NARRATIVES OF THE SAINTLY BODY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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by

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Department of English
Notre Dame, Indiana
December 2003
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Abstract

by

Marianne Alicia Malo Chenard

This dissertation investigates narratives of the saintly body in Anglo-Saxon England that were written between the late seventh century and the late tenth century. Specifically, it examines the ways in which the bodies of holy men and women were constructed through these narratives, and read in local appropriations of emblematic vitae and passiones. The saints depicted in these accounts—to whatever extent these narratives rewrote biblical, exegetical, or hagiographic texts—illustrate various manifestations of sanctity. Indeed, sanctity itself is a mutable discourse, variously shaped from text to text in order to uphold other key discourses therein, such as those of chastity, Christian kingship, penitence, and reformed monasticism. This mutability is made clear in the texts that this study analyzes: the Anglo-Latin Prosa de virginitate and Carmen de virginitate by Aldhelm and the Ecclesiastical History by Bede, as well as the anonymous Old English Martyrology and Ælfric's Lives of Saints. In these works, the textualized body of the saint provides fertile ground for narrative constructions of sanctity, regardless of the genre in which that body figures: it is clear that the processes underlying these constructions are always inflected by the historical circumstances surrounding the
production of the texts in which the saintly body is narrated. In the first chapter,
Aldhelm's delicate negotiations of virginity (in the bodily and spiritual dimensions of
*virginitas*) illustrate the intimate connection of sanctity with a body part; in this case, the
present or absent hymen. The second chapter examines how the metonymic value of the
saintly body in Bede's account of King Oswald contributes to the cult of a warrior king.
The third chapter, which discusses the harlot saints Mary Magdalene and Pelagia,
assesses the Old English martyrologist's narrative focus on the penitents' nakedness. The
final chapter examines Ælfric's narrative portrayal of the *breost* [breast] in his *passiones*
of the virgin martyrs Agatha and Eugenia. In these two accounts from the *Lives of Saints,*
the *breost* emerges as the focal point of a discourse of chastity that, in the context of the
Benedictine reforms, uses the female body as the ground of argument.
To my family
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Finally, heartfelt thanks are due to the members of my extended family, to whom this dissertation is dedicated. My parents, Daria and Eugene Malo, provided the encouragement and financial support that saw me through six years of graduate study. In addition, they most willingly and lovingly supplied childcare for my two children during many months of extended work hours. I should like to thank my husband, Charles Chenard, for his sincere willingness to live for several years away from the community that he calls home, for the many hours spent playing Mr. Mom in my absence, and for the gentle understanding that he provided in face of the vicissitudes of graduate student life. Our children, Gabrielle and Christian, were models of forbearance, especially during the final stages of this project. At the very least, I hope that the fact that their mother was able to see a doctoral degree to completion while also starting a family will eventually inspire them to pursue significant accomplishments of their own. Merci de tout mon coeur.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td><em>Analecta Bollandiana</em></td>
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<td>ASE</td>
<td><em>Anglo-Saxon England</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BHL</td>
<td><em>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</em>, 2 vols. = Subsidia hagiographica 6 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898-1901)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCCM</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966-)</td>
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<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-)</td>
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<td>CSASE</td>
<td>Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Dictionary of Old English, Dictionary of Old English Project, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986-), microfiche</td>
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<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Text Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</td>
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<tr>
<td>EHD</td>
<td>Dorothy Whitelock, ed., English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042, 2d ed. (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELH</td>
<td>English Literary History</td>
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<tr>
<td>JEGP</td>
<td>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS</td>
<td>Ælfric's Lives of Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
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<td>n.s.</td>
<td>new series</td>
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OE Bede  

OEM  
*Old English Martyrology*

o.s.  
original series

PL  

ser.  
series

Skeat  

s.s.  
supplementary series
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates narratives of the saintly body in Anglo-Saxon England. Specifically, it examines the ways in which the bodies of holy men and women were constructed through such narratives and read in local appropriations of emblematic vitae and passiones. According to these narratives, medieval and antique saints took various routes to holiness. Some of them demonstrated exemplary devotion to Christ by performing feats of asceticism; others underwent the most extreme forms of torture at the hands of pagan persecutors before finally being executed. But despite the numerous ways in which these men and women were said to have achieved holiness, they all had one important thing in common: their reputations as saints were principally secured by texts recording their apparent sanctity. Indeed, saints are made, not born, for without documentary "evidence" of their holy deeds, the rationales for their veneration vanish. Such "evidence" is contained in hagiographic texts; that is, in narratives concerning extraordinary displays of piety apparently made by individuals bearing particularly powerful witness to God's presence in the world. This is as true for hagiographic texts

created in Anglo-Saxon England as it is for the sources upon which these accounts are often based.

Such a notion of the hagiographic text emphasizes the sanctity manifested through these pious displays rather than saints themselves, for sanctity is the proper subject of hagiography. As different as the routes to sanctity can be, Anglo-Saxon hagiographers, like their antique predecessors, generally did not go out of their way to create holy "individuals" whose remarkable piety made them stand out from the saintly crowd. Instead, early English hagiographic texts—whether in the form of *passiones*, accounts of saints martyred for their faith, or *vita*, accounts of confessors whose lifestyles constituted a metaphorical martyrdom—emphasized each saint's place in the universal community of holy men and women.2 This place was most definitively secured when a given saint's power of intercession, most often after his or her death, was proven. In keeping with longstanding traditions of hagiographic writing, Anglo-Saxon accounts of saints could be highly derivative, sometimes to the extent of citing incidents verbatim from accounts of other saints.3 James W. Earl uses the term "iconographic style" to emphasize the fundamental similarities between the writing of saints' lives and religious iconography: this style includes hagiography's "inevitable structural design and extreme


3. The highly derivative nature of hagiographic writing often frustrates historians such as the Bollandists, part of whose work is to identify the historical saints behind *vita* and *passiones* from throughout Christendom. The work of the Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye highlights this frustration. See, for example, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, 3d ed., Subsidia hagiographica 18 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1927). Other important studies by Delehaye include *Sanctus: Essai sur le culte des saints dans*
conventionality, its stylization and lack of characterization, its disregard for chronology, its dependence upon miracle stories, and its insistence upon its own absolute historical truth value in spite of its obvious and openly admitted fabrication." Such a definition highlights the fundamentally static, yet iconic, nature of the hagiographic text. Thomas J. Heffernan's definition of what he terms "sacred biography" places similar emphasis on the iconicity of hagiographic writing:

_Sacred biography_, as understood here, refers to a narrative text of the _vita_ of the saint written by a member of a community of belief. The text provides a documentary witness to the process of sanctification for the community and in so doing becomes itself a part of the sacred tradition it serves to document. The appropriation of many of these texts into the liturgical celebration of the medieval church attests to the fact that many in the church believed the texts to be inherently sacred. . . .

This definition of sacred biography implies an interpretive circularity in the composition and reception of these texts. First, the text extends the idea that its subject is holy and worthy of veneration by the faithful, and, second, the text as the documentary source of the saint's life receives approbation from the community as a source of great wisdom. In its participation in the tradition, the text is canonized by the tradition and thereafter becomes part of the appropriating force of the tradition.\(^5\)

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The extremely conventional nature of hagiographic writing does not imply, however, that the saints found in *vitae* and *passiones* are so generically constructed as to be indistinguishable from one another. Hagiographers, whether Anglo-Saxon or not, are charged with making a case for the holiness of particular men and women. The specific "saintly" qualities that they choose to emphasize in their narratives—chastity, warlike prowess, prayerful eremiticism, to name but a few examples that this study will examine—depend on the particular circumstances from which these individual accounts arise. Indeed, as will be seen, the notion of "sanctity" expressed in Anglo-Latin and Old English texts is not decisively fixed, but instead shifts (within the limits of hagiographic convention) depending on the contexts underlying the creation of these narratives. For example, the accounts written by Aldhelm of Malmesbury in the late seventh century, and by Ælfric of Cerne (later of Eynsham) three centuries afterward, both bear the indelible stamp of the relationship between these authors and the patrons who commissioned the *De virginitate* and the *Lives of Saints*, respectively.\(^6\) In effect, these circumstances mandated the rewriting of previous accounts in ways that both conformed to the set conventions of the hagiographic genre—and thus to the notions of "sanctity"

that these conventions upheld—but also in ways that demonstrated Aldhelm's and Ælfric's acute awareness of their audiences and their particular horizons of expectation.\(^7\)

Writers in Anglo-Saxon England, such as Aldhelm, Bede, the anonymous Old English martyrrologist, and especially Ælfric, created a substantial number of hagiographic texts.\(^8\) What makes the notions of sanctity expressed in these texts of special interest is the way they were constructed long before the papacy instituted formal canonization procedures: procedures that acknowledged sanctity based on criteria set by

\(^7\) Eugene Green's recent study, *Anglo-Saxon Audiences*, Berkeley Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics 44 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) uses semiotic theory to analyze Anglo-Saxon law codes, homilies, and poetry and the relationship between these texts and their audiences. While my approach to hagiographic writing pays close attention to texts, it does not attempt to investigate textuality at a linguistic level: my methodology takes into account the historical contexts of textual creation as much as possible. The circumstances surrounding King Ceolwulf's involvement in the creation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which is the focus of Chapter 2, and of the anonymously compiled *Old English Martyrology*, which is studied in Chapter 3, are much less clear. My conclusions concerning the influence of audience upon Bede and the Old English martyrrologist are therefore very tentative given the paucity of external evidence concerning this influence. Internal evidence provides more, but still limited, help. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is edited and translated by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; reprint, 2001). The *Old English Martyrology* is edited by Günter Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, vol. 2 (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982).

the Catholic Church's highest authority. The notions of sanctity expressed in Anglo-Saxon hagiographic texts must therefore not be read anachronistically against official criteria for sanctity that were codified several centuries later. Furthermore, these notions of sanctity, like the cults that flourished around the saints themselves, must be understood as primarily local phenomena. Indeed, the concept of sanctity upheld by the Anglo-Saxon authors considered here is a rather fluid construct. It emerges as a mutable discourse, variously shaped from text to text in order to uphold other key discourses underlying them, such as those of chastity, Christian kingship, penitence, and reformed monasticism.

The notion of sanctity as a mutable discourse is not, of course, unique to hagiographic texts from Anglo-Saxon England. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell's seminal study of sanctity in later medieval texts, for example, demonstrates that the perceptions of sanctity found in these accounts depended on such variables as a given saint's sex, age, class, and geographic region of residence. Concepts of sanctity in early

9. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell study the perceptions of sanctity as documented in the *vitae* of saints who lived between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries in *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), especially chapter 5, "Who Was A Saint?" (141-65). The beginning of the chapter offers a brief discussion of the three official criteria for sainthood (martyrs excepted) established by Pope Urban VIII in the early seventeenth century: doctrinal purity, heroic virtue, and miraculous intercession after death; see 141-42. Weinstein and Bell emphasize that these criteria were rooted in longstanding practices at a local level, practices that were, however, neither systematic nor consistent over time and place. They explore the historical background to Urban's canonization procedures at 161-93.


medieval England have received some degree of attention in previous years, most notably in the full-length studies by David Rollason and Susan J. Ridyard. Studies on the various aspects of hagiographic writing from early medieval England, both in Anglo-Latin and Old English, have proliferated in keeping with a general surge in interest in saints among medievalists. These studies range from investigations into the sources of Anglo-Saxon hagiography (now documented, among the sources heretofore discovered for Anglo-Saxon texts generally, through the ongoing Fontes Anglo-Saxonici project, and in the so-called "Acta sanctorum" section of the recently published Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture), to readings of the textualized bodies of saints and their implications for notions of (particularly female) gender.


The present study has its genesis within this range of analysis: it takes source analysis and gender studies as its starting points, and combines the two methodologies in order to investigate the roles that textual representations of saintly bodies played in Anglo-Saxon constructions of sanctity. In its investigation of the relationship between corporeal representation and sanctity, this study pays close attention to the contexts surrounding the accounts discussed in each chapter. By "contexts," I mean three things: first, the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the Anglo-Latin and Old English texts under consideration, at least as far as these circumstances can be determined; second, the narrative logic within the proximate Latin sources from which these accounts are derived (if applicable); and third, the narrative logic within the texts created by Anglo-Saxon authors, either via the adaptation of identified proximate source materials, or, in the case of Bede's account of King Oswald, through citations of hagiographic convention more generally. The "narrative logic" to which I refer above includes consideration of the conventions of the hagiographic genre, whether an Anglo-


14. The chronological sequencing of this study by no means suggests any notion of "development" in Anglo-Saxon hagiographic writing. It does, however, provide a more visible long-range perspective on textual representations of saintly bodies—particularly those included in larger collections that are not solely comprised of properly "hagiographic" material—in a variety of historical contexts.

Saxon author rewrites one or more identified texts, or creates a text that is less obviously derivative.

