

Power Relations and Resistance in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines power relations in the film The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die (2023), directed by Edward Bazalgette, by applying Michel Foucault's theory of power relations and resistance. The film portrays Uhtred of Bebbanburg's struggle to support the unification of England amid political manipulation orchestrated by Ingilmundr, an Irish spy who exerts influence over King Aethelstan to advance his own ambitions. The purpose of this study is to analyze how power relations are exercised and how resistance is enacted within the narrative. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study analyzes selected scenes and dialogues using narrative and cinematographic elements as analytical tools. The findings reveal that Ingilmundr exercises three interconnected forms of power: dominative power through coercion and violence, subjective power through ideological and psychological manipulation, and exploitative power by mobilizing social unrest for personal gain. In response, Uhtred resists these power dynamics by challenging the ideological control exerted over Aethelstan and restoring ethical leadership grounded in justice and unity. The study concludes that the film represents power as a relational and productive force, while emphasizing resistance as a moral and strategic practice capable of disrupting manipulation and restoring social order.

Keywords: film studies; narrative elements; cinematographic elements; power relations; resistance.

A. Introduction

Power is an inescapable dimension of human social life, shaping how individuals act, speak, and relate to one another across social, political, and cultural contexts. In everyday interactions, whether in workplaces, families, or governance structures, power operates not only through formal authority but also through discourse, knowledge, persuasion, and social norms. Scholars have long emphasized that power should not be understood solely as domination exercised by a sovereign subject; rather, it functions as a relational and dynamic force embedded within networks of social interaction (Foucault, 1978; Lukes, 1974). These power dynamics continuously influence how identities are formed, how legitimacy is produced, and how resistance emerges.

Michel Foucault's conception of power fundamentally challenges traditional hierarchical views by proposing that power is diffuse and omnipresent. As Foucault (1978) argues, power is "everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (p. 93).

Power, therefore, does not reside exclusively in institutions or individuals but circulates through discourses, practices, and everyday interactions. Power relations are neither fixed nor stable; they are constantly negotiated, contested, and reconfigured through social processes. This relational understanding foregrounds how power operates subtly—often invisibly—through norms, knowledge systems, and forms of social regulation.

Within this framework, power relations extend beyond coercion and overt domination into the realm of manipulation. Lukes (1974) conceptualizes power as operating across multiple dimensions, including the capacity to shape perceptions, beliefs, and preferences in ways that sustain inequality. Manipulation functions by controlling access to information, framing discourse, and normalizing particular values as natural or inevitable. Such processes enable dominant groups to maintain authority while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Butler (1997) further emphasizes that power operates through discursive practices that regulate subjects and delimit the conditions under which agency becomes possible. Consequently, power relations are deeply intertwined with systems of privilege, exclusion, and social inequality.

Literary and cinematic texts provide a productive site for examining how power relations are represented, legitimized, and resisted. Film, in particular, functions as a cultural medium through which social hierarchies and ideological struggles are dramatized and made visible. Previous studies have demonstrated that films often depict power relations through character interactions, narrative conflicts, and symbolic representations (Noor, 2019; Febriyanti, 2013). For example, analyses of Macbeth (2015) reveal how legitimate, referent, and expert power operate through persuasion, violence, and false legitimacy, ultimately producing tyranny and resistance (Noor, 2019). Similarly, studies of novels and films have shown how power is exercised through family structures, religious authority, and institutional norms, and how resistance emerges in response to domination (Wardhana, 2016; Asmoro, 2015; Yunita & Efendi, 2024).

Despite the growing body of scholarship on power relations in literary works, existing studies tend to focus on either sociolinguistic features, such as address terms, or generalized representations of domination and resistance. Limited attention has been paid to how power relations operate specifically through manipulation within historical drama films, particularly in relation to legitimacy, authority, and resistance in post-feudal political contexts. Moreover, while *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023) has been examined from linguistic and moral perspectives, its representation of power relations through Foucauldian analysis remains underexplored.

