, hag, fury

*lybbestre—a witch, sorcerer

sigewif—wise woman, "victory woman"

wicce—witch

"A witch who works with herbs"

*wyrtgælstre—a woman who uses herbs for charms

Although this list is only a sampling of available terms, it already demonstrates that Old English recognized a wide range of magical practitioners.[52] My translations might even indicate that our modern vocabulary insufficiently captures the complexity of early medieval specialists. Latin vocabulary offers a similarly extensive list. Isidore of Seville's taxonomy of magical practitioners in his *Etymologiae* describes the following roles: *magu* ("magician"), *maleficus* ("evil magician"), *oraculum* ("oracle"), *necromantius* ("necromancers"), *hydromantius* ("hydromancers"), and *incantator* ("enchanter").[53] Cynefrith's role as a *medicus* or *læce* is equally significant because it stands as one of the only roles that was represented in a positive way as if it was the

[52] Audrey Meaney, "Ælfric and Idolatry, *The Journal of Religious History* 13.2 (1984): 119-35. In this article, Meaney discusses Ælfric's terminology about idolatry, superstition, and heathenism; she argues that when Ælfric condemned something, he thought it was a living practice at that time even if he had little experience beyond his walls. At 135, Meaney concludes that Ælfric's writing was political: "witches and wizards formed an alternative source of power in society, one perhaps with great influence among the country people especially, and one whose authority was in direct conflict with the church. Therefore these country people must be brought to see how dangerous their devotion to their cunning men and women was: they might obtain health from them in this life, but they would be damned for it in the next."
[53] Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

"official" medical practitioner. Of course, these vocabulary lists do not mean that every word referred to some actual practitioner since some of these words were used in glossaries as translations from Latin terminology. Nonetheless, Audrey Meaney suggests that words like *burgrune, leodrune,* and *hellerune* originally referred to supernatural agents and were perhaps later applied to mortal women.[54]

For this reason, rather than identifying specific roles, I cast the net as wide as possible to encompass a range of practitioners who provided magical, medical, and legal services. The fact that Old English law codes rarely mention specific practitioners—relying instead on a few words like *scinnlæca* or *wicce*—suggests that vernacular legal taxonomy was ambiguous and shifting. Legal texts did not reproduce the language of the clientele but that of secular courts and ecclesiastical authorities. In the next section, I examine the legal identity of cunning folk in early medieval England. Throughout secular law codes, cunning folk were either condemned or ignored. The services they performed were rendered invisible in the eyes of the law. Cunning folk had no official role in the productive economy; although they provided valuable services, there were no contractual obligations to heal people or find stolen goods. Beyond secular law codes, penitentials associated cunning folk with witchcraft and heathenism. These texts assign penance for work that was considered pagan (gathering herbs while reciting incantations) or magical (bewitching a lover). The penitential tradition viewed cunning folk as contagions in the Christian community: they might be poisoners (*lyblac*) or practitioners of deceitful arts

[54] Audrey Meaney, "Women, Witchcraft and Magic in Anglo-Saxon England," *Superstition and Popular Medicine in Anglo-Saxon England,* ed. D.G. Scragg (Manchester: Center for Anglo-Saxon Studies, 1989): 9-40.

(*scinncræft*). Taken together, secular law codes and penitentials render cunning folk in exclusionary terms.

Law and Invisible Labor

In *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons,* Colin Dayan shows that the law is metaphorically a type of witchcraft. Just as witchcraft allows preternatural harm, the law can be deliberately shaped to injure others across geographic, temporal boundaries.[55] With this framework, Dayan argues that medieval legal texts created a type of "civil death" that was built into the early structure of common law; in turn, the legal mechanism behind "civil death" laid the groundwork for Anglo-American law to deprive people of rights by stipulating that certain people have lost all legal existence. A central aspect of "civil death" is the idea of corruption of blood. In post-Conquest law, the Normans introduced the legal concept of "corrupt blood" to the already existing "attainder" framework. If someone committed either a serious felony or treason, they were "attainted" and forfeited all goods, tenements, and lands to the king.[56] The

[55] Colin Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 33. Throughout this book, Dayan uses metaphors of witchcraft and sorcery to explain legal rationality (39-40): "I tell this story [of the white dog], a tale of what some call the 'supernatural,' to extend my discussion of the sorcery of law. What the modern world condemns as witchcraft or projects onto those deemed 'uncivilized' remains at its heart. In its manipulation of categories such as the spirit and the flesh, the law perpetuates its claims to mastery and comprehension, all the while investing the juridical order with the power to redefine persons. Legal culture has carved up human differences into hierarchies capacious enough to accommodate subordination. The law's artificial entities—whether disabled as slaves or degraded as felons—are made 'vulnerable,' in the scholar and activist Ruthie Gilmore's words, to 'premature death.' This threat persists in a world where the supernatural serves as the unacknowledged legislator of justice." Dayan challenges the "spirit of the law" by arguing that dehumanizing, exclusionary ideologies of the past are continuously redrawn in the present. Put differently, the "intent" or "spirit" of the law can never be assessed by rational, unbiased agents. The tension between the "letter of the law" and the "spirit of the law" is similar to literal vs. allegorical readings of the Bible.
[56] Dayan, *White Dog,* 46-7, points out that medieval terminology likely confused "tainted" and "attainted:" "What is crucial about the definition of *attainder* is the way a probable mistake in philology became a convenient means of exclusion. The similarity of 'tainted' and 'attainted,' especially in their past-participle

blood of an "attainted" person was "held to be corrupt, so that he could not transmit his estate to his heirs, nor could they inherit."[57] According to Dayan, "attainder" and the corruption of blood was carried into legal justifications for slavery in the Americas and for post-Civil War Jim Crow segregation. Thus, corrupt blood became a historical residue that continued to define the legal rights and identity of people long after the Norman conquest.

In Old English law codes, a similar kind of "civil death" was enacted on witches, cunning folk, and other folk practitioners. For example, King Alfred's *Domboc* contains the following proclamations: "The women who are wont to receive wizards and magicians and witches, do not let them live. And he who has intercourse with cattle, he shall suffer death. And he who offer sacrifice to heathen idols over God alone, he shall suffer death."[58] Inspired by Exodus 22.18 ("Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"), this statute condemns to death anyone practicing witchcraft, bestiality, and idolatry. The language is interesting because witches were not directly targeted; instead, the code condemns women (*fæmnan*) who receive or accept these magical practitioners. One

forms, would make their blending almost unavoidable. *The Oxford English Dictionary* focuses on what became the gist of attainder—corruption of blood—through a false derivation of *attainder* in *taint* or *blemish*: 'L. *attingere* to touch upon, strike, attack, etc.; subsequently warped in meaning by erroneous association with F. *taindre, teindre*, to dye, stain.' Beneath an apparently inadvertent, false, or at least loosely mixed-up terminology in late medieval England lies an anatomy of disabling."

[57] Dayan, *White Dog*, 45. Dayan adds that "corruption of blood operated practically as a severing of bloodlines, thus cutting off inheritance, but also metaphorically as an extension of the sin or taint of the father visited on his children. If we treat *blood* and *property* as metaphors crucial to defining *person* in civil society, then it is easy to see how corruption of blood and forfeiture of property could become the operative components of divestment. By a negative kind of birthright, bad blood blocked inheritance. Whether slave or criminal, both are degraded below the rank of human beings, not only physically and morally but also politically."

[58] Todd Preston, *King Alfred's Book of Laws: A Study of the Domboc and its Influence on English Identity, with a Complete Translation* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012), 30-32.

possible reading is that these women were sexually consorting with magicians. Just as bestiality warranted the death penalty, so too did sexual encounters with these inhuman agents. Nonetheless, the fact that mere association merited death suggests that magical practitioners were *tainted* in some way—they deserved neither legal compensation nor mercy.