My approach to this project emphasizes historical specificity and textual detail. To this end, I have closely analyzed several accounts of saints that are found within larger collections (and which, as it happens, are not necessarily "hagiographic" themselves), paying particular attention to the use of language to describe saints' bodies and holy attributes. Most of the texts I have analyzed in this study first caught my attention because they depart from their sources in compelling ways. Bede's portrayal of King Oswald of Northumbria is different, however, in that it makes intriguing use of generic conventions to create the ur-narrative of a new saint. Nevertheless, in all the texts examined here, saintly bodies are narratively prominent to an extent that signals their importance in constructions of sanctity. Moreover, the particular ways in which these saints are narratively embodied suggest that these bodily portrayals significantly participate in the larger discourses that these texts uphold.

My focus on textualized bodies is based on the assumption that bodies do matter—and matter greatly—in Anglo-Saxon hagiographic texts.16 In fact, much insight into

16. Despite the work done by various Anglo-Saxonists to theorize embodiment in early English texts, the many essay collections and monographs dealing with medieval texts and bodies are still weighted very heavily toward the later Middle Ages. Early examples include Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism (=Speculum 68), ed. Nancy Partner (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1993); and Framing Medieval Bodies, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); as well as Caroline Walker Bynum's various oft-cited works, including Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1992); and The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336, Lectures on the History of Religions, n.s., 15 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Some of the more recent examples include Constructions of
textual constructions of sanctity can be gleaned when attention is paid to how
hagiographers portray the bodies of exemplary Christians. Instead of examining what
these bodies are, this investigation seeks to determine how they mean in their respective
texts. Textual bodies do not have any "inherent" or "natural" meaning, nor do they
acquire meaning in a contextual vacuum. In hagiographic writing, saintly bodies accrue
meaning partly by citing and repeating generic hagiographic conventions; conventions, in
other words, that precede (and to a considerable extent determine) the forms that these
narrated bodies finally take. The clearest examples of this dynamic can be seen in the
portrayals of virgin martyrs, such as, for example, the account of Agatha written by
Ælfric. Ælfric derived his portrayal of Agatha's tortured virgin body from the Latin
source text he was using. But Agatha's body, as both Ælfric and his source narrate it,
looks a lot like the wracked bodies of myriad other holy virgins striving to protect their
purity. Some particulars of Agatha's torture, such as the excision of her breast, do

17. For instance, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, in "Body and Law in Late Anglo-
late Anglo-Saxon law and the implications of these shifts for notions of subjectivity.

18. Karen A. Winstead emphasizes the conventional (and indeed formulaic)
nature of virgin martyr narratives while studying various appropriations of them in late
medieval England: see Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England
distinguish her from other martyred virgins. But the general run of her passio—her noble birth, pursuit by a lust-crazed pagan, refusal to lose her virginity and to worship idols, several episodes of torture (of which her breast's excision is but one manifestation)—much of which centers upon her body, is highly formulaic: it adopts a narrative framework signalling its affiliation with many other "generic" accounts of virgin martyrdom.

A close look at Ælfric's translation of his source text, however, reveals another important element informing his portrayal of Agatha. Ælfric does not translate his Latin source into Old English word for word: instead, Ælfric abbreviates the account, selectively leaving out lines of plot and dialogue. The result—at least as it has been conveyed in Skeat's edition of the Lives of Saints—is an account of Agatha that renders the saint even more "saintly" than she appears in the Latin narrative.\(^{19}\) The particular ways in which Ælfric shapes his vernacular passio—and especially the ways in which his text deviates from its source—are explicable in terms of the concerns voiced by Ælfric as part of the reforms that Benedictine clerics like himself were trying to establish among members of the clergy in the late tenth century.

Saintly bodies like Agatha's, as they are found in hagiographic texts, are constituted through narrative performativity; in other words, they acquire meaning by way of narrative.\(^{20}\) As they are narrated, these bodies undergo highly stylized citations

\(^{19}\) I am aware of the pitfalls attending my study, given that it is based on print editions of both sources and derivative texts, rather than on manuscript versions of both.

and repetitions of the bodies portrayed in prior hagiographic texts. It is through these repeated citations of prior textualized bodies that they gain signification. The ways in which saints are narratively embodied in the works of Aldhelm, Bede, the Old English martyrologist and Ælfric are thus predetermined to a great extent by longstanding conventions of hagiographic writing. The meanings of these narrated bodies thus accrue through time: not only do these meanings appear with reference to proximate hagiographic sources, but they also appear with ultimate reference to the set of conventions from which all hagiographic narratives generally draw. Not all of the narratives investigated in this study draw upon these conventions with the same degree of transparency, however. While Aldhelm's and Ælfric's portrayals of virgin martyrs clearly display intertextuality, Bede's depiction of Oswald less evidently recalls the *vitae* of prayerful saints, for example, of the prototypical desert father Anthony. The narrative performativity of saintly bodies, is, however, inflected by other elements of textual creation that, in their particular details, are unique to each text in which these bodies appear. These elements include the author's awareness of his audience, and the ideas and images that he wished to convey to them through his narrative. The influence of the author-audience relationship can be most accurately gauged when author and audience can be identified, but aspects of this relationship can also be inferred from clues that

*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), especially 24-25 and 33. Although performativity as defined by Butler addresses issues of gender and agency, the notion maps with uncanny fitness onto the issue of hagiographic representation. This study does not address questions of agency among saints; indeed, it would be inappropriate to do so, since saints in Anglo-Saxon texts do not demonstrate a subjectivity anything like its modern incarnations. The only "agency" that is rightly of any concern is that of the authors I discuss. Their choices of what and how to write, while made with textual conventions in mind, are the products of deliberate decision-making.
narratives divulge, especially when they are closely read in the context of the larger works in which they are situated.

The meanings that textualized saintly bodies acquire by citing and repeating prior hagiographic narratives are also determined in part by the saints' gender. Saintly bodies, especially those gendered female, are usually pushed into the narrative foreground in hagiographic texts: such is the case for the Latin sources studied here as well as for the Anglo-Latin or Old English rewritings of these sources. This happens because one of the conventions of female sanctity is the guarding of a woman's virginity for Christ at all costs, even at the cost of her life; indeed, many virgins are also martyrs. But this is not to suggest that textual embodiment is solely a function of female sanctity, for saintly male bodies can and do figure prominently (although much less often) in accounts concerning them. Bede, for instance, highlights King Oswald's manus [hands] and their role in his sanctity; Oswald was not said to be sexually pure (in fact, he was a father). In building up the sanctity of a Christian monarch during a period when Christianity's foothold in England was tenuous at best, Bede chooses a body part—said to be preserved incorrupt—and textually foregrounds it to emphasize the prayerfulness, generosity, and success in war that, to his mind, an exemplary king ought to display. This is a point at which the particular historical context of Bede's authorship of the Oswald narrative becomes at least as important to consider as the generic conventions, such as bodily incorruptibility, that inform Bede's work.

In Chapter 1, I consider historical context and generic convention with regard to Aldhelm's late seventh-century treatise De virginitate. The prose and verse texts of this work include abbreviated accounts of male and female virgins; however, the male
exemplars are not usually slaughtered for their chastity. In Aldhelm's brief *passiones* of exemplary virgins, as in other narratives of virgin martyrs, the female bodies are doubly foregrounded; that is, in terms of their sexual purity and of their torture. Aldhelm's point in all this is to demonstrate the link between virginity and martyrdom. By appropriating such accounts, Aldhelm justifies his idiosyncratic reformulation of the three degrees of chastity for the women to whom he addresses his work. These addressees are the sisters of Barking monastery, to whom he refers as "virgins" despite the likelihood that at least some of these women had been previously married. Indeed, the very category of *virginitas* [virginity] emerges as a performative construct in the *De virginitate*, in part because this construct does not appear consistently to require that a virgin have an intact hymen.21 Furthermore, Aldhelm's construct of *virginitas* emphasizes modest dress, lack of pride, and readiness for martyrdom as the defining features of that category. This emphasis is nothing original to Aldhelm, but it underscores the shrewdness behind Aldhelm's reformulation of *virginitas*, *viduitas* [widowhood], and *iugalitas* [the married state] for the sisters of Barking monastery. Drawing upon such authorities as Cyprian

21. Kathleen Coyne Kelly examines the instability of the concept of *virginitas*, especially in terms of the relationship between the figurative value of the hymen and notions of female gender in the late Middle Ages. See *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity*, especially 1-39. Likewise, Sarah Salih emphasizes the multiplicity of virginity, at least as *virginitas* is portrayed in accounts of virgin martyrs, in "Perpetual Incorruption in Corruptible Flesh: Towards a Theory of Virginity," chapter 2 of *Versions of Virginity*, 16-40, and especially at 38: "Virginity is a place where bodies and their signs do not always add up neatly into coherent identities. In its insecurity, virginity is perhaps a figure for any process of gender production. It can be lost, but because it is a process in time it can also be recovered." Salih acknowledges, however, that theologians who concerned themselves with *virginitas* would have disagreed with the notion that *virginitas* was in any way recuperable once a woman's sexual purity was lost.
and Augustine, Aldhelm links *virginitas* to ideals of attitude and behavior in a way that allows women of any sexual status a degree of access to the realm of *virginitas*.

Aldhelm thus uses abbreviated versions of various *vitae* and *passiones* in the service of redefining patristic notions of sexual purity. In contrast, Bede's narrative of Oswald in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, an Anglo-Latin text completed in 731 and which is examined in Chapter 2, does not deal with chastity, nor does it evidently rewrite previous hagiographic narratives. Instead, Bede textually creates a saintly monarch using repeated images of the Northumbrian king's hands. Oswald's hands have multivalent signification in Bede's text; Bede makes their metonymic import evident in his use of *manus* to denote not only the king's hands, but also to mean "violence" and "army." While *virginitas*, as in Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, is typically gendered female, the image of *manus* in the *Ecclesiastical History* is clearly gendered male (despite the word's grammatically feminine gender) by virtue of its connotations of violence and warfare. Bede's Oswald is modeled upon notions of Old Testament kingship, where the ideal monarch is as adept at defending his people from harm as he is devoted to (and favored by) God. Bede adds elements of eremitic piety to Oswald's portrayal, so that the hands which defeat the king's enemies are also the hands that are persistently raised in prayer as the king intercedes for his people. Although Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is not properly a work of "hagiography" (in this sense, neither is Aldhelm's *De virginitate*), accounts of saints nonetheless abound in this text. Of all the accounts that Bede includes therein, that of Oswald—more than that of any of Bede's female saints—demonstrates the processes by which a saint is created through
textual depiction of the body. In effect, Bede narratively "canonizes" Oswald using the raw materials of legend surrounding the king's body.

Where Bede focuses on a body part to shape Oswald's particular manifestation of sanctity, the Old English martyrologist selectively uses nakedness to highlight the sanctity of the repentant harlot Pelagia. Chapter 3 demonstrates how the martyrologist, writing in the middle of the ninth century, translates accounts of Pelagia and her penitent prototype, Mary Magdalene, into Old English. The Latin sources for these vernacular accounts imply the nakedness of both saints once they have become ascetics. The martyrologist's act of translation adds another dimension to the inquiry into hagiographers' adaptations of source materials, when in fact particular versions of these materials can be identified. It is instructive to see not just what the martyrologist includes or leaves out of his Old English accounts (especially since the Old English

*Martyrology* comprises abbreviated versions of longer texts), but also how he renders these texts in a new language. The martyrologist clearly structures his accounts in a way that emphasizes the penitent sanctity which Mary Magdalene and Pelagia share. The holiness of both women is based upon their turning away from sexual sin, signified by the tears of repentance that both saints shed. But there are important differences in the martyrrologist's portrayals of these two women. For instance, the martyrrologist excises implications of Mary's nakedness from the vernacular account, while he quietly portrays the naked corpse of the cross-dressed hermit Pelagia. His decision to include nakedness (or not) in these accounts appears to be motivated by his ideas about which narrative strategies might depict the sanctity of each penitent prostitute most appropriately, and the extent to which an even ephemeral suggestion of saintly nakedness might uphold or undo these depictions.

Chapter 4 repeats the emphasis that Chapter 2 places on the relationship between body part and sanctity in its examination of Ælfric's portrayals of the virgin martyrs Agatha and Eugenia. Ælfric's narrative depictions of the two women's breasts in his late tenth-century collection of *vitae* and *passiones* known as the *Lives of Saints* emerge as keys to understanding the particular manifestations of sanctity that Ælfric wished these saints to reflect. Writing in the era of the Benedictine reforms taking hold in Anglo-Saxon England, Ælfric's accounts of these saints—both in their selection for inclusion in the collection and in the particular ways in which Ælfric translates their Latin sources into Old English—are influenced both by the reform rhetoric of monastic chastity and the fact of Ælfric's writing for a lay audience. The *breost* [breast] functions as a multifaceted sign in these two accounts. In keeping with his Latin source, Ælfric casts Agatha's *breost*
as the metaphoric seat of the saint's faith. The reattachment of Agatha's fleshly breast after its severance reflects not only the perpetual endurance of Agatha's fidelity to Christ, but also the intimate relationship between salvation and healing contained in the Old English verb *hælan*. Ælfric's repetition of words with *hæl* as their base strengthens (and indeed improves) the narrative emphasis that the Latin text places on Agatha's stalwart faith and the role that her *breost* plays in securing it. In contrast, Ælfric's *passio* of the virgin cross-dresser Eugenia posits the *breost* as the ultimate signifier of filial identity when Eugenia, falsely accused of attempted sexual assault in her monkish guise, literally reveals herself to be the daughter of the prefect before whom she appears in judgment for her ostensible crime. For both Agatha and Eugenia, the *breost* acts as a narrative reminder of their female gender and the intimate relationship between that gender and their particular manifestations of holiness.