The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die (2023), directed by Edward Bazalgette and adapted from Bernard Cornwell's *The Saxon Stories*, offers a rich narrative terrain for examining power relations. Set within the political struggles of early medieval England, the film portrays conflicts over sovereignty, loyalty, and legitimacy, foregrounding manipulation, strategic violence, and resistance as central narrative forces. The protagonist's position within shifting power hierarchies illustrates how authority is constructed, challenged, and contested through discourse and action.

Accordingly, this study applies Michel Foucault's theory of power relations to analyze how power and resistance are represented in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023). By focusing on practices of manipulation, legitimacy, and resistance, this study seeks to contribute to literary and film studies by offering a nuanced analysis of power as a relational and discursive phenomenon rather than a static possession. This approach not only extends existing scholarship on power relations in film but also demonstrates how historical drama functions as a cultural text that reflects enduring struggles over authority and control.

This study is guided by two central research concerns. First, it seeks to examine how power relations are represented in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023), particularly through interactions among characters and the exercise of authority within the narrative. Second, it investigates how the main character responds to and resists dominant power structures, revealing the dynamics of resistance that emerge within unequal relations of power.

The scope of this research is limited to a textual analysis of *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023) as a historical drama film. The analysis concentrates specifically on representations of power relations as theorized by Michel Foucault, focusing on how power operates through discourse, manipulation, and social interaction within the film. This study does not address audience reception, production context, or broader sociopolitical implications beyond the narrative framework of the film.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are twofold. The first is to analyze the ways power relations are constructed between the protagonist and opposing characters within the film. The second is to identify and explain the forms of resistance enacted by the protagonist in response to dominant power structures, highlighting how resistance functions as an integral component of power relations.

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of Foucauldian power relations to contemporary historical cinema, demonstrating how film narratives can serve as sites for examining the circulation of power and resistance. Practically, the study provides a critical reference for students and scholars in literary and film studies who are interested in issues of power, ideology, and resistance as represented in narrative texts.

B. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the representation of power relations in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on interpreting meanings, representations, and social relations embedded in cultural texts rather than measuring numerical variables. Qualitative research emphasizes the analysis of words, images, narratives, and symbols as socially constructed data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As Kuckartz (2013) explains, qualitative inquiry draws on non-numerical data such as spoken language, written texts, and visual materials to understand social phenomena in depth.

In the context of film analysis, a descriptive qualitative method allows for close reading of dialogues, scenes, and visual compositions to reveal how power operates within narrative structures. This approach is particularly relevant for studies grounded in critical theory, as it enables an interpretive examination of discourse, representation, and ideology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Accordingly, this study analyzes power relations as they are constructed through narrative progression, character interactions, and cinematic techniques rather than through statistical generalization.

The primary data source of this study is the historical drama film *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023), directed by Edward Bazalgette. The film serves as the concluding narrative of the television series *The Last Kingdom* and is set in the late Saxon period, portraying political conflict, territorial unification, and struggles for authority. The film was selected because it foregrounds complex power relations enacted through manipulation, loyalty, warfare, and

ideological control, making it a suitable text for analysis using Michel Foucault's concept of power relations.

Secondary data sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and theoretical works related to power, resistance, discourse, and film studies. In particular, Michel Foucault's theories of power relations (Foucault, 1978, 1980) provide the primary analytical framework for interpreting the data.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic and multi-stage process to ensure analytical depth and reliability. First, the film was watched repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative structure, character development, and thematic focus. Repeated viewing is essential in qualitative film analysis, as it allows the researcher to identify patterns, nuances, and symbolic meanings that may not be immediately visible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2019).

Second, purposive sampling was applied to identify scenes and dialogues that explicitly or implicitly depict power relations and resistance. The selection criteria included: (1) scenes involving authority, domination, or manipulation; (2) interactions between dominant and subordinate characters; and (3) moments where resistance, defiance, or negotiation of power is evident. Both verbal data (dialogues and monologues) and non-verbal data (facial expressions, camera angles, mise-en-scène, and visual symbolism) were collected to capture the multimodal nature of power representation in film.

All selected scenes and dialogues were transcribed and documented to facilitate systematic analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using a theory-driven qualitative textual analysis, guided by Michel Foucault's concept of power relations. According to Foucault (1978), power is not merely possessed but exercised through discourse, social practices, and institutional relations. This perspective enables the analysis of power as dynamic, relational, and embedded in everyday interactions.