The laws of King Ethelred contain a similar passage. Laying out the ordinances of the *witan*, the Council of Eynsham states:

> And we will beseech every friend, and all people also diligently teach, that they, with inward heart, love one God, and carefully shun every heathenism. And if witches or soothsayers, magicians or whores, murderers or perjurers, be anywhere found in the country, let them diligently be driven out of this country, and this people be purified: or let them totally perish in the country, unless they desist, and more deeply make *bot*.[59]

Like Alfred's *Domboc*, this code imagines a pure, homogenous Christian nation. The code equates the harm posed by witches, soothsayers, magicians, whores, murderers, and perjurers because these people stained the body politic. It did not matter that soothsayers were theoretically different from magicians or witches since these terms were not used in a technical sense; instead, the code used broad categories, casting as wide a net as

[59] Liebermann, ed. trans., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1903-1916) "The Laws of King Æthelred ad Eanhan," 6-7: "And la gif we willað biddan freonda gehwylcne and eal folc eac læran georne, þæt hi inwerdre heortan ænne God lufian and ælcne hæðendom georne arcunian; and gif wiccan oþþe wigleras scincræftigan oþþe horcwenan morðwyrhtan oþþe mansworan ahwar on earde wurðan agitene, fyse hi man georne ut of þysan earde and clænsige þas þeode oþþe on eared forfare hi mid ealle butan hi geswican and þe deoppor gebetan."

possible over transgressive actors. In the eyes of legal authorities, murderers, magicians, perjurers, and witches were equally harmful to the body politic, so people drawn to one deceitful action might readily take up another.

Despite these condemnations, Ethelred's code offered mercy to those who made amends. A similar stipulation is found in the laws of Æthelstan. In a heading "On Witchcrafts," this code lays out the following judgment:

> And we have ordained respecting witchcrafts, and poisoners, and deeds of destruction: if anyone should thereby be killed, and he could not deny it, that he be liable in his life. But if he will deny it, and at the threefold ordeal shall be guilty; that he be 120 days in prison: and after that let his kindred take him out, and give to the king 120 shillings, and pay the 'wer' to his kindred, and enter into 'borh' for him, that he evermore desist from similar acts.[60]

Æthelstan's laws provided a pathway towards social rehabilitation for those who killed others by means of witchcraft. The accused were not simply tossed out of Christian society but imprisoned and fined. Of course, it is unclear what kind of deeds constituted harmful witchcraft. *Lyblac* refers to an act of using drugs, herbs, or potions to poison others. Likewise, *morþdæd* describes a deed that causes destruction of the body or soul.

[60] Liebermann, "The Laws of King Æthelstan æt Greatanleage," 6: "Ond we cwædon be þæm wiccecræftum ond be liblacum ond be morðdædum gif man þær acweald wære ond he his ætsacan ne mihte þæt he beo his feores scyldig. Gif he þonne ætsacan wille ond on þam þrimfealdum ordale ful weorðe þæt he beo cxx nihta on carcerne ond nimen þa magas hine siþþan ut ond gesyllan þam cynge cxx scill ond forgyldan þone wer his magum ond gangon him on borh þæt he æfre swylces geswice."

But what would these terms have meant in legal contexts? How would authorities have determined that someone was killed by witchcraft?

One important clue stands out: in these laws, "magical" harm is always enacted at a distance, possibly in secrecy. Early modern witchcraft trials revealed that accusations of witchcraft often came from neighbors rather than from law enforcement. In an environment where neighbors could turn people over to the courts, folk medical practitioners had to tread carefully since upset clients might seek legal revenge. The complaint might be more serious in the event of untimely death. If a client died shortly after visiting a herbalist or cunning folk, their kindred would have ample cause to accuse the practitioner of negligence. Likewise, local practitioners might be accused by the kindred of the recently deceased even if that person never visited a specialist. Cunning folk who have received particularly negative "reviews" might be susceptible, as well as anyone already ostracized from a community. Since magical harm could be done at a distance through poison or charms, sudden changes of health, coupled with neighborly tensions, laid the groundwork for witchcraft accusations. The fact that terms like *morþdæd* and *wiccecræft* are imprecise suggests that the law codes were deliberately written to cast a wide net over possible actions. However, witchcraft references in royal law codes are no indication that people were actually prosecuted for illicit practices. Since folk practitioners provided useful services, witchcraft accusations might have disrupted local service networks; more importantly, there is little evidence that calls to exile or kill witches were taken seriously by secular authorities until centuries later.

Given that royal law codes did not impact every village community, manuals of

penance show how the Church dealt with witchcraft, sorcery, and other forms of paganism in local settings. In penitential literature, anyone practicing witchcraft must fast as penance. However, some of the actions associated with witchcraft reveal that important services could fall under the same "magical" taxonomy. In *The Canons of Theodore,* "if a woman practice witchcraft and diabolical incantations, she is to cease and fast one year, and the three fasting periods or yet more according to the merits. If a woman effects an abortion of her child, the same measures are judged."[61] The *Canons* also state that "whoever performs exorcisms and divination and the interpretation of dreams, that is done according to the calculation of heathens. And who brings other men into such incantations, if they belong to the clergy they shall be degraded, and if they are lay people they are to repent with full penance."[62] Purporting to condemn witchcraft and heathenism, these passages actually challenged valuable service industries. Divination, dream interpretation, and exorcism were not simply "magical" acts since they could have therapeutic effects, helping people deal with matters of love, mortality, and providence. Likewise, abortion was a valuable means for early medieval women to assert control of

[61] Allen J. Frantzen, "Canons of Theodore," *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database*, accessed January 2020, http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/?p=index, 66.05.01-66.05.02. "Gyf hwylc wif wiccunga bega ond þa deofollican galdorsangas blinne ond fæste an gear ond þa .iii. æfæstenu oððe þonne gyt ma æfter þæra gearnunga. Ða wif ðe doð aworpennysse hyra bearna þa ylcan gemete syn hy gedemde ærðon þa bearn cwice syn." All citations of penitentials rely on Frantzen's online edition; I have cited texts according to the section divisions on the website. I have also consulted John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents* (New York: Columia University Press, 1938, repr., 1990).
[62] "Canons of Theodore," 78.01.04. "On canone hit cwið se ðe halsunga ond galdorcreaftas ond swefn hrace behealdað þa beoð on hæðenra manna gerime. And eac swylce þa þe oðre men on ðam drycræft ge gað gif hy on mynstre syn hy syn ut aworpene gif hy on folce syn betan fulre bote."

their own bodies. Folk practitioners with knowledge about abortifacients would have provided an important—but largely hidden—service.

The *Old English Penitential* contains passages about similar kinds of service work. This text lays out guidelines for herb gathering: "It is indeed not permitted to any Christian man that he practice useless auguries as heathen men do, that is that they believe in the sun and the moon and the stars' course and seek time-auguries to begin their events, nor [in] gathering herbs with no incantation other than with the Pater Noster and with the Credo or with some prayers that belong to God."[63] This passage does not challenge the act of herb gathering but polices its methods: Christian men should replace "heathen" incantations with those sanctioned by the Church. While this stipulation is seemingly innocuous, herbs were useful sources of medicine and food that likely grew outside of settlements. So while the labor required to gather these herbs was not always visible, the person's behavior should be controlled lest they give voice to heathen practices.

