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By Janet L. Nelson

ENGLAND AND THE CONTINENT IN THE NINTH CENTURY: I, ENDS AND BEGINNINGS

READ 24 NOVEMBER 2001

ABSTRACT. This essay begins by celebrating the achievement of Wilhelm Levison, whose *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* has both inspired and provoked new generations of explorers. The essay goes on to argue that the historiography of the earlier Middle Ages has been haunted by quests for the end of the Roman Empire. Recent attempts at periodisation, Marxist and other, have extended Rome's decline to span the ninth century, with the Carolingian heyday both truncated and belittled, while Anglo-Saxon England has been split down the middle by representations of the Vikings' impact as a re-run of the fifth-century barbarian onslaught. Since 1989, abundant and diverse historiographical takes, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and comparative, have made it possible to see the ninth century as a formative and defining period in European history, not least because of multiple contacts between England and the Continent. The last part of the essay examines the pontificate of Leo III (795–816), to show England and the Continent meeting, figuratively speaking, in Rome. A wider world of connections is brought into view and the scene set for further explorations.

'IN MY beginning is my end' is one of those deep sayings that sets the mind working overtime – and over time. First, in my present situation, it makes me reflect that the beginning of one president's stint is necessarily an end to another's. Peter Marshall's lectures have adorned and enriched the last four years' programmes of this Society, and of course its *Transactions* too. Great wisdom, scholarship worn lightly, intercontinental breadth, compelling explanatory power: these made Peter's lectures as memorable as his whole presidency has proved memorable in expanding the Society's size and scope, and, more

¹ T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker', *The Four Quartets* (1944), 15. The tag was a well-used later medieval and early modern *memento mori*.

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important still, its vision of what it can and should be doing for History. Peter's successor self-evidently has an impossible act to follow.² All that can be said is that this one will be different, thanks to the Society's excellent practice of choosing as successive presidents specialists in different times and places. So, we now skip back a millennium, from India and America to western Europe, from an age of western European global cultural dominance to a world in which Latin Christendom, small, disparate, poor, was peripheral to the great Eurasian landmass, where the shots were called in Baghdad and Ch'ang-an.³ The Royal Historical Society takes all that and more in its stride, just as, following the injunction of the psalmist's text in Hebrew that adorns the Gustav Tuck theatre in University College, London, it 'considers the years of each generation'.⁴ Enough, in this context, about a beginning being an end.

Let me instead pursue the thought in another context. My title, as early medievalists here will have recognised, perhaps with a frisson of alarm at what may look like sheer cheek on my part, echoes Wilhelm Levison's *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*. Levison escaped from Germany in 1939, just in time, and received a welcome in Durham, then as since, a bastion of medieval learning. In 1943, Oxford invited Levison to deliver the Ford Lectures, which became the book published posthumously in 1947. In his preface, he wrote: 'I have tried to some extent to connect up Continental and English research. May these pages ... contribute to join again broken links, when the works of peace have resumed their place lost in the turmoil of war.'⁵ And Levison recalled 'with grateful mind' his old pre-war colleagues at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH), 'many of whom did not bow the knee to Baal, but remained faithful till the hour of parting could no longer be avoided'. My beginning is a salute to his memory. His death was indeed the ending of a magnificent chapter in the history of early medieval scholarship. Of course, the Monumenta has long since revived again, and flourished, but that was a never-to-be-repeated pioneering age when Levison and Bruno Krusch between them published the seven magnificent volumes of the MGH *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, and Levison completed the first part of the revision

²This is the apt moment to acknowledge, too, James Holt and Rees Davies, two medievalists among recent past presidents of the Society, both exemplary, both inimitable.

³See *The Times Atlas of World History*, ed. G. Barraclough, 4th rev. edn G. Parker (1993), 108–9: 'The Eurasian world in 814'.

⁴The Society owes thanks to UCL for making this beautiful theatre available for our lectures in London. I owe the translation of the Hebrew to the kindness of my UCL colleague David d'Avray.

⁵W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1947), vi. There is a thought-provoking entry on Levison (by F. Lifshitz) in *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, ed. K. Boyd (1999), 1, 717–18.

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of Wattenbach's nineteenth-century monumental *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*. No wonder an MGH colleague recalled Levison as 'the tireless one' (*der Unermüdlich*).⁶ No wonder early medievalists remember Levison with grateful mind. No wonder that more than one of us has wished that Levison had lived to write the sequel to his masterwork. As it is, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* contains no more than a few tantalising forays into the ninth.

