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**Author:** Rafał Borysławski

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*Hlæfdige and Hlaford*  
Gendered Power and Images of Continuity  
in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*

Rafał Boryśławski

*University of Silesia in Katowice*

The woman who, depending on a historical source, political environment, and the time of her life, is remembered under the names of Emma and Ælfgifu was in the very centre of events shaping eleventh-century political reality of England, Normandy, and Denmark. As a wife of two kings and a mother of two kings whose rule extended, albeit with varying degree of efficiency, over England, Denmark, and Norway, her importance can hardly be questioned. At the same time, the dramatic events in which she was embroiled, including the particularly brutal maiming and then death of one of her sons, her repeated loss of and reinstatement into power, the pendulum swings between periods of political usefulness and relative abandonment, might make her particularly appealing to the attempts at what may be called historical psychologizing of her character. Indeed, to our contemporary eyes and sensitivity she seems on the one hand a figure larger than life: ambitious, influential, perhaps scheming, and self-confident. On the other hand, like all the women of prominence of her times, her importance was directly effectuated only by her relations to powerful men; beginning with her father, who must have been instrumental in deciding about her marriage, and, principally, her royal husbands and her royal sons. Understandably, tempting as they may be, any endeavours at conceptualizing Emma's emotional states and transitions are fraught with controversy and, at best, may be accused of anachronism. However, the fact that with the creation of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, a unique textual eulogy that must have been written under her guidance, she is a rare example of a woman of her era who transcends her gendered role by asserting, shaping, and promulgating a vision of power balances and of her own persona. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* where these tasks are undertaken is not so much a portrayal of her own story, or of her husbands' and her sons' reigns, but it seeks to create a cohesively angled vision upon them, weaving them into a consistent entity. As much as it describes the events and tensions of the transitions of power in the first decades of the eleventh century, it also prescribes them. In doing so, the *Encomium* may

resemble a hagiography where the unfolding of events corroborates a vision of sanctity, since no action is ultimately accidental or coincidental and they are all predestined to serve their divinely ordained aim, introduced and clarified in the *Encomium*.

The chief point of this chapter is, however, not so much to look at the questions of historicity of the *Encomium* in the way it depicts Queen Emma, nor to view the *Encomium* dedicated to her in order to sift the historical fact from historical propaganda. Instead the intention of the present text is three-fold: first and foremost, to propose a reading of and a reading in the creation of Emma's figure as queen in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, secondly, to look at it as a literary text offering a discussion on the mysticism of royal rule and, thirdly, to consider the roles of the issues of gender, understood as a cultural construct of sex, present in the *Encomium*. Consequently, the chapter will be an attempt at an analysis of the *Encomium* as a text writing and asserting Emma's power in its feminine dimension, augmented by the aspects connecting it with masculine prerogatives. Within the scope of this paper, therefore, lies a question of how much of a *hlaford* "lord" we can see in the portrayal of the *hlæfdige* "lady" of the *Encomium*. The discussion will be grounded upon Simon Keynes's 1989 edition of the *Encomium*,<sup>1</sup> which itself is a broadened and revised edition of Alistair Campbell's seminal 1949 work on its text. I shall be also relying and, with due allowances, offering a supplementary interpretation of the image of Queen Emma proposed by Pauline Stafford in what is so far one of the most thorough attempts at a study of the queen's character.<sup>2</sup> In trying to read the gendered power written into the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, I shall also refer to what may be inferred from a selection of late tenth/early eleventh century Old English poetic comments on femininity and queenship preserved within Old English gnomic texts.

Let us begin with an unavoidably sketchy recapitulation of several chief points related to the figure of Queen Emma in order to establish the necessary contextual backdrop to the *Encomium*. Emma, who during her marriage to King Æthelred the Unready accepted the English name of Ælfgifu, should be perhaps counted as one of the most politically engaged and as one of the most ambivalent of early English queens. A daughter of Richard I of Normandy and Gunnora, separated by only two generations from her great grandfather Rollo, possibly identifiable as Göngu Hrólfir, she may be described as either a catalyst of socio-political events of the first half of the eleventh century or, at the very least, a figure in their maelstrom. Related to Norman, Viking, English, Danish, and Norwegian centres of power, Emma witnessed and oversaw the transforma-

<sup>1</sup> A. Campbell ed., *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, with a supplementary introduction by S. Keynes (Cambridge 1998).