Elsewhere, the *Old English Penitential* also challenges those using witchcraft for sexual attraction. This stipulation would surely resonate with early modern cunning folk: "If anyone use witchcraft [*wiccige*]in the matter of any man's desire and give to him to eat or drink or any kind of incantation [*galdorcræfte*] so that their love be the greater

[63] "Old English Penitential," 42.23.01. "Nis na soðlice nanum cristenum men alyfed þæt he idela ðinge bega swa hæðene men doð hwtunga bega swa hæðene men doð þæt is þæt hi gelyfen on sunnan ond on monan ond on steorrena ryne ond secen tida hwatunga hira þing to beginnene ne wyrta gade runga mid nanum galdre butan mid pater noster ond mid credo oððe mid summon gebede þe gode belimpe."

because of it: if a layman does it, he is to fast half a year."[64] The *Old English Handbook* contains a similar clause: "If anyone performs witchcraft [*wiccige*] because of love of another and gives him something in his food or drink or [puts him] under a magic spell [*galdorcræftum*], if it is a layman, he is to fast a half year."[65] These penitentials lay out additional penance—in ascending order of severity—for clerics, deacons, and masspriests caught in the same act. Although *wiccige* (*wiccian* —"to practice witchcraft") is vague, it suggests that food, drink, and incantations that influenced sexual desire were transgressive acts. While a penitent might freely offer up this information, an inquisitive confessor would likely know which locals provided these services and pay attention to social encounters. Furthermore, the fact that poison was often associated with witchcraft means food or drink that had been prepared in private was potentially dangerous.

This brief survey of penitential literature shows that outright condemnations of "magical" services found in royal law codes do not match the Church's pastoral care mission. It was a lot easier to condemn theoretical acts or identities that were largely invisible to secular authorities than it was to cast out neighbors who provided useful services. However, penitentials reveal that it was not always easy to differentiate helpful services from harmful actions. Someone who thought they had been poisoned might

[64] "Old English Penitential," 44.14.01. "Gif wiccige ymbe æniges mannes lufe ond him on æte sylle oððe on drence oððe on æniges cynnes galdorcræfte þæt heora lufe forþam þe mare beon sceole gif hit læwede man do fæste he healf ger wodnesdagum ond frigedagum on hlafe ond on wæ ond þa oðre dagas bruce his metes butan flæsce."

[65] "Old English Handbook," 54.37.01. "Gyf hwa wiccige ymbon oðres lufu ond him sille on æte oððe on drence oððe on galdorcræftum gif hit beo læwede man fæste healf gear wodnesdagum ond frigedagum on hlafe ond on wætere ond ða oðre dagas bruce his metes butan flæsce cleric I gear ut supra iii dagas on wucan on hlafe ond on wætere diacon iii gear ut supra. Mæssepreost v gear þæt an on hlafe ond on wætere ond ða iiii ælce frigedæg on hlafe ond on wætere ond þa oðre dagas forga flæsc."

resort to home remedies before consulting a leech or other local specialists. But what if that practitioner also provided love incantations to others? What if a practitioner offered a potion that ended up poisoning their client—has this specialist performed *lyblac*? For these reasons, it would be difficult for priests charged with pastoral care to judge penitents according to rigid standards set out in secular law codes alone, even if they were tasked with carrying out these duties. The "civil death" enacted by kings on-high was too extreme for smaller communities.[66]

The Leech, *Galdra,* and Folk Healing

Even Ælfric acknowledged that afflicted people would seek medical help from available sources, not all of whom were sanction by the Church. The use of medicinal herbs was only improper when accompanied by non-Christian verbal incantations:

> The Christian man who is afflicted in any way like this [with bodily weakness], and then wishes to seek his health from unlawful cures, or from cursing charms, or from any witchcraft, then will be like those heathen men who offered to devil-worship for their bodies' health, and so destroyed their souls. Let him who is unhealthy pray for his health from his Lord, and patiently endure the strokes; look how long the true Leech provides it, and let him not buy the body's health through and Devil's craft with his soul; let him ask also good men's blessing, and seek his health at holy relics. No Christian man is allowed to fetch his health from any stone, nor from any tree, unless it is the holy cross-sign, nor from any place,

[66] Filotas, *Pagan Survivals,* documents many of the extreme views throughout early medieval pastoral literature.

> unless it is the holy house of God. The one who does otherwise undoubtedly falls into heathen worship. We have, however, examples in holy books, that he who wishes may cure his body with true leechcraft, as did the prophet Isaiah, who made for the king Hezekiah a salve for his sore, and healed him. The wise Augustine said that it is not dangerous if anyone eat a medicinal herb; but he censures it as unlawful sorcery if anyone ties those herbs on himself, unless he lays them on a sore. Nevertheless we must not set our hope in medicinal herbs, but in the Almighty Creator who gave that virtue to those herbs. Nor must any man enchant an herb with charms [*galdre*], but with God's words must bless it, and so eat.[67]

Ælfric argued that the true medicinal power of herbs and incantations lay with God and his Church. Herbs themselves had healing power only because God instilled them with *cræft*. He did not outright condemn medicinal traditions, instead suggesting

[67] Adapted from Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 92-3. For Old English text, see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. Peter Clemoes, The Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 303-325"Se cristena mann ðe on ænigre þissere gelicnysse bið gebrocod, and he ðonne his hælðe secan wyle æt unalyfdum tilungum, oððe æt wyrigedum galdrum, oððe æt ænigum wiccecræfte, ðonne bið he ðam hæðenum mannum gelic, þe ðam deofolgylde geoffrodon for heora lichanman hælðe, and swa heora sawla amyrdon. Se ðe geuntrumod beo, bidde his hæle æt his Drihtne, and geðyldelice þa swingla forbere; loc hu lange se soða læce hit foresceawige, and ne beceapige na ðurh ænigne deofles cræft mid his sawle ðæs lichaman gesundfulnysse; bidde eac goddra manna bletsunge, and æt halgum reliquium his hæle gesece. Nis nanum cristenem men alyfed þæt he his hæle gefecce æt nanum stane, ne æt nanum trowe, buton hit sy halig rode-tacen, ne æt nanre stowe, buton hit sy halig Godes hus: se ðe ells deð, he begæð untwylice hæðengild. We habbað hwæðere þa bysne on halgum bocum, þæt mot se ðe wile mid soðum læcecræfte his lichaman getemprian, swa swa dyde se witega Isaias, þe worhte ðam cynige Ezechie cliðan to his dolge, and hine gelacnode. Se wisa Augustinus cwæð, þæt unpleolic sy þeah hwa læce-wyrte ðicge; ac þæ he tælð to unalyfedlicere wiglunge, gif hwa ða wyrta on him becnitte, buton he hi to ðam dolge gelecge. Þeah-hwæðere ne sceole we urne hiht on læcewyrtum besettan, ac on ðone Ælmihtigan Scyppend, þe ðam wyrtum ðone cræft forgeaf. Ne sceal nan man mid galdre wyrte besingan, ac mid Godes wordum hi gebletsian, and swa ðicgan."

that people should find solace in sanctioned healers and healing practices. In an environment with different, competing practitioners, Ælfric does not blame people for trying different healing methods; rather, he elevated the true leech above the rest. The fact that true leechcraft could be traced back to holy books demonstrates that ecclesiastical authorities like Ælfric aligned proper healing practices with literate, textual traditions.