There is a further sense, too, in which a subject came to an end not just in Levison's work, but around 800. The well-documented eighth-century connections woven by four generations of Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent were becoming attenuated, or transformed, as the Frankish Church assumed responsibility for its own mission. A great age of missionary saints' Lives ended too. To read the Continuator of Bede is to realise, painfully, that Bede's act was impossible to continue.⁷ In Francia, the Continuator of Fredegar who stopped work in 768 had no successor.⁸ Thread-bare annals replaced history on both sides of the Channel.⁹ The death of Alcuin in 804 did not just put a stop to his letter-writing, so depriving us of the richest source we have for Anglo-Continental relations in the late eighth century, but the Northumbrian annals nourished by information from Francia stopped approximately then too.¹⁰ It becomes curiously less easy to write a story of Anglo-Continental connections in the ninth century than for the eighth century – or even the seventh.

As for seizing the ninth century as a substantive subject in itself, there is another kind of obstacle: periodisation, History's handy organiser, but also its bane. Marc Bloch, in 1942, noted the carving-up of the past by centuries as a 'rather recent fashion', 'all the more insidious because it has no rational basis'.¹¹ What Georges Duby called the magic of the double zero still casts its spell – witness the syllabus I have taught for thirty-two years at King's College London. Frustration may account

⁶ Walther Holtzmann, 'Vorwort' to Levison's revised vol. 1 of W. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter* (Weimar, 1952), vii.

⁷ *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), 361–3, trans. J. McClure and R. Collins, *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1994), 296–8, and comment, xxi–ii.

⁸ R. Collins, 'Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth-Century Frankish Historiography: Two Case Studies', in *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, ed. J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter, Beihefte der *Francia* (Sigmaringen, 1994), 227–47; *idem*, *Fredegar, Authors of the Middle Ages*, 13 (Aldershot, 1996).

⁹ M. McCormick, *Les 'Annales' du haut moyen âge*, Typologie des sources du haut moyen âge occidental xiv (Turnhout, 1975).

¹⁰ D. Rollason, *Sources for York History to AD 1100*, The Archaeology of York 1 (York, 1998); *idem*, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing in Northern England', and J. Story, 'Symeon as Annalist', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. D. Rollason (Stamford, 1998), 1–13, 202–13.

¹¹ M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. P. Putnam (Manchester, 1954), 149.

for the proliferation of 'long centuries' (the long eighteenth century set the trend) that sprawl imperialistically across double-zero frontiers. The ninth century recently had its first four decades nabbed by foragers from the long eighth: maybe no bad thing.¹² But what the ninth century has suffered excessively from is periodisation's dead hand. It has been the victim of two great efforts at revisionism. Marx rethought Antiquity as a slave-based mode and the Middle Ages as feudalism. Uncertainty about where, when and how you got from one to the other (not to mention, in feudalism's case, confusion with non-Marxist meanings) has evoked a great deal of debate. That most magical of multiple zeros, the year one thousand, has seemed to many historians, especially in France, the most natural of frontiers. Under the great neo-Marxian sign of *mutation féodale*, that frontier could remain upstanding when other walls crumbled, leaving the ninth century firmly on the antique side.¹³ Marc Bloch began *Feudal Society* with the ninth century in order to emphasise, not a beginning, but an end.¹⁴ In his view, the ninth century completed the unfinished business of the fifth, as a second age of invasions by Saracens, Vikings and Magyars finished off the remnants of the Roman empire. This was scene-setting. For Bloch's book, centred on the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, was about a new world. Overwhelmed by prescience of the destruction to follow, Charlemagne, as imagined by Michael Wallace-Hadrill, could only lament, *Dieus . . . si penuse est ma vie* – though he had to do so in the words of a twelfth-century text (the Song of Roland), not a ninth-century one.¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill followed the logic of Bloch's periodisation. The ninth and tenth centuries inevitably featured in *The Barbarian West* (and in so much other text-book writing on the earlier Middle Ages) as a dying fall. See also Georges Duby's answer in 1980 to his own question, what, really, was the Carolingian empire? – 'a village chiefdom extended to the limits of the universe; from the edge of impenetrable forests that sheltered outlaws, where every autumn men took their herds of pigs and bands of huntsmen ventured, through clearings where starving peasants struggled to produce what they were forced to take to the residences of their lords, those specialists in fighting whom their warlord-

¹² *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. I. L. Hanson and C. Wickham (Leiden, 2000).

