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INVISIBLE LABOR IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores invisible labor, which is a contemporary term, as written in Old English literature. This thesis contends that invisible labor refers to labor that is ignored, underpaid, oftentimes spans across social hierarchies and is socially constructed. The first part of this thesis goes into the contemporary understanding of invisible labor, how this understanding leads to recognition of invisible labor in Old English literature and shows that this labor is not gender specific. The second part of this thesis goes into peace-weaving as invisible labor, which had been culturally considered women's work and economically devalued, as depicted by the actions of Wealhtheow when she serves mead and speaks up for her sons in *Beowulf* and heroic actions of killing Holofernes by Judith in *Judith.* The third part of this thesis explores peacemaker as invisible labor, as depicted by Wiglaf serving "water" in *Beowulf,* Widsith taking Ealhhild to her new king in *Widsith,* Constantine taking advice from the Angel as depicted in Cynewulf's *Elene,* the soldiers standing by King Athelstan and defeating the Scots in "The Battle of Brunburgh," and the men being faithful to AEthelred against the Vikings in "The Battle of Maldon." In analyzing invisible labor as depicted in Old English literature, what may be viewed in contemporary terms as "ordinary" work of service that is easily dismissed and unrecognized, will bring insight into how invisible labor was seen in Old English literature.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that invisible labor, which is a contemporary term, is written about as a concept in Old English literature. Invisible labor includes any hidden labor which spans social hierarchies and is a social construct that is constantly evolving as society is changing and progressing. Labor can be defined as physical and emotional work.[1] Both physical and emotional work includes production outside the home for an employer or inside the house, raising a family. In Old English literature, poets and prose writers valued labor and wrote about various forms of invisible labor, which include peace-weaving, peacemaking, passive, hidden, militaristic, and sometimes heroic work. Anglo-Saxon writers reimagined and exposed these different actions as invisible labor as well as examined gendered expectations for their performance.

Invisible labor is understood to include activities that may be paid employment to retain a job and support a family, but also often overlooked, ignored, or devalued by employers, consumers, and co-workers.[2] Examples of modern-day invisible labor include janitorial services who empty trash cans and mop the floor, military servicemen and women who safeguard a nation from foreign invaders, farm work including those who plant and pick the produce that is found in the grocery stores, mail order packers such as Amazon factory workers who package our orders and

[1] Cherry defines emotional work as "work wife" or "identity work" that is time and effort spent doing work. I define physical work as labor that may be compensated or uncompensated labor that produces a product or provides a service. Miriam A. Cherry, "People Analytics and Invisible Labor," *Saint Louis University Law Journal* (2016): 1.

[2] Cherry defines this labor as work that serves to hide particular functions that workers take on for little or no pay. Cherry claims that this work is fundamentally disconcerting as workers and employers do not recognize the merit of this work. Cherry, "People Analytics and Invisible Labor," 2.

ship them out, and service staff at a restaurant, men and women who serve meals and seat guest while making sure that restaurant patrons are happy. These examples of invisible labor are obscured and often underpaid, with workers relying on tips to live, ignored and devalued based on class and gender, even though these workers form the backbone of contemporary society and live with their "work taken on for little or no pay."[3]

Another way that illustrates invisible labor is work that takes place in the home and includes child-rearing, cooking dinner for the family as well as other domestic and volunteer work.[4] Miriam Cherry points out that, "many people think of invisible labor... as unpaid housework, domestic chores or perhaps childbearing." [5] However, invisible labor is much more than silent work or labor that is unappreciated or undervalued. Thus, Cherry sought to bring a fuller understanding of invisible labor:

> We define *invisible labor* as activities that occur within the context of paid employment that workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit

[3] Cherry claims that her focus is not to provide statistical data to back up her claims but to "focus on both the globalization of work and the increasing role that technology has had on the work and workers." Cherry claims that her research in this paper is "concerned with the ways that invisible labor was being performed in the workforce seemingly without customers, co-workers, or sometimes even without the workers themselves being aware of it. Cherry, "People Analytics and Invisible Labor," 1-3.

[4] Besides naming these sociocultural forms of invisible labor in her article, Hatton claims that this work is devalued, in part, because it is performed in the home...the home itself is constructed as a site in which 'real' work does not take place...devalued through gender ideologies and not bringing home a paycheck. Erin Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility: Rethinking the Concept of Invisible Work," *Work, Employment and Society*, (2017): 343-45.

[5] Cherry, "People Analytics and Invisible Labor," 1.

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.[6]

However, invisible labor as portrayed in Old English literature is labor that is determined by gender, commodified, burdensome, undervalued, heroic militaristic, occasionally overshadowed by domestic work and often ignored as well as devalued either symbolically by what is implied by the work, demeaning for the work being intentionally ignored or no acknowledgment for work performed as is the case in a military battle. Accordingly, the sections that follow analyze Old English literature through the lens of invisible labor summarizing some of the mechanisms of work as written by Anglo-Saxon authors.

Invisible labor is always socially constructed and was continually changing in Old English literature during the Anglo-Saxon period, the importance of invisible labor to Anglo-Saxons was vital to the economic survival of the communities. Thus, invisible labor manifested itself in epic poetry and prose under the guise of women married off to kings, men who carried on traditions of the leadership of kingdoms and warriors, including men and women who fought to protect their land from invaders. Anglo-Saxon poets used the word *freoþuwebban* in Old English literature, which means peace-weaving, peacemaking, treaty weaver, and true weaver.[7] In

[6] Cherry, "People Analytics and Invisible Labor," 3.

[7] These terms are defined in the *Dictionary of Old English.* Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, University of Toronto, Centre for Medieval Studies, and Dictionary of Old English Project. *Dictionary of Old English.* Toronto: Published for the Dictionary of Old English Project, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986.

addition to these job labels, other fields of work in Anglo-Saxon times show that invisible labor in Old English literature operates under a system of "informal work" or work that would not be defined as traditional work due to the service being unpaid and undefined, which was the case for peace-weaver Wealhtheow and peacemaker Wiglaf in *Beowulf*.[8] In *Widsith* and Cynewulf's *Elene,* invisible labor operates as "enacted" work based on speaking and conquest skills through the actions of scop Widsith and imperialism of new lands under Emperor Constantine.[9] In the epic poem *Judith,* Judith's actions in killing Holofernes and saving her people from the Assyrian invasion defy the societal laws of patriarchy could be classified as both "domestic" or unpaid work as well as "public" military work due to having a woman kill and become a hero.[10] Judith's work, when viewed through a contemporary lens, shows that privilege gender determined roles for a war where men were the only warriors, was changing in Old English. Finally, "The Battle of Brunanburh" and "The Battle of Maldon" depict that the work of soldiers and thanes who fought to keep out invaders expands the understanding of invisible labor of military men. However, rejection of domination and invasion which would be viewed as work that benefits the "public sphere".[11] Ultimately, by viewing Old English literature and invisible labor through a contemporary conception framework, the mechanisms of work performed during Anglo-Saxon

[8] Hatton claims that informal work is part of the sociological mechanism of work not legally defined as employment. Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility," 339.

[9] Hatton claims that enacted work based on skills is part of the sociocultural mechanism of work, which is a hegemonic cultural ideology. Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility," 339.

[10] Hatton claims that both domestic and public work are part of the sociospatial mechanism where work is spatially segregated, unpaid and benefits the institution. Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility," 339.

[11] Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility," 339.

times can be explained by showing that labor was indeed ignored, out of sight, informal, enacted, patriarchal, unpaid and provided a means of military protection for the community.

All the examples in Old English literature of invisible labor are different forms of invisible labor that were present in the Anglo-Saxon culture. These literary examples of invisible labor include Wealhtheow's peace-weaving in *Beowulf,* which can be understood as a labor. Wealhtheow marries Hrothgar, serves mead in Heorot, and speaks up for her sons' inheritance when she felt it was threatened while complying with Anglo-Saxon law.[12] Harte claims that in Anglo-Saxon society it was necessary to have laws and to speak up to maintain order and traditions amongst the community, including labor. Thus, if Wealhtheow had not married to unite her old kingdom with the new, or failed to speak up for her sons, a feud and subsequent breakdown of social order could have resulted in a war. Wealhtheow's work is considered invisible because according to the poem, she is not focused on maintaining the social order or interested in receiving self-recognition for her work. Judith's labor in *Judith* is shown to be heroic due to her intentionally going to the Assyrians and allowing herself to be captured so that she can kill Holofernes and save her people. Ryner claims that "what is at stake ...is not treasure but a heroic subject formation" where Judith can create a new identity of a female warrior, a new form of labor, rather than seeking to obtain unneeded money for her community.[13] Wiglaf in *Beowulf* shows that he is a peacemaker when he stands by Beowulf during the battle against the dragon, follows the mead serving tradition by serving Beowulf water before his death in the

[12] Jeremy Harte, "Language, Law, and Landscape in the Anglo-Saxon World," *Time & Mind-the Journal of Archaeology Consciousness and Culture,* (2015): 53-54.