It has been difficult to locate charms in medieval England's medical discourse. Verbal incantations appear in various manuscript contexts: in medical texts like the *Lacnunga,* incantations serve as remedies for disease; in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41, a version of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,* devotional formulas and protective prayers were archived as marginalia surrounding the main text; in the *Vitellius Psalter,* ritual incantations for protecting bees and helping sick livestock are found in the same manuscript containing a glossed Gallican psalter and prognostics. Early scholarly work on charms by Felix Grendon and Oswald Cockayne tended to present incantations as individual items removed from all manuscript context. These scholars were fascinated with the supposedly "pagan" and Germanic resonances in charms; in viewing charms as "survivals," Grendon and Cockayne thought that charms preserved earlier layers of Germanic culture that have since been lost. In his 1993 *Anglo-Saxon Medicine,* M.L. Cameron argued that verbal remedies could be pragmatic, rational texts rather than pagan survivals or magical rituals.[68] Developing these ideas further,

[68] M.L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 138: "Although remedies such as these are magical to our way of thinking, we should ask ourselves if they were thought to be so by their medieval users. Even today a practicing Christian will see nothing magical or superstitious in

Karen Jolly suggested that charms were "middle practices"—syncretic rituals that developed out of negotiations between folk culture and elite religious authorities.[69] Jolly recognized that verbal incantations often used Christian liturgical formula like the *pater noster* and were copied into manuscripts at high-status minsters, which means that charms were not seen as magical aberrations but as legitimate Christian practices. Ciaran Arthur's 2018 *'Charms', Liturgies, and Secret Rites in Early Medieval England* builds on Jolly's assessment, arguing that "Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics valued *galdor* as a very powerful ritual performance that could be used in explicitly Christian and liturgical ways."[70] Arthur views *galdor* as part of mainstream liturgical practice in early medieval England; in this framework, *galdor* were neither connected to other European ritual traditions nor did they serve as precedents for later charmic practices.[71]

My own view is that *galdor* were part of an early medieval service industry that provided ritual practices that lay people and clergy could administer as needed. This industry is largely invisible to modern scholars because we tend to associate *galdor* with either magical or liturgical practices, overlooking the actual labor that must have taken

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prayers for rain as part of a church service, while looking at an Indian rain dance as a magical performance. To many of us, the use of holy water, of consecrated wine and salt and oil of extreme unction is a magical, or at least superstitious, practice[…]after their consecration, they must have been substantially different from what they had been before, no longer being simply bread, wine, salt and oil, and in their new guises might be expected to have medicinal properties different from their original ones."

[69] Karen Jolly, *Elf-Charms*, 9: "My argument in this work is that the Christian charms[…]are not some kind of Christian magic demonstrating the weakness of early medieval Christianity but constitute evidence of the religion's success in conversion by accommodating Anglo-Saxon culture[…]popular religion, as one facet of a larger, complex culture, consists of those beliefs and practices common to the majority of believers. This popular religion encompasses the whole of Christianity, including the formal aspects of the religion as well as the general religious experience of daily life."

[70] Ciaran Arthur, *'Charms', Liturgies, and Sacred Rites in Early Medieval England* (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2018), 17.

[71] Arthur, *'Charms',* 11.

place as a condition for their performance. However, medical remedies—including *galdor*—often required rare ingredients, herbal mixtures, or even amulets. All of these items had to be acquired through careful work: amulets had to be crafted and herbs gathered by someone familiar with the desired ingredients.[72] While scholars debate the theological meaning of *galdor* and the place of medical texts in popular healing practices, we cannot ignore the labor necessary to perform these written remedies in the first place. Ingredients had to be gathered by knowledgeable people and prepared by skilled practitioners. Local clergy could have performed some of this work, but it is difficult to imagine that priests were the only people searching for woodland herbs or preparing amulets. Performance instructions in some charms do suggest that a priest was present or that the performer either knew Latin or could read from a manuscript; moreover, other remedies require liturgical items like a paten or holy water. These remedies clearly required preparation that is invisible in the text itself. In fact, our focus on text-based evidence tends to prioritize the worldview and actions of ecclesiastically trained individuals even though many remedies indicate that this group was not the exclusive

[72] Audrey Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones* (Oxford: BAR British Series, 1981). In the chapter "Manufactured Amulets," Meaney describes amulets found in early medieval gravesites in France, Germany, and Scandinavia, buried alongside the dead. Among these items were model weapons and tools, sometimes threaded onto rings like keychains. There were also pendants and brooches in English graves from the same period. Although it is impossible to know if these grave items were protective amulets, some were clearly symbolic like small pendants shaped like hands (page 169) and wire rings with twisted, knotted designs (page 174); both of these items were thought to protect the wearer from the "Evil Eye," demons, and malevolent magic. These protective amulets had to be constructed by hand, which required (sometimes) metalworking and weaving; moreover, raw materials such at metal, wool, and glass had to be gathered and constructed. At 185, Meaney shows that thread-boxes—small boxes hung from girdles that contained thread and possibly needles—were found in women's graves. These thread-boxes "may well have symbolized skill in textile work […] [i]n his sermon against pagan practices, Eligius of Noyon preached that a woman should not 'name other unfortunate persons either at the loom, or in dyeing, or in any kind of work with textiles.'"

audience. By viewing medical practice through an invisible labor lens, I argue that both clergy and laity performed hidden work for their communities that created the necessary conditions for medical care.

Although the language of "industry" suggests some type of cohesive organization, it can also refer to shared labor among different regions. This industry was not centrally organized; however, some ecclesiastical authorities sanctioned certain rituals by incorporating them into liturgical texts while others like Ælfric and Wulfstan viewed *galdor* as *deofolcræft*. Despite internal tensions within ecclesiastical centers, *galdor* seemed most problematic when they led people astray from Christian practice.[73] Unsanctioned incantations competed with authorized verbal formulas like the *pater noster,* psalms, and the Creed. Sick, diseased, or vulnerable people were more likely to resort to *galdor* if other remedies failed or if such tools were readily available. With the exception of Bald's *Leechbook*, most surviving charms and medical remedies were recorded in manuscripts after the Benedictine Reform, so it is nearly impossible to determine if we have fragments of folk ritual rather than ecclesiastically sanctioned practices.

In the early medieval period, traditional distinctions between charm, prayer, and liturgy are less evident when these genres are examined in their manuscript context. Jonathan Roper offers a simple solution: "prayers petition, charms command."[74]

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[73] Arthur, *'Charms',* 93-95.
[74] Jonathan Roper, *English Verbal Charms* (Helsinki: Soumalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2005), 65. Roper says that charms are a verbal genre "halfway between spell and prayer." See also Jonathan Roper, *Charms and Charming in Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

However, scholars like Karen Jolly, Ciaran Arthur, and Roy Liuzza have shown that this formula is not so evident in early medieval England. Both Jolly and Arthur argue that charms were understood as Christian rituals that demonstrated the creative, syncretic dynamics of early medieval Christianity. Jolly believes that the Germanic origin of certain charms is largely obscured by the gradual conversion process that, over the course of several hundred years, adopted "native" invocations into a Christian theology.[75] Because nearly every reference to *galdra* exists in manuscripts produced at high-status Reform minsters, Arthur suggests that *galdra* were seen as liturgical rituals, not as a distinct genre related to European charming traditions. Arthur believes that some *galdra* "functioned to encourage liturgical practice in the wider community," so we should view them as creative expressions of the liturgy rather than rituals of the folk.[76] Liuzza argues that scholars should avoid artificial categories and focus instead on the reason for the ritual's performance and its source of power.[77]

If we accept that *galdra* were creative liturgical rituals, we must still attend to the labor needed to perform them in the first place. Even the liturgy required hidden labor to organize festivals and prepare materials; furthermore, mass itself was performed by "hidden" labor in many parts of medieval western Europe as lay participants were physical separated from the ritual by rood screens. Thus, there is no need to imagine that