¹³ C. Wickham, 'The Other Transition: From the Ancient World to Feudalism', *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), 3–36; *idem*, 'Mutations et révolutions aux environs de l'an mil', *Médiévales*, 21 (1991), 27–38; T. N. Bisson, 'The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 144 (1995), 6–42; cf. D. Barthélemy and S. White, 'Debate: The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), 196–223; T. Reuter, C. Wickham and the rejoinder of Bisson, 'Debate: The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 155 (1997), 176–225; and D. Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu?* (Paris, 1997), 13–28.

¹⁴ M. Bloch, *La société féodale* (2 vols., Paris, 1939–41), English trans. J. Anderson (1961).

¹⁵ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, 3rd rev. edn (1967), 114.

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king led every spring on plundering raids'.¹⁶ Where, really, was the link between this primitive capital accumulation and the new age of feudal growth after the year 1000? In such a context, Carolingian renewal of the Roman empire could only seem at best a fantasy, at worst a fake. In the historiographies of Germany, of Italy, of Spain, all for quite different reasons that Marx would have termed superstructural, but which also have a lot to do with modern national preoccupations, the big medieval break-points have *postdated* the ninth century: Germany's first Reich, Italy's urban civilisation, Spain's *reconquista*.

In a second area, too, revisionism became fossilised in a way that offered nothing for the ninth century. For the francophone Belgian Henri Pirenne, medieval European towns were the creation of *homo oeconomicus* in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The breed was new. An absence of continuity, of any organic or structural link, between the key economic institutions of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, was the key argument of *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. The rise of Islam, and the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries ended the Roman empire for good by destroying a trading and cultural community centred on the Mediterranean.¹⁷ In economic terms, this end was followed by no new beginning, but a caesura: a period of no markets, but instead of rural autarky, associated with what we would call underdevelopment, in Francia, the heartland of Charlemagne's empire. Here belong Duby's outlaws, pigs and huntsmen, impenetrable forests, starving peasants and miserable clearings. Because Pirenne left his book unfinished when he died in 1935, and its latter part remained only a sketch, between his earlier work and this final one no bridge was ever built. Into that void fell the ninth century. At the same time, of course, Pirenne acknowledged cultural and ideological innovation in the eighth-century Franks' *entente cordiale* with the Church. *Mohammed and Charlemagne* ends here, with new monarchy. Pirenne could not have written the rest of the ninth century in these terms, any more than could his younger contemporaries Louis Halphen and François-Louis Ganshof, who took up Pirenne's story. New monarchy was shortlived because (I quote Halphen) 'neither Charlemagne nor his counsellors were capable of forming a clear idea of the objective to be aimed at'. Charlemagne

¹⁶ G. Duby, *Des sociétés médiévales*, Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France, prononcée le 4 décembre 1970 (Paris, 1971), p. 23.

¹⁷ H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (1937), trans. B. Meall (1939). Recent radical rethinking is exemplified in P. Delogu, 'Reading Pirenne Again', in *The Sixth Century*, ed. R. Hodges and W. Bowden (Leiden, 1998), 15–40; P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), 153–72; and, especially relevant to the ninth century, M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge, 2002), all with fine bibliographies.

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'had no idea of system', but simply responded to events.¹⁸ The result – and the word recurs depressingly in the writings of the late 1940s – was decomposition. Charlemagne's old, decaying body (he died at the age of sixty-five in 814) represented the premature aging of his state.¹⁹ And to the Old World historians of the late 1940s, it mirrored the state of the post-war Continent. Looking back from 1990 and from the New World, Norman Cantor castigated the 'post-Nazi era anti-intellectualism of [the Austrian] Heinrich Fichtenau (Hitler was a phony, so Charlemagne had be a phony, too), and the sour British vulgarity of Wallace-Hadrill (they were all barbarians, and intelligence never prevails in history anyway)'.²⁰ Things could only get better.

The post-war historiographical upswing began and thrived where you would have expected: in the areas of high culture, the Church and Christianisation in regions and localities rather than at the level of kingdom or empire. The ninth century was the focus of new attention from theologians, historians of thought including political thought, of script, of art and ritual and the Christian life. While the bulk of the work was Continental,²¹ there were important contributions from this side of the Channel where two men in particular were productive and inspirational: Michael Wallace-Hadrill (let me as quickly as possible rescue his name from the charge of sour vulgarity, ethnically labelled or otherwise) and Walter Ullmann, who, like Levison, came to Britain in 1939 and stayed. If you seek their monument, look about you! Most of the earlier medieval historians currently working in this country are their intellectual children and grandchildren.²² Their influence internationally was and still is large.