[13] BD Ryner, "Exchanging Battle: Subjective and Objective Conflicts in the Battle of Maldon," *English Studies,* (2006): 275.

absence of a queen in Beowulf's kingdom. Harte claims that Wiglaf would have been enforcing a new base of power, labor, and tradition to help establish power and deflect opposition.[14] Widsith in *Widsith* is not a peacemaker but is a scop whose job includes taking Ealhhild, who is the peace-weaver, to her new kingdom to marry the king, as well as entertaining kingdoms to earn money to support himself. Cynewulf's *Elene* depicts invisible labor through the angel, who is the peacemaker, tells Constantine how he will win the battle he is fighting, and this brings Constantine closer to his God. "The Battle of Brunanburh" constructs a militaristic perspective of invisible labor in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* which shows the triumphant battle of King Athelstan over Olaf, who is trying to invade his kingdom. Finally, "The Battle of Maldon" shows how the military struggle against the Vikings invaders was rejected by the people of Maldon, shows the treachery of the Vikings versus the bravery of the people of Maldon, and shows the commodification of Anglo-Saxon society when the Vikings demanded payment to leave the people of Maldon alone. Ultimately, *Widsith, Elene,* "The Battle of Brunanburh" and "The Battle of Maldon" all show different forms of "economic relationships that they wish to take up."[15] Had these economic relationships not been created, a loss of increased labor, money, or land would have happened. Thus, the communities in *Widsith, Elene,* "The Battle of Brunanburh" and "The Battle of Maldon" would not have generated greater power and dominance for their community, which would have made them all vulnerable to external personal or societal conflicts.

[14] Harte, "Language, Law, and Landscape in the Anglo-Saxon World," 56.

[15] Ryner, "Exchanging Battle," 269.

Invisible labor, as represented in Old English literature, helps to expose cultural norms that show Anglo-Saxon history of work by exposing the many forms that labor took place. Anglo-Saxon labor includes warriors, peace-weavers, peacemakers, and scops. By studying Anglo-Saxon labor, these worker's job identity no longer remains hidden due to gender, class, and type of work. Additionally, when invisible labor is exposed in Old English literature, through poetry and prose, it allows for the sharing of lived experiences of the writers by sharing culturing practices present in the communities including the cup passing ritual or cultural icons like swords or mead cups, which reveals the actual work that took place within Anglo-Saxon history and ensures that this literature is not forgotten.[16] Thus, by exploring the authorship of each of the texts that are cited in this thesis, I was able to learn that the origin of the poems and prose that I use is speculative. Still, these texts do have characteristics including word usage, writing style, and cultural traditions that assure that they are indeed a part of Old English literature and that they do matter.[17]

Invisible labor has shaped the meaning of the work of the peace-weavers and peacemakers. The poem *Beowulf* takes on invisible labor and shows through the actions of Wealhtheow and Wiglaf that invisible labor was learned behavior. This complexity in *Beowulf* over invisible labor includes peace-weaving activities of Wealhtheow in service to her king Hrothgar at Heorot

[16] Professor Cheung was lecturing on when literature is no longer talked about, it gets lost, forgotten, and goes out of print. King-Kok Cheung, "Asian American Literature," (Lecture, University of California, Los Angeles, CA., January 08, 2020).

[17] Weiskott claims that the evidence for the authorship of Widsith is inconclusive, whereas Hartman of *Judith* is male due to the poets' attention to form. See Eric Weiskott, "The Meter of Widsith and the Distant Past," *Neophilogus,* (January 2015): 143-50.

by preserving and transmitting customs in the mead hall as well by Wiglaf as a soldier in service to Beowulf on the battlefield. Peace-weavers like Wealhtheow were typically women, usually from some royal lineage, who married a man from another tribe to extend the bonds of peace between tribes. Wodzak says that "Wealhtheow is characterized as a...peace pledge."[18] A peace pledge is marked by peace-weavers having children to strengthen the positive ties between tribes and serve mead in the hall "in their attempt to establish and maintain stability," in other words, "an essential" person.[19] Chance claims that "The role of woman in *Beowulf* primarily depends upon peace-making, either biologically through her marital ties with foreign kings, as a peace-pledge or mother of sons, or socially and psychologically as a cup-passing and peace-weaving queen within the hall."[20] Therefore, besides seeing peace-weavers as only women, peacemakers can be men like Wiglaf in *Beowulf*, who was a warrior, a scop like Widsith in *Widsith*, a thane like the men in "The Battle of Maldon," an angel like the angel who spoke to Constantine in Cynwulf's *Elene*, or cup passer like Wiglaf. Sklute wrote that peace-makers "reflects anything of the social system of the Anglo-Saxons... (or a) diplomat."[21] The peace maker is part of the social system of work that is a sociospatial work. Sociospatial work can be either domestic work

[18] Victoria Wodzak, "Of Weavers and Warriors: Peace and Destruction in the Epic Tradition," *Midwest Quarterly-A Journal of Contemporary Thought*, (1998): 256.

[19] Wodzak, "Of Weavers and Warriors," 256.

[20] Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, eds., "The Structural Unity of *Beowulf,*" *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 250.

[21] Damico and Olsen, *New Readings,* 208.

in the home or public sphere work such as the military or public service.[22] Sociospatial work requires many workers to perform many different tasks and therefore is useful in understanding the Anglo-Saxon labor of peace-weavers and peacemakers. Peace-weavers and peacemakers perform their work during ceremonial activities such as feast in halls, amongst storytellers in the hall, and battle scenes as soldiers as it is written about in Old English literature. Old English epic literature, including *Beowulf*, and prose such as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* as well as other prose sources from Old English, illustrates a definition of invisible labor, to show that invisible labor is the foundation and backbone of Anglo-Saxon society. By studying this labor through literature, it makes it possible to see how Anglo-Saxons were moved by the written word, inspired to work, even if it was heroic, were entertained, and shows the inheritance of traditions for labor. However, what makes understanding why invisible labor is hidden especially when using Old English literature to support my assertions, is that "speech and circumstantial reality exist in a state of presence, whereas writing and text exist in a state of suspension—that is, outside circumstantiated reality—until they are "actualized" and made present by the reader-critic." One is not able to fully understand the relevance of invisible labor through literature without studying these works[23] Therefore, even though invisible labor is talked about, once labor is written about, the work has now become a concrete part of the community and literary thinking.

[22] Hatton, "Mechanisms of Invisibility," 339.

[23] Eileen A. Joy, and Mary K. Ramsey, eds., *The Postmodern Beowulf: A Critical Casebook* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006) 5.

Peace-weaving in Old English Literature

In looking at the actions of Wealhtheow as a peace weaver, *Beowulf* shows her in service to King Hrothgar in Heorot. Wealhtheow is a submissive worker and victim of her circumstances who serves mead in the hall. The cup passing tradition interweaves standard cultural practices and artifacts found in Old English literature and Anglo-Saxon society to generate an understanding of the position, role, and function of women like Wealhtheow. Chance claims that "the peace-weaver embodies the tension between passivity and aggression, between social and anti-social behavior, passion and reason. Passivity, sociality, and reason belong to the domestic worker; aggression, anti-sociality, and passion to the heroic world."[24] Thus, when the poem shows Wealhtheow serving mead before the first battle, it depicts a form of invisible labor that was present in Old English literature. Jamison claims that in Anglo-Saxon culture:

> The Germanic woman who acts as peace pledge might contend with her situation in various ways...the role of object, inert, passive, bearer of meaning...she may succumb to the role of an object and acquiesce to a marriage she does not desire... she may establish herself in her new husband's home and become a king maker, balancing her loyalties and using her diplomatic skills to forge peace; or she may even rebel against the system of exchange.[25]

Wealhtheow is actively transforming the role of peace-weaver as invisible labor. Wealhtheow's labor includes service and speechmaking. The poem creates a new identity for the peace-weaver that consist of work not for personal gain or self-recognition but emotional labor for the good of the family and community.

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[24] Wodzak, "Of Weavers and Warriors," 257.

[25] Carol Parrish Jamison, "Traffic of Women in Germanic Literature: The Role of the Peace Pledge in Marital Exchanges," *Women in German Yearbook* (2004): 14.

The first instance where Wealhtheow is using her position to define her role in Anglo-Saxon society occurs in Heorot while serving mead. There was a specific practice on the order of who drinks and who is served mead first in the hall. Hill also claims that there were customs, including the law of serving mead and who is invited to drink from the mead cup:[26]

Wealhtheow came forward,
Hrothgar's queen, mindful of the courtesies;
Attired in her gold, she welcomed the men.
The noble lady gave the first cup,
filled to the brim, to the king of the Danes,
bade him rejoice in this mead-serving,
beloved by his people; he took it happily,
victory-famed king, the hall-cup and feast.
The lady of the Helmings walked through the hall,
offered the jeweled cup to veterans and youths
until the time came that the courteous queen,
splendid in rings, excellent in virtues,
came to Beowulf, brought him the mead.
She greeted him well, gave thanks to God
wise in her words...
He accepted the cup,
battle-fierce warrior, from Wealhtheow's hand,[27]

[26] John M. Hill, *The Cultural World in Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 4-7.

[27] Howell D. Chickering, trans. *Beowulf* (New York: Anchor; Bilingual edition, 2006), 85. 612b-629.