<sup>2</sup> P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century," in A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge 1997), 3–26.

tion of what is commonly described as Anglo-Saxon England into a short-lived Viking-inspired anarchy and, subsequently, into an Anglo-Danish and, as Queen Consort of Norway, Anglo-Scandinavian realm. Less directly, her influence has been discussed as extending well beyond her lifetime: Eleanor Searle convincingly presents Emma as eventually paving the way for the future Norman Conquest.<sup>3</sup> From the House of Normandy, the House of Wessex, the House of Denmark and, posthumously, the House of Normandy again, the wife of King Æthelred the Unready and then of King Knútr inn ríki (Cnut), the mother of King Hǫrða-Knútr (Harthacnut) and King Edward the Confessor, present in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and in skaldic verse – *Emma Normanorum gemma*, to borrow the phrase coined by Henry of Huntingdon some one hundred years after her death,<sup>4</sup> was pivotal in the great eleventh-century “game of thrones.” Understandably, both the power struggles of her era and she herself are by far too large to fit into a totalizing image in the scope of this paper, which, as has been said above, is conceived to be an attempt at reading Emma in the contexts of the *Encomium*’s political, matrimonial, and matrifocal dimensions of gendered power.

The second contextual theme which requires recapitulation at this stage is the complex question of the purpose that the *Encomium* was designed to serve. Central to it is the dating of the text, which, as both Campbell and Keynes agree, was most likely created early during the short English reign of King Hǫrða-Knútr, sometime around the year 1041 or 1042.<sup>5</sup> The Encomiast, a Flemish monk from the monastery of Saint-Omer, conceived a text with a clear political agenda, in all likelihood composed in agreement with the queen’s vision of her own roles and, as both editors prove, in relative disagreement with the factual state of events.<sup>6</sup> On the issue of reliability of the *Encomium* as a historical source, Simon Keynes sums up his and Alistair Campbell’s view by emphasising the necessity of the approach which should be “guided in the first instance not so much by a determination (against the odds) to separate the hard information from the rhetorical or polemical embellishment ... as by wish to understand why Queen Emma should have commissioned a work of this nature in the early 1040s, and how the Encomiast set about the task in hand.”<sup>7</sup> Put briefly then, the *Encomium* is a text which appears to be serving its immediate political context of, firstly, presenting the righteousness and beneficial aspects of the Danish rule in England derived from King Sveinn tjúguskegg (Sweyn Forkbeard) and,

<sup>3</sup> E. Searle, “Emma the Conqueror,” in C. Harper-Bill et al. (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge 1989), 281–88.

<sup>4</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People 1000–1154*, D. Greenway (trans.) (Oxford 2000), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, xxxix–xli, xciii.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, lv–lxvi, cxxxii–cli.

<sup>7</sup> S. Keynes, “Introduction to the 1998 Reprint,” in Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, lxvii.

more importantly, Knútr inn ríki, and, secondly, of reaffirming the legitimacy of Emma's sons, Hǫrða-Knútr and Edward, on the English throne. The famously dark element associated with it is whether the *Encomium* was not intended to perform one other specific function, namely to appease the situation after an expedition in which Emma's sons by Æthelred, Alfred the Ætheling and Edward, later remembered as the Confessor, failed to gain control over the kingdom having arrived to England from their Norman exile in 1036 after the death of Knútr. Alfred's infamous betrayal by Earl Godwine, his imprisonment, blinding and, soon after, his death at Ely monastery, sent shockwaves across the kingdom, such that several years later the *Encomiast* goes to great pains in explaining that Godwine's treason and royal death had been instigated by a letter supposedly sent to the English princes and signed by their mother. The letter, the *Encomiast* stresses, had been apparently fabricated by Harold Harefoot, Knútr's son by Ælfgifu of Northampton, his previous female companion, in order to lure the princes back to England, eliminate them and thus clear his own claims to the throne. The question whether the letter included in the *Encomium* is a "genuine" forgery on Harold's instigation, Emma's own failed political attempt to regain the crown for the House of Wessex or, most chillingly, her attempt to clear the path to the throne for Hǫrða-Knútr, vexes contemporary historians and must have vexed people in her time.<sup>8</sup> The *Encomium* communicates in this respect a clear message of an external, Harold-inspired plot and its tragic consequences. There is no way of deciding, naturally, to what an extent Emma's party was successful in clearing her name. Suffice it to say, however, that rumours and ambiguities may have lingered long enough<sup>9</sup> as the *Encomiast* completes his work some six years after the disastrous events of 1035–1036.