The analysis followed four main steps. First, the collected data were organized into thematic categories related to power relations, including domination, surveillance, manipulation, legitimacy, and resistance. Second, each selected scene and dialogue was examined to identify how power operates through language, actions, and visual representation. Third, the data were interpreted by linking narrative events and cinematic techniques to Foucauldian concepts such as discourse, subjectivity, and resistance (Foucault, 1980). Finally, the findings were synthesized into a coherent analytical narrative that explains how power relations and resistance are constructed and contested within the film.

In addition to narrative analysis, the study also considers basic cinematographic elements—such as camera movement, framing, lighting, and sound—to support the interpretation of power dynamics, as visual form plays a crucial role in shaping meaning in film texts (Brown, 2016).

Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a rigorous and theoretically grounded analysis of power relations in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die*, contributing to critical film and cultural studies.

C. Findings and Analysis

The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die (2023) is a British historical drama film directed by Edward Bazalgette and written by Martha Hillier, adapted from Bernard Cornwell's *The Saxon Stories* series. The film centers on Uhtred of Bebbanburg, a seasoned warrior and leader whose

lifelong struggle is driven by the ambition to unify England amid political instability and competing claims to power. As the concluding chapter of *The Last Kingdom* narrative, the film foregrounds the dynamics of power, manipulation, and resistance within the formation of early English sovereignty.

A central axis of the film's power relations is the influence of Ingilmundr, an Irish spy who becomes one of King Aethelstan's most trusted advisors. Through calculated persuasion and psychological manipulation, Ingilmundr gradually consolidates control over the young king. He exploits Aethelstan's insecurities and fear of failure, convincing him that cruelty, intimidation, and violence are necessary tools for achieving unity. Under Ingilmundr's influence, Aethelstan abandons his earlier ideals of justice and fairness, adopting increasingly authoritarian methods to conquer smaller kingdoms and assert dominance.

Uhtred, who once served as Aethelstan's mentor and moral guide, observes this transformation with growing concern. Recognizing that Ingilmundr's manipulation has distorted the king's judgment, Uhtred attempts to intervene by reminding Aethelstan of the values they once shared, particularly unity rooted in justice rather than fear. However, Ingilmundr's strategic isolation of the king renders Uhtred's efforts ineffective. Aethelstan, now deeply dependent on Ingilmundr, interprets Uhtred's counsel as opposition rather than guidance.

The film vividly illustrates how power operates through discourse, emotional manipulation, and strategic control rather than through overt force alone. Ingilmundr's authority is maintained through rhetoric, intimidation, and the suppression of dissent, effectively severing Aethelstan from alternative perspectives. In contrast, Uhtred's resistance to this power is characterized by patience, strategic reasoning, and moral conviction. His opposition demonstrates that resistance to domination often requires careful planning and the ability to expose truth rather than direct confrontation.

Eventually, Uhtred succeeds in gathering sufficient evidence to uncover Ingilmundr's deception. By confronting Aethelstan with this truth, he dismantles Ingilmundr's hold over the king. However, the consequences of manipulation persist, as Aethelstan's earlier decisions have already provoked widespread conflict. The resulting warfare reveals how the exercise of power through coercion can destabilize political order and inflict lasting damage.

In the final stages of the narrative, Uhtred leads an alliance aimed at ending the conflict and restoring peace. Through renewed dialogue and reflection, he assists Aethelstan in reclaiming his original principles of justice and responsibility. The film ultimately presents power as a contested and unstable force, shaped by manipulation, resistance, and ethical choice. *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* thus underscores the dangers of unchecked authority and highlights the moral courage required to resist domination, suggesting that genuine unity can only emerge through accountability, truth, and shared values.

1. Power Relations Depicted in *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023)

According to Foucault (1982), power is not merely repressive but also productive, as it shapes individuals' behavior, beliefs, and identities. Power operates through a network of relations rather than being possessed exclusively by a single authority. It emerges in interactions between those who exercise power and those who are subjected to it, functioning through discourse, knowledge, and social practices. In *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023), power relations are prominently depicted through the relationship between King Aethelstan, the newly crowned ruler of England, and Ingilmundr, an Irish spy who serves as his trusted advisor.