The sequence of cup passing and descriptive details about Wealhtheow and Heorot show invisible labor in action. Firstly, Wealhtheow serves mead to Hrothgar, the "king of the Danes" in the Heorot. Next, Wealhtheow serves mead to the thanes or Hrothgar's "veterans and youth." Hills writes that this honor includes "non-martial social activities as feasting, gift exchange and ceremonial speeches."[28] Hill says that the "that many aspects of Germanic social life – such as ancestral identity, jural customs, gift-giving, and service... passing of cups in the mead hall-- ...function... (as) the creation of the poet" and are a part of Anglo-Saxon society[29] which aids in understanding Anglo-Saxon culture. Firstly, the poem gives at least five titles for Wealhtheow including "Hrothgar's queen," to show who she is married to, "noble lady," to show the class and status of Wealhtheow, "lady of the Helmings," to show her former family name before she married Hrothgar and "courteous queen" and "excellent in virtues" to show the goodness of Wealhtheow. All of these labels demonstrate relationship, class, status, and family, which are crucial to components in understanding who could be subject to invisible labor. Wealhtheow's identity is tied to how Hrothgar, her former family and the poem see her. The poem also writes about the wealth of the Danes and Hrothgar's kingdom, which include the "jeweled cup" and "rings." The poem gives descriptive details of the jewelry, customs, and artifacts in Heorot to show the importance of wealth in the kingdom, order of distribution for mead and who is welcome to receive mead from the cup. Ultimately, the poem is showing that Wealhtheow is a successful peace-weaver, who is demonstrating her loyalties to Hrothgar and his men, by focusing on her role as Hrothgar's wife, which reflects the social norms that were in place during Anglo-Saxon times. Wealhtheow is not working to bring attention to herself but she is, as the

[28] Hill, *The Cultural World in Beowulf,* 85.

[29] Hill, *The Cultural World in Beowulf*, 4-5.

poem describes, working quietly to elevate her king and Heorot through Wealhtheow's invisible labor and her virtues.

Fig. 1. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 244. Gold finger ring, inlaid with niello, inscribed inside 'Queen Aethelswith.' Like the ring in the name of AEthelswith's father, Aethelwulf, this is likely to have been a gift, perhaps in the context of her marriage to King Burgred of Mercia.
This figure shows an example of the rings would have been given by the king to his queen as a visible sign of her peace-weaving actions and to ensure her loyalty to her new tribe as a symbol of gratitude for two tribes merging in marriage.

Lastly, in this passage, the poem states that Wealhtheow is "mindful of courtesies" to show that Wealhtheow knows the cup passing tradition. Wealhtheow "gave the first cup... to the victory-famed king," to demonstrate that the order of cup passing starts with the king and continues to the other men based on rank. Wealhtheow then "offered the ...cup to veterans and youths," to show that those who fight for Heorot are welcome to partake in the ritual. Finally, Wealhtheow "brought the mead" to Beowulf to show that she includes Beowulf into the cup passing custom, for his desire to fight Grendel and do what he must to protect Heorot.

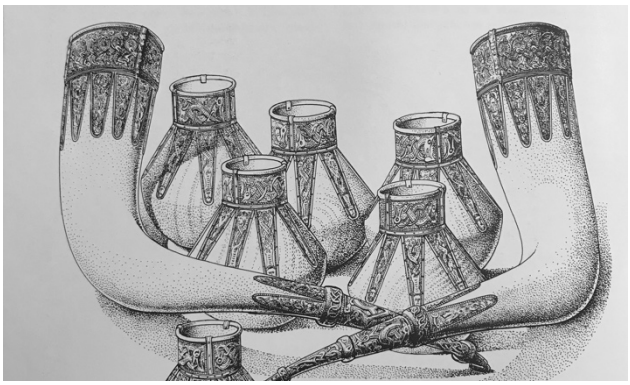

Fig. 2. Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1986) 64. Artist's impression of drinking horns and Maplewood bottles may have been placed in the burial chamber.[30]

In this illustration, the horns, which go back to Germanic origins, would have been used for ceremonial purposes such as Wealhtheow serving mead in the hall, were a common Anglo-Saxon artifact.

Wealhtheow is a heroic figure in *Beowulf* because of her speech and her desire to stand up for her son's position in Heorot. Wealhtheow's passive woman ideal from earlier in the poem is an "integral—indispensable—to the poem's plot, narrative structure, and meaning"[31] and shows an expanding role of femininity by allowing women to speak, which broadens the definition of roles of women in Anglo-Saxon times. Wealhtheow is unique as the only female speaker in *Beowulf.* The artistic choice of Wealhtheow's speech is the second instance of peace-weaver changes. It makes Wealhtheow the most fully developed female character by having Wealhtheow take a role of leadership in Heorot. By including a speech in the poem, "Wealhtheow demonstrates her

[30] The original drinking horns was found at Sutton Hoo Burial Site in 1939 and recreated by an artist for the British Museum in London.

[31] Joy, *The Postmodern Beowulf,* 469.

maternal concern," [32] for her sons by asserting an expanding social movement of women in Anglo-Saxon society. The evolution of women was mostly absent from political, social, economic equality, and focused solely on women's work in the home. Fleming claims that:

> men and women in the sixth century, for example, even those living under the same roof, led very different lives. Women spent long hours in damp weaving sheds working at their looms, and they bore and tended children. Men (so we know from their skeletons) had lifetimes of hard labour, and they got into fights...One of the consequences of these disparate experiences was that in some ways poor and prosperous women...had more in common with one another than with their own brothers and husbands.[33]

Despite these limits which are recorded in Old English literature, Cavell argues that these impediments including so few women speakers and opportunities in Anglo-Saxon society and Old English poetry and prose, that women took advantage of opportunities for inclusion into society and show contemporary society that "defining modern conceptions of the role of women through the Anglo-Saxon world"[34] was necessary. The poem shows that Wealhtheow delivers the speech after Beowulf defeats Grendel. Wealhtheow approaches:

Then Wealhtheow spoke
"Accept this cup, my noble lord,
gold-giving king; be filled in your joys,
treasure-friend to all, and give to the Geats

[32] Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature,* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2005), 100.

[33] Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome* (London: Penguin UK, 2011), 64.

[34] Megan Cavell, "Formulaic Friþuwebban: Reexamining Peace-Weaving in the Light of Old English Poetics," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (July 2015): 355.

your kind words, as is proper for men;
in your generous mind, be gracious to the Weders,
remembering the gifts you would have this warrior
for your son...
Full well I know
of my gracious Hrothulf that he would rule
the young men in honor, would keep all well,
if you should give up this would before him.
I expect he will want to repay our sons
only with good once he recalls
all we have done when he was younger
to honor his desires and his name in the world."
She turned to the bench where her sons were sitting,
Hrethric, Hrothmund, and all the young men,
the sons of nobles. There sat Beowulf,
the Geatish hero, between the two brothers.[35]

Wealhtheow's speech shows that she does not conform to the traditional role of submissive peace-weaver because she is willing to talk in Heorot and that is why it is considered invisible labor. Wealhtheow is not speaking up for her own recognition but the recognition of her sons as heir which is another reason why this speech is considered invisible labor. Wealhtheow, in particular, uses her speech as a form of invisible labor to protecting her son's future inheritance from being given away to Hrothgar's nephew. Wealhtheow knows what is best for her family,

[35]Chickering, *Beowulf*, 117.

including "not hesitating to intervene in matters concerning the futures of their sons as kings."[36] Overing claims that Wealhtheow's speech "represents the conditions of her world as she observes them, not as she creates them."[37] Thus as the speech of the poem shows, Wealhtheow is subtly fighting for her sons Hrethric and Hrothmund to inherit Heorot. Horner argues that Wealhtheow "creates a new version of the traditional peace-weaver text, a new ending: rather than passively accepting events as they unfold (as the men determine),"[38] to help change the future. Wealhtheow knows that the usual line of succession in Anglo-Saxon society is for the nephew of the king's sister to inherit the kingdom. Sons born from the king's sister or nephew are considered a direct bloodline should the queen be unfaithful.[39] The poem directs Wealhtheow's speech at Hrothgar and Beowulf in the lines "uncle and nephew." Wealhtheow's statement shows that even though there is a crowd at the feast in Heorot, her words are intended solely for Hrothgar and Beowulf. The poem has Wealhtheow's speech and seat placement of her sons is Wealhtheow exercising her influence in the mead hall by the seating of her sons on either side of "the Geatish hero." The seat placement allows for Wealhtheow's sons to share in the heroic glory that Beowulf brought to Heorot when he defeated Grendel. Chance says that Wealhtheow's behavior is considered "anti-type of the peace-weaving queen,"[40] where the peace-weaver behaves more like a king instead of a submissive queen. Thus, Wealhtheow's behavior and speech acts as a form of emotional behavior of invisible labor similar to a housewife's work

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[36] Jamison, "Traffic of Women in Germanic Literature," 23.

[37] Gillian Overing, *Language, Sign, and Gender in Beowulf* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 96.

[38] Joy, *The Postmodern Beowulf,* 478.

[39] Eric Jager, "Medieval Literature," (Lecture, University of California, Los Angeles, CA., April 20, 2019).

[40] Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature,* 106.

because the only merit to be achieved by this speech and work is the raising up of her sons' status as opposed to raising up her own status which is what a homemaker does.