It is tempting, perhaps, to see Emma as a scheming royal femme fatale, an eleventh-century Lady Macbeth type of figure. However, laying the obviously impossible moral judgement aside, it remains without a shade of doubt that the *Encomium* presents the queen-mother as a person, who, in both her political identity as queen and in her gendered identity as a widow and mother, is in the centre of power. Whether the historical extent of her political influence matched her portrait painted by the *Encomiast* is a matter of some debate among historians.<sup>10</sup> But if her power is to be understood as consisting in the continuity

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. W. Campbell, "The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: Personal Panegyric or Political Propaganda," *Annuaire Medievale*, 19 (1979), 27–45; T. Bolton, "Ælfgifu of Northampton: Cnut the Great's Other Woman," *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, LI (2007), 247–68.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. F. Barlow, "Two Notes: Cnut's Second Pilgrimage and Queen Emma's Disgrace in 1043," *The English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 649–656.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford 1997); E. M. Tyler, "Crossing Conquests: Polyglot Royal Women and Literary Culture in Eleventh-Century England," in E. M. Tyler, *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c.800–c.1250* (Turnhout, Brepols 2011), 171–96.

and perpetuation of rule and of the Anglo-Scandinavian body politic, then such a perspective presents her influence as directly stemming from the cultural and political expectation associated with femininity. The power understood in this way is the power of the wife, mother, and widow, and it is in these aspects that Pauline Stafford and Katherine Karkov understand its manifestation in the *Encomium* as corresponding to a rising Marian cult in the West.<sup>11</sup>

In order to establish at least a partial cultural perspective on the idealized literary roles of queenship in the exertion of power and perpetuation of stability, we may turn to Old English gnomic verse recorded around the time of Emma's political prominence. The Exeter Book's tripartite *Maxims* poem occupies the central part of the manuscript containing a rich and diverse body of poetry in the vernacular. The poem is a gnomic discussion of the nature of relations in the world as understood by the late tenth- or early eleventh-century poet. The emphasis here is laid upon balance and stability which are effectuated by the mediation and equilibrium of contrasting elements in the obviously Christian ramifications. The stress is on their complementariness, which the *Maxims* present as an organizing principle in what is an apparently turbulent universe. Out of binary oppositions and reciprocal relations emerge wisdom and meaning which also extend to gender relations. Early in the poem, they are asserted as a productive union of sexes:

... Tu beoð gemæccan;  
 sceal wif ond wer in woruld cennan  
 bearn mid gebyrdum. ... (*Maxims I*, 23–25)<sup>12</sup>

Two shall make a match; man and wife shall bring into the world, children through birth.

In the second, so-called B-part of the poem, reciprocity is applied to the relationship between royal spouses who are assigned complementary roles, external for the *cyning* and internal for the *cwene*. The poem speaks of a queen that is to be procured by king with gifts, which may be understood as a form of externalization of power towards the queen on the part of the king. The queen, however, is subsequently presented as a peacekeeper of the court, which, in turn is a form of internalized power. If the warlike valour belongs to the king, to her belong the comfort and confidence of the people. What unites them both is their mutual generosity, and even though its vectors are, respectively, directed

<sup>11</sup> P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen," 3–26; K. Karkov, "Emma: Image and Ideology," in S. Baxter et al. (eds.), *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham 2009), 509–21.

<sup>12</sup> *Maxims I*, in B. J. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, Vol. I (Exeter 1994), 251. Unless otherwise stated, the translations into Modern English are mine own.

outside and inside of the community, the verse represents the queen and the king as its joint possessors and distributors:

Cyning sceal mid ceape cwene gebicgan,  
 bunum ond beagum; bu sceolon ærest  
 geofum god wesan. Guð sceal in eorle,  
 wig geweaxan, ond wif geþeon  
 leof mid hyre leodum, leohtmod wesan,  
 rune healdan, rumheort beon  
 mearum ond maþmum, meodorædenne  
 for gesiðmægen symle æghwær  
 eodor æþelinga ærest gegretan,  
 forman fulle to frean hond  
 ricene geræcan, ond him ræd witan  
 boldagendum bæm ætsomne. (*Maxims I*, 81–92)<sup>13</sup>

A king must acquire a queen after some bargaining, win her with chalices and bracelets. Generous with gifts they must both be. Battle courage must grow strong in an eorl and the woman must increase in the love of her people. She must keep secrets and be of cheerful mind, be generous with horses and treasures. At the mead-drinking she must always greet first the protector of princes; quickly offer the cup to the hand of her lord and to know what is wise for them both as rulers of a home.