The argument uniting the four chapters in this dissertation is that the body is a site for the narrative construction of sanctity, and that the processes of that construction are always inflected by the historical circumstances surrounding the production of the texts in which these bodies are narrated. In the first chapter, Aldhelm's delicate negotiations of virginity (in the bodily and spiritual dimensions of *virginitas*) illustrate the intimate connection of sanctity with a body part; in this case, the present or absent hymen. But this connection is neither fixed nor consistently portrayed throughout the *De virginitate*; that is, neither within the prose or verse texts individually, nor across these two versions of Aldhelm's treatise. The relationship between sanctity and hymeneal intactness varies depending on whether Aldhelm is narrating the sanctity of an exemplary female *virgo*, or whether he is flattering the pious, and sometimes sexually impure, sisters of Barking
monastery. The second chapter examines how the metonymic value of the saintly body in Bede's account of King Oswald contributes to the cult of a warrior king. Although warrior kingship is not the only type of rule of which Bede approves in the *Ecclesiastical History*, it emerges as a preferred form of royal leadership in light of the violent threats to the establishment of Christianity during Oswald's time. The third chapter, which discusses the harlot saints Mary Magdalene and Pelagia, assesses the martyrrologist's narrative focus on the penitents' nakedness. The martyrrologist's selective textual depiction of nakedness in these two accounts suggests that the martyrrologist uses such portrayal when it highlights a sexual sinner's penitent sanctity with minimal scopophilic distraction. The final chapter examines Ælfric's narrative portrayal of the *breost* [breast] in his *passiones* of the virgin martyrs Agatha and Eugenia. In these two accounts from the *Lives of Saints*, the *breost* emerges as the focal point of a discourse of chastity. Here, Ælfric uses the female body as the ground of argument regarding the renunciation of sexual activity among clerics: renunciation that Ælfric, as well as other clerics who espoused the tenets of the Benedictine reforms, believed that as-yet unreformed clergymen should undertake.

Throughout this dissertation, Latin biblical citations are from the Vulgate Bible.23 English translations of biblical quotations are from the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible.24 Finally, in transcribing Latin and Old English material, I have not included diacritics.


CHAPTER 1

SANCTITY AND THE DISCOURSE OF PURITY IN ALDHELM'S *DE VIRGINITATE*

The prose and verse texts of Aldhelm's *De virginitate* were intensively studied in England and on the continent, until at least the Norman Conquest. In particular, they received close attention as curriculum texts and as models for Latin authors in late Anglo-Saxon England eager to imitate the Aldhelm's hermeneutic style. Scott Gwara notes that

*Michael Lapidge's translation of the *Prosa de virginitate* (in Lapidge and Herren) was made based on Rudolf Ehwald's 1919 edition of that work. A reprint of Ehwald's text, re-edited by Scott Gwara, has recently appeared in the CCSL series: I have chosen to cite the *Prosa de virginitate* from Gwara's edition. Gwara's text of the *Prosa de virginitate* will be cited by page and line numbers, Ehwald's edition of the *Carmen de virginitate* by line number only, and the translations of these two works (in Lapidge and Herren, and Lapidge and Rosier, respectively) by page number. I will signal any modifications to Lapidge's translations (as well as to Rosier's), whenever they are necessary, with explanatory notes.


nineteen manuscripts of the *Prosa de virginitate* are extant; Rudolf Ehwald lists twenty manuscripts of the *Carmen de virginitate* (including fragments), most dating from the ninth century through the eleventh century. The history of the *De virginitate* 's dissemination and study (as made evident by its glosses, for example) clearly point to the importance of this text, both for its time and for centuries thereafter. Nevertheless, stylistic and glossographical studies aside, this treatise has not received much attention in contemporary scholarship.


densa silva of Aldhelm's complex Latin to the extent of rendering visible a shrewd rhetorical design underlying the composite De virginitate. Aldhelm uses patristic teachings on the three degrees of chastity as the basis for both the Prosa de virginitate and the Carmen de virginitate: these three degrees were traditionally held to be virginitas [virginity], viduitas [widowhood], and iugalitas [the married state]. But Aldhelm does not adopt these categories without significant modification. In the prose version, for example, he replaces the second category, viduitas, with a state that he calls castitas [chastity]. This is no mere cosmetic change, for Aldhelm alters the definition of the latter state to reflect the change of name. The verse text, in contrast, does not even give distinct names to the three states. That Aldhelm renames—and then later refuses to name—these degrees of sexual purity offers a clue that the abbot is making some deeper discursive manoeuvres throughout the De virginitate. When it is considered that Aldhelm crafted the composite De virginitate in a milieu only recently (and probably only marginally) converted to Christianity, these manoeuvres and their logic start to become evident. In effect, Aldhelm appropriated and then recreated the patristic discourse of purity, using excerpts from the vitae and passiones of various saints as his authoritative base. In so doing, Aldhelm took into account the various sexual histories of the women who resided at the Barking double monastery, and to whom he dedicated his work.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) The conventional view that Aldhelm addressed his work exclusively to the sisters of Barking has been recently challenged by Scott Gwara. Gwara argues that it is possible to identify the abbesses of four different double houses in the dedication to the Prosa de virginitate: see Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis: Prosa de virginitate, 47-53. That Aldhelm might have written the De virginitate for several double monasteries does not, however, change the substance of my argument.
1.1 Aldhelm and the Dedicatees of the *De virginitate*

Aldhelm composed the *De virginitate* in the late seventh or early eighth century. He wrote the prose part first, and then the verse counterpart at an unknown later date. The work as a whole was written sometime between the accession of Hildelith as second abbess of the double monastery at Barking (ca. 675) and Aldhelm's investiture as bishop of Sherborne in 706. Hildelith and several of her sisters in Christ are named in the opening lines of the *Prosa de virginitate* and are assumed to be the audience for whom Aldhelm subsequently wrote the *Carmen de virginitate*. Among the sisters whom Aldhelm names is Cuthburg, generally assumed (although definitive proof is lacking) to have been the same Cuthburg once wed to the Northumbrian king Aldfrith. Given the

6. Scott Gwara has revised the dating of the *Prosa de virginitate* to after 685, and possibly closer to 700, on the basis of charter evidence and on the assumption that one of Aldhelm's dedicatees, Beorngyth, was second abbess of Bath: see *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis: Prosa de virginitate*, 53-54. For the dates of Hildelith's accession and death, see Lapidge and Herren, 51, and 191, nn. 3 and 4. Concerning the date of the beginning of Aldhelm's episcopacy, see Lapidge and Herren, 10. Lapidge argues that Aldhelm wrote the *De virginitate* while abbot of Malmesbury rather than as bishop on the basis of a letter to Aldhelm from Cellanus of Péronne (no. 9 in Ehwald's edition), addressing Aldhelm as "archimandrita" [abbot] and noting that Cellanus has read what appears to be both parts of Aldhelm's treatise; see Lapidge and Herren, 14-15.


8. Stephanie Hollis asserts that such an identification is "attractive" in light of the queen's subsequent career as abbess of Wimbourne; she speculates that Hildelith also may once have been married. See *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992), 81. Furthermore, Hollis argues that
likely presence of at least one formerly married royal among his dedicatees, Aldhelm
maintains orthodoxy to the spirit of traditional Christian teachings on sexual purity. But
he does so while also being aware of the force of customary marriage and divorce
practices at a time when the position of the English church was weak. In other words,
Aldhelm upholds patristic teachings on women's sexuality while simultaneously
demonstrating awareness of his dedicatees' sexual backgrounds. He writes in the spirit of
Gregory the Great's exhortation (as it was later recorded in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History
of the English People*) to Augustine, archbishop of Canterbury, to destroy not the Anglo-
Saxons' pagan temples but rather the idols inside, "Nam duris mentibus simul omnia
abscidere impossibile esse non dubium est, quia et is, qui summum locum ascendere
nititur, gradibus uel passibus, non autem saltibus eleuaturo" [(for i)t is doubtless
impossible to cut out everything at once from their stubborn minds: just as the man who

the *Prosa de virginitate* 's dates could be narrowed down to 697[¶]705 if the identification
of Cuthburg as the quondam wife of Aldfrith were definitively established; see *Anglo-
Saxon Women*, 81, n. 41. Six headings for the name "Cuthburg" appear in William
George Searle's *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum*, and most of these headings cite
occurrences of the name in more than one text: see *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum: A
List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to That of King John*
(Cambridge: University Press, 1897; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms
Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1969), 148. There are two separate occurrences of "Cuthburg" as
the name of queen and abbess in the Durham *Liber vitae* alone: see *The Oldest English
Texts*, ed. Henry Sweet, EETS, o.s., 83 (London: EETS, 1885), 151-66, at 154. Clearly,
this matter of Cuthburg's identity requires more investigation.

9. Hollis supplies an important caveat in this regard: "It is easy to overestimate the
actual influence that the church [sic] exerted on the hearts and minds of the Anglo-Saxon
populace at large because our sole contemporary chronicle of events is the sanguine
account of its advance that Bede gives" in his *Ecclesiastical History*. See *Anglo-Saxon
Women*, 6. For a general survey of church history in early Anglo-Saxon England, see
is attempting to climb to the highest place, rises by steps and degrees and not by leaps].

Indeed, Aldhelm takes a distinctively syncretic approach to his subject matter. The holy personages included in the composite *De virginitate*—both male and female, and from periods both before and after Christ's Incarnation—serve as exemplars that reinforce not only Aldhelm's particular stance on virginity, but also on the two lesser grades of purity.

The presumed presence of once-married—and not necessarily widowed—women at Barking makes it important to consider three key factors that influenced Aldhelm's writing of the *De virginitate*. The first is the nature of Barking's inmates and their implication in the *De virginitate*'s creation. Second is Anglo-Saxon secular law concerning marriage and divorce; and third, the power of the early English church to promulgate (and punish in case of deviance) orthodox Roman doctrine on marriage.

The history of the double monastery in its earliest forms, such as at Barking, is largely shrouded in mystery. The abbesses and other women in these institutions came

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from the ruling class. Of those women whose identities are known, some were said to be
virgins; that is, hymeneally intact. One of these women was Ælfflæd, daughter of the
Bernician king Oswiu who consecrated her to perpetual virginity as an infant in exchange
for victory against Penda. Ælfflæd later became abbess at Whitby. Some, like
Æthelburh, Æthelberht of Kent's daughter, were widows: Æthelburh founded the double
house at Lyminge upon the death of her husband, the Deiran king Edwin. Yet others,
like Cuthburg (and possibly Hildelith), had apparently left their marriages to pursue the

was likely founded in 666; see Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales, 2d ed.,
(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 256. EH 4.6-4.10 deals with the foundation of
Barking by Eorcenwold as a sister monastery to his own at Chertsey, with miracles
surrounding plague and other diseases from which Barking’s various inmates suffer, and
only briefly with Hildelith regarding her decision to transfer the bones of deceased
members of the Barking community from the monastery to its minster. Barking’s
architectural history and results of excavation are in Alfred W. Clapham, "The
Benedictine Abbey of Barking: A Sketch of its Architectural History and an Account of
Recent Excavations on its Site," Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society
12 (1913): 69-89. Roberta Gilchrist provides an archaeological history of later medieval
English female monasticism that touches upon early double monasteries, including
Barking, in Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women


13. Marc Anthony Meyer, "Queens, Convents and Conversion in Early Anglo-
that Lyminge was "founded for Æthelburga [sic] by her brother King Eadbald," yet
concedes that extant evidence makes it unclear whether the royal men who endow land,
or the women who first head the monasteries, should be properly regarded as founders.
See "Sisters under the Skin," 96 and 99. Bede's Ecclesiastical History states that
Eorcenwold "construxerat" [founded] Barking monastery for his sister: see Colgrave and
Mynors 4.6, 354, 22; trans. 355, 18. A charter that P. H. Sawyer dates to "probably 690 ▶
693" names Æthelburh as beneficiary of land endowed at Barking; see Anglo-Saxon
Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography, Royal Historical Society Guides and
monastic life. While nothing is known about the circumstances surrounding the dissolution of Cuthburg's marriage, the case of Æthelthryth, twice-wed wife of Aldfrith's brother and predecessor, Ecgfrith, is relatively well known. Bede praises the queen for having preserved "uirginitatis integritate gloriosa" [the glory of perfect virginity], even to the point of including a poetic encomium to her in his Ecclesiastical History.