In contrast to Wealhtheow's actions as a passive queen who transitions to taking an active role in invisible labor in Heorot is *Judith*. Judith is an example of the heroic code of invisible labor with privilege. Judith's role in killing Holofernes allowed for the defeat of the Assyrians, which helped her people achieve peace and economic stability. Judith's role in willingly giving herself over to the Assyrians show that she is redefining invisible labor by allowing herself to be captured; her heroic actions of invisible labor show that Judith is putting the good of the community over personal interest. Thus, Judith's work in killing Holofernes maintains its invisibility despite using her femininity to achieve her goals because she is not seeking acknowledgement or recognition for her work from her community. The poem begins at the feast of Holofernes. Holofernes was the leader of the Assyrians. Judith uses her femininity to become a murdering seductress, by entering the Assyrian camp, taking advantage of the drunken Holofernes and ultimately kill him by catching Holofernes off guard:

> I heard then that Holofernes eagerly threw a wine party, and that with all the wonders a magnificent feast did he organize. To this the lord of men commanded all the most senior thegns.[41] This bidding the shield-totting men carried out in great haste. There came to the powerful king in procession the captains of that people. That was the fourth day

[41] According to the *OED*, thegns are also known as an English thane. This is a modern usage of the word thane, which, according to the *OED*, was "adopted to distinguish the Old English use of thane from the Scots use made familiar by Shakespeare." "thegn". *OED* Online. December 2019. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/11125 (accessed February 05, 2020).

after Judith, far-sighted in thinking,

a lady elvishly fair, first visited him.[42]

The poem has Holofernes summon his men to come to a feast to get drunk. The thegns follow the example of Holofernes and drink. The early passages of the poem are missing and do not specify why Holofernes has thrown this party.[43] None the less, it is this party, which lays the foundation for Judith to be able to see during her four days prior, that Holofernes is a drunkard and partier who, despite his brutish behavior, will be easy to overtake because he is drunk, when the time comes. The four days also show that Judith was patient. Ultimately, what is at stake for Judith is that she knows that if she was to be successful at killing Holofernes, and at protecting her people, she needs to wait until the time is right; which is when Holofernes is drunk and in a weakened state. Judith's patience allows her to be in the role of "shadow work," as she is the only woman in Holofernes tent.[44] Judith's work is not meant to bring her attention or compensation but instead be a behind the scenes invisible labor whereby Judith's work is performed individually for the good of the community.

The time arrives when Holofernes commands his men to bring "the blessed maid...to his bed."[45] Judith is the maid who is brought to Holofernes's bed to wait until he is ready to have sex with her in his drunken state. The poem says that Judith:

she was loaded with necklaces,

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[42] Richard North, Joe Allard, and Patricia Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures, (*United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited: 2011), 403.

[43] See the translation of *Judith* by North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 402-419.

[44] Marjorie L. DeVault, "Mapping Invisible Work: Conceptual Tools for Social Justice Projects," *Sociological Forum*, (2014): 786.

[45] North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 404.

all adorned with rings...

Judith they

found all sharp in mind, and boldly then

the shield-men began to convey

the bright maid to the high pavilion

where the nighty, during the banquet was to rest

in a chamber for the night...[46]

The poem is showing that there is a contrast between the states of Holofernes and Judith. Holofernes is drunk, as is noted in the earlier lines, from his consumption of wine. At the same time, Judith is "found all sharp in mind" due to being sober and intentionally abstaining from wine, can eventually kill Holofernes in his "chamber" or personal tent, due to his weakened mental state. Judith's invisible labor is being an alluring woman so that she can go into Holofernes tent to kill him. Judith remains invisible because she is not promoting herself by her work but is merely conforming to the social norms as depicted by the Old English poet regarding how a beautiful woman seduces a man.

[46] North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 404.

Fig. 3. Jost Amman, (1539-1591). late 16th century. Judith: Celebrated Women of the Old Testament. Place: The British Museum, London.

This illustration is Amman's interpretation of Judith. Judith has a crown on her head which is a sign of her privilege and higher-class status in her community. Judith is dressed in detailed flowing clothing including buttons, ribbons and sandals which shows that lives as an upper-class woman. Judith is also holding the head of Holofernes and a sword which she used to kill Holofernes. The illustration of Judith shows the power a woman can have in Old English literature, as Judith does by her stance over a Holofernes.

Beowulf shows Wiglaf to be an alternative to the cup-passing queen and thus acknowledges that peace weavers are not necessarily gendered in Anglo-Saxon society. Invisible labor need not be the focus of passive aristocratic women like Wealhtheow but can include Wiglaf. The poem has Wiglaf perform a different type of peace-weaving, not constructed in the hall, but located on the battlefield. Wiglaf fights in a war, avenges the dragon, helps Beowulf who did not marry, and has no offspring, protecting their kingdom. The poem chooses Wiglaf to destroy the idea of a female-only peace-weaver as illustrated by Wealhtheow, to make the role fit a male. By having a peace-weaver include male character like Wiglaf, it maps out a new plotline for Old English literature which shows that males can bring about unity in the hall and shows that this unifying presences in the court, where Beowulf is king now includes actively showing social harmony and diplomacy by serving the cup to Beowulf. Klein claims that in "*Beowulf*...that the poem depicts...its hero...(show that) peace weaving...demands that one redefine the place traditionally allotted to the domestic world within a heroic ethos."[47] Wiglaf is Beowulf's distant relative, faithful soldier, or thane, who, at the end of the battle to defeat the dragon, performs the cup passing ritual.

Then his loyal thane, immeasurably good,
took water in his hand, bathed the bloodied one,
the famous king, his liege, dear friend,
weak in his wound, and unstrapped his helmet.
Then Beowulf spoke, despite the gash,

[47] Megan Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies: The Poetics of Human Experience in Old English Literature*, (Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 283.

the gaping wound, --he knew for certain
he had finished his days, his joy in the world,
that his time was over, death very near:
"Now I would want to give to my son
these war-garments, had it been granted
that I have a guardian born from my body
for this inheritance."[48]

As these lines illustrate, the poem has Wiglaf act as the young warrior who respects the warrior code, by having Wiglaf stay close to his wounded king.[49] Wiglaf's invisible labor is quiet compliance to the social norms as dictated in *Beowulf* because the poem saying that Wiglaf is acting but out of quiet duty for the customs amongst the Geats and not seeking recognition from the community for his actions**.** Thus, invisible labor in *Beowulf* shapes the succession and lines of inheritance in the poem. The poem works in the line of succession by creating a dual purpose for Wiglaf's life as a thane and peacemaker, showing that his identity and inheritance is forged in maintaining the cup passing tradition in the kingdom of the Geats, by "took water in his hand" and cleansing, Beowulf, in the absence of a queen even though he was not born of Beowulf. Chance writes that "The mead-sharing and the cup-passer herself come to symbolize peace-weaving and peace because they strengthen the societal and familial bonds between lord and retainers."[50] As Beowulf's speech goes on, it depicts Beowulf's personal history behind inheriting the kingdom from Hygelac, which is described earlier in the poem. Beowulf is

[48] Chickering, *Beowulf,* 213-215.

[49] Chickering, *Beowulf,* 213.

[50] Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies*, 284.

concerned with who will inherit the kingdom, and due to not having a family,[51] Wiglaf will inherit the kingdom. Overing claims that by "enacting the ties of kinship, weaving the web of peace in *Beowulf*...the...presence of a multitude of possibilities, a site of infinite potential"[52] for inheritance is made possible. Wiglaf's inheritance is due to performing the emotional invisible labor, nurse or caregiver of Beowulf.

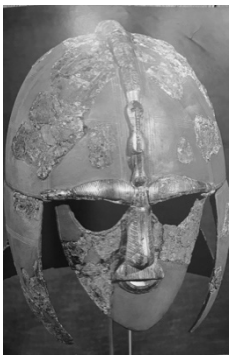

Fig. 4. Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1986) 48-49. The Sutton Hoo helmet.

The figure is an example of the type of helmet that Wiglaf would have filled with water to continue the cup passing tradition. The helmet, which is a replica of the original, would have been made from one single "sheet of iron".[53]

[51] I attribute this statement to the class lecture given by Professor Eric Jager at UCLA in his class on "Medieval Literature," which took place on April 20, 2019.

[52] Overing, *Language, Sign, and Gender in Beowulf*, 75.

[53] Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, 48-49.

Fig. 5. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 244. Probable locations of places and peoples in *Beowulf.*
This illustration shows where the tribes that are named in *Beowulf* would have lived including the Danes in Heorot where King Hrothgar and Wealhtheow were from and the Geats where Beowulf is from.

Old English literature shows more instances of invisible labor in the epic poem *Widsith* by depicting Widsith as a passive physical laborer. At the beginning of the poem, Widsith the scop, goes on a journey to take Ealhhild to her new kingdom to be married and become a peace-weaver:

> Widsith spoke, unlocked his word-hoard,
> he who of men had travelled in most nations
> and peoples on earth. Often in the hall did he receive
> a desirable treasure. His noble ancestry awoke
> from Myrging stock. He with Ealhhild,
> faithful treaty-weaver, for the first time

came seeking the home east of Angeln

of Goth-king Eormanric, savage-hearted

breaker of covenants.[54]

Treaty-weaver is used in *Widsith* to provide a reference to Anglo-Saxon traditions and history. Widsith's work in the poem reveals that he is a scop and a deliverer of peace-weaver Ealhhild, who carries the title "treaty-weaver." "Treaty-weaver" is a translation of the compound word *freoþuwebban.*[55] Even though the poem specifically calls Ealhhild a peace-weaver, I do not feel that Widsith acts in the role of peacemaker like Wiglaf in *Beowulf* due to only delivering Ealhhild to her new kingdom. Niles says that lines 5-9 are "generally agreed that the purpose of this journey to the interior of northeastern Europe...can only have been to present Ealhhild, who must be imagined as a princess of royal blood in Marriage to King Eormanric."[56] However, lines 1-5 of *Widsith* show that the poem is a begging poem where Widsith would have asked for money when he finished taking Ealhhild to King Eormanric.