The binary relation is then reminiscent of the relation retained in the etymologies of the Old English words denoting the lord and lady, *hlaford* and *hlæfdige* respectively. Both words were used as forms of address to monarchs; the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and royal charters on numerous occasions speak of *Ælfgifu seo hlæfdige* and *Emma hlæfdie* “the Lady *Ælfgifu*” and “Lady Emma.”<sup>14</sup> Both contain the root *hlaƿ* “bread” and, in essence, both display a degree of externality and internality of their gender roles: etymologically *hlaford* can be derived from the Old English *hlaƿ-weard* “guardian of bread,” whereas *hlæfdige* is ultimately rooted in the *hlaƿ-dæge* “bread-kneader.”<sup>15</sup> Along with the etymologies, the passages from the *Maxims* as well as other Old English exemplifications of the roles of queens may be then attesting to the fact that Old English literature seems to be painting a more proportionate picture of gender relations than the later Middle Ages. Intriguingly, this may also be substantiated by the legal

<sup>13</sup> *Maxims I*, in B. J. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology*, 254.

<sup>14</sup> S. Keynes, “Introduction to the 1998 Reprint,” in A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, xvi–xvii.

<sup>15</sup> See the entries for *dæge*, *hlæfdige*, and *hlaford*, in T. N. Toller, *Supplement to J. Bosworth, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford 1955), 144, 548–49.

positioning of Anglo-Saxon women as oath-worthy and as able to represent themselves in court.<sup>16</sup>

Old English women and Old English queens, such as the one described in *Maxims*, are then culturally conceptualized as complementary, concord-weaving, and productive agents to masculinity, much like *Beowulf's* conciliatory Wealhtheow, King Hrothgar's royal wife. Indeed, recently she has been compared to the peace-weaving roles assigned to Queen Emma in Helen Damico's radical reading of *Beowulf* as a political and social parable on England of the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>17</sup> Old English tradition boasts a number of feminine figures of royal descent who are represented in historical sources authored by men as instrumental to the germination of political concord and learning and who appear either at important junctures or are meant to be understood as harbingers of resolutions of some crises. Suffice it to mention the Northumbrian princess and abbess, St. Hild, whom the Venerable Bede presents as a godmother of Christian poetry in the vernacular and a patroness of the unity of the church among *gens Anglorum* in her role as the hostess of the Synod of Whitby.<sup>18</sup> Alfred the Great's mother, Queen Osburh of Wessex, is yet another example of a royal personage who, in the words of Asser, played a pivotal role in the education of the future scholarly king, setting Alfred in a direction which would later assert his uniqueness, for, if we are to believe the words of Alfred's biographer, it was her who instilled in the young prince his love of books and learning.<sup>19</sup> In *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, although perhaps less so in her factual life, Lady Emma is all this as a royal wife and a royal mother, but she is also much more, for in the narrative of power that the *Encomium* is, her roles are not only extended towards the spheres reserved for kings, but also towards the spheres that are celestial.

The *Encomiast* opens his Prologue with what clearly is a most lofty address to the excellence of the queen over anyone else of her sex. Gender is then crucially accentuated from the very start, but Emma's gendered power is established in the manner that brings to mind the salutation of the Virgin Mary, with the *Encomiast's* emphasis on his own unworthiness and the queen's brilliance which, as the *Encomiast* does not fail to inform his readership, is more obvious than the radiance of the sun:

<sup>16</sup> A. L. Klinck, "Anglo-Saxon Women and the Law," *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), 107–21.

<sup>17</sup> H. Damico, *Beowulf and the Grendel-kin. Politics and Poetry in Eleventh Century England* (Morgantown 2015), 204–84.

<sup>18</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Leo Sherley-Price (trans.) (London 1990), Book IV. 23–24, pp. 243–50.

<sup>19</sup> S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (trans. and eds.), *Alfred the Great. Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London 1983), Chap. 23, p. 75.