¹⁸ L. Halphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris, 1947; repr. with postface by P. Riché 1995), 423, and cf. 424, 412.

¹⁹ F.-L. Ganshof, 'L'échec de Charlemagne' ('Charlemagne's failure'), and 'The last period of Charlemagne's reign: a study in decomposition', both in his collected papers trans. J. Sondheimer, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* (1971), chs. 12 and 13; and see also H. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire* (Oxford, 1957; originally published in German in 1949), 177–87.

²⁰ N. F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1991), 139.

²¹ The works of B. Bischoff in his collected *Mittelalterliche Studien*, 1 and II (Stuttgart, 1966–7); J. Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1957–66); J. Semmler, 'Studien zum *Supplex Libellus* und zur anianischen Reform in Fulda', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 119 (1958), 268–98. These three in *Karl der Grosse: Idee und Wirklichkeit*, ed. W. Braunsfels (5 vols., Düsseldorf, 1965), vols. 1 and II; and P. Riché in his collected papers, *Instruction et vie religieuse dans le haut moyen âge* (Aldershot, 1981), are exemplary, in both senses.

²² This emerges from the historiographical review by R. Collins, 'The Carolingians and the Ottonians in an Anglophone World', *Journal of Medieval History*, 22 (1996), 97–114. There is an entry for Ullmann (by F. Lifshitz), but not, alas, for Wallace-Hadrill, in *Encyclopedia of Historians*, ed. Boyd, II, 1212–13. The third great inspiring presence for my

And yet in 1989, quite soon after their deaths, Richard Sullivan, a North American grand old man of earlier medieval history surveying the international historiography of the preceding three decades or so, detected ‘a malaise in Carolingian studies’. He was polite enough to write of a problem rather than an error, but he was absolutely clear that a crisis had arisen out of the Carolingianists’ very achievement: in producing a great deal of research intended to support their prior conviction that the Carolingian age was one of beginnings, and innovation, Carolingianists had actually proved the opposite. Their findings, far from sustaining the ‘unique, organic character’ of the Carolingian period, had splintered it beyond repair by demonstrating ‘cultural plurality’. The Carolingianists’ cognitively dissonant experience had produced, Sullivan thought, ‘a kind of aimlessness’, an ‘absence of cohesion’, ‘uncertainty’ – in short, ‘something amiss’.²³ Sullivan, perceptibly, grew impatient with the Carolingianists’ prior conviction: it became a previous conviction. Sullivan’s tone, in 1989, was appropriately judgemental. Few Carolingianists then aged forty or over remained with knuckles unrapped. Yet Sullivan’s justice was more remedial than punitive. What he prescribed for these recidivists was an *annaliste* boot camp, distance runs while carrying thirty-five kilos’ weight of *grandes thèses* through indefinitely prolonged late Antiquity, immersions in icy post-Roman *longues durées*, ending with a short, sharp douche of *révolution féodale*. They – we – would emerge convinced of ‘a long historical continuum reaching forward from late antiquity, a continuum in which the Carolingian age constituted a not so distinctive segment’. The failed model of Carolingian change would be replaced by a new “excavation” of structural foundations’, from the bottom up — hence diminishing the role of elites and of “high” civilisation’, and privileging ‘the “little” people whose lives constitute the essence of society’s basic structures [characterised by] immobility over the *longue durée*’. ‘Enduring economic, social and mental structures ... little affected by the allegedly decisive events clustered around 750’ (he referred to the fall of Byzantine Ravenna to the Lombards, and the accession in Francia of the first Carolingian king) persisted down to c. 1000, increasingly moribund. Sullivan finally, and to me rather surprisingly, endorsed the *annaliste/marxisant* variant of the dead hand. So much for the innovative ninth century – if

generation of British earlier medievalists was Karl Leyser. See the entry (by T. Reuter), in *Encyclopedia of Historians*, ed. Boyd, 1, 721–2.

²³R. Sullivan, ‘The Carolingian Age: Reflections on its Place in the History of the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 267–306, at 268, and for quotations below, 281, 285–7, 297–8, 303. It is instructive to compare two earlier historiographical staging-posts: the two volumes of *Nascita dell’Europa ed Europa carolingia: un’equazione da verificare*, *Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano sull’alto Medioevo xxvii* (Spoleto, 1981), and the review article of D. Bullough, ‘*Europae pater*. Charlemagne and his Achievement in the Light of Recent Scholarship’, *English Historical Review*, 85 (1970), 59–105.