[54] North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 92.

[55] In my research, I have found three Old English poems that explicitly use the term peace weaver, and they are *Beowulf, Widsith,* and *Elene* or *Cynewulf.* This was validated in Damico and Olsen, *New Readings,* in the essay by L. John Sklute "*freoðuwebbe* in Old English Poetry," 204-210.

[56] John Niles, "Widsith and the Anthropology of the Past," *Philological Quarterly*, (Winter 1999), 187.

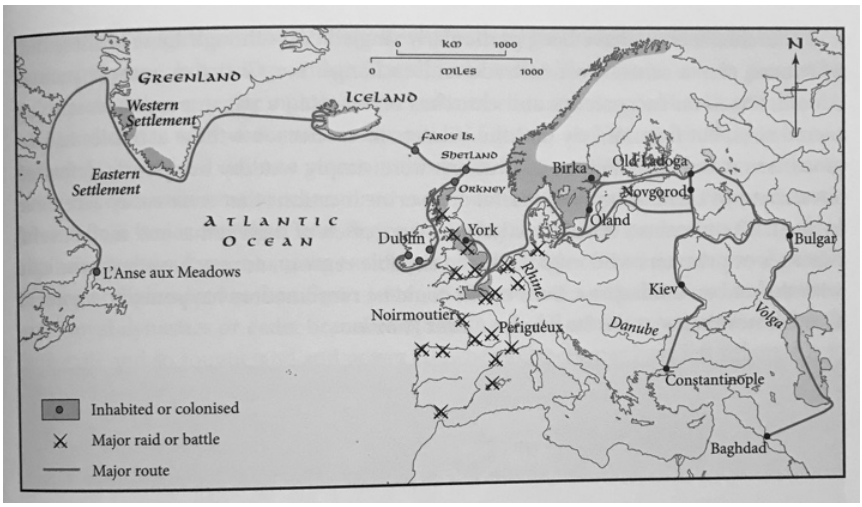

Fig. 6. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 382. Map of Scandinavian activity in the Viking age.

This map illustrates the geography from around 825 AD and gives an example of the potential northeastern Europe nations that Widsith could have traveled to and around, stopping to beg and earn money as a scop to live.

To fully understanding the term peace-weaver/peacemaker and invisible labor, it is necessary to understand its usage in all the works, *Beowulf, Widsith,* and Cynewulf's *Elene.* Sklute claims that peace-weaver or "*freoþuwebban* appears only three times in Old English poetry, once in *Widsith,* once in *Beowulf,* and once in Cynewulf's *Elene"* and not "commonly used."[57] Sklute claims that all three works show the peace-weaver performing the same function, just different circumstances.[58] Sklute also claims that "since the historical realities reflected in the poetry are generally obscure and since our well-intentioned reconstruction of those realities are, at best, tentative, it seems to me more important and even valid to try to understand the function and meaning of the term in this literary context than to speculate about the possible historical practice

[57] Damico and Olsen, *New Readings,* 204.

[58] Damico and Olsen, *New Readings,* 208.

it might represent."[59] Thus, understanding *freoþuwebban* or peace-weaver in Old English as written about in Old English literature is the best way to achieve a more thorough interpretation of the practice of peace-weaving as invisible labor. Old English writers were able to show examples in their poetry and prose what invisible labor looked like which includes angelic messengers.

The story of Cynewulf's *Elene* is the account of the adventures of Saint Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, who travels to the Holy Land in search of the True Cross of Christ. The poet has Constantine first goes through a battle to arrive at the scene where he has a vision of an angel and sees the angel's prophecy. What makes this moment unique is that the Cynewulf calls the angel an authentic weaver or true-weaver:

> Then to emperor's own person in sleep,
> while he slumbered with entourage, was revealed
> a tumultuous vision for him to see who braved defeat.
> Dazzling fair in a man's form there appeared to him,
> white and brilliant of hue, some kind of man
> displayed more peerless than any, either now or before,
> whom he saw beneath the sun. He awoke from sleep,
> lay beneath his boar-banner.
>
> Speedily with him that herald,
>
> radiant messenger from glory, came to point to order,
> calling him by name (night slipped her cover):
> 'O Constantine, the King of Angels, Commander

[59] Damico and Olsen, *New Readings,* 205.

of Fate, has ordered me to offer you His covenant,

Lord of Host He is. Be not afraid,

though foreigners with fear may menace you

with combat hard. Look into heaven above you,

towards glory, where you will find succor,

a token of victory.'

Straight off was he read

at the holy man's instruction, opened his heart,

looked up just as commanded by this herald,

a treaty's true-weaver. Bright in its trappings, a dazzling

tree of glory he saw high above the cloud-line,

adorned with gold (jewels were gleaming),

that shining tree was inscribed with Roman letters

bright and radiant: **With this beacon you**

will overcome your enemy in the fierce invasion,

withstand the hostile host.[60] Then the light departed,

up it moved and the herald with it

to the throng of clean beings. The king was happier for that,

and less care did the men's chief have

in his heart for that fair sight.[61]

[60] These lines are intentionally bold in the text.

[61] North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 319-321.

Elene's angelic peacemaker illustrates invisible labor that is shadow work, work that is hidden and in service to others, because the angelic messenger's work benefits Constantine and is behind the scenes. For the angelic messenger was not seeking fame, glory or money for delivering God's message to Constantine but only wanted to do God's bidding. Cynewulf's *Elene* shows that the traditional practice of peace-weaving or true-weaving was not intended to represent only women or even peacemakers who are not human but male-gendered spirits. This vision by Constantine begins with first seeing the angel or "Dazzling fair in a man's form...white and brilliant of hue, some kind of man." Cynewulf is specific in calling this heavenly creature a man. This writing by Cynewulf reveals how angels, who are usually obscure, are open to speculation or interpretation of what gender Cynewulf feels the angel should look like, which in this case is a male.

In the poem, Constantine reflects on the vision while awake and replays the message given to him by the "herald." The poem has Constantine look up and see the "herald." The "herald" commands Constantine to look up "a treaty's true-weaver." This "true-weaver" in Old English is *fæle friþuwebba* or a faithful peace-weaver. The peace-weaver is described as male by the poem. The peace-weaver speaks a prophetic message to Constantine after the herald has shown Constantine the True Cross and that he will win the battle against the Huns. Sklute claims that peace-weaver in this context reflects "her presence and her actions help the lord at his task."[62] Cynewulf uses *Elene* to reflect the understanding that the "herald" is weaving peace and providing services as the messenger between God and man, which leads man closer to God. The passage ends with Emperor Constantine being happy at the "fair sight" or vision that the "herald has given him," which I argue shows Constantine that God is there to protect him and his people

[62] Damico and Olsen, *New Readings*, 208.

through his messengers. Cynewulf's *Elene* demonstrates that the term peace-weave or peacemaker function in a literary context as an expanded form of emotional labor to include men or male figures, but also messengers and heralds, which is shows that invisible labor need not be gender-specific.

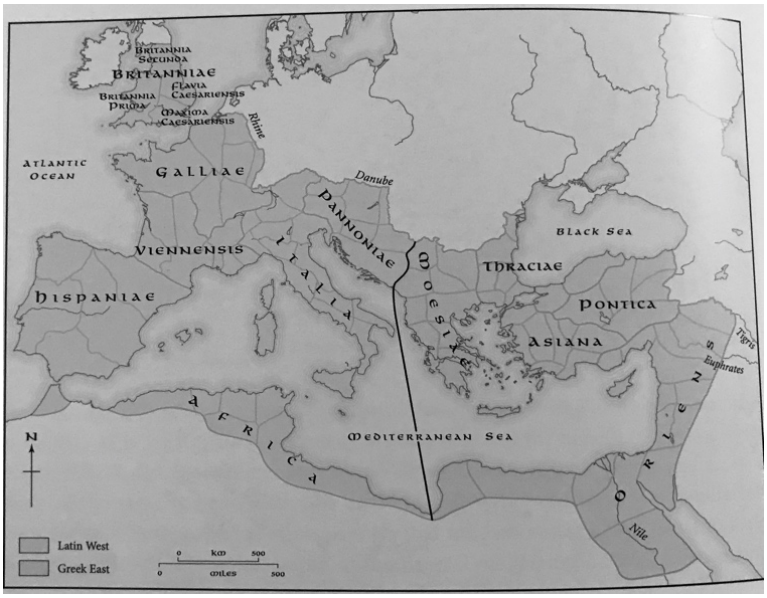

Fig. 7. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 22. The later Roman Empire stretching from Cumbria on the Nile, the Roman Empire was vast. By the late fourth century it was divided between the Latin West and the Greek East. Britain stands out in being separated by the Atlantic from the remainder of the Roman World, and as the most northerly of the twelve dioceses.[63]

This figure is a map that Constantine would have been familiar with and gives an idea of the vast territory in the Roman Empire. The map is broken up into the Latin West and Greek East.