Salus tibi sit a domino Iesu Christo, o regina, quae omnibus in hoc sexu positis prestas morum elegantia.

Ego servus tuus nobilitati tuae digna factis meis exhibere nequeo, quoque pacto verbis saltem illi placere possim nescio. Quod enim cuiuslibet peritiae loquentis de te virtus tua preminet, omnibus a quibus cognosceris ipso solis iubare elarius lucet. (*Encomium...*, Incipit Prologus)

May our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you, O Queen, who excel all those of your sex in the admirability of your way of life.

I, your servant, am unable to show to you, noble lady, anything worthy in my deeds, and I do not know how I can be acceptable to you even in words. That your excellence transcends the skill of any one speaking about you is apparent to all to whom you are known, more clearly than the very radiance of the sun.<sup>20</sup>

The radiance of the sun invoked at the onset of the *Encomium* has recently been noted by Catherine A. M. Clarke to be a conventional reference to the power of the male ruler in late antique and early medieval tradition of panegyric writings. Clarke is inclined to see its mention in the Prologue as especially meaningful and “evoking here a sense of Emma’s sole authority and power in her own right (rather than merely in relation to a husband, father or son).”<sup>21</sup> The worshipful approach to the queen’s grandeur is later augmented in the Encomiast’s protracted explanation, the *Argumentum*, as to why he begins his work with an account of King Sveinn tjúguskegg. In a convoluted, almost gnostic manner, in the part which precedes the actual historical account, he is at pains to present his work as constantly orbiting around the queen, even if she is not immediately apparent and literally present in the passages which are to follow. The Encomiast begins with a grandiose comparison of his work to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which, he emphasises, does not openly refer to Octavian and yet is clearly devoted to his praise. This is meant to assure the audiences of the *Encomium* that its author intends to speak of Emma in the like manner. The centrality of her status and her immaterial presence are thus the marks of her queenship as the body politic and as such extend beyond her femininity into the realm of masculinities:

Nosti, quoniam ubicumque giraveris circulum, primo omnium procul dubio principium facies esse punctum, sicque rotato continuatim orbe reductetur circulus, quo reducto ad suum principium eius figurae continuetur ambitus. Simili igitur continuatione laus reginae claret in primis, in mediis viget, in ultimis invenitur, omnemque prorsus codicis summam complectitur. (*Encomium...*, Argumentum)

<sup>20</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 4–5.

<sup>21</sup> C. A. M. Clarke, *Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England. Texts, Hierarchies, Economies* (Cambridge 2012), 129–30.

You are aware that wherever you draw a circle, first of all you certainly establish a point to be the beginning, and so the circle is made to return by continuously wheeling its orb, and by this return the circumference of the circle is made to connect itself to its own beginning. By a similar connection, therefore, the praise of the Queen is evident at the beginning, thrives in the middle, is present at the end, and embraces absolutely all of what the book amounts to.<sup>22</sup>

Whether the *Encomiast*, as well as alluding to an imperial and almost celestial status of the queen, is also quasi-biblically alluding to the etymology of her name connected with Gothic *ermen* “whole” (as in the name of Ermanaric)<sup>23</sup> and Old English *eormen* “universal, immense, whole, general” and *emnis* “equity, evenness and equilibrium”<sup>24</sup> is impossible to be corroborated, although it is not inconceivable. In a similar vein and in the spirit of Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*, the very sound of Emma’s name may have been construed by the *Encomiast* as a sign which implies cyclicity with its two syllables, “em-ma,” one immediately giving rise to the other and doing so *ad infinitum*.

The first time the *Encomiast* makes an explicit mention of Queen Emma as a character of his historical oeuvre does not happen until the sixteenth chapter of the *Encomium*’s second book. When she does appear as a *nobilissima coniuge* “most noble wife,” in keeping with the message of the *Maxims* cited above about wooing a queen with gifts, we read not only about the customary gift giving, but, more importantly, also of Emma’s immediate declaration of the chief marital condition with which she aims to secure her rank. In so doing, she is portrayed in an act of asserting her gender-related power as a mother of a future heir. Thus her inaugural mention in the account of events immediately positions her as bargaining with the king and as wrestling from him some of his prerogatives – whatever her true bargaining power at that point was, the *Encomiast* depicts Emma as a match for King Knútr. In this short passage she, as it were, becomes a *hlaford* in the body of a *hlæfdige*:

Mittuntur proci ad dominam, mittuntur dona regalia, mittuntur et verba precatoria. Sed abnegat illa, se unquam Chnutonis sponsam fieri, nisi illi iusiurando affirmaret, quod nunquam alterius coniugis filium post se regnare faceret nisi eius, si forte ille Deus ex eo filium dedisset. (*Encomium*, Book II.16)

Woovers were sent to the lady, royal gifts were sent, furthermore precatory messages were sent. But she refused ever to become the bride of

<sup>22</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 6–7.