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[75] James C. Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Valerie I.J. flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[76] Arthur, "*Charms*," 103.
[77] Roy Liuzza, "Prayers and/or Charms Addressed to the Cross," in *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies in Honor of George Hardin Brown*, Karen Jolly, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, and Sarah Larratt Keefer, (Morgantown, West Virginia University Press, 2008), 276-320.

para-liturgical rituals were only performed by ecclesiastics and always understood through theological terms. In fact, several charms mention priest or lay participants, which reminds us that these rituals could be meaningful for multiple audiences, even if we only have one side of the story. Some remedies even add additional work restrictions. A remedy against demon possession—*wið deofolseocnesse*—stipulates that herbs can only be gathered under the right conditions: "When you mean to pluck this herb [priapiscus], you must be free from every defilement; and you must gather it when the moon is nine nights old, and eleven nights, and thirteen nights, and thirty nights, and when it is one night old."[78] There were also recipes for salves that could be stored for future consumption or brewed in response to sudden illness. One such salve—*wið Ælfcynne*—could be applied in the following circumstances: "If any wicked temptation come to a man, or an elf or a nocturnal demon [assail him], smear his forehead with this salve, and put some on his eyes and some where his body is sore; and perfume him with incense, and repeatedly sign him with the sign of the cross."[79] In addition, this salve required various herbs, consecrated salt, butter, an altar, and mass singing. These ingredients had to be gathered and the salve prepared by a skilled individual. This labor could be time consuming, requiring specialized knowledge about measurements and preparation that must have been acquired through experiential learning. In other words,

[78] Quoted in Felix Grendon, *Anglo-Saxon Charms* (originally published 1909; reprint, Norwood Editions, 1976), 85: "Đonne ðu þas wyrt niman wylt, ðu scealt beon clæne wið æghwlce unclænnysse; and ðu hy scealt niman þonne se mona bið nigon nihta eald, and endlyfon nihta, and ðreottyne nyhta, and ðrittig nihta, and ðonne he byð anre nihte eald."
[79] Quoted in Grendon, *Charms*, 107: "Gif men hwilc yfel costing weoþe, oþþe ælf oþþe nihtgengan, smire his andwlitan mid þisse sealfe, and on his eagon do, and þær him se lichoma sar sie, and recelsa hine, and sena gelome. His þing biþ sona selre."

the tradition process through which medical knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next is also invisible to modern scholars. Because the work of preparation and transmission is largely hidden by the limited material record, we should think more imaginatively about the participants involved in early medieval medicine.

In London, British Library, Harley 585—the *Lacnunga*—we find the following childbirth ritual, titled *wið lætbyrde*, which roughly translates as "for late birth" or "for a woman who cannot nourish her child":[80]

> Let the woman who cannot bring forth her child go to the grave of a deceased man, and step three times over the grave, and then say these words three times:
>
> "This be my cure for the hateful late-birth,
>
> This be my cure for the grievous dismal birth,
>
> This be my cure for the loathsome lame-birth."
>
> And when the woman is with child and she goes to bed to her husband, then let her say:
>
> "Up may I go, over you may I step,
>
> With a living child not with a dying one,
>
> With a full born child, not with a dead one."

[80] Peter Murray Jones and Lea T. Olsan, "Performative Rituals for Conception and Childbirth in England, 900-1500," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89.3 (2015): 406-433. At 428, Olsan and Jones clarify this translation: "[the woman] cannot successfully bring her child to term and safely deliver it."

And when the mother feels that the child is alive, let her then go to church, and when she comes before the altar, let her then say:

“By Christ, I said, this [child] has been revealed.”

Let the women who cannot bring forth her child, herself take some [earth] from the grave of one of her own children, wrap it up afterwards in black wool, sell it to merchants, and then say:

“I sell it, may you sell it,

this black wool and the grains of this sorrow.”

Let the woman who cannot bring forth her child take, in her palm, the milk of a cow of one color and sop it up with her mouth, and then go to running water and spit the milk therein; and with the same hand let her scoop up a mouthful of the water and swallow it. Let her then say these words:

“Always have I carried with me this great strong hero,

By means of this glorious food, a hero.

Then I wish to have it for myself and go home.”

> When she goes to the brook, then let her not look around, not yet when she goes thence; and let her thereafter go into a house other than the one from which she set out, and there let her take food.[81]

Although early scholars like Grendon classified this text as a charm, it has ritualistic elements in addition to verbal invocations that challenge such a simplistic taxonomy. The participant is told to travel to various places, reciting invocations at each of the following locations: a grave, a bed, church, a market, a river, and a neighbor's house. On one level, these sites were places of symbolic power that operated according to the ritual's logic. Ritual actions were meant to bring about a desired outcome: stepping three times over the grave of a deceased man (*gewitenes mannes*) invokes the Trinity while also drawing on the power of the deceased.[82] Similarly, reciting an invocation with her husband at their bedside symbolized a united, complete family. On another level,

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[81] "Se wifman, se hire cild afedan ne mæg, gange to gewitenes mannes birgenne, and stæppe þonne þriwa ofer þa byrgenne, and cweþe þonne þriwa þas word: 'þis me to bote þære laþan lætbyrde, þis me to bote þære swæran swærtbyrde, þis me to bote þære laðan lambyrde.' And þonne þæt wif seo mid bearne and heo to hyre hlaforde on reste ge, þonne cweþe heo: 'up ic gonge, ofer þe stæppe mid cwican cilde, nalæs mid cwellendum, mid fulborenum nalæs mid fægan.' And þonne seo modor gefele þæt þæt bearn si cwic, ga þonne to cyrican, and þonne heo toforan þan wofode cume, cweþe þonne: 'Criste, ic sæde, þis gecyþed.' Se wifmon, se hyre bearn afedan ne mæge, genime heo sylf hyre agenes cildes gebyrgenne dæl, wry æfter þonne on blace wulle and bebicge to cepemannum, and cweþe þonne: 'Ic hit bebicge, ge hit bebicgan, þas sweartan wulle and þysse sorge corn.' Se wifman, se ne mæge bearn afedan, nime þonne anes bleos cu meoluc on hyre handa, and gesupe þonne mid hyre muþe, and gange þonne to yrnendum wætere and spiwe þær in þa meolc; and hlade þonne mid þære ylcan hand þæs wæteres muðfulne and forswelge. Cweþe þonne þas word: 'gehwer ferde ic me þone mæran maga þihtan mid þysse mæran mete þihtan; þonne ic me wille habban and ham gan.' Þonne heo to þan broce ga, þonne ne beseo heo, no ne eft þonne heo þanan ga; and þonne ga heo in oþer hus oþer he out ofeode and þær gebyrge metes."

[82] Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 311-325. Tambiah argues that magical thinking tends to be metaphorical rather than scientific; at 311 he writes: "Magical acts, usually compounded of verbal utterance and object manipulation, constitute 'performative' acts by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object or person on an analogical basis. Magical acts are ritual acts, and ritual acts are in turn performative acts whose positive and creative meaning is missed and whose persuasive validity is misjudged if they are subjected to that kind of empirical verification associated with scientific theory."

these places represented a map of the village. As the woman travels from a gravesite to her home, a church, and a river, she would pass through communal spaces and other townsfolk. Entering both a church and another's home might have also required prior consent, which suggests that this ritual brought the woman into contact with her community, both living and dead.