Æthelthryth may have been one of medieval England's most venerated saints, but Æthelthryth's turn to monasticism has begun to generate controversy in recent scholarship. The point of debate is not the claims made by Æthelthryth's various hagiographers that the queen remained a virgin through two marriages, but what appears to be her unilateral decision to leave Ecgfrith. Indeed, Peter Jackson argues that such a decision prompted Ælfric to include a passage from Rufinus of Aquileia's Historia monachorum in Ægypto in his account of Æthelthryth in the Lives of Saints (which otherwise faithfully rewrites Bede's EH 4.19) in order to register his disapproval of

14. Bede notes that Hildelith "streuiussime et in obseruantia disciplinae regularis et in earum quae ad communes usus pertinent rerum prouidentia praefuit" [was most energetic in the observance of the discipline of the Rule and in the provision of all such things as were necessary for the common use]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.10, 362, 3-5; trans. 363, 3-5. It is unclear which rule Hildelith might have been following, since Benedictine monasticism was not the norm in England until the late tenth century (see Chapter 4 below, passim). The Regula S. Benedicti was, however, known in England well before that time: see, for example, Michael Lapidge's evidence for the study of the Regula S. Benedicti in early Canterbury, in "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," ASE 15 (1986): 45-72. Julie Ann Smith argues that some combination of Columbanian and Benedictine precepts may have guided women's religious life at Barking before the eighth century. See Ordering Women's Lives: Penitentials and Nunnery Rules in the Early Medieval West (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 133-37.

15. Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 390, 8; trans. 391, 7-8. The encomium is at 4.20.
Æthelthryth's independent renunciation of her marriage. Writing about the roles of early Anglo-Saxon women monastics in political and ecclesiastic affairs, however, Marc Anthony Meyer makes the even more provocative suggestion that Æthelthryth's and Ecgfrith's marriage "ended after twelve long years in an atmosphere of intense hostility as Æthelthryth was packed off to Coldingham, a double monastery ruled by the king's aunt Æbba" to make way for a more politically advantageous union with Eormenburg. Whatever circumstances led to the appearance of certain royal women in the monasteries—whether double or for women only, if that distinction can actually be made with any

16. "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the Life of Æthelthryth, Lines 120-30," ASE 29 (2000): 235-60, at 257-59. Ælfric's account of Æthelthryth is in Skeat 1: 432-40. This might in part explain why the OE Bede leaves out the encomium to Æthelthryth, although this would have to be considered in light of the translator's treatment of other verse texts from the Latin version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History.

17. "Queens, Convents and Conversion," 90-116, at 101. Pauline Stafford argues that Ecgfrith engineered the divorce using the excuse that Æthelthryth had a "vocation" to chastity, but that in fact the divorce was "required by [Æthelthryth's] sterility." See Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 74. The question of why Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor, entered the monastery at Wærwell raises similar questions about what happened in Æthelthryth's case. MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is silent about Edith's entering the monastery. In contrast, the MS D entry for the year 1051 cryptically reads that "man gebrohte [Edith] to Hwærwellan 7 hy þære abedissan betæhton" [Edith was brought to Wherwell and they committed her to the abbess]. At the farthest temporal remove from this event, the pro-Godwine MS E (s.a. 1048 [1051]) is the most explicit, stating that Edward "forlet" [abandoned] his queen. For MS C, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, vol. 5 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001); for MS D, see G. P. Cubbin, ed., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, vol. 6 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996); for MS E, see Charles Plummer, ed., Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892).
clarity—the fact remains that married women whose husbands had not yet died were likely among the residents of Barking monastery.\textsuperscript{18}

Early Kentish law, especially Æthelberht, chs. 79 and 80, has conventionally been cited as evidence that it was both legal and relatively easy for an Anglo-Saxon woman to leave a man with whom she was sexually linked. But Carole A. Hough has cogently argued that Æthelberht, chs. 79 and 80 more likely refer to compensations for widows based on whether or not they remarry, rather than to divorce.\textsuperscript{19} Regardless of how these

\textsuperscript{18} S. E. Rigold argues that "It is probably meaningless and certainly impossible on the evidence to distinguish a double minster from a 'pure' nunnery at [sic] this period": see "The 'Double Minsters' of Kent," 27-37, at 27. If, as Pauline Stafford states, Cuthburg only left for Barking upon Aldfrith's death, Aldhelm's elimination of widowhood from his three degrees of purity would seem illogical, since Cuthburg is one of the women to whom he addresses the \textit{Prosa de virginitate}. See \textit{Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers}, 176-77.

two clauses from Æthelberht's law-code might have been interpreted in the seventh century, however, they would not likely have been in force in Northumbria, where Cuthburg's and Æthelthryth's unions would presumably have been dissolved. Bede clearly states that Æthelberht was the third Anglo-Saxon king to rule over the kingdoms south of the Humber: assuming that Bede is not underestimating the reach of the Kentish king's power, this must mean that the influence of Æthelberht's rule, and thus of his legislation, did not extend into Northumbria. Yet in the end, it is impossible to determine to what extent Kent might have had legal jurisdiction over Essex, where Barking monastery was located and for whose sisters Aldhelm wrote the *De virginitate*. Indeed, the history of law among the East Saxons is obscure for this period. To complicate matters further, it is not known to what extent surviving royal law-codes represent the customs by which the king's subjects might have actually abided. Given what little can be gleaned about early Anglo-Saxon law, it is at least as likely that women

20. "Qui tertius quidem in regibus gentis Anglorum cunctis australibus eorum prouinciis, quae Humbrae fluuo et contiguis ei terminis sequestrantur a borealibus, imperauit" [He was the third English king to rule over all the southern kingdoms, which are divided from the north by the river Humber and the surrounding territory]: Colgrave and Mynors 2.5, 148, 5-8; trans. 149, 5-7.

21. The same principle applies even if the *Prosa de virginitate* was dedicated, as Scott Gwara argues, to the abbesses of three other double monasteries (see p. 22, n. 5 above). None of these monasteries (Wimborne, Bath, and Withington) were located in Northumbria.

like Cuthburg may have been cast aside by their husbands as that they may have initiated divorce themselves.

In addition to secular Anglo-Saxon law, ecclesiastical texts such as the *Poenitentiale Theodori* contained rulings concerning marriage. An eighth-century compilation of judgments attributed to Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (668-90), this work was assembled by one "Discipulus Umbrensium" who had apparently gathered his information from a certain Eoda, one of Theodore's disciples.23 One of its canons (2.12.6) specifies that "[m]ulieri non licet virum dimittere licet sit fornicator nisi forte pro monasterio. Basilius hoc iudicavit" [(a) woman may not divorce her husband, even if he is a fornicator, unless, perhaps, for the purpose of entering a monastery. Basil decided this].24 This canon may represent a theoretical, and conditional, permission for women to repudiate their marriages unilaterally. Its citation of Basil as precedent-setter is noteworthy: Stephanie Hollis maintains that there is no evidence in Basil's writings that


he was at all at variance with Christian teaching on the fundamental indissolubility of marriage. She concludes that

What the canon conveys is that Theodore was bent on upholding the principle that a woman may not divorce her husband but, under extreme pressure from female converts—and royal women were surely the only ones in a position to force this concession—Theodore made a special exception for cases where the woman wanted to enter a monastery.  

Michael Lapidge states that Aldhelm "cannot but have been aware of Theodore's ruling." At the same time, however, it is once again important not to overstate the case for the church's influence upon such matters in Aldhelm's England. Allen J. Frantzen cautions that while the influence of the Poenitentiale Theodori was significant in Ireland and on the continent, its impact on England is more difficult to evaluate. At the same time, however, this canon of the Poenitentiale Theodori points to a schism between the mores of a population relatively new to Christianity and a church with a long-promulgated stance on the permanence of marriage. In this sense, canon 2.12.6 shares discursive space with Aldhelm's De virginitate.

Whether the formerly married women of Barking had left their husbands voluntarily or involuntarily, they had an important stake in the creation of Aldhelm's treatise. That the Prosa de virginitate contains a dedication to at least one of these

25. Anglo-Saxon Women, 61. For further discussion of "pro monasterio" in light of both Hollis's assertion and of McNeill and Gamer's translation (as cited on p. 31, n. 24 above), see Appendix.

26. Lapidge and Herren, 55.

27. See p. 24, n. 9 above.

sisters, as well as an allusion (in the form of an exhortation topos) to the work's genesis in a request previously made by them, points to some kind of "patronage" relationship between the sisters and Aldhelm. Aldhelm, however, did not appear to expect any kind of material remuneration for his services. At the end of the Prosa de virginitate, he does not request such payment for his work as he does at the conclusion of his Epistola ad Acircium, written for King Aldfrith.

Instead, Aldhelm writes that he will not produce his promised hexametrical version "nisi praecedentis scripturae stilum uestrae sagacitati fore ratum experiar" [unless I find out that the style of the preceding work was pleasing to your intelligence]. While he does add a sort of extended "begging" clause, he requests prayer from the sisters rather than any form of material payment. Aldhelm repeats this request at the end of his verse


30. "si voti compotem summus Olimpi regnator effecerit, tanto velim devotae mentis effectum ostendens enixius mireris et uberius venereris, ut hoc sit quaedam fessae menti rata recompensationis portio ac obleta remunerationis vicissitudo" [should the ruler of Olympus on high grant (my) prayer, I would wish you to demonstrate your admiration the more earnestly and cherish the more richly the accomplishment of my devout heart—so that (I may enjoy) from it a certain measured portion of recompense and a payment offered in exchange for a weary mind]. The Epistola ad Acircium is edited by Rudolf Ehwald, under the title of Aldhelmus de metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis, in Aldhelmi opera, 59-204. The preceding quotation is at 202, 1-4; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 45. See also Lapidge, "Artistic and Literary Patronage," 64-65.


32. "sit mihi praesentis opusculi rata recompensatio uestrarum precum frequens collata uicissitudo meique sudoris et laboris fiat fulcimentum uestrae intercessionis adiumentum, ut, qui propria meritorum qualitate et fidei fragilitate tremibundus ac nutabundus uacillare uideor, robustissima patrociniorum uestrorum columna fretus feliciter ac firmiter fulciri merear" [let the welcome reward for my present little work be the frequently conferred exchange of your prayers, and let the mainstay of my sweat and
text, asking for compensation in the form of prayer for God's mercy upon him.\textsuperscript{33} Clearly, Aldhelm's aim is to please his dedicatees in exchange for their intercession. The abbot strove to make both the form and content—the "stilus"—of his text pleasing to the women who, having commissioned the \textit{De virginitate}, would have expected to find their various marital statuses positively reflected therein even despite the church's prohibition of divorce.

1.2 Patristic Notions of the Three Degrees of Purity

Long before the age of the Anglo-Saxons, Christian doctrine concerning marriage emphasized the fundamental indissolubility of the marital union. The second chapter of Genesis sets out the reasoning behind the essential unity of husband and wife: Eve was created from Adam's rib.\textsuperscript{34} In the gospel of Mark, Jesus cites the notion of the two

labour be the support (given by) your intercession, so that I, who seem to vacillate shakily and uncertainly in the condition of my own merits and the weakness of my faith, may deserve to be sustained blessedly and fixedly, borne up on the stable column of your patronage]: Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 757, 37-759, 43; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 131.

33. He asks the sisters to read the composite \textit{De virginitate} "mente benigna" [with kindly mind], "Ut mihi cum precibus peccati vincla resolvant / Et pretium libri pendant oramine crebro" [so that they may loosen the bonds of sin from me with their prayers, and pay the price of the book with frequent supplication]: Ehwald, \textit{CdV} 469, 2871-470, 2872; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 166.

34. Gen. 2:23-24: "dixitque Adam hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis et caro de carne mea haec vocabitur virago quoniam de viro sumpta est quam ob rem relinquet homo patrem suum et matrem et adherebit uxori suae et erunt duo in carne una" [And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh].
permitted in the Old Testament. The apostle Paul's teaching on marriage is similarly unequivocal. Similarly, Augustine of Hippo, alluding to the marriage of Adam and Eve, asserts in De bono coniugali that "quoddam sacramentum nuptiae gerunt" [marriage bears a kind of sacred bond]. By its nature, this bond cannot be dissolved—even in the

35. Mark 10:9: "quod ergo Deus iunxit homo non separet" [What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder].

36. 1 Cor. 7:10-11: "his autem qui matrimonio iuncti sunt praecipio non ego sed Dominus uxorem a viro non discedere quod si discesserit manere innuptam aut viro suo reconciliari et vir uxorem ne dimittatur" [But to them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife]. See Michael Lapidge's discussion of a seventh-century marriage debate poem, "A Seventh-Century Insular Latin Debate Poem on Divorce," Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies 10 (1985): 1-23.


Scott Gwara includes Augustine's De sancta virginitate, De bono viduitatis, and De bono coniugali in his list of Aldhelm's sources for the Prosa de virginitate: see Aldhelmii Malmesbiriensis: Prosa de virginitate, 365; cf. Ehwald's less complete list in Aldhelm opera, 544. Helmut Gneuss's list of manuscripts known in Anglo-Saxon England does not include reference to any containing De sancta virginitate, but does not refer to any containing De sancta virginitate either. See Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 241 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001). The online Fontes Anglo-Saxonici database does not list any Aldhelmian works incorporating material from De sancta virginitate or De bono coniugali; it does not mention any Anglo-Saxon text including material from De bono viduitatis. See Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Register of Written Sources Used by Anglo-Saxon Authors, ed. Rohini Jayatilaka, 1999, Oxford, Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project, 19 Dec. 2001 <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk>. Augustine's De sancta virginitate is in Sancti Aureli Augustini, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 41 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1900), 233-302. It is translated by John McQuade, "Holy Virginity," in Saint
case of a couple's infertility (the bearing of children being one of Augustine's three goods of marriage)—until the death of one spouse.