<sup>23</sup> See the entry for *Ermeniricus*, in W. P. Lehmann, *A Gothic Etymological Dictionary* (Leiden 1986), 100.

<sup>24</sup> See the entries for *emnis* and *eormen* in J. Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford 1898), 250, 254.

Knútr, unless he would affirm to her by oath, that he would never set up the son of any wife other than herself to rule after him, if it happened that God should give *her* a son by him.<sup>25</sup>

As the conjugal union is agreed, the marriage is portrayed as being of mutually supportive and mutually inspiring nature in which both King Knútr and Queen Emma appear as spouses of equal importance – the king rejoices at the unexpectedly, as the *Encomiast* says, noble marriage, while the queen at the excellence of the king and expectation of the offspring:

Gaudebat enim rex, nobilissimis insperato se usum thalamis; haec autem hinc praestantissima virtute coniugis; hinc etiam spe gratulabunda ace(n)debatur futurae prolis. (*Encomium*, Book II.17)

For the king rejoiced that he had unexpectedly entered upon a most noble marriage; the lady, on the other hand, was inspired both by the excellence of her husband, and by the delightful hope of future offspring.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the birth of Hƿrða-Knútr complements and seals the marriage and is, as if, effectuated by the queen's "delightful hope of future offspring." This, along with the indisputable grace granted by the Saviour, openly invites a mystical reading of the royal nativity scene, while the mutual care about the newborn and the mutual choice of the name by the royal parents are presented as acts of mutual and commensurate development. The *Encomium* implicitly declares what is an obvious truth at this stage, so obvious that it may almost be deemed confrontational to power relations within the marital union: that there is no king without his queen, since the paramount aim of a monarch is to outlive his time in the body of his successor, who may only be granted by the queen. It is, as if, only because of Emma, in her sacred dual role as a queen and as a queen-mother, that Knútr the father becomes a stronger Knútr in his son, a Hƿrða-Knútr. If we are to follow the likely belief in the mysticism of names that is present in the *Encomium*, then not only is Hƿrða-Knútr a "stronger knot," a bond unifying both the marriage and legitimising Knútr's reign in England, but also Queen Emma, with her original Norman name signifying completeness, is presented by the *Encomiast* as complementing King Knútr by granting him that which is desired by all kings – a perpetuation of the rule:

Non multo post siquidem, Salvatoris annuente gratia, filium peperit nobilissima regina. Cuius cum uterque parens intima atque ut ita dicam singulari gauderet dilectione, alios vero liberales filios educandos direxerunt Normanniae, istum hunc retinentes sibi, utpote futurum heredem regni.

<sup>25</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 32–33, emphasis mine.

<sup>26</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 34–35.

Itaque dilectissimum pignus, uti mos est catholicis, sacro abluerunt fonte baptismatis, imponuntque ei vocabulum quodammodo optinens indicium futurae virtutis. Vocatur siquidem Hardocnuto, nomen patris referens cum additamento. Cuius si ethimologia theutonice perquiratur, profecto quis quantusve fuerit dinoscitur. 'Harde' quidem 'velox' vel 'fortis', quod utrumque, multoque maius his, in eo uno cognosci potuit, quippe qui omnes sui temporis viros omnium virtutum praestantia anteivit. (*Encomium*, Book II.18)

For indeed soon afterwards it was granted by the Saviour's grace that the most noble queen bore a son. The two parents, happy in the most profound and, I might say, unparalleled love for this child, sent in fact their other legitimate sons to Normandy to be brought up, while keeping this one with themselves, inasmuch as he was to be the heir to the kingdom. And so they washed this very dear child, as is the custom of all Christians, in the sacred baptismal font, and gave him a name which conveyed in a measure an indication of his future excellence. For indeed he was called Hƿrða-Knútr, which reproduced his father's name with an addition, and if the etymology of this is investigated in Germanic, one truly discerns his identity and greatness. 'Harde,' indeed means 'swift' or 'strong,' both of which qualities and much more could be recognized in him above all others, for he excelled all the men of his time by superiority in all high qualities.<sup>27</sup>