Besides Old English poetry providing examples of peacemakers or peace-weavers, there are examples of invisible labor in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is one of the earliest forms of historical prose in Old English Literature. Ryan claims that "the *Anglo-*

[63] Ryan and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 22.

Saxon Chronicle covers the period from the attempted invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar in 60 BC to the death of King Stephen and the accession of Henry II in 1154."[64] In addition to the history of the arrivals to England, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* contains laws, songs, poems, manuscripts, and other historical accounts that the Anglo-Saxon felt were important. Some of the key themes in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* include cultural mediation, truth, bravery, honor, loyalty, duty, perseverance, hospitality, and invisible labor with examples of these themes in the poem "The Battle of Brunanburh" and account of "The Battle of Maldon."

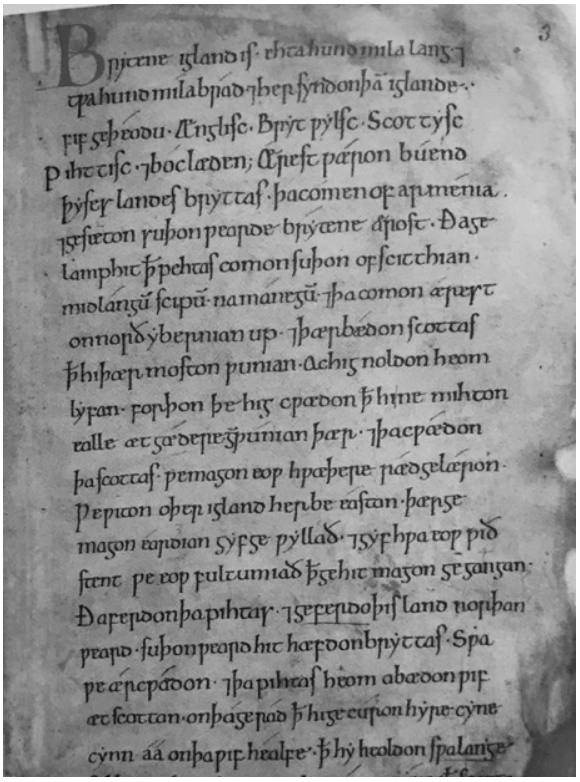

Fig. 8. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 274. Version D, the 'Worcester Chronicle'. This page shows the preface to *Chronicle* describing the island of Britain and its inhabitants.

[64] Ryan and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 275.

This figure is from The Worcester Manuscript, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B, iv, *ff*[65] written in beautiful script by hand which shows how important the documentation of history of the development of England after Rome.

The heroic battle poems "The Battle of Brunanburh" and the account of "The Battle of Maldon" are pieces of history and literature that aid in understanding invisible labor from a historical military perspective. Higham and Ryan claim that there were different types of war that were common in Anglo-Saxon history, "early Germanic society was structured mainly around warfare which included invisible labor, in the context of the kindred (feud), the war-band (feud/raid/mercenary service), or the tribe (tribal warfare.)"[66] The *Chronicle* focuses on "The Battle of Brunanburh" and "The Battle of Maldon" as war-band warfare. Both battles show growing Anglo-Saxon nationalism and violence between Viking raiders or "heathen outsiders"[67] and the Anglo-Saxons response, which included how communities negotiated the violence they witnessed. Niles claims that "this perspective involves, among other things, looking upon Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry as discourse...one important means by which a culture defined itself, validated itself, and maintained its equilibrium through strategic adaptations during a period of major change."[68] Niles claims that the *Chronicle* explores how the soldiers**,** who are the invisible labor, deal with the threat of death and loss to their communities from invasions from

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[65] Ryan and Higham do not say what are the specific folio number for the preface page in the *Chronicle,* where this illustration comes from, nor do Ryan and Higham specify the exact recto or verse. Ryan, and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 274.

[66] Ryan, and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 102.

[67] Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 31.

[68] Joy, *The Postmodern Beowulf,* 131.

outsiders while receiving no monetary payment for their work.[69] The *Chronicle* provides details about the material artifacts the men used in their labor to protect themselves and preserve their history including axes and shields. These artifacts, according to Ryan, "make clear that the past mattered to the Anglo-Saxons and that control of its meaning and significance through the production of text and the maintenance of records was of fundamental importance."[70] "Brunanburh"[71] itself tells the story of King Athelstan's triumph over Olaf in battle:

> Here King Athelstan, leader of warriors,
> ring-giver of men, and also his brother,
> the aethling Edmund, struck life-long glory
> in strife round Brunanburh, clover the shield-wall,
> hacked the war-lime, with hammers leaving,...
> they defend land, treasures and homes
> against every foe. The antagonist succumbed,
> The nation of Scots and sea-men
> fell doomed. The field darkened
> with soldiers' blood[72]

[69] I claim that the soldiers from Maldon did not receive payment after they were defeated by the Vikings for their work as the poem does not specify this. North, Allard, and Gilles, eds., *Longman Anthology of Old English,* 501-518. The only payment that was exchanged at the end of the battle was 10,000 pounds to the Danish men. Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 127.

[70] Ryan, and Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 276.

[71] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 106.

[72] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 106.

The poem uses heroic epic poetry tropes, including the topos of the generous Lord, King Athelstan, surrounded by his comitatus or loyal man, gift-giving, and heroic battle. I argue that the poem shows King Athelstan engaging in battle against the Scots to unite the neighboring kingdoms by force. The *Chronicle* description of the battle uses vivid sensory detail about royalty and soldiers, images of weapons, and battle techniques that were a part of the invisible labor.

Athelstan is a generous king who shares his wealth for the loyalty of his men and as payment for their invisible labor of bringing together the kingdoms. Athelstan gives jewelry, as is noted by calling the king the "ring-giver."[73] Hill claims that "gift giving...establishes an important, continuing reciprocity: gifts, trust an honour on the part of the lord's part for service, honour, and loyalty on the retainer's part."[74] Treasure distributing is a common tradition in Anglo-Saxon history[75] and ensures loyal invisible labor while acknowledging the soldiers who fought for their lord. Soldier invisible labor is often ignored because this labor takes place away from home, but it is written about in great detail in Old English literature. The "shield-wall" is a wall where troops are stacked with shields to create a barrier to block out potential spears from hitting the forces and killing them. The "war-lime"[76]" the actual shield a soldier would carry into battle.

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[73] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 106. The compound word formula is a common poetic form for adding a unique description to a person and gives further details about that person in Old English literature.

[74] Hill, *The Cultural World in Beowulf,* 89.

[75] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* xi-xxxv. The introduction to the *Chronicle* instructs how to read the text as well as some common historical facts.

[76] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 107.

The “hammers leaving,”[77] are artifacts, are also the weapons of a soldier. These weapons and the hammer, in particular, are solid metal object, intricately carved with a sharp t shape end.

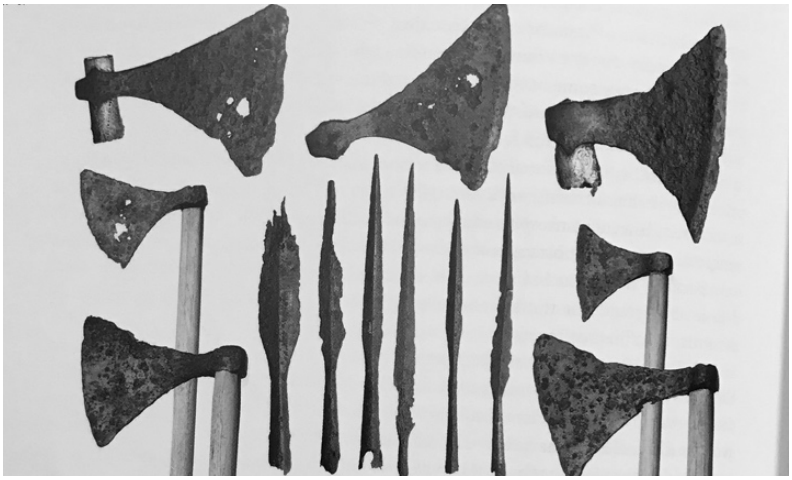

Fig. 9. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 350. Selection of late tenth-or eleventh-century Viking weaponry recovered from around London Bridge.

The figure shows axes that were hammer shaped which were commonly used by the Vikings to fight battles similar to the ones fought at Brunanburh or Maldon.

Apart from the weapons, the passage from the *Chronicle* of “The Battle of Brunanburh” foreshadows what will happen at the end of the battle. With “The antagonist succumbed,” “Scots,” and compound “sea-man,” which is a reference to the navy, all the troops are identified by generic names and are not specific names, which bestializes the Scottish soldiers and prevents anyone from feeling sad by killing them. The passage also spells out the gloating defeat of Olaf and his men by Athelstan. I argue that the poem's descriptions of men being defeated as well as the soldiers “field darkened with soldiers' blood” works to dehumanizes because it removes the

[77] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 107. Weapons are the definition that the *Chronicle* provides in the footnotes.

humanity of the nameless soldiers. Ultimately, the *Chronicle*[78] devotes sustained attention to this important battle because of King Athelstan's objective to unite the kingdoms of the English and the Scots. Howe claims that this remembrance shows "the past is remembered through books and men; the cultural memory is retained in writing and speech"[79] and therefore, the epic poem retains great significance by being included in the yearly annual of the *Chronicle*. Ryan claims that "the *Chronicle* exceeds in importance any other written source for Anglo-Saxon England...supply(ing) the chronological framework for much of the period, providing details of characters and episodes not their own history, how they retold, reinterpreted and reconfigured past events in order to shape and to make sense of their present."[80] Thus, it was important for Old English writers and future generations of people that the *Chronicle* document the history and cultural education of Anglo-Saxon society while also showing a record of the early development of England.