Augustine cites his three goods of marriage—\textit{fides} [faith], \textit{proles} [progeny], and \textit{sacramentum} [sacrament]—for the first time in \textit{De bono coniugali}; the notion of these goods recurs throughout his later writings on the married state.\textsuperscript{38} Philip Lyndon Reynolds explains that by \textit{sacramentum} Augustine meant not a ritual such as baptism or the reception of the Eucharist, but rather a fundamental bond between husband and wife.\textsuperscript{39} In \textit{De bono coniugali}, Augustine expends a considerable amount of energy justifying not simply the inherent inseparability of the married Christian couple, but also the multiple sexual unions (both within and outside of marriage) of the Old Testament Patriarchs. He argues that such unions were justified by the need to populate the earth, ultimately going back to God's command to Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28, "crescite et multiplicamini et inplete terram" [Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth] with a view to


\textsuperscript{39} "When Augustine says that there is a sacrament in marriage, he means at least three things: first, that marriage is indissoluble, and that this attribute is what makes it a holy and sacred condition; second, that there is a symbolic and representational relation between marriage and Christ's union with the Church; third, that marriage, by virtue of its indissolubility, is analogous to baptism": \textit{Marriage in the Western Church}, 309.
bringing about (as he states later in *De sancta virginitate*) the Incarnation of the Messiah.\(^{40}\) But at the same time, Augustine observes that such a need has evidently long passed.

Two points from Augustine's discussion of this matter are of interest to the study of Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, since they might be seen as a sort of doctrinal precedent for his own teaching on purity within the context of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity. However quietly present in Aldhelm's work, Augustine's treatment of marriage permeates Aldhelm's *De virginitate* and the abbot's recasting of the three states of purity. First, Augustine states that different times require different obligations to Christ:

> nam tantum adfert oportunitatis ad aliquid iuste agendum seu non agendum temporum secreta distinctio, ut nunc melius faciat qui nec unam duxerit, nisi se continere non possit, tunc autem etiam plures inculpabiliter ducebant et qui se multo facilius continere possent, nisi aliiud pietas illo tempore postularet.  
> [S]icut enim sapiens et iustus, qui iam concupiscit dissolui et esse cum Christo et hoc magis optimo delectatur, non iam hic uiuendi cupiditate, sed consulendi officio sumit alimentum, ut maneat in carne, quod necessarium est propter alios, sic misceri feminis iure nuptiarum officiosum fuit tunc sanctis uiris, non libidinosum.

[The mysterious difference of times brings so great an opportunity of doing or of not doing something justly that, now, he does better who does not marry even one wife, unless he cannot control himself; then, however, they had without fault several wives, even they who could restrain themselves much more easily, except that piety in that time demanded something else. For, as the wise and just man, who for a long time was desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ and was delighted rather by this greatest good, not the desire of living here but the duty of caring for others, took food that he might remain in the flesh, which was necessary for the sake of others, so, too, for the men of those times it was not lust but duty to be joined with women by the law of marriage.]\(^{41}\)

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With the notion of the "temporum secreta distinctio" [mysterious difference of times],
Augustine shifts his argument to a brief focus on social mores that are no longer
acceptable in late antique Christianity. In effect, Augustine justifies the formerly
permitted practice of taking several sexual partners (always men with various women, not
women with various men, since only the former pattern results in potentially great
numbers of children) in light of virginitas: the ideal way of life under the New Law that
was also promulgated by other theologians such as Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome.  

From the outset of his treatise, Augustine emphasizes the primarily social nature
of Adam and Eve's union.  In the following chapter, Augustine makes reference to the
question of procreation before the Fall but sidesteps the issue of whether or not Adam
and Eve had physical intercourse in Paradise. What concerns Augustine most in his
teachings on marriage, Peter Brown emphasizes, is that in Paradise, Adam's and Eve's
sexual desire was in perfect harmony with their wills—a sublime concord that was lost

42. For Augustine's teaching on the prohibition of Old Testament women having
multiple sexual partners, see De bono coniugali 213, 7-22; trans. Wilcox, "The Good of
Marriage," 34-35. For overviews of patristic teachings on virginity, see Peter Brown, The
Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity,
Lectures on the History of Religions, n.s., 13 (New York: Columbia University Press,
1988), especially 192-95 (Cyprian), 341-65 (Ambrose), 366-86 (Jerome) and 387-427
(Augustine). See also Joyce E. Salisbury, Church Fathers, Independent Virgins (London:
Verso, 1991), 1-54.

43. "Quoniam unusquisque homo humili generis pars est et sociale quiddam est
humana natura magnumque habet et naturale bonum, uim quoque amicitiae, ob hoc ex
uno deus uoluit omnes homines condere, ut in sua societate non sola similitudine generis,
sed etiam cognitionis uinculo tenerentur. [P]rima itaque naturalis humanae societatis
copula uir et uxor est" [Since every man is a part of the human race, and human nature is
something social and possesses the capacity for friendship as a great and natural good, for
this reason God wished to create all men from one, so that they might be held together in
their society, not only by the similarity of race, but also by the bond of blood relationship.
And so it is that the first natural tie of human society is man and wife]: De bono coniugali
In keeping with this idea, Augustine, while carefully stressing that marriage is by no means a sin (and is in fact a good in its own right, as the title of his tract reflects) constructs desire as a phenomenon independent of carnality. As a result, Augustine places the married men of his time in a position inferior to that of the polygamous Patriarchs:

in istis enim carnale est ipsum desiderium filiorum, in illis autem spiritale erat, quia sacramento illius temporis congruebat. [N]unc quippe nullus pietate perfectus filios habere nisi spiritualiter quaeerit; tunc uero ipsius pietatis erat operatio etiam carnaliter filios propagare, quia illius populi generatio nuntia futurorum erat et ad dispensationem propheticam pertinebat.

[For, in these (i.e., the married men of Augustine's day) the very desire for children is carnal; in those (i.e., the Patriarchs), however, it was spiritual, because it was in accord with the mystery of the time. In our day, it is true, no one perfect in piety seeks to have children except spiritually; in their day, however, the work of piety itself was to propagate children even carnally, because the generation of that people was a harbinger of future events and pertains to the prophetic dispensation.]

Here, desire comes in two forms: "carnale" and "spiritale." In Augustine's estimation, the Patriarchs could have refrained from sexual relations (let alone with multiple partners) completely and easily, had the obligation to propagate not been incumbent upon them.

44. Peter Brown explains the relationship between sexual desire and the will, as Augustine saw it, in The Body and Society, 402-05.

45. De bono coniugali, 212, 24-213, 6; trans. Wilcox, "The Good of Marriage," 34. In the next chapter, Augustine offers allegorical explanations of Old Testament polygamy and its relation to the New Testament ideal of monogamy: "sicut ergo sacramentum pluralium nuptiarum illius temporis significauit futuram multitudinem deo subiectam in terrenis omnibus gentibus, sic sacramentum nuptiarum singularum nostri temporis significat unitatem omnium nostrum subiectam deo futuram in una caelesti ciuitate" [Therefore, just as the multiple marriages of that time symbolically signified the future multitude subject to God in all peoples of the earth, so the single marriages of our time symbolically signify the unity of all of us subject to God which is to be in one heavenly City]: De bono coniugali, 215, 7-11; trans. Wilcox, "The Good of Marriage," 36.
The spiritual desire of the Patriarchs thus becomes a good greater than the physical desire leading to sexual intercourse and the propagation of children. After Christ's Incarnation, physical desire is no longer a necessity, but it is not sinful either. Augustine's reference to "sacramento illius temporis" once again points to a difference in time as justifying deeds that, despite the corrupted sexual desire that accompanies any postlapsarian act of coition, were nevertheless in perfect accord with God's will.

Augustine's final analysis of Old Testament polygamy provides a tacit, yet very important, foundation for Aldhelm's own treatment of the formerly married in his De virginitate. Responding to heresies that cast the Patriarchs as sexually incontinent, Augustine contends that "non lasciuiendi, sed gignendi causa illis feminis utebantur; neque contra morem, quia illis temporibus ea factitabantur; neque contra praeceptum, quia nulla lege prohibebantur" [they made use of their wives not for the sake of being wanton, but for procreation; nor against the customs, because at the time those things were being done; nor contrary to precept, because they were not prohibited by any law]. Augustine's discursive strategy here is to cite not divine authority but the ancient common practice—the mos—among these men that was in harmony with God's plan for the world, ultimately leading to the birth of Christ. For Augustine, such a mos, which the faithful in later times may not fully understand (and may even be quick to condemn), does play an important role in bringing about the City of God on earth.

In De sancta virginitate, written not long after De bono coniugali, Augustine addresses the notion of custom with regard to the Virgin Mary's betrothal to Joseph.

Mary consecrated her virginity to God, Augustine observes, but this was against Jewish custom. He emphasizes the freedom of Mary's choice to retain her virginity within the context of a spiritual marriage (in Dyan Elliott's definition of the term as "total sexual abstinence in wedlock") that maintains the appearance of the customary consummated union with the conception and birth of a child, but in which Mary can still fulfill her spiritual desire for perpetual virginity. For Augustine, the mos of marriage is in some instances a potential obstacle to the realization of God's larger plan for humanity. In Mary's case, there was a distinction to be made between consummated and unconsummated wedlock. Although Jewish custom mandated a union of the first type, an unconsummated, spiritual marriage to Joseph was the perfect answer both to Mary's desire to retain her virginity, and to the necessity that the future mother of Jesus be physically pure.

However, for Aldhelm, the concept of marriage—whether these unions are consummated or not—is plainly out of date. Aldhelm asserts that he does not despise marriage; to do so, he admits, would be heretical. But, like Augustine before him, he emphasizes that a new era (in this case, the age of Anglo-Saxon England's incipient Christianization) requires new mores in keeping with the new system of belief being introduced. Moreover, within this new system of belief, marriage is a state patently

47. "[S]ed quia hoc Israhelitarum mores adhuc recusabant, desponsata est uiro iusto, non uiolenter ablature, sed potius contra uiolentos custodituro quod illa iam uouerat" [But, because the customs of the Jews as yet forbade this, she was espoused to a just man; not to one who would ravage by violence, but to one who would protect against violent men that which she had already vowed]: De sancta virginitate, 238, 6-8; trans. McQuade, "Holy Virginity," 147.

inferior to that of virginity. Citing Jerome's letter to Eustochium, Aldhelm establishes this hierarchy while maintaining that the praise of virginitas does not tarnish the relative merits of iugalitas. 49

49. Although his aim is to encourage virginitas, Aldhelm writes,

immaculata matrimoni contubernia et legitimum tori conubium, sicut scismaticorum deleramenta garriunt, spernendum [non] ducimus; quod abit a catholica ecclesiariarum fide, praesertim cum pro certo nouerimus, priscis temporibus patriarchas divinae sanctionis praeccepto coniugii foedera seruantes supernae gratos maiestatis extitisses et sacrosancti spiritus charismate refertos futurae incarnationis cunabula propheticis praesagiorum uocibus uaticinasse. . . . Sed iam furuo facessante ueteris instrumenti umbraculo et clara coruscante euangelii gratia tantum inter iriginitatis flores et iugalitatis mores distare dicimus, quantum distat oriens ab occasu. Vnde quidam catholicorum floridam iriginitatis gloriam explanans de iugalitatis stirpibus oriundam sub figura tropi ita eleganter exorsus lego, inquit, de terra aurum, de spina rosum, de conca margaretam.

[we do not consider that the immaculate cohabitation of matrimony and the legitimate union of lawful wedlock is to be scorned, as the ravings of heretics blather. Far be it from the catholic faith of the churches, particularly since we know for certain that in ancient times the patriarchs (sic) who maintained the bonds of marriage according to the precept of divine decree were pleasing to the heavenly majesty, and, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, prophesied the birth of the future Incarnation in presentient voices of prognostication. . . . But now, with the dusky shadow of the ancient document [i.e. the Old Testament] receding and the clear beauty of the Gospel flashing forth, we say that there is as great a distance between the flowers of virginity and the customs of marriage as is between east and west. Whence one of the catholic fathers (sic; i.e., Jerome), explaining that the flowering glory of virginity arises from the root of marriage, through the agency of a metaphor began elegantly as follows: "I select gold from the earth, the rose from the thorn, the pearl from the shell.