To my knowledge, this ritual is the only medical remedy that specifically calls for women performers. Yet, its language implies that she was not the main agent. Instead of issuing direct instructions to the participant (i.e. "go to a grave" or "go to church") in the indicative, this ritual uses the subjunctive for third-person imperative statements throughout: *se wifman* [...] *gange* ("let the woman go"), *seo modor* [...] *cweþe* ("let the mother say"), *se wifmon* [...] *genime* ("let her take"). The ritual also refers to the woman with the third-person singular *heo, hire.* Although this syntax is somewhat common in medical rituals, this text reads as if it expects a mediator to guide women through the ritual. At one point, the ritual even emphasizes these separate roles: "let the woman […] herself take some earth" (*se wifmon* [...] *genime heo sylf*). *Heo sylf* indicates that the woman *herself* must take the earth, not someone helping her. If the scribes of Harley 585 were male, this ritual, whether copied from another manuscript or transcribed from oral medicine, was written to give agency to someone who could read the text. The woman dealing with the trauma of a lost child—even taking earth from the grave of *agenes cildes* ([her] own child)—must revisit this trauma through the symbolic movements of the ritual.

This ritual was part of a larger repertoire of childbirth medicine. The labor exerted by women to care for their bodies and raise children has often been sidelined by investigations into the liturgical and theological elements of medicine. However, *wið lætbyrde* shows that ecclesiastical elites—those with access to manuscript culture—were not always the intended performers of written medical remedies. Lea T. Olsan and Peter Murray Jones demonstrate that *wið lætbyrde* was one example of a larger genre of performative rituals for conception.[83] Olsan and Jones show that healing rituals might be written on amulets rather than recited orally so that male clergy could provide it to women in labor; in later medieval remedy collections "male agents, clerical or lay, play the leading roles in these ritual interventions in childbirth."[84] Olsan and Jones see *wið lætbyrde* as reiterating "traditions that have acquired an authority in an oral-aural world of what a woman can do to enhance her chances of successful conception and gestation and the birth of a healthy baby."[85] In this framework, a woman performing *wið lætbyrde* was likely supported by other women in her community, who could even follow her as she moved from home to town to stream. The lack of other written Old English childbirth rituals suggests that women's medicine was primarily curated by networks of female practitioners. Conception and safe childbirth rarely concerned men, so this "labor" was seldom recorded. It is even feasible that *wið lætbyrde* was recorded in the *Lacnunga* so

[83] Olsan and Jones show that childbirth rituals were thought to be efficacious because every individual performance drew power from successful previous performances. Thus, rituals often contain symbolic motifs handed on over centuries, biblical narratives acted out by the performer, or Christ's words uttered as an incantation. At 415, Olsan and Jones also suggest that a charm recorded in the margins of sermon texts was used by priests in pastoral care. If true, this observation supports my theory that *wið lætbyrde* was written for male readers, not female performers.
[84] Olsan and Jones, "Childbirth Rituals," 419-423.
[85] Olsan and Jones, "Childbirth Rituals," 429.

that potential male medical practitioners could supply it to distressed women; nonetheless, the ritual still expects a woman to perform the ritual steps.[86] *Wið lætbyrde* provided women with ritual actions to control her own anxieties surrounding childbirth. Even though the text offers a male-centered view, it still represents women as ritual actors dealing with the labor surrounding conception, birth, and child-raising.

A lengthy agricultural ritual recorded in British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.VIII, fols. 176r-178r illustrates another dimension of hidden labor. This ritual, known to scholars as the *Æcerbot*, was intended to protect fields from witchcraft or infertility. The *Æcerbot* has puzzled scholars because it seems to blend Christian and Germanic elements. Its references to "mother earth" and its use of verbal incantations stand alongside obvious Christian features like a mass-priest and Latin prayers. If Christianity was an all-encompassing worldview that blotted out heathen practice, how could such a ritual have been created? Jolly posits that this ritual was the product of a long conversion process that created gray areas "containing practices that do not fit into tidy categories and are subject to differing interpretations."[87] Over several centuries, Christian belief gradually blended with Germanic folklore until the two cultural systems were inseparable. Whoever designed the *Æcerbot* would have surely called themselves "Christian" and understood the ritual as an entirely Christian performance even if it drew

[86] Olsan and Jones, "Childbirth Rituals," 432: "In the high and late Middle Ages, most of those present during a birth were women, but men were close by, interested, and occasionally called on for special duties. a priest might be present, who had been sent for, as the French instructions indicate, or a medical practitioner, especially in cases of emergency. These men might offer a ritual in the form of a charm or amulet."
[87] Jolly, *Elf-Charms*, 10.

on older Germanic elements that had since lost this cultural association. These Germanic parts were not "survivals" handed on mindlessly but meaningful elements of constantly shifting cultural practice.[88] Arthur suggests that the *Æcerbot* was actually inspired by the version of the *Heliand* included in the same manuscript. Although there is not much evidence for this reading, Arthur points to an eleventh-century marginal note written in what seems like the same hand as the *Æcerbot* near the section in the *Heliand* in which the Archangel Gabriel greets the Virgin Mary.[89] Thus, the ""mother earth" of the *Æcerbot* is not a pagan deity but the Virgin Mary herself. For Arthur, this marginal note suggests that the composer read the *Heliand*, was inspired by its Marian elements, and created the *Æcerbot* by blending Marian devotion, Masses, and *galdra* to bring the liturgy into agricultural healing. While it is common practice to trace the cultural lineage of medical texts, Jolly and Arthur show that the *Æcerbot* was not transgressive but part of a coherent Christian worldview that drew creatively on a repertoire of ritual elements that would be learned through ecclesiastical training.

An important question remains: what dimension of hidden labor is reflected in the *Æcerbot*? John Niles pointed out that the ritual was probably performed on a manorial estate because it praises "the one who owns that land and all those who are serving under

[88] That said, when dealing with medieval medical texts, it is still helpful to search for older attestations of specific recipes in the textual record. A remedy found in the *Lacnunga* or *Bald's Leechbook* might also appear in older manuscripts of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia,* which raises two possibilities: (1) this remedy is attested throughout western European oral traditions, appearing in different cultural contexts over long periods of time, or (2) this remedy was primarily transmitted through textual culture, thereby representing a learned medical tradition.

[89] Arthur, '*Charms',* 88-90. See also Ciaran Arthur, "Ploughing through Cotton Caligula A.VII: Reading the Sacred Words of the *Heliand* and the *Æcerbot," RES,* 65 (2014): 1-17; Arthur, "Three Marginal Notes in London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.VII, *N&Q,* 62 (2015): 211-17.

him."[90] Niles even suggests that the ritual served as a precedent for Plough Monday rituals that arose during the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century.[91] While there is no clear link between Plough Monday and the *Æcerbot*, rituals surrounding the plough—especially the first day of ploughing—were not uncommon throughout European pre-industrial agriculture.[92] Field blessings were also common. Karen Jolly has shown that ecclesiastics created protective field prayers by combining various ritual traditions.[93] It is possible that the *Æcerbot* was created under similar circumstances: a literate cleric could have designed this ritual to deal with worst-case scenarios in which fields fail to grow properly. The *Æcerbot* was not merely a generic, protective ritual but one used in the event that the field "will not grow well or if some harmful thing has been done to it by a sorcerer or by a poisoner."[94] The ritual was also meant to begin prior to and end on the first day of ploughing, so the performers would have known if the field grew poorly last