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Sullivan was right. But I do not believe Sullivan was right, either in the diagnosis, for cultural plurality can coexist with organic unity, nor in the prescription, for I think we shall not look at the little people *instead of* elites, any more than we should look at men *instead of* women and gender. I am for the inclusive view, and I hope to convince you that it shows the ninth century's formative impact in the history of Europe.

But before pursuing that agenda, I want to apply the Sullivan method to the historiography of ninth-century England, which he excluded. Looking back from 1989, we would have to start, not post-war, but mid-war, in 1943, with F. M. Stenton's Anglo-Saxon chronicling of 'the evolution of an effective monarchy', and 'the advance of the English peoples towards political unity'.²⁴ Here is a ninth century of shadow, of *disunity*, corruption, violence within, making the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms easy prey to Viking depredation and destruction from without, but also a ninth century of sunshine, not least in its coverage of the reign of Alfred, who in successfully resisting the Vikings created a state and a corpus of Old English vernacular literature, and set Englishkind (*Angelynn*) again on the progressive road.²⁵ Stenton can stand, too, for the inclusion in historical studies of numismatics. Not himself a numismatist, he recognised the importance of coinage as evidence of the Anglo-Saxon economy and of the state. One reason for Alfred's consistent interest in London, and his 'restoration' of the city in 886, was that he knew the value of its mint.²⁶ After the war, Dorothy Whitelock's publication of *English Historical Documents*, volume 1, a landmark of erudition, gave undergraduates easy access to a treasure-hoard of evidence, including some of the Continental narrative sources with a bearing on Anglo-Saxon history.²⁷ Even in those decades,

²⁴ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943). The quotations come from the third edition (1971), 259.

²⁵ See P. Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald *et al.* (Oxford, 1983), 99–129, building on but also critiquing Stenton; and S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS*, 6th series, 6 (1996), 25–50.

²⁶ Stenton's pioneering interest in this field was recognised in the presentation to him of a Festschrift edited by R. H. M. Dolley, *Anglo-Saxon Coins: Studies Presented to F. M. Stenton* (Oxford, 1961). The most recent work also acknowledges (though it revises) Stenton: see M. Blackburn, 'The London Mint in the Reign of Alfred', in *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, ed. M. Blackburn and D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), 105–24.

²⁷ D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, 1 (1955; 2nd rev. edn, 1979). For a thoughtful review of the second edition, see K. Leyser, 'The Anglo-Saxons "At Home"', in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, II ed. D. Brown, J. Campbell and S. C. Hawkes (British Archaeological Reports, British Series XCII, Oxford, 1981), 237–42, reprinted in Leyser's collected papers, posthumously published as *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, ed. T. Reuter (2 vols., London, 1994), I, 105–10.

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historians of Anglo-Saxon England did, sometimes, look across the Channel, not just, as Levison had done for the eighth century, to show the multiplicity of contacts, or, as Stenton and Whitelock did, to track evidence bearing on England, but, as well, to make substantial comparisons and contrasts, as James Campbell and Patrick Wormald both did for the tenth and eleventh centuries.²⁸ For the ninth century, though, Michael Wallace-Hadrill's shining example apart,²⁹ what strikes me is the relative lack of such comparative approaches before c. 1989, a tendency accentuated, paradoxically, by one of the most positive aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies already in those decades: their inter-disciplinarity. Talking to archaeologists of the middle Saxon period did not incline historians of ninth-century Wessex to look across the Channel (though in their defence, it must be said that there were few Continental archaeologists specialising in the ninth century to talk to in those days, which helps explain why both Quentovic and Pont-de-l'Arche were excavated, in the end, by English archaeologists).³⁰ Talking to Old English specialists did not incline the historian of ninth-century Wessex to look across to the Continent either; and that, I am afraid, remains for me a limitation of Anglo-Saxon historiography in North America where the great majority of specialists come out of the literary and linguistic rather than the historical stable. What has the Sullivan method revealed for England then? No sign of aimlessness, certainly, and plenty of cohesion – perhaps too much.

My response to historiographical developments *since* 1989? Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be middle aged may allow (by analogy with wine) a more intense savouring of change and difference.