See Gwara, Pdv 89, 4-93, 21; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 64-65. I have modified Lapidge's translation of mores from "virtues" to "customs" to highlight the parallel between Aldhelm's view on marriage in this passage and Augustine's use of mos to refer to the marriage tradition that the Virgin Mary was obliged to follow. Jerome's Epistle 22, "Ad Eustochium," is in Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae: Pars 1: Epistolae 1-70, 2d ed., CSEL 54, ed. Isidore Hilberg (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 143-211. The lines that Aldhelm cites (verbatim) are at 170, 8-9. An English translation of this letter is in "Letter 22 to Eustochium," in Select Letters of
1.3 Aldhelm's Three Degrees of Purity in the *Prosa de virginitate*

Aldhelm's overarching concern in the prose and verse *De virginitate*, as in Jerome's letter to Eustochium and Augustine's *De sancta virginitate*, is with purity outside of wedlock. His purpose is to praise and encourage the sexual abstinence of the sisters of Barking, not to exhort them to marriages that some of them had already renounced or which had been otherwise dissolved. Aldhelm's re-envisioning of the three grades of chastity, however, sets him apart from his patristic predecessors. This is not simply due to his elimination of *viduitas*, but also to the way in which the Anglo-Saxon author reconstructs the second of the three states. In Aldhelm's reckoning, there is much more fluidity among the three states than might be apparent at first glance. Such fluidity becomes especially evident when the rhetorical strategies of the *Prosa de virginitate* and of the *Carmen de virginitate* are compared, for there are important differences in Aldhelm's treatment of the three grades in the two treatises.\(^{50}\) Although the *Prosa de virginitate* and *Carmen de virginitate* comprise an *opus geminatum*, the latter version is indeed, as Michael Lapidge asserts, "far from being a slavish versification of the earlier prose work."\(^{51}\)

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50. Michael Lapidge broadly outlines the structural differences between the prose and verse versions of the *De virginitate* in Lapidge and Rosier, 98-100. Sinéad O'Sullivan treats the prose and verse texts as though they were virtually interchangeable; see "Patristic Background," "Aldhelm's *De virginitate*," and "The Image of Adornment," passim.

51. Lapidge and Rosier, 99. From Ehwald's list of extant codices it is apparent that these two works were never bound together; see *Aldhelmi opera*, 225 and 349. For more on the composite *De virginitate* within the context of other *opera geminata*, see
Following a lengthy passage weighing the relative values of what Aldhelm calls the "tripertitam humani generis distantiam" [three-fold distinction of the human race], he finally defines the terms that he uses to distinguish among the three states:

Cuius differentiae argumento conici et colligi datur, quod uirginitas sit, quae ab omni spurcitia carnali illibata spontaneo caelibatus affectu pudica perseuerat, castitas uero, quae pactis sponsalibus sortita matrimonii commercia regni caelestis causa contempsit, iugalitas, quae ad propagandam posteritatis sobolem et liberorum procreandorum gratia licitis conubii nexibus nodatur.

[From the evidence of this distinction, it is permissible to deduce or conjecture what virginity is, which unharmed by any carnal defilement continues pure out of the spontaneous desire for celibacy; (and) chastity on the other hand which, having been assigned to marital contracts, has scorned the commerce of matrimony for the sake of the heavenly kingdom; or conjugality which, for propagating the progeny of posterity and for the sake of procreating children, is bound by the legal ties of marriage.]\(^{52}\)

First of all, it is immediately clear that Aldhelm replaces the term conventionally naming the second state, \textit{viduitas} [widowhood], with \textit{castitas} [chastity]. All three of Aldhelm's states, called by three different names, appear primarily to be tied to the presumption that one either has (in the case of \textit{castitas} and \textit{iugalitas}) or has not (in the case of \textit{virginitas}) ever engaged in sexual intercourse. Moreover, it seems that Aldhelm distinguishes between \textit{castitas} and \textit{iugalitas} on the basis of whether one has (in the case of \textit{castitas}) or

\ displeased


52. Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 221, 20–223, 26; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 75-76. Aldhelm's use of \textit{castitas} to name the second state is not new: Carmela Vircillo Franklin points out that Aldhelm borrowed his tripartite distinction from the \textit{passio} of saints Victoria and Anatolia. He did not, however, borrow the definitions cited above from this work. See "Theodore and the \textit{Passio S. Anastasii}," in \textit{Archbishop Theodore}, 175-203, at 188-90.
has not (in the case of iugalitas) renounced conjugal relations previously undertaken. But when close attention is paid to Aldhelm's diction in the rest of his prose tract, it becomes apparent that Aldhelm's logic is not quite this transparent.

The first line of the Prosa de virginitate opens with a greeting to the "Reuerentissimis Christi uirginibvs" [most reverend virgins of Christ], even though at least one of Aldhelm's addressees had probably been married and was a woman to whom, unlike Æthelthryth of Ely, tradition did not attribute virginity. This is no uncalculated slip in the abbot's terminology, for Aldhelm once again makes reference to Barking's "virginibus Christi" [virgins of Christ] near the end of the same work. Even more oddly, however, Aldhelm refers to the harlots who attempt to seduce the unwilling Chrysanthus as "pulcherrimae virgines" [very beautiful virgins] and notes that the chaste male saint's resolve is not swayed by the "formosa virginum venustate" [alluring beauty of the virgins]. While it is logical to assume that virgo should name a female who qualifies for the state of virginitas, this is not so in the case of Aldhelm's virgines [virgins]. Clearly, there is a disjunction between Aldhelm's definition of virginitas and

53. Gwaratal, Pdv 27, 1, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 59. Veronica Ortenberg argues that Aldhelm refers to formerly married women as virgines [virgins] in both the Prosa de virginitate and the Carmen de virginitate because "they had, in effect, finished doing their job as women (namely to marry and have children) and, having put this behind them, had placed themselves outside the scope of that which made them women—they had become asexual beings who were no longer regarded as specifically female." See "Virgin Queens: Abbesses and Power in Early Anglo-Saxon England," in Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59-68, at 60.

54. Gwarta, Pdv 745, 5; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 129.

55. Gwara, Pdv 465, 33 and 467, 38-39; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 97. I have substituted "virgins" for Lapidge's translations ("girls" and "young women," respectively) to illustrate my point.
his use of virgo to describe individuals—women in all of these cases—who have apparently engaged in sexual intercourse. This disjunction raises the question of what Aldhelm perceives to be the relationship between a woman's sexual history, potentially verifiable through examination of her hymen, and her fitness for the prime category of virginitas with its hundredfold spiritual rewards.

Hymeneal intactness is unique to women as a visible signifier of the absence of sexual activity. Men have no such readable signifier: indeed, it is impossible to determine whether or not a man has ever engaged in sexual intercourse simply by looking at his genitals. So although Aldhelm's formulation of virginitas indicates a potentially verifiable physical state, the author nonetheless uses virgo to refer to some women who are not sexually pure. The abbot does not, however, use virginitas, the term he defines as the state of optimal sexual purity, with reference to any woman who has had sexual intercourse. Yet there is still no simple correlation between hymeneal integrity and Aldhelm's definition of virginitas. In effect, while hymeneal intactness is the necessary sign of virginitas, it is not its sufficient sign.

56. Kathleen Coyne Kelly discusses the hymen as signifier of a range of beliefs about women, emphasizing that virginity is an unstable concept. See Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages, Routledge Research in Medieval Studies 2 (London: Routledge, 2000), 1-39.

57. Even when translated as "girl" or "young woman," virgo carries the sense of a sexual innocence that accompanies youth. The notion of virgo thus implies a "natural" and therefore necessary relationship between youthful femininity and hymeneal intactness. See Lewis and Short, s.v. "virgo."
It has been observed that Aldhelm's definition of *virginitas* requires more than just physical intactness.\(^5^8\) In this sense, Aldhelm's formulation of this category is not fundamentally different from that of various patristic authors, for whom *virginitas* has a clear spiritual component. But what makes Aldhelm's formulation in the *Prosa de virginitate* unique (and, in some ways, quite peculiar) is that it does not appear even to require hymeneal intactness. For example, Aldhelm uses the adjective *intacta* with *virginitas* only three times in his prose text. The first instance concerns the bee, to whom Aldhelm refers as "intactae uirginitatis tipum" [a symbol of intact virginity].\(^5^9\) The other two references are to the glory of "intactae uirginitatis" [intact virginity] without reference to any particular being.\(^6^0\) Yet even these three instances demonstrate no link between *virginitas* and hymeneal intactness, given that Aldhelm never employs *intacta virginitas* to refer to a woman. Furthermore, phrases describing the body as *intactus*—an apparently unambiguous reference to the hymeneally intact body—occur only in Aldhelm's four citations of Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine, which make a sharp

\(^{58}\) That *virginitas* is diminished by pride will be dealt with below. See Mary of the Incarnation Byrne, *The Tradition of the Nun*, 29-31, and Lapidge and Herren, 56.

\(^{59}\) Gwara, *Pdv* 73, 23-24; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 63. I have changed Lapidge's translation of "intactae" from "unstained" to "intact."

\(^{60}\) Gwara, *Pdv* 741, 46 and 753, 43; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 128, 130. Aldhelm does not pair *intacta* with *virginitas* in the *Carmen de virginitate*, but does so once with *virgo*. The narrative of the transvestite saint Eugenia's encounter with the lustful Melantia points out that God wished to make known the "Virginis intactae . . . triumphos" [triumphs of the intact virgin] through this encounter: Ehwald, *CdV* 1916; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 145. I have changed Rosier's translation of "intactae" from "chaste" to "intact."
distinction between bodily and spiritual purity. The words *integritas*, *integer*, and *integre* likewise have no clear hymeneal connection for Aldhelm, since they refer to both men and women in the *Prosa de virginitate*, as well as throughout the *Carmen de virginitate*.

In effect, Aldhelm's notion of the three grades of purity only superficially deals with women's sexual states from a physical standpoint. Aldhelm does use terms that seem to imply the presence of unpenetrated hymens—*virgo, intacta, integritas*—but Aldhelm does not use them in this way. There appears to be no logic to Aldhelm's tripartite scheme if one simply looks for evidence of clear, unambiguous, and consistent physical correspondences to Aldhelm's elaboration of *virginitas* in the *Prosa de civitate Dei*.

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61. Following Ehwald, Gwara traces the following passage to Augustine's *De civitate Dei* 1.18: "Ita non amittitur corporis sanctitas manente animi sanctitate etiam corpore oppresso, sicut ammittitur sanctitas corporis uiolata animi puritate etiam corpore intacto" [Thus the sanctity of the body is not lost provided that the sanctity of the soul remains, even if the body is overcome, just as the sanctity of the body is lost if the purity of the soul is violated, even if the body is intact]: Gwara, *Pdv* 743, 57-59; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 129; original emphasis. Aldhelm's wording in fact matches Prosper's paraphrase in the *Liber sententiarum* 51, 1-3; see *Proserpi Aquitani opera*, ed. M. Gastaldo, CCSL 68A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), 213-365, at 269; cf. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De civitate Dei: Libri 1-10*, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb, CCSL 47 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 19, 40-42. The same wording is also found in Prosper's *Epigrammata* 51. Following Ehwald, Gwara traces Gwara, *Pdv* 743, 61-68 to *Epigrammata* 51 as well (with Aldhelm substituting "submotum" for "semotum" at line 67). See *S. Prosperi Aquitani Epigrammatum*, in *Sancti Prosperi Aquitani opera omnia*, PL 51 (Turnhout: Brepols, n.d.), cols. 497-532, at col. 513. Gwara attributes Aldhelm's diction in Gwara, *Pdv* 745, 69-70 to Prosper, *Epigrammata* 76: see PL 51, col. 521. Cf. Ehwald, *Pdv* 319, 22-23, which he attributes to Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos* 147; both Prosper and Aldhelm use "animae" instead of Augustine's "cordis." See *In psalmum 147 enarratio*, in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Enarrationes in psalmos 101-150*, ed. D. Eligius Dekkers and Johannes Fraipont, CCSL 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), 2138-165, at 2146, chap. 10, 7-8. These last lines also occur in Prosper's *Liber sententiarum* 79, 1-2: see *Proserpi Aquitani opera*, 276. Aldhelm's versions of these passages are all translated in Lapidge and Herren, 129.
virginitate. What logic there is in this treatise emerges only upon consideration of virginitas as more than just a physical state from which one can potentially fall by having sexual intercourse.

It is no surprise, then, that "uirginitas animae" rather than "Virginitas . . . carnis" is more evidently Aldhelm's primary concern. Aldhelm's formulation of virginitas is certainly not unique in this respect. What is of note, however, is the way in which the abbot deploys emphasis on the non-physical qualities that must accompany physical intactness if one is to embody virginitas in all its fullness. Like Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine before him, Aldhelm constructs an ideological split between body and flesh (although, like the others, he uses caro to refer both to sinful "flesh" as well as to the material body), and between mind and spirit. But Aldhelm goes one step further: he uses these fissures as discursive spaces in which to incorporate divorced women into the three states of purity. With virginitas as a performative as well as a physical state (especially in Aldhelm's diatribe against ostentatious dress and pride), the abbot sets up his three grades as a moral trajectory through which a woman can move. Like his patristic predecessors, he makes room for the potential movement of hymeneally intact virgines down the scale of purity. But, in an important rhetorical move, he also creates a path for the limited upward movement of the divorced through his idiosyncratic elaboration of castitas [chastity]. For Aldhelm, castitas, like virginitas, denotes a performance that glosses over the necessary sign of female virginitas (that is, hymeneal integrity). But in contrast to virginitas, castitas is a state that is potentially attainable—in all of its fullness—by women of any sexual background.

62. Gwara, Pdv 745, 70 and 69; original emphasis
For Aldhelm, a *virgo* can be corrupted through displays of sartorial ostentation. The abbot cites a number of passages from Cyprian's *De habitu virginum* to make his case. Aldhelm's choice of citations from Cyprian emphasizes that virgins who have devoted themselves to Christ must not adorn their bodies with attractive clothing and jewelry, for two main reasons. First, doing so distracts them from their devotional duties, and second, dressing attractively can lead young men to sexual temptation. What Aldhelm does not mention, however, is that Cyprian links enticing dress with a virgin's own hidden sexual desire, in addition to the desire of those who might gaze upon her. In fact, by merely wishing to render such desire visible through her clothing, Cyprian states that a *virgo* is no longer a *virgo*. For the bishop, then, women lose their claim to be *virgines* if they harbor sexual desire, even if this desire never leads to intercourse.