[90] *Æcerbot*; John Niles, "The *Æcerbot* Ritual in Context," in *Old English Literature in Context*, ed. John D. Niles, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 44-56.
[91] Steve Roud, *The English Year: A Month-by-Month Guide to the Nation's Customs and Festivals, from May Day to Mischief Night* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). Roud lays out the earliest reference to Plough Monday during the fifteenth-century: "The commonest early references to customary behavior of Plough Monday are records from the fifteenth-century onwards of 'plough lights' in local churches. These were candles that were kept burning in the church specifically to bring the Lord's blessing on the efforts of farmers and farmworkers. The 'common' or 'town' plough was also kept there, to be loaned out in turn to villagers who could not afford one of their own, and its presence presumably gave the opportunity for services based on blessing the plough and praying for success in the coming year […] *Dives and Pauper* (c. 1405-10) complains of people 'Leading the plough about the fire as for good beginning of the year', and in 1413, in Durham, there is a record of 4d being given 'to the people who were drawing a plough'. From the 1460s onwards there are numerous references to lights and to ploughs being taken round the parish to raise money for church purposes, but this custom seems to have been restricted geographically, being found only in the eastern midland counties of Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk, and not even in every church in those areas," 18-9.
[92] Thomas Davidson, "Plough Rituals in England and Scotland," *The Agricultural History Review* 7.1 (1959): 27-37.
[93] Karen Jolly, "Prayers from the Field: Practical Protection and Demonic Defense in Anglo-Saxon England," *Traditio* 61 (2206): 95-147.
[94] Elliot van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). 6.116, lines 1-3: "Her ys seo bot, hu ðu meaht þine æceras betan gif hi nellaþ wel wexan oþþe þær hwilc ungedefe þing on gedon bið on dry oðde on lyblace."

season. In this situation, the community could also pray over the fields or bless them through additional ritual activity. Debby Banham has shown that, "at various points in the agricultural cycle, there were significant interventions by the Church."[95] Because the *Æcerbot* deals with cereal production—a part of agriculture of little interest to social elites—Banham speculates that elements of the ritual were "used by peasant farmers left largely to their own devices by their superiors."[96] We certainly do not know if the *Æcerbot* was ever performed by anyone in early medieval England. Nonetheless, the text shows that agricultural work had an important ritual dimension that could be stratified along lines of social class. While medieval ritual is often framed as a religious activity, the *Æcerbot* illustrates that ritual was a necessary step for agricultural work to take place. Thus, for early medieval peoples, agricultural rituals like the *Æcerbot* were part of the work necessary to manage fields, protect livestock, and feed the community. Put simply, we cannot separate farm "work" from its "ritual" dimension because the agricultural cycle was so heavily ritualized. Instead, we should see agricultural ritual as a hidden type of labor that was central to early medieval farming.

[95] Debby Banham, "The Staff of Life: Cross and Blessings in Anglo-Saxon Cereal Production," in *Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. Sarah Larratt Keefer, Karen Loiuse Jolly, Catherine E. Karkov, (Morgantown: West Verginia University Press, 2010), 279-318, at 281. At 284, Banham suggests that the *Æcerbot* was not originally one text because "there is at least a possibility that only the second half concerns arable land, the first part dealing with pasture." This distinction is interesting, but I read the text as a coherent ritual at the time it was written down.

[96] Banham, "Staff of Life,"287-8. Banham points out that cattle were the real source of wealth in early medieval England. In a note on 287, she writes: "Nearly all of the provisions of Anglo-Saxon law dealing with theft, for instance, are concerned primarily with livestock, according to the late Patrick Wormald (personal communication). The Old English word *feoh* is also indicative, meaning as it does either 'wealth' or 'cattle,' or in many cases no doubt both, as does *ceap* in the homilies quoted below."

Closer scrutiny of the *Æcerbot* reveals that the ritual was labor-intensive. The ritual should begin before dawn with the practitioner cutting four sods from each corner of the afflicted land. Afterwards, they must "take oil and honey and yeast, and milk from each animal that is on the land, and a piece of each type of tree that grows on the land, except hard beams, and a piece of each herb known by name, except burdock only, and put then holy water thereon, and drip it three times on the base of the sods."[97] At this point, the performers would have walked around the fields in the dark digging up pieces of turf. If the tree pieces and herbs had not been gathered already, doing so at night could be more difficult. Either way, gathering these items required someone who knew the surrounding flora. The sods should then be taken to a church where a mass-priest must sing four masses over them. After these masses, the practitioner should "let someone turn the green to the altar, and after that let someone bring the sods to where they were before, before the sun sets."[98] These instructions suggest that the ritual was not meant to be performed by a single person; in fact, the language requires "someone" besides the person who dug them up to handle the sods after the priest's blessing. This "hidden labor" appears again in the next instruction: "And have made for them four signs of Christ of quickbeam and write on each end: Matthew and Mark, Luke and John."[99] These wooden crosses had to be constructed by a woodworker and finished by someone who

[97] *ASPR* 6, 116, 5-10: "Genim þonne ele and hunig and beorman, and ælces feos meolc þe on þæm lande sy, and ælces treowcynnes dæl þe on þæm lande sy gewexen, butan glappan anon, and do þonne haligwæter ðær on, and drype þonne þriwa on þone staðol þara turfa."
[98] *ASPR* 6, 116, 14-17: "And bere siþþan ða turf to Circean, and mæssepreost asinge feower mæssan ofer þan turfon, and wende man þæt grene to þan weofode, and siþþan gebringe man þa turf þær hi ær wæron ær sunnan setlange."
[99] *ASPR* 6, 116-7, 17-19: "And hæbbe him gæworht of cwicbeame feower Cristes mælo and awrite on ælcon ende: Matheus and Marcus, Lucas and Iohannes."

could write. We can already see that the ritual required multiple actors with varying occupational skills: a priest who could sing mass, someone trained to write, a woodworker, a person who could gather herbs, wood, and milk, and finally an organizer who could follow instructions and speak Latin.

The second part of the ritual contains several verbal incantations that must be recited in the afflicted field, presumably by the organizer. Whoever recited the *galdor* had to know the Pater noster, litanies, the Benedicite, and the Magnificat. Afterwards, "unknown seed" must be gathered from beggars and placed on the plough along with incense, fennel, hallowed soap, and hallowed salt.[100] How did the beggars acquire seed? It could be that beggars already carried seed that had been gathered from fields to exchange for goods, but such an interpretation is not supported by the text. Another possibility is that the beggars were asked to gather seeds by the organizer so that they could play their part in the ritual. In either event, the beggars performed some unrecognized work to acquire the very seeds needed to make the ritual effective.

The *Æcerbot* concludes by cutting the first furrow with the plough and setting a baked loaf therein. After the furrow has been cut, the organizer must "take then each kind of flour and have someone bake a loaf [the size of] a hand's palm and knead it with milk and with holy water and lay it under the first furrow."[101] Once this loaf is placed in the

[100] Banham, "Staff of Life," at 289, notes that the "unknown seed" might refer to seed taken from a neighboring farm since this seed would grow better on a fallow field; however, she also posits that the seed was "supplied by chance, if not some more personal supernatural force, rather than by those enacting the ritual." How the beggars acquired this seed is left unstated in her account.

[101] *ASPR* 6, 118, 72-4: "Nim þonne ælces cynnes melo and abacæ man innewerdre handa bradnæ hlaf and gecned hine mid meolce and mid haligwætere and lecge under þa forman furh."

earth, words of power are spoken over the field to complete the blessing. A vernacular incantation asks that God, "the one who made the ground, grant us the gift of growing."[102] Finally, the performer must say three times "Crescite in nomine patris, sit benedicti" followed three times by Amen and Pater noster.[103] Just like the herb-gatherers and the mass-priest, baking the loaf required the labor of someone with specialized knowledge. Of course, baking was not as technical as priestly training but it sill required skills that only certain people possessed. The important point is that the ritual text required participants from different segments of the community. The instructions take two syntactic constructions that illustrate this point: (1) imperative commands ("take sods at night") directed at the ritual's organizer and (2) subjunctive instructions that direct someone else to perform the action ("then let a man drive forth the plough…", "let a man take unknown seed from beggars…"). Perhaps I am splitting hairs as it is possible that these instructions meant the same thing to the ritual's practitioners. However, the fact remains that the *Æcerbot* required help from the kitchen and the church, from beggars and the ploughman. It was a multi-lingual ritual that drew on different parts of the community, which is thematically related to its demand for milk from each animal, pieces of every herb, and sods from each corner of the field. The *Æcerbot* was designed to protect the fields that fed the community, so it is reasonable to think that part of its efficacy depended on communal participation.