Ingilmundr exercises power by manipulating Aethelstan's decisions and actions through persuasive language, emotional control, and strategic isolation. By positioning himself as the

king's most loyal confidant, Ingilmundr gradually shapes Aethelstan's perceptions of leadership and authority, distancing him from alternative voices that might challenge his influence. He instills the belief that ruthless expansion, violence, and the suppression of dissent are necessary to achieve national unity. As a result, Aethelstan's identity as a ruler is reconstructed into that of an increasingly authoritarian and power-hungry king who governs through fear and oppression.

This relationship illustrates how power relations can produce specific forms of knowledge, behavior, and identity. Aethelstan's transformation into a tyrannical ruler is not inherent but emerges through continuous exposure to Ingilmundr's influence. Ingilmundr creates a relationship of dependency, persuading Aethelstan that his legitimacy and strength as a king depend on unquestioning obedience to Ingilmundr's guidance. Within the narrative, Ingilmundr's exercise of power can be categorized into three interrelated forms: dominative power, subjective power, and exploitative power.

1.1 Dominative Power

Dominative power refers to a form of power exercised through direct domination, coercion, and hierarchical authority. Foucault (1978, p. 136) associates this form of power with sovereign power, which operates through the right to punish, exclude, or eliminate, thereby exerting a direct and often violent impact on individuals' lives. In the film, Ingilmundr embodies dominative power through his ability to command violence, manipulate authority, and eliminate perceived threats to his influence.

Ingilmundr's use of dominative power is evident in his strategic deployment of religious rhetoric and political manipulation to justify acts of violence. By presenting himself as a defender of divine will, he legitimizes coercion and suppresses resistance. One significant instance of dominative power occurs when Ingilmundr declares Uhtred an enemy of God and instructs his subordinates to assassinate him. This act is intended to remove Uhtred as a political and moral threat, thereby consolidating Ingilmundr's control over King Aethelstan.

Although the assassination attempt ultimately fails—due to information being leaked to Uhtred by his followers—the event demonstrates how dominative power operates through fear, authority, and the normalization of violence. Ingilmundr's willingness to authorize death in the name of political stability exemplifies Foucault's notion of power that operates by deciding who may live and who must die, reinforcing a dominative relationship rooted in coercion and control.



Picture 1
Uhtred Receives Information

Note. Uhtred is informed by his men that Ingilmundr is after his life. From *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* [00:43:24] by Edward Bazalgette (director), 2023, Carnival Films.

Uhtred's men came to his camp and said in hushed tones, "Lord Ingilmundr has declared you an enemy of god to incite his followers to kill you." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:43:24 - 00:43:29). Uhtred responded confidently, "Aethelstan would not allow it." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:43:30 - 00:43:31). Uhtred's men asserts "Which is why Ingilmundr seeks to keep his hands clean of it and has left the camp." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:43:31 - 00:43:36). "To go where?" (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:43:38 - 00:43:39). Uhtred realized the threat was coming.

Uhtred's man words, "Lord Ingilmundr has declared you an enemy of God" implies dominative power as Ingilmundr manipulates religious authority to vilify Uhtred. By labeling Uhtred as an "enemy of God," Ingilmundr leverages the people's faith to justify violence against Uhtred, positioning himself as a righteous leader who eliminates "divine enemies." Furthermore, "Which is why Ingilmundr seeks to keep his hands clean" Ingilmundr's decision to leave the camp shows a strategic use of dominative power by avoiding direct confrontation. By orchestrating events from a distance, Ingilmundr maintains plausible deniability while consolidating control over his followers' actions.

The exercise of dominative power by Ingilmundr through his declaration that Uhtred is an "enemy of God." This accusation is not just a religious condemnation but a tactical move to weaponize faith as a means of control. By invoking divine authority, Ingilmundr manipulates the religious beliefs of the people and justifies violent actions against Uhtred. This tactic ensures that Ingilmundr's followers see their actions as morally righteous, even when committing murder. In doing so, Ingilmundr consolidates his dominion over both the people's faith and their loyalty, ensuring obedience without question. This manipulation exemplifies Foucault's notion that power operates not only through physical domination but also through the shaping of ideologies and beliefs, making subjects internalize the authority's will.