[78] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 106 to 110.

[79] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, 70-71.

[80] Ryan and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 271.

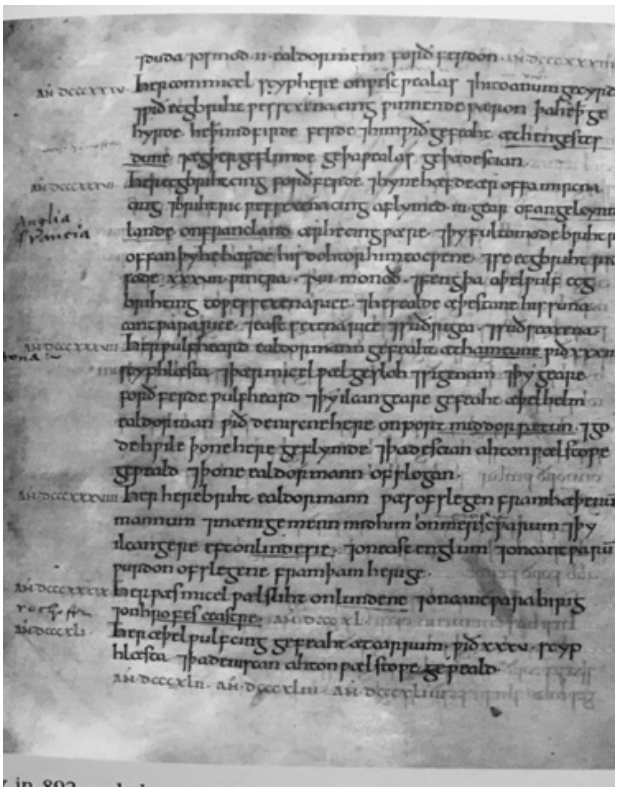

Fig. 10. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 273. Version C, the so-called 'Abingdon Chronicle'. This page features entries from the years 835-41 (recte 838-43), describing the Viking Attacks on southern Britain.

The figure is from The Abingdon Manuscript, British Library MSS Cotton Tiberius A iii, *f.* + A vi, *ff.* and British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B I, *ff.* The figure illustrates how the annal has the year on the left with descriptions of what the Anglo-Saxons felt was important historical events on the right.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* includes in three separate annals for "The Battle of Maldon." These dated annals are in 991 "The Canterbury Manuscript, British Library MS Cotton Domitian A viii, *ff.,*"[81] 993 "The Winchester Manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 173,

[81] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* 126.

ff.,"[82] and 991 "The Peterborough Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS *Laud*."[83] All three accounts give a short reflection and overview of the military victory with "The Winchester Manuscript," being the most detailed. The account from "The Winchester Manuscript" was written retrospectively, and I argue that this is why the account is so thorough and includes additional information that historians later learned from the battle. The *Chronicle* entry from "The Winchester Manuscript" is as follows,

> 993 [991]. Here in the year Olaf came with ninety-three ships to Folkestone, and raided round about it, and then went from there to Sandwich and so from there to Ipswich, and overran all that, and so to Maldon. And Ealdorman Byrhtnoth came against them there with his army and fought with them; and they killed the ealdorman there and had possession of the place of slaughter.[84]

The *Chronicles* passage, as concise as the entry is, fails to showcase the courage, cowardice, loyalty, and betrayal that is in Anglo-Saxon history and epic Old English poetry. The rest of this entry goes on to give more details that were added in 994.[85] Additionally, the passage gives meaning to the year written by providing the geographical information of where the ships landed,

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[82] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 127.

[83] Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 127.

[84] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English* 126.

[85] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English* 126. I did not add these details as they talk about Olaf's baptism and do not specify if Olaf's baptism is due to "The Battle of Maldon" being viewed as not only a military victory but a moral victory as well. This also makes me question if the *Chronicle* wanted to make sure that there was a Christian connection, to be attractive to a broader audience. However, a spiritual or moral connection is not something that I wish to explore, as I do not see it as relevant to my argument.

battles occurred, including the names of the towns before concluding in Maldon. The *Chronicle* does not give details on what happened in the other towns, only what happened in Mauldin. Thus, this passage has become a brief reflection of Olaf's work, his ability to lead his ships from town to town, his ability to take possession over land, and military victory over Ealdorman Byrhtnoth.

The fame that surrounds "The Battle of Maldon" due to the poem of the same name. "The Battle of Maldon," poem was written after the battle. The unfortunate thing about this poem is that a fragment is missing from the beginning of the poem. "Maldon" was initially located "in London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho A. xiii."[86] However, "The Battle of Maldon" was destroyed in the Cotton Library fire in 1731.[87] The poem currently in translation was made based on a transcript in 1725,[88] which was produced six years before the fire.

"Maldon" as a poem, provides the emotion of the battle of that day and gives many details about the cultural artifacts and invisible labor that is associated with a similar battle during Anglo-Saxon times. Thus, "The Battle of Maldon" poem expands on the elements that are neglected from the *Chronicle* annuals. These missing items from the *Chronicle* include the lineage of men, tell the weapons used in battle, including the swords, shields, and ships, as well as the emotions that were felt during the fight. What is also missing from the *Chronicle* is the geographic details of the battle. "The Battle of Maldon," includes speeches, statements on thievery and deception, as well as honor, resiliency, to allow the humanity of the Vikings and Byrhtnoth to come through. Additionally, the poem writes about the courage, generosity,

[86] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English* 499.

[87] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English* 499.

[88] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English* 499.

cowardice of the warriors, loyalty to the leaders, and betrayal of the warriors. I argue that the poem wanted to celebrate "The Battle of Maldon" by commemorating the bravery and loyalty of those who fought in the battle as well as highlight the wins, potential losses, and commodification of humans and things on both sides.

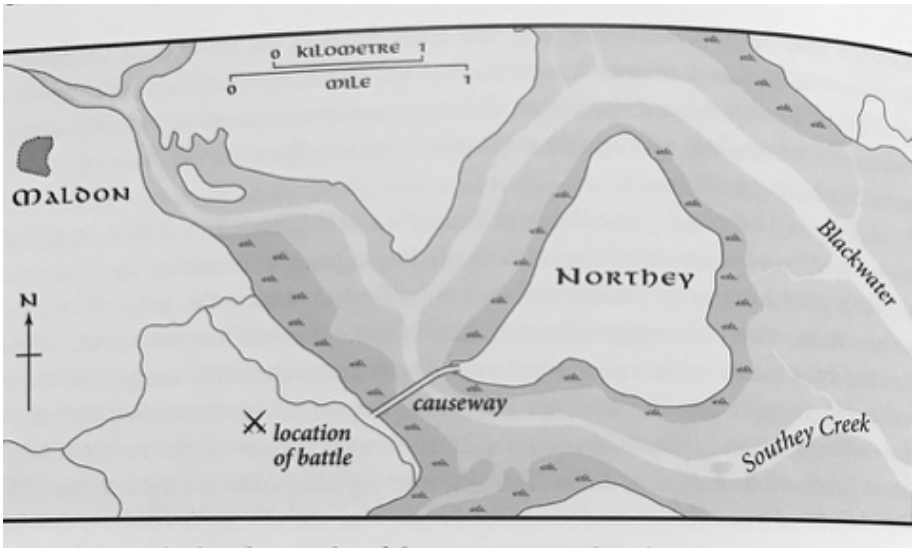

Fig. 11. Martin J. Ryan, and Nicholas J. Higham. *The Anglo-Saxon World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 344. Site of the Battle of Maldon.

The figure shows the area for the ground battle in Maldon. Maldon was a small coastal community near the island Northey. Professor Jager claims that the Vikings were on the island, Northey, which had a small bridge for the Vikings to cross.[89] The actual battle of Maldon is said to have took place near the bridge.[90]

There are two sections of "The Battle of Maldon" that show invisible labor in action, while justifying the bravery and also the betrayal of the Vikings in the poem. These speeches are delivered by the invisible laborers or soldiers who do not receive compensation and heralds or

[89] Eric Jager, "Medieval Literature," (Lecture, University of California, Los Angeles, CA., April 04, 2019).