[102] *ASPR* 6, 118, 79: "se god, se þas grundas geworhte, geunne us growende gife."
[103] *ASPR* 6, 118, 81-2.

There is other evidence in the *Æcerbot* demonstrating that the ritual had a communal focus. However, beneath the surface of the text lies an anxiety about malevolent actors doing harm to the fields from within the local community. Consider the ritual's stated purpose: "Here is the remedy, how you may better your land, if it will not grow well or if some harmful thing has been done to it by a sorcerer [*dry*] or by a poisoner [*lyblace*]."[104] There are many reasons why fields might not grow well from one year to the next such as intense Spring flooding that washes away seeds, soil made infertile because fields were not rotated, animals stealing seeds and crops, or even unusual Summer drought.[105] Although early medieval farmers did not understand soil science, centuries of trial and error led to effective farming systems capable of sustaining communities of several hundred people. Poor crop yields could devastate a community, forcing them to ration resources or acquire extra goods from neighboring settlements. Such an event could leave a traumatic imprint on the community over the following year; even worse, an infertile field one year would surely be remembered during the next ploughing cycle, which means the *Æcerbot* had a therapeutic effect on the whole community. Its very performance saw people moving throughout the community, organizing the necessary actors, moving sods in and out of church, reciting *galdra* while lying prostrate in the fields. These visible actions reminded people that divine intervention was possible if the ritual was enacted correctly. However, the *dry* and *lyblace* threatened the prosperity of the community from within. If any field that

[104] *ASPR* 6, 116, lines 1-3: "Her ys seo bot, hu ðu meaht þine æceras betan gif hi nellaþ wel wexan oþþe þær hwilc ungedefe þing on gedon bið on dry oððe on lyblace."
[105] Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Bollington: Windgather Press, 2004).

struggled to grow crops one year, people might fear that it had been harmed by poison or some type of supernatural power. As the history of witchcraft demonstrates, accusations of malevolent magic fell on neighbors rather than people from distant villages. It was far easier to imagine harm arising from neighborly tension than it was to cast blame on anonymous people living in other communities since they had no incentive to bewitch these fields.

In one of the *Æcerbot's* incantations, the ritual again calls for protection against harmful actors. After setting the "unknown seed" on the plough, the practitioner asks the Lord to guard the fields:

> May the eternal lord and his holy ones, who are in heaven, grant him, that his produce be guarded against any enemies whatsoever, and that it be safe against any harm at all, from poisons [*lyblaca*] sown around the land. Now I bid the Master, who shaped this world, that there be no speaking-woman [*cwidol wif*] nor artful man [*cræftig man*] that can overturn these words thus spoken.[106]

Here, the ritual again calls for protection against poisons and other malevolent deeds. The term *cwidol* referred to a "jabbering" or a "persuasive speech."[107] Likewise, the adjective *cræftig* meant that someone was "strong, powerful," "wise, learned," or—most likely in

[106] *ASPR* 6, 118, 59-66: "Geunne him ece drihten and his halige, þe on heofonum synt, þæt hys yrþ si gefriþod wið ealra feonda gehwæne, and heo si geborgen wið ealra bealwa gehwylc, þara lyblaca geond land sawen. Nu ic bidde ðone waldend, so ðe ðas woruld gesceop, þæt ne sy nan to þæs cwidol wif ne to þæs cræftig man þæt awendan ne mæge word þus gecwedene."
[107] Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, and Antonette dePaolo Healey, eds., *Dictionary of Old English: A to I Online* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018), "cwidol."

this context—"so knowledgeable as to be powerful" with magic.[108] We might be tempted to think that these lines were insignificant, but I contend that repeated references to poisoners and *cræftig* men show that the greatest threats to community came from within its borders. The ritual calls for specific protection against the powers of the *cwidol wif* and *cræftig man* because these early medieval "cunning folk" were threatening enough to warrant extra safeguards. However, the text does not clearly explain why these people were so threatening. Perhaps the "jabbering" woman knew *galdra* that could turn the field infertile once again; maybe the "artful" man was a skilled maker of poisons and potions. Regardless, the *Æcerbot* frames field protection as a competition over different sources of power: the ritual petitions the "eternal lord" for divine protection while guarding against human malevolence.

Beneath these competing sources of power, the *Æcerbot* was ultimately a ritual about human work. Although discussions about its origins or symbolic meaning are fruitful, the *Æcerbot* was designed to legitimize the labor needed to plough, sow, and care for a field of crops. A poor harvest threatened the material interest of the community, so ritual, prayer, and liturgy were tools to call for divine intervention against the uncertainty facing early medieval farmers. Put differently, this ritual was more than a symbolic performance. The *Æcerbot* was part of agricultural *work* because early medieval farming was already heavily ritualized—the annual cycle was repeated year after year, fields were sown during the same month, and the patterns of work remained unchanged. The agricultural year was already marked by various rituals, feasts, and

[108] *Dictionary of Old English*, "cræftig."

holidays that followed the seasonal cycle. Although scholars often frame early medieval ritual as a dimension of Christian living, I have argued that we should see ritual as work that was as integral to agriculture as threshing, ploughing, and caring for animals.[109] Rituals like the *Æcerbot* were inseparable from labor because they were one of the many tools used to bring order to the annual cycle and deal with the collective trauma brought about by bad harvest. However, the fact that visual representations in Cotton Julius A.vi (discussed in the preceding chapter) depict scenes such as ploughing, pruning vines, clearing land, haymaking, harvest, and fence building shows that higher status peoples cared little for the ritual labor that was integral to agricultural work. Those who actually performed the *Æcerbot* and other agricultural rituals were hidden in the backgrounds of history.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that scholarship about medieval medical practice too often overlooks the work involved in caring for the sick, preparing remedies, and funding medical care. I have shown that folk practitioners had to work carefully to avoid accusations of witchcraft, sorcery, or other malevolent practices. Cunning folk of later periods show how this territory might be navigated: practitioners could use established clientele networks to spread positive stories and ward off negative ones. It is no surprise

[109] See David Hill, "Prelude: Agriculture through the Year," in *The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World*, ed. Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 9-22, for an overview of the agricultural year with its ritual elements excluded. At 12, he mentions that the feasting scene in Cotton Julius A.vi was not "strictly speaking, agricultural in nature because it shows lords, with their fine clothes, furniture, wine and food, feasting at the close of lent. However, they are enjoying the fruits of their peasants' labour in the fields."

that most service work has been rendered invisible because our focus on textual sources replicates the worldview of high-status ecclesiastics. However, preparatory work is implicit in Old English *galdra* like *wið lætbyrde* and the *Æcerbot*. These rituals required careful planning and preparation, which suggests that medical service was integrated into aspects of daily living like herb gathering and food preparation.

The invisible labor framework that I've applied in this chapter illustrates how the limitations of textual evidence requires us to reframe material in imaginative ways to think about how people acted in the wider world. At the same time, many academics—graduate students, adjunct faculty, independent researchers, early career scholars—perform labor that is essentially invisible as they travel to conferences or publish without receiving monetary compensation. Representations of history are political, so it is necessary to uncover places where our own contemporary ideologies about work impact our engagement with the past.

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