The intention of the *Encomium* as a text reinforcing a vision of Hƿrða-Knútr as a rightful king at the time of its creation, cannot be made more explicit. Regardless what the real state of affairs at the birth of Hƿrða-Knútr was, the *Encomium* offers a vision of continuity of power in which Emma plays a pivotal role. In emphasising the mutual love and care over the new-born son, the mutual baptism, performed as though without the presence of any Church figure, and the mutual choice of the name by the two parents, Hƿrða-Knútr's birth is presented as important to them both. What can be indirectly read from the manner in which he is introduced in the *Encomium* is that the legitimacy of his later reign in England is effectuated not only by his descent from the royal father, but, at least equally importantly, from his royal mother. As a matter of fact, it is the latter that may be seen as strengthening Hƿrða-Knútr's royal rights even more, since the figure of Queen Emma becomes the embodiment of the continuity of rule stretching back to the times of Æthelred on the one hand and promising the preservation of this continuity in the persona of her other son, Edward, on the other hand. Completed around the time of the transition of power in England to Hƿrða-Knútr, who is soon after followed on the throne by Edward, the *Encomium* is an exhortation to the two royal half-brothers, whose rights to the throne, despite their mutual prolonged absences from England, in

<sup>27</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 34–35.

Denmark and Normandy respectively, are presented as well-founded ultimately because of the authority of their mother.

Queen Emma's true power, as envisaged in the *Encomium*, lies then in maintaining its continuity and perpetuation in and by her sons. In this sense, she is portrayed as central to upholding the line of succession and, consequently, central to upholding the domestic peace, performing the role familiar from the queen in the *Maxims*. And since the perpetuation of royal power is of obviously cyclical nature, as it is repeatedly re-established by the changing monarchic persona and the unchanging realm, the Encomiast resorts to the rhetoric of cyclicality in his eulogy. The metaphor of circularity, as has been mentioned, is markedly employed by the Encomiast in the Argument in order to present his text as revolving around the persona of the queen. Likewise, it is implicitly present in the understanding of the queen's name and may be one of the reasons for which she is named Emma and not Ælfgifu in the manuscript.<sup>28</sup> However, the cyclical aspect of Emma's power over the realm and over the text is also present in two other preeminent features of the *Encomium*: in the prefatory image of Queen Emma receiving the *Encomium* from the hands of the Encomiast, with her sons observing the bestowal, and at the book's end, where the Encomiast expresses the conviction of the perpetuation of the kingdom. It is, therefore, as if the *Encomium Emmae Regine* was indeed conceived as a self-perpetuating work, since the remarkable opening image is a representation of the queen receiving the *Encomium*, which, effectively, would also contain an image of the queen receiving the *Encomium*, and so on; depicting the offering of a book within a book, within a book, within a book, *ad infinitum*, and resembling mirrors reflecting mirrors.

What then was outwardly conceived as a work of history is additionally a work on the mysticism of the continuation of royal power in general and on the mysticism of Queen Emma's gendered power. The correlations between the representation of the queen enthroned and the iconic representations of the Virgin Mary are evident and have been noted by Pauline Stafford,<sup>29</sup> and by Catherine Karkov. Karkov sees the portrait as "based on the traditional iconography of the Adoration of the Magi where the magi bow or kneel before the enthroned Virgin and Child."<sup>30</sup> To expand the discussion of the gendered mysticism of the monarchic ideal, the closing section of this paper intends to suggest some supplementary reading to the scope proposed by Stafford and Karkov.

The similarities between Emma and the Virgin are conspicuous, beginning with the fact that much as the Holy Virgin had to suffer through the ordeal of her son, Queen Emma is portrayed as experiencing comparably traumatic

<sup>28</sup> For Queen Emma's name, title and forms of assent see Appendix I, in: A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 55–61.