[90] Ryan and Higham, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 344.

nameless people, who are oftentimes ignored, and not the people in power. It starts with the enemy or "Viking messenger"[91] telling the terms at which the Vikings will provide protection to the people of Maldon and concludes with Byrhtnoth speech to his men. This speech as delivered by the Viking herald and shows that the Vikings did not necessarily want to fight. Instead, the Vikings were more like pirates or mobsters if you will, who wanted booty and cooperation from people but were willing to use violence to achieve their objective. The Vikings encouraged the people of Maldon to feel that they needed their protection via its speech, and if the people of Maldon did not give the Vikings what they requested, the Vikings would fight for the money and other valuables:

Stood then on shore, called out hard
a Viking herald, the man spoke words
who menacingly offered the seafarers'
message to the earl, where he stood on his bank:
'Bold sailors have sent me your way,
told me to tell you that you must quickly send
some rings for protection, and for you people it will
be better to buy off this spear-charge with tribute
than have us all join battle hard as this will be.
We need not waste each other, if you can manage that.
In exchange for the gold we will confirm the truce.
If you take care of this, who are the riches here,
and go so far as bailing out your countrymen,

[91] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English*, 502.

give the sailors, on their own terms of course,

money for good will, and take our peace,

we will go with the coin to our ships,

put out to sea, and keep the peace with you'[92]

This passage begins with physical and sensory information, which includes "stood" and "spoke." The poem uses stood to stress the importance of someone standing up in an erect or attention-grabbing way, which would be his public role. The speaker stands in front of the crowd, "on his bank," commanding their attention to his speech. The poem is specific about who is speaking by identifying the "Viking herald" to show that the speaker is a herald. A herald is a messenger and a form of invisible labor as the poem does not say that he receives compensation or recognition outside of being a nameless herald for his speech. Also, the Viking was not native to the region; thus, it was necessary to identify who is speaking. Then the poem injects more emotion to the passage by calling the speech "menacing" or showing that the statement is going to be threatening in nature as the "seafarers" or navy are. Ultimately, the message was directed to the leader or, in this case, the "earl." The "herald" begins his speech by calling the Vikings "bold sailors" or unafraid men, to inject fear into the speech. After the introduction, the "herald" outlines what will happen to the earl and the populace if they do not give money and jewelry to the Vikings, which includes a battle. This battle will be brutal based on the weapons. Then the "herald" appeals to the senses of the earl and people by saying that they can avoid conflict if they cooperate, and it would be a waste of men or resources if they have to fight. Howe claims that "moments in OE poetry...can be read as placing desire for personal glory before the collective

[92] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English*, 502-503.

good of the people."[93] The "herald" is appealing to the personal glory of the Vikings by ending his speech as stressing peace between the two groups of people even though the Vikings want the booty. Ultimately, this speech by the "Viking herald," highlights the desire of the Vikings to acquire more land and money for its leaders by the invisible labor of the soldiers.

Fig. 12. Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1986) 89. Obverse of one of the Merovingian tremisses (no. 26) from the purse, with a diademed and draped bust. The coin was minted at Valence (Drome) between 595 and 605. The reverse of coin 9, showing a Latin cross flanked by two smaller equal-armed crosses. The mint is uncertain, but it may have been in the Limoges area. The coin was minted between 605 and 615.

The figure illustrates how the gold coins which were found at the Sutton Hoo Burial site could have been taken by the Vikings via the invisible labor of the soldiers, for the leaders of the Vikings.

[93] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 80.

The response to the speech, “The Battle of Maldon” by Byrhtnoth and people, is a call for the invisible labor of the soldiers to get ready to fight and faithfulness to AEthelred, their chieftain. The poem depicts the loyalty and bravery as:

Byrhtnoth spoke, lifted his board,
twirled his slender spear, spoke these words,
angry and resolved gave him answer:
‘You hear what these people say, swab-jockey?
They will give you spears for tribute,
poisoned points and old swords,
a death-duty no good for you in war.
Sailors’ messenger, go back with this report,
Tell your people a much worse piece of news,
that here stands an unshamed earl with his army,
who will defend this inheritance,
this homeland of AEthelred my chieftain,
his land and people. Heathen men must
fall in war. It seems too mean to me
that you should take ship with our money
without a fight, now you have
come here this far into our country
Nor shall you get your treasure so peacefully.
Sword-point and blade will reconcile us first,

grim war-athletics, before we pay tribute.'[94]

The poem details a foreign attack by the Vikings over the Anglo-Saxons that is appalling to Byrhtnoth. Howe claims that this foreign attack is a part of the poems "vision of ...a migratory martial campaign."[95] This foreign attack, led by "they" or the nameless soldiers, the invisible labor of the Anglo-Saxons as written by the Old English poet, is the reason that Byrhtnoth is speaking actively via twirling his spear because he is confident that his solders can defeat the Vikings. The poem has Byrhtnoth hold his "board" or shield and "twirled his slender spear" to show that Byrhtnoth is not afraid of the Vikings soldiers and that he is angry over the Vikings threatened punishments. Then Byrhtnoth proceeds to insult the Vikings by calling them a "swab-jockey" or a person who lives in fear or is a drunkard. As if the insult was not bad enough, Byrhtnoth boldly claims that the people will not pay the "tribute" or give money and valuables to the Vikings because they will not give in to extortionist demands. The poem has Byrhtnoth threaten the Vikings with their death or "death-duty." Then Byrhtnoth gives an additional message to the Vikings. Byrhtnoth says that they will all do everything to defend their land, AEthelred, and dehumanizes the Vikings by calling them "Heathens." The overall effect of Byrhtnoth's speech, which includes the word "peacefully," does not inspire peace but instead harks back to the "herald" speech, to show the potential power of the invisible labor of the nameless solders, while giving the poem the ability to increase the understanding of heroic invisible labor by the soldiers showing the cruelty and death involved in war and the artifacts used in fighting wars or in this case the weapons used by the Vikings and Maldon.

[94] North, Allard, and Gilles, ed., *Longman Anthology of Old English*, 503-504.

[95] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 79.

Conclusion

Invisible labor is a modern term used by scholars to describe hidden labor, which may or may not receive compensation, yet serves the community. Old English poets and prose writers understood the value of labor via peace-weaving, treaty-weaving, true-weaving, peacemaking, through the heroic and militaristic code. There is a great use of ambiguity in Old English literature due to the meaning of the word *freoþuwebban* when translated from Old English. *Freoþuwebban* means peace-weaving, peacemaking, treaty-weaver, true-weaver and is labor that is usually unacknowledged or ignored. Old English poets and prose authors placed *freoþuwebban* in the text show the versatility of invisible labor. Anglo-Saxon authors used cultural mediation as a way to preserve the culture of the Anglo-Saxon period with the cups, swords, shields, which allowed writers the ability to transmit the useful aspects of the literature for future generations to know the history of tangible items used in Old English poetry and prose. The preservation of history includes showing what invisible labor is, which includes, peace-weaver, peacemaker, treaty-weaver, true-weaver, privilege, and heroic military warrior looked like.

Through my literary study on the ways peace-weaver or peacemaker is used in the context of Old English literature, I have argued from a provisional stance that a peace-weaver is a cultural construct that embodies the ideal of weaver of peace through marriage, interceder for others either as a woman, man or spiritual entity and sharer of cultural practices. I argue that through the study of the works of philologists Megan Cavell[96] and R. D. Fulk[97] that the actual definition

[96] Cavell, "Formulaic FriÞuwebban," 355.

[97] R. D. Fulk "On Argumentation in Old English Philology, with Particular Reference to the Editing and Dating of Beowulf." *Anglo-Saxon England* 32, (2003): 1-26.

of whom a peace-weaver or what invisible labor is complicated due to the ambiguity of defining Old English terms. I argue that the uncertainty is why a peace-weaver can be either male or female. This understanding of ambiguity became most apparent when I researched and conducted in-depth studies into *Beowulf, Widsith,* and Cynewulf's *Elene.* I argue that all three poems specifically use the word peace-weaver, which is also a treaty-weaver or true-weaver; however, each poem defines peace-weaver differently. In *Beowulf,* the poem presents political themes through serving mead in the hall with Wealhtheow, specifically calls Wealhtheow a peace-weaver and alludes to a new definition of peacemaker on the battlefield with Wiglaf. Yet, in *Widsith*, the poem writes a complex narrative of where Widsith has traveled, his desire to recruit benefactors to support his work and put into words the practice of dropping off a treaty weaver or Ealhhild with her new king, as a means of providing a historical timeline for the poem. In Cynewulf's *Elene,* the poem has a peacemaker defined in a masculine spirit who is a messenger from God sent to assist Constantine. As different as peace-weaver is defined in *Beowulf, Widsith,* and Cynewulf's *Elene, Judith,* "The Battle of Brunburgh," and "The Battle of Maldon" show the peace-weaver as possessing the heroic or military code, sometimes from a place of privilege.

However, the spirit of my argument on understanding invisible labor as depicted in Old English poetry and prose is weakened by inaccurate dating since the mere fact that these works are still in circulation is proof of their ability to withstand time and translations. Ultimately, poets and prose authors wanted later centuries to understand what they went through and how they used their poetry and prose to express the vicissitudes of their lives. These challenges are included in *Beowulf, Judith, Widsith,* Cynwulf's *Elene,* "The Battle of Brunburgh," and in "The Battle of Maldon." However, as open to invisible labor as I interpret the unknown authors of

Old English poetry and prose, I sense a flaw in the way invisible work is written. This flaw, which is not the fault of the writer, I believe, is due to over 1000 years of literature and history in translation. I note that there is the possibility that some poetry and prose may have been exploited for the translator's agenda and do not necessarily reflect the entire views of the original works. Translators have the agency to do many things, including adding to or altering the text and manuscripts that they translate. Ideologically, I would like to ascertain that the books in translation that I read is pure, just as the author wrote, and would give me the ability to accurately highlight invisible labor as I see it in the literature. Still, I believe that some text may be altered due to the bias of the translators. I assert that there is a possibility that words, phrases, and situations may be embellished due to the time of translation, including many centuries of changing value systems. My hope in discussing invisible labor, as seen in Old English literature, is that there may be a consensus of what invisible work could be and acknowledge that there may be some irregularities in the translated text that I read.

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