In the context of Aldhelm's writing, it is clear why the abbot carefully selects his citations from *De habitu virginum* so as to eliminate phrases arguing that a woman who harbors sexual desire ceases to be a *virgo*. By citing such phrases, Aldhelm would have undermined the logic behind the label of "virgins" that he accords his addressees: some of these women had once been sexually active, and can be presumed to have been subject to their own carnal desire. Aldhelm instead emphasizes Cyprian's precept stating that the incitement of lust in others through enticing adornment is responsible for a virgin's

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63. "sic dum ornari cultius, dum liberius euagari uirgines uolunt, esse uirgines desinunt, furtiuo dedecore corruptae, uidualue antequam nuptae, non mariti sed Christi adulterae" [hence virgins in desiring to be adorned more elegantly, to go about more freely, cease to be virgins, being corrupted by a hidden shame, widows before they are brides, adulteresses not to a husband but to Christ]: *De habitu virginum*, ed. Guilelmus Hartel, in *S. Thasci Caecili Cypriani opera omnia*, CSEL 3.1 (Vienna: C. Gerold, 1868), 185-205, at 201, 20-22; trans. Angela Elizabeth Keenan, "The Dress of Virgins," in *Saint Cyprian: Treatises*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 23-52, at 48.
downfall. Here, Aldhelm shares with Cyprian the fundamental idea that to be fully a *virgo*, a woman must not risk inflaming others' sexual desire with her alluring appearance. However, such a notion becomes finally tautological in both clerics' treatises: a *virgo* is a woman who looks like a *virgo*. But there is an important difference between Cyprian's and Aldhelm's views on the relationship between *virgines* and female adornment. Cyprian assumes *a priori* that all of the *virgines* whom his tract addresses are sexually pure and hymeneally intact; Aldhelm, however, clearly does not.

64. ceterum . . . si tu te sumptuosius comas et per publicum notabiliter incedas, oculos in te iuuenum illicas, suspiria adolescentium post te trahas, concupiscendi libidinem nutrias, sperandi fomenta succendas, ut, etsi ipsa non pereas, alios tamen perdas et uelut gladium te et uenenum uidentibus exhibeas, excusari non potes, quasi mente casta sis et pudica. Redarguit te cultus improbus et impudicus ornatus nec computari iam potest inter uirgines Christi, quae sic uiusit, ut possit adamari.

[Besides . . . if you dress yourself sumptuously and go out in public so as to attract notice, if you rivet the eyes of young men to you and draw the sighs of adolescents after you, and nourish the desire of carnal lust, and arouse the fires of sexual anticipation so that, even if you yourself don't perish, you nonetheless destroy others and present yourself to your onlookers as if you were poison or the sword, you cannot be excused as if you were of a chaste and modest mind. Your shameless dress and your immodest jewellery condemn you, nor can she who lives in such a way as to be the object of passion be counted among the virgins of Christ.]

That not all of Aldhelm's *virgines* are sexually pure thus makes the connection between his use of *virgo* (a term describing a woman) and *virginitas* (a term describing her state on the scale of purity) more clear. In the *Prosa de virginitate*, the abbot emphasizes the *virgo*'s external appearance; but because his *virgines* are not all hymeneally intact, he reverses Cyprian's logic regarding the relationship between adornment and a woman's status as *virgo*. That is, where Cyprian's (sexually pure) *virgines* must dress appropriately to reflect their being (sexually pure) *virgines*, it appears that, at least to a certain extent, Aldhelm's addressees can "become" (sexually pure) *virgines* by dressing like women who have never had sexual intercourse. Although lack of hymeneal intactness among formerly married women makes it impossible for these sisters to attain the state of *virginitas*, Aldhelm nevertheless makes it obvious that virginity is performative.

In this way, Aldhelm skirts the issue of a woman's need for hymeneal intactness as the necessary sign of *virginitas*: in other words, as a necessary property of the *virgo*. In effect, Aldhelm metonymically substitutes the sign of "proper dress" for that of the intact hymen—an internal bodily sign that is not readily and publicly readable, in contrast to clothing and jewelry which are outside the body and therefore openly legible. Cyprian connects the opinions of those looking upon a virgin's clothing with the state (actual, as well as presumed) of that virgin's hymen. Specifically, he casts all forms of immodest adornment as a broken hymen: "uirgo non esse tantum sed intellegi debet et credi: nemo cum virginem uidetur, dubitet an uirgo sit" [A virgin should not only be a virgin, but she ought to be known and considered as such. No one on seeing a virgin should doubt
whether she is one]. Aldhelm, however, reverses Cyprian's logic by making modest clothing a substitute hymen for "virgines" who are no longer physically intact. Writing for a community that includes the formerly married, Aldhelm appropriates Cyprian's precepts in a way that tells the women of Barking that, in effect, "you are what you wear." But with his emphasis on the performative aspect of virginitas, Aldhelm knows that he has no patristic precedent to back him. Although Cyprian, Augustine, and Jerome would never claim that a woman's claim to virginitas rests upon her physical integrity alone, they do place much more emphasis on this physical element than does Aldhelm. As a result, Aldhelm needs other authoritative sources to back his idiosyncratic notion not just of virginitas, but of his decision to name the second state "castitas." For a good part of this authority, he turns to hagiographic narratives.

1.4 Hagiography and Aldhelm's Authorization of virginitas

Aldhelm uses narratives of virgin saints as key authoritative texts both to elaborate his notion of virginitas (which is only partially supported by the biblical and patristic texts he cites), as well as to justify his inclusion of castitas [chastity] as a replacement for viduïtas [widowhood]. The accounts of these exemplary virgins—women and men, Old and New Testament figures alike—are of special importance to the De virginite's authoritativeness for the women of Barking. Aldhelm himself admits (in a very unpatriotic manner) that he lacks scriptural support for his work just before he

begins his accounts of virgins in the *Prosa de virginitate*. The placement of such a statement there underscores Aldhelm's intent to use these narratives as authorities to justify his idiosyncratic appropriation of patristic doctrine concerning sexual purity.

As though to emphasize the fundamentally elastic nature of *virginitas* (indeed, an elasticity that the abbot stretches to an extreme), Aldhelm deftly appropriates these narratives to blur the distinctions between *virginitas* and *castitas*. Justifying the special praise that *virginitas* merits, Aldhelm observes that Jesus entered the womb of Mary, who was "uirginali puerperio praeditae sine periculo perpetuae puritatis et dispendio castitatis" [made capable of virginal birth without danger to her perpetual purity or loss of her chastity]. Of note here is Aldhelm's ascription of *puritas* and *castitas* to Mary. His choice of these terms rather than *virginitas* with regard to the prime exemplar of spiritual as well as physical virginity underscores Aldhelm's equation of all these terms in this context. Despite Aldhelm's use of *castitas* to name the second degree of purity, his

66. "Sed ne forte propriae disputationis uerbosa garrulitas aut garrula uerbositas firmo scripturarum fulcimento carens a quolibet criminetur, purpureos pudicitiae flores ex sacrorum uoluminum prato decerpens pulcherrimam uirginitatis coronam Christo fauente contexere nitar" [But so that, lacking the firm support of the scriptures, I am not blamed by someone for the verbose garrulity or garrulous verbosity of my dissertation, I shall attempt to weave with Christ's favour a most beautiful crown of virginity, plucking crimson flowers of purity from the meadow of holy books]: Gwara, *Pdv* 225, 35-39; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 76. With this statement, Aldhelm makes it clear that he does not believe that his recourse to Old and New Testament exemplars is adequate in itself to buttress his notions of sexual purity.


68. Aldhelm does not use any form of *castitas* or *casta* to refer to Mary at the beginning of *Prosa de virginitate*, chap. 40. Instead, Aldhelm refers to her as "uirgo perpetua" and specifies that he is writing about her "perpetua uriginitate"; see Gwara, *Pdv* 581, 1 and 583, 10. The only other occurrence of *perpetua* with a reference to virginity in the composite *De virginitate* occurs when Didymus addresses "pudicos thalami consortes" [modest partners in marriage] among the Indian people, saying that they
use of the term with reference to Mary does not bring Jesus's mother down a step on the purity scale. It could be argued that Aldhelm's use of *castitas* here has no significance at all; perhaps the abbot simply wanted a synonym for *virginitas* to vary his diction, since he had used the adjective "virginali" a short time before. While this may be the case, Aldhelm, with no apparent hesitation, later repeats *virgo* twice and employs *virginitas* once in a space of two lines with reference to Mary.\(^69\) Even if the abbot had wanted some lexical variety in the earlier passage, were he at all concerned about distinguishing clearly between *virginitas* and *castitas* (as he does when he first defines these terms), he could have used any of a number of synonyms for *virginitas* which he in fact uses elsewhere, such as *integritas*, *pudicitia*, and *castimonia*.

Aldhelm reinforces the fluidity of the terms *virginitas* and *castitas* in the narratives of other exemplars in the *Prosa de virginitate*. Shortly into his catalogue of male virgins, Aldhelm refers to Daniel's "spontaneae uirginitatis munus" [gift of spontaneous virginity].\(^70\) But several lines later, Aldhelm observes that Daniel is granted ___________________ possess "fructus perpetuae uirginitatis" [the fruits of perpetual virginity]: Gwara, *Pdv* 285, 57 and 59; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 81. I have modified Lapidge's translation of "pudicos" from "chaste," to avoid confusion with *castos* in the ways that Aldhelm uses it and its variants elsewhere.

69. This is found in his transition from his brief epithalamium concerning Mary and his account of Cecilia: "Verum mihi de Mariae perpetua uirginitate, quae ante sacri sermonis receptaculum uirgo faurorabilis exstitit et post caelestis puerperii praecomin uirgo faurorabilior permansit, sollice scribenti repente ad memoriam reidiit" [Truly, it (i.e., how Cecilia shunned marriage) suddenly came into my mind as I am writing carefully about the perpetual virginity of Mary—who was a virgin full of grace before receiving the sacred [Word], and who remained a virgin of even greater grace after the honour of her divine child-bearing]: Gwara, *Pdv* 583, 9-585, 13; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 107. Ehwald, *Pdv* includes "seminis" [seed] rather than "sermonis" [Word] at 292, 11.

the ability to prophesize "pro uicissitudine castitatis" [in exchange for his chastity].\textsuperscript{71} Not long afterwards, in a passage linking his male Old Testament and New Testament exemplars, Aldhelm laments that the "eyes" of virginal purity and of holy chastity—both of which states are untainted by carnal enticement—can nevertheless be dulled by even an unactualized lustful thought.\textsuperscript{72}

In the catalogue of virgins that follows, Aldhelm uses the terms \textit{virginitas} / \textit{castitas} and \textit{virginalis} / \textit{casta} quite interchangeably to refer to the state of his exemplars. In effect, his holy men and women represent \textit{both virginitas} and \textit{castitas}, but it is understood that they do so only because they fulfill the necessary cause of the first grade as Aldhelm sets it out; that is, they are unharmed "ab omni spurcitia carnali" [by any carnal defilement].\textsuperscript{73} In effect, any association of \textit{virginitas} with hymeneal intactness is

\textsuperscript{71} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 237, 9; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 77.

\textsuperscript{72} "O quam limpida uirginalis pudicitiae pupilla coruscat, o quam splendida piae castitatis acies illustrat, quas nec carnalis caligo illecebrae obtundit nec spurcae obscenitatis glaucoma suffundit" [Oh, how the pellucid pupil of virginal purity shines, oh how the brilliant eye of holy chastity beams forth, when neither the carnal darkness of lasciviousness dulls nor the glaucoma of foul obscenity overspreads]: Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 261, 24-263, 27; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 79. Although \textit{virginitas} is here used adjectivally and \textit{castitas} substantively, Aldhelm's fundamental equation of the two concepts is clear. By the same token, Aldhelm states that the truly pure are those who "cum caterua castae uexillationis uictricia uexillationis labara laeti gestabunt" [are to proceed in throngs through the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem with the company of chaste soldiers carrying victorious (banners), and who shall joyously carry the trophy of virginal triumph and the standard of uninjured chastity]: Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 265, 34-267, 39; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 79.

\textsuperscript{73} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 221, 21; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 75. \textit{Virgo} is a nominative form referring to someone who belongs in the category of \textit{virginitas}. The state of \textit{castitas} has no such grammatical counterpart in Latin, except where the adjective \textit{casta} is understood substantively.
lost with reference to sexually pure males like Daniel. It will be recalled that according to Aldhelm, *castitas* is the state "quae pactis sponsalibus sortita matrimonii commercia regni caelestis causa contempsit" [which, having been assigned to marital contracts, has scorned the commerce of matrimony for the sake of the heavenly kingdom].