<sup>29</sup> P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen," 3–26

<sup>30</sup> C. Karkov, "Emma: Image and Ideology," 510.

vicissitudes related to the disastrous plight of Alfred the Ætheling, and, more importantly, to the struggle of Hōrða-Knútr with the malignant Harold Harefoot, whom the Encomiast does not fail to present as being of illegitimate birth. This, together with the miracles mentioned as occurring at the tomb of the murdered Alfred, highlights the legitimacy of Emma's sons not only in the eyes of people, but also in the eyes of God.<sup>31</sup> The *Encomium's* closing paragraph rejoicing in the harmony of the reunited family and in the harmony of the joint rule is visibly conceived to form an enveloping structure with the image of the enthroned queen.

Hic fides habetur regni sotiis, hic inviolabile viget foedus materni fraternique amoris. Haec illis omnia prestitit, qui unanimes in domo habitare facit, Iesus Christus dominus omnium, cui in Trinitate manenti inmarcescibile floret imperium. Amen. (*Encomium...*, Book III.14)

Here there is loyalty among sharers of rule, here the bond of motherly and brotherly love is of strength indestructible. All these things are granted them [i.e. Emma, Hōrða-Knútr and Edward] by Him, who makes dwellers in the house be of one mind, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who, abiding in the Trinity, holds a kingdom which flourishes unfading. Amen.<sup>32</sup>

The harmonious vision that the Encomiast presents at the end of his work is already present in its frontispiece illustration of the queen being handed the book while her two sons are admiringly watching this from aside. Likewise then, the visual portrayal of the queen at the opening of the *Encomium* may be illustrated with the words with which it is concluded. In the opening image, clearly a form of a visual motto setting the agenda for the entire text, she is portrayed, perhaps even with some visibly individualised facial features, as sitting enthroned in the pose characteristic of power figures – monarchs in majesty. The representation is that of a *regina utilis*, an effective and pragmatic queen. The fact that she is already holding the book to her left side, between her heart, the kneeling and tonsured Encomiast, and the visible busts of her sons, both deferentially looking up to her, not only positions her as the key figure of the image, but also centralizes the position of the book. And since Emma's posture may also be understood as judiciary, the book and the vision it conveys is the truth against which her achievements are to be measured. The vectors of power are distinctly obvious with their two main axes, which, incidentally, repeat the axes of her shanks: Emma's acceptance of the *Encomium* introduces her sons, Hōrða-Knútr in particular, as if patiently waiting for the book to assume its place, while the queen's eyes are carefully levelled with the eyes of the new king. Moreover, the position Emma is sketched in, as the enthroned position of power, is tradition-

<sup>31</sup> Book III.6, in: A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 46–47.

<sup>32</sup> A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 52–53.

ally used in representations of God, Christ<sup>33</sup> and the Virgin Mary.<sup>34</sup> If we were to apply the Marian iconography to this portrayal, the open book occupies the place of Christ on Mary's lap. This could not be coincidental as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* is focused also on Emma's sons and, more importantly, it is indeed intended to offer what Christ did offer: the way, the truth and the life, not to mankind, of course, but to the body politic of her sons as a perpetuation of the kingdom and of the Anglo-Danish line of succession, which is among the main purports of the *Encomium*. She is then not only a mother to her sons and people, but also a law- and truth-giving figure.

Intriguingly, this may be corroborated and reinforced by the masculine element present in the depiction of Emma in the image, namely in Emma's dual resemblance to Moses the Lawgiver in the *Encomium*'s frontispiece. For one thing, the book she is holding may be likened to the ten commandments demarcating the new covenant. Correspondingly, the succession of Hōrða-Knútr and then of Edward may undoubtedly be understood as an opening of a new era. The other elements are the curious leaf-like or horn-like shapes protruding from Emma's crown. Can we see in them a reflection of Vulgate's mistranslation of Moses's apparition as *cornutus* "horned" after a conversation with God?<sup>35</sup> If that were the case, Emma's queenship may be said to have been gendered by her *Encomium* into forms of kingship as well. The *hlæfdige* may have needed to at least partially become a *hlaford* in order to bolster the position of her sons, and thus, in a curiously reversed way, the queen reminds her people that it is her who offers the continuity of power and connections with the past kings in the opening year of Hōrða-Knútr's reign.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the representation of Christ in Majesty in the Trinity Gospels, Cambridge, Trinity College MS. B 10 4, fol. 16v. See: C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (Ithaca 1982), plate B, p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of visual depictions of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England, see M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1990), 142–78.

<sup>35</sup> The theme of the horned Moses is discussed, for instance, by E. G. Suhr, "The Horned Moses," *Folklore* 74 (1963), 387–95.