This scene uses an over the shoulder shot which shows Uhtred over his man shoulder. The close position between Uhtred and his man imply the intensity of the moment and the urgency of the information being relayed. The dim and shadowy lighting reflects the clandestine nature of the power struggle. The darkness emphasizes the secrecy of Ingilmundr's schemes and the danger looming over Uhtred.

This resonates with the dominative power described by Foucault (1978), where he explains that dominative power is seen in the ability to "take" or "dispossess," including things related to time, the body, and even life. In this instance, Ingilmundr exercises dominative power by attempting to eliminate Uhtred as his obstacle in carrying out his plan to overthrow Aethelstan's throne and give the throne to his clan.

1.2 Subjective Power

Subjective power works through mechanisms that subtly and continuously shape individuals, such as social norms, education, and discourse Foucault (1977, 202). This suggests that this power is not hierarchical or centralized, but rather spread across various aspects of everyday life. It creates individual identities, imposing laws of truth that must be recognized by the individual and by others around them. Ingilmundr employs subjective power to control Aethelstan's thoughts, actions, and decisions by exploiting his emotional vulnerabilities and shaping his perception of leadership. He presents himself as a loyal and wise advisor, using flattery and trust to gain influence over Aethelstan's judgment. By instilling fear of betrayal and emphasizing the need for ruthless authority, Ingilmundr manipulates Aethelstan into adopting a more tyrannical approach to ruling. This form of subjective power allows Ingilmundr to subtly implant his own ideologies and ambitions into Aethelstan's mind, making the young king believe that these ideas are his own.

The first event that shows subjective power happens when Prylig is a priest and also Uhtred's messenger to deliver a message to Aethelstan, he delivers a message to Aethelstan to go to Wessex for the coronation as king because his father has died. However, Aethelstan had not answered Ingilmundr immediately ordered Prylig to leave and rejected the message. Here Ingilmundr is exercising power as if he is deciding the decision of the new king-to-be, Aethelstan.



Picture 2

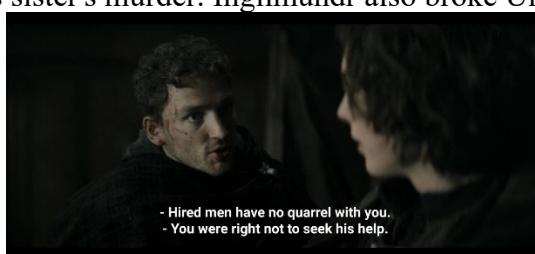
Aethelstan Receives the Message

Note. Aethelstan receives a message from Uhtred's messenger with Ingilmundr listening behind him. From *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* [00:12:44] by Edward Bazalgette (director), 2023, Carnival Films. Prylig delivered the message, "Lord Aethelstan, you should make haste to Wessex for coronation. Your brother gathers men. Establish yourself at Winchester before he raises an army." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:12:49 – 00:12:58). Without consent Ingilmundr speaks for Aethelstan, "We will leave when God commands us to leave, Father Pyrlig. And that command has not been given. Return when you have prayed." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:12:58 – 00:13:05).

The dialog above shows Prylig as Uhtred's messenger who brings an important message about strategic steps to strengthen Aethelstan's position as king. However, this urgency is ignored by Ingilmundr, who immediately takes over the conversation without seeking Aethelstan's consent. Ingilmundr used religious language to manipulate the decision. By mentioning "God commands," he positions himself as an intermediary of divine will, giving the impression that this political decision should not be imposed by mere mortals, including Prylig.

This scene uses a full shot that shows Prylig kneeling before Aethelstan, with Ingilmundr in the background preparing to interrupt. This emphasizes the equal power of Aethelstan and Ingilmundr while Prylig is a subordinate. The dim lighting with natural light from the window gives a stressful atmosphere. Ingilmundr's partially illuminated silhouette symbolizes ambiguous power, creating the impression that he controls the situation under the pretext of spirituality. The predominance of grayish blue and the rough texture of the stone wall gives the impression of rigidity and psychological pressure, reflecting the oppressive and manipulative power exercised by Ingilmundr.