Aldhelm does not render *castitas* in opposition to *virginitas*: nowhere does he say that a taint "ab omni spurcitia carnali" [by any carnal defilement] characterizes *castitas*, thus cleanly distinguishing that state from *virginitas*. Virtually all of the holy women in Aldhelm's catalogue, from Mary onwards, have been betrothed to suitors; in other words, they have technically entered into "pactis sponsalibus" [marital contracts]. But they remain *virgines* through their unequivocal refusals to fulfill these contracts through sexual consummation with the men to whom they have been promised.

Aldhelm writes that the "uirgo sacratissima" [most holy virgin] Cecilia rejects marriage "obtentu castitatis" [on the grounds of her chastity] without ever engaging in sexual intercourse. In the process, she also converts her own suitor ("procum proprium") and his brother to Christianity. What Aldhelm does not mention, however, is that his source *passio* of Cecilia recounts that the saint and her suitor do actually marry, that Cecilia converts her new husband on their wedding night, and that the couple subsequently lives in a chaste, spiritual union after an angel warns Valerian not to touch


Cecilia. In fact, Aldhelm takes pains to deny that Cecilia ever went through a marriage ceremony at all, emphasizing her tremendous revulsion toward, and active repudiation of, the very idea of wedlock. In Aldhelm's tripartite scheme of purity, then, Cecilia

77. Lapidge and Herren provide a list of Aldhelm's sources at 176-78. For the passio of Cecilia, see "Vita et martyrium ex pervetustis actis S. Cæciliae virginis et martyris," in AASS, 14 Aprilis, vol. 2 (Paris, 1866), 203-08. Even though the original describes Valerian (whom Aldhelm does not name) as Cecilia's sponsus both before and after the marriage, a formal ceremony certainly takes place. The text states that "Cæcilia Valerianum quemdam juvenem habebat sponsum, qui in amore Virginis perurgens animum diem constituit nuptiarum. Venit dies in quo thalamus collocatus est. Venit etnox, in qua suscepit una cum sponso suo cubiculi secreta silentia" [Cecilia had a certain young spouse, Valerian; she, inflaming her soul with love of the Virgin, settled upon the day of (her) wedding. The day came on which the marriage was set. And the night came, in which, she, together with her spouse, received the secret silence of their bedchamber]: see 204, 1-5. For an overview of pre-Christian Roman marriage, see Peter Brown, The Body and Society, 5-25. Aldhelm might have made a similar modification to his narrative of Constantia, for which no source has yet been traced. See "De sanctis virginibus romanis Constantia Augusta, Attica et Artemia," in AASS, 18 Februarii, vol. 3 (Paris: n.p., 1865), 67-71. Ælfric's version of Constantia's story in the Lives of Saints, however, does not relate that Constantia weds Gallicanus; see Skeat 1: 186, 296-194, 429.

belongs to the categories of both virginitas and castitas: for the first, she retains her hymeneal intactness and betrays no sexual desire for Valerian; for the second, she refuses to go through a marriage ceremony.\textsuperscript{79}

There are other examples of Aldhelm's use of both virginitas and castitas, in either their nominative or adjectival forms, to refer to his saintly exemplars. Aldhelm describes the glories of Lucy, "castissimae uirginis" [most chaste virgin]—an epithet not even applied to Mary—who rejects marriage and intercourse with Paschasius, who then becomes her persecutor and sends her to her death.\textsuperscript{80} He then writes that the persecutor (later bishop) Cyprian recognizes Christ's victory "per castissimam Iustinae uirginitatem" [through the most chaste virginity of Justina].\textsuperscript{81} Like Cecilia, Eugenia rejects marriage "ob potiorem uirginitatis gloriam" [for the sake of the greater glory of her virginity].\textsuperscript{82} She subsequently escapes to a monastery disguised as a monk "sine castitatis cicatrice" [with no blemish on her chastity].\textsuperscript{83} Aldhelm then moves on to Agnes, whose story the abbot addresses to "eiusdem uirginalis propositi participibus et castae sodalitatis consortibus" [the adherents of the same virginal undertaking and to the companions of

\textsuperscript{79} Aldhelm does not mention Cecilia's martyrdom, a curious omission in light of the emphasis on martyrdom characterizing the narratives that follow. He also does not mention the martyrdom of Basilissa.

\textsuperscript{80} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 597, 2; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 108. The source narrative is in L. Surius, \textit{De probatis sanctorum historiis}, vol. 6 (Cologne, 1575), 892-94.

\textsuperscript{81} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 613, 17-18; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 109. I have added "most" to reflect the intensification of \textit{castam} that "castissimam" connotes.

\textsuperscript{82} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 621, 8; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 110.

\textsuperscript{83} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 623, 17; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 110.
chaste fellowship]; that is, to the "virgins" of Barking once again.\textsuperscript{84} Even in the face of martyrdom, Thecla, Aldhelm reports, "indisrupta tamen castitatis crepundia et pretiosam uirginitatis stolam ... inuiolabilem" [nonetheless kept the token of her chastity unbroken and the precious mantle of her virginity undestroyed].\textsuperscript{85}

Through all of these saints' narratives, Aldhelm flatters both the never-married and formerly wed women in his audience. These accounts laud all of the author's dedicatees, both named and unnamed, who have never partaken of the married life or who no longer do so. Aldhelm's discourse of purity, underscored by these accounts, does not sharply distinguish between those women at Barking who had once been wives and those who had never married. In the images of female saints' active refusals to wed (with the notable exceptions of Basilissa and Daria who willingly enter into sexually abstinent marriages with Christian spouses), Aldhelm applauds those among his audience who had voluntarily left their husbands. But even more strikingly, these images especially flatter those sisters whose marriages may have been terminated against their will; indeed, female saints are never portrayed by their hagiographers as being forced out of marriages they desire. The \textit{Prosa de virginitate}'s gallery of saintly, spiritually victorious women who vigorously scorn married life and the sexual activity that accompanies it would have

\textsuperscript{84} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 631, 3-5; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 112.

\textsuperscript{85} Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 641, 11-14; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 113. After concluding his catalogue of female exemplars, Aldhelm asks rhetorically if it is any surprise that "castissimum Ioseph legalia ueterum uolumina immensis praeconiorum laudibus concelebrant" [the books of the Old Law also honour the chaste Joseph with immense paeans of praise]: Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 699, 4-6; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 121. He then notes that Joseph remains under divine protection for as long as he remains a "purae uirginitatis comes" [companion of pure virginity]: Gwara, \textit{Pdv} 701, 11; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 121.
greatly pleased the abbot's formerly married patrons, whether or not they had initiated their own divorces.

Aldhelm's prose treatise would have also pleased the sisters of Barking in terms of its elimination of *viduitas* [widowhood] as its second grade of purity, and its replacement of *viduitas* with the more inclusive category of *castitas*. Aldhelm's choice of *castitas* to replace *viduitas* fits the context of his writing for formerly married women perfectly. This is because *castitas* is a blanket term for sexual purity, used frequently in patristic writing as a synonym for other terms connoting such purity: these terms include *pudicitia, castimonia*—and even *virginitas*. *Castitas* is not a term used by such theologians as Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine to denote a specific state. As a result, Aldhelm appropriates the term *castitas* with its underlying general meaning and, by using it to (re)name the second grade of sexual purity, grants the term a specific meaning. But rhetorically speaking, this specificity only lasts as long as his definition of *castitas* set out in the *Prosa de virginitate*. While Aldhelm defines *castitas* as the sexual state of those who have spurned conjugal relations (that is, of those who were once, but are no longer, married), he uses the term as so general a signifier of "sexual purity" throughout the rest of his tract that the signification of *castitas* becomes obscured.

But such obfuscation is deliberate, and serves Aldhelm well. Because he otherwise employs *castitas* in a general sense, his use of the term to name the second state of purity can incorporate all formerly married women, whether they are no longer married because of divorce or the deaths of their spouses. Even a widow can be said to actively scorn marriage if she chooses not to remarry, and retires to a monastery instead. In this sense, Aldhelm's use of *castitas* can be interpreted as a broadening of the category.
of *viduitas* [widowhood]. Yet the breadth of *castitas's* signification in this treatise is much greater than this. Aldhelm casts the semantic net of *castitas* so widely that he blurs the boundaries between *virginitas* and *castitas*. This is not to say that Aldhelm equates *virginitas* with *castitas*, for he does not go quite that far; in fact, equating these categories would have been heretical, as Augustine's and Jerome's responses to Jovinian suggest. Aldhelm never claims, for instance, that those women who had been sexually active, and who thus fall into the category of *castitas*, merit the hundred-fold reward that awaits those who maintain their sexual integrity. Aldhelm clearly states that those who claim *virginitas, castitas* and *iugalitas* merit the hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold rewards respectively:

> His igitur tribus graduum ordinibus, quibus credentium multitudo in catholica florens ecclesia discernitur, euangelicum paradigma centesimum, sexagesimum et tricesimum fructum iuxta meritorum mercimoniam spopondit, licet quidam centesimi fructus manipulos euangelicis noualibus ubertim pululantes et granigera spicarum glumula germinantes martiribus sacrum pro Christianae confessionis titulo cruorem ritu riui rorantibus deputare soleant.

[To these three levels of rank, therefore, into which the flourishing multitude of believers in the catholic Church is divided, the gospel parable has promised hundred-fold, sixty-fold and thirty-fold fruit according to the outlay of their merits, even though certain (authorities) are accustomed to allot the sheaves of the hundred-fold harvest, sprouting abundantly in the fallow lands of the gospel and putting forth grain-bearing ears of corn, to the martyrs who pour out their holy blood in the manner of a stream for the glory of the Christian faith.]

86. Augustine's *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*, as well as Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* refute the heretic Jovinian's denial that virginity was superior to the married state, and that Christians were Manichaeans in their championing of *virginitas*; see John McQuade's introduction to "Holy Virginity," 135-37.

Nevertheless, Aldhelm is only telling a partial truth with this statement. As he suggests, it is true that the reward system he cites is not fixed in patristic writings on the states of purity. However, he implies that the attribution of the sixty-fold reward to the formerly married is orthodox by church standards. This is clearly untrue. Furthermore, although Aldhelm makes the boundaries between virginitas and castitas somewhat permeable, his "reward system" nevertheless stays fixed. By doing this, Aldhelm maintains a semblance of categorical fixity while at the same time demonstrating the instability inherent in these categories.

For example, as his descriptions of his exemplary virgins demonstrate, a true virgo—that is, one who is of the state of virginitas, and thus has been "ab omni spurcitia carnali illibata" [unharmed by any carnal defilement]—is also necessarily casta [chaste]. In other words, a woman who is of the first grade of purity belongs there because she has first "matrimonii commercia . . . contempsit" [scorned the commerce of matrimony], which is the condition defining castitas. As a result, the abbot can use words related to both virginitas and castitas for his female exemplars without any contradiction. This notion adds some more logic to Aldhelm's address to the "[r]everentissimis Christi virginibus" [most reverend virgins of Christ] in the prologue to the Prosa de virginitate. That Aldhelm addresses formerly married women as "virgins," however, does not imply that Aldhelm somehow believed that women who

88. Gwara, Pdv 221, 21; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 75.
had had sexual intercourse could regrow their hymens. Indeed, while references to *virginitas* and *castitas* are fully (and, for Aldhelm, frequently) interchangeable with regard to his saintly women exemplars, they are not cleanly interchangeable with respect to Aldhelm's readers. There still remains a good amount of incongruity in Aldhelm's references to the *virgines* of Barking.

Even if the formerly married women among these readers cannot reclaim *virginitas*, however, those who are physically intact can be brought down the purity scale. Possibly the biggest source of flattery for those who are forever excluded from *virginitas* because of past marriage is the notion that not all women who are "technically" virgins are in a state of *virginitas*, especially because of susceptibility to pride. Early in his treatise, Aldhelm deals at length with the fact that *virginitas* must be accompanied by the other virtues, especially that of humility. Here, Aldhelm's emphasis departs from that of Cyprian: in *De habitu virginum*, the bishop's assertions that virgins who do not dress modestly cease to be virgins has to do with the sexual desire that jewelry, ostentatious clothing (not to mention makeup and hair dye) betray on the virgin's part. Aldhelm's treatise, however, shifts emphasis from physical ostentation as a sign of a virgin's hidden lust to pride as the biggest threat to a woman's *virginitas*.

91. Aldhelm summarizes his teaching on humility as follows: "Quamobrem nullus hanc solam puritatis praerogatiuam sine ceterarum adiumento uirtutum sufficere sibi ad capissendam plene perfectionem confidat et quasi hac tantum seruata absque reliquorum conflictu uitiorum feriatus et securus existat!"  [Wherefore let no-one trust that the sole attribute of purity without the assistance of other virtues will suffice in attaining fully to perfection, and as if, were it alone preserved, he might be relaxed and confident without taking on the conflict of the remaining vices!]: Gwara, *Pdv* 171, 1-173, 5; trans. Lapidge and Herren, 71.
To Aldhelm's mind, a woman claiming virginitas needs more than just humility to guarantee her place among those who will receive the hundredfold heavenly rewards. Following his narratives of saintly women, Aldhelm reinstates the link between virginitas and castitas through an exhortation preceding his Cyprian-like diatribe against ostentatious dress: "Ornetur, inquam, beatae uirginitatis integritas non exterioris hominis formosa uenustate, sed interioris religiosa castitate!" [Let the perfection of blessed virginity be