²⁸ J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany: Some Comparisons and Connections', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. D. Hill (British Archaeological Reports, British Series LIX, Oxford, 1978), 255–70, and *idem*, 'The Significance of the Anglo-Norman State in the Administrative History of Western Europe', in *Histoire comparée de l'administration (IVe–XVIIIe siècle)*, ed. W. Paravicini and K. F. Werner, Beihefte der *Francia* IX (Munich, 1980), 117–34, both reprinted in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (1986), chs. 12 and 11; P. Wormald, 'Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. B. A. E. Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), 13–42.

²⁹ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century: Some Common Historical Interests', *History*, 35 (1950), 202–18, reprinted in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (1975), 201–16. This was the inspiration behind J. L. Nelson, '“A King across the Sea”: Alfred in Continental Perspective', *TRHS*, 36 (1986), 45–68, reprinted in J. L. Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 1999), ch. 1.

³⁰ R. Hodges, 'Trade and Market Origins in the Ninth Century: Relations between England and the Continent', in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. M. Gibson and J. L. Nelson (2nd edn, Aldershot, 2000), 203–23; B. Dearden, 'Charles the Bald's Fortified Bridge at Pitres (Seine): Recent Archaeological Investigations', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 11 (1989), 107–11; *idem*, 'Pont-de-l'Arche or Pitres? A Location and Archaeomagnetic Dating for Charles the Bald's Fortifications on the Seine', *Antiquity*, 64 (1990), 567–71.

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Little over a decade ago, Sullivan looked in vain, he said, for diversity in scholarship on the ninth century. Since then, how he must have enjoyed seeing a hundred flowers bloom in England (and Britain more widely) and on the Continent *and* in North America! Over the past decade or so, Carolingianists and Anglo-Saxonists alike have proved incorrigibly productive and innovative. What is more, there seems to me to have been a lot more to-ing and fro-ing across the Channel intellectually and therefore literally too,³¹ and a lot less fog. Historians of Anglo-Saxon England are no longer insular (if they ever were). Some evidently know their ways round Brescia and Rome, Benevento and Monte Gargano just as well as Southampton, London and Canterbury.³² ‘Historians of Anglo-Saxon England’ are in some cases intrepid Continentals following Levison and Ullmann into lands across the sea, but for happier because entirely positive reasons and from choice,³³ just as ninth-century Continental history has long been a specialism of choice for some born and bred on this side of the Channel and further afield too. Benefits in all cases have been mutual. 1989 was a vintage year in one other quite specific sense: Rosamond McKitterick’s *The Carolingians and the Written Word* challenged us all to look afresh at the multiplicity, and multiple concerns, of ninth-century writers and readers, lay as well as clerical.³⁴ From that, much has followed (and will follow), not least from this author herself.³⁵

³¹ There is an instructive comparison to be made with the relatively limited participation of British scholars in post-war scholarship on earlier medieval Continental Europe of the immediate post-war decades, and the increased traffic of the 1980s and *a fortiori* the 1990s. See, for instance, the volumes of the Spoleto Settimane held from 1952 onwards by the Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo at Spoleto (published 1954 onwards). Much to be welcomed are inter-institutional collaborations set up over the past decade involving Dutch, Belgian, German and French scholars, young and old, with British and American counterparts. The ongoing effects of the ‘Transformation of the Roman World’ project are perceptible here: see below, n. 53. There is still a long way to go, however, and British scholars of the younger generation are likely to be more, not less, hampered by a deficit in modern-language skills that has become a national disgrace.

³² See for instance S. Keynes, ‘Anglo-Saxon Entries in the “Liber Vitae” of Brescia’, in *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately*, ed. J. Roberts and J. L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1997), 99–119; J. Story, ‘Cathwulf, Kingship and the Royal Abbey of St Denis’, *Speculum*, 74 (1999), 1–22; A. Thacker, ‘*Peculiaris patronus noster*: The Saint as Patron of the State in the early Middle Ages’, in *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell*, ed. J. R. Maddicott and D. M. Palliser (2000), 1–24.

³³ See for instance A. Schärer, ‘The Writing of History at King Alfred’s Court’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 5 (1996), 177–206; S. Lebecq, ‘Les marchands aux longs cours et les formes de leur organization dans l’Europe du nord et du nord-ouest aux VIIIe–XIe siècles’, *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VIe au XIe siècle*, ed. A. Dierkens and J.-M. Sansterre (Geneva, 2000), 321–37.

³⁴ R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989).

³⁵ R. McKitterick, ‘Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals’, *TRHS*, 6th series, 7 (1997), 101–30; *idem*, ‘Political Ideology in