The second event of subjective power happens when Ingilmundr showing his influence over Aethelstan. Uhtred meets Aethelstan when he attacks the village controlled by his brother. Uhtred tries to advise Aethelstan not to be so cruel as to kill his own brother. Then Ingilmundr arrives suddenly and shows his influence on Aethelstan's actions and reveals that he is the mastermind of Aethelstan's sister's murder. Ingilmundr also broke Uhtred's advice.



Picture 3

Ingilmundr Tries to Influence Aethelstan

Note. Ingilmundr tries to influence Aethelstan to ignore Uhtred's words. From *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* [00:23:34] by Edward Bazalgette (director), 2023, Carnival Films. Uhtred says, "You had no need to kill your brother." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:23:23 – 00:23:24). Aethelstan denies "I did, or in time, he would return." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:23:24 – 00:23:26). Uhtred raises his voice, "You dishonored your word." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:23:26 – 00:23:27). Aethelstan again denied, "I did not. I told him to yield. I did not say he would survive." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:23:27 – 00:23:30). Then Ingilmundr came to influence Aethelstan, "It was never our plan to let him live. Lord, reverse the order. We are close to routing them." (Bazalgette, 2023, 00:23:30 – 00:23:34).

Aethelstan's words during his dialogue with Uhtred show Ingilmundr's internalization of influence over Aethelstan's mindset, where he tries to justify his actions with a pragmatic narrative that killing his brother was to prevent future threats. Ingilmundr's words, "It was never our plan to let him live. Lord, reverse the order." This implies his dominant position as the master manipulator. He not only justifies Aethelstan's actions but also reinforces the strategy of domination by redirecting Aethelstan's focus to military objectives. This emphasizes Ingilmundr's control over Aethelstan's decisions and actions, showing how power can work manipulatively.

The scene uses a close-up shot that highlights the facial expressions of Ingilmundr and Aethelstan. Ingilmundr on the left appears to dominate the visual space while talking to Aethelstan, reflecting his influence. The dark lighting with high contrast or chiaroscuro creates a gloomy atmosphere that reflects moral conflict and the deceitfulness of power.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *The Last Kingdom: Seven Kings Must Die* (2023) presents power relations as complex, dynamic, and multifaceted, operating through three interrelated forms: dominative power, subjective power, and exploitative power. Ingilmundr emerges as the central agent of power, exercising dominative power through coercion and violence, most notably in his attempt to eliminate Uhtred by declaring him an enemy of God and orchestrating his assassination. This act reflects a sovereign mode of power that relies on fear, exclusion, and the right to kill in order to secure political control and eliminate opposition.

In addition, Ingilmundr's use of subjective power is evident in his ability to shape King Aethelstan's beliefs, values, and decisions. Through ideological manipulation and religious extremism, Ingilmundr persuades Aethelstan to justify cruelty, forced conquest, and religious intolerance as divine obligations. This process illustrates how power operates productively by constructing particular forms of knowledge and subjectivity, transforming Aethelstan into an authoritarian ruler whose identity is shaped by discourse rather than personal conviction.

Furthermore, Ingilmundr exercises exploitative power by manipulating social unrest and fear among communities such as Thelwall. By exploiting the instability created by Aethelstan's oppressive rule, Ingilmundr mobilizes resistance movements for his own strategic interests while disguising his actions as acts of liberation. This manipulation of collective anxiety demonstrates how exploitative power destabilizes social order and generates widespread chaos for personal political gain. In response to these power structures, Uhtred's resistance is primarily directed toward subjective power, which he recognizes as the root of the broader crisis. Rather than confronting violence with violence, Uhtred seeks to dismantle Ingilmundr's influence by restoring Aethelstan's moral awareness. Through counsel, honesty, and persistent moral confrontation, Uhtred attempts to awaken the young king to the destructive consequences of manipulation, injustice, and authoritarian governance. His resistance highlights that challenging power does not always require physical force but can also take the form of ethical intervention and truth-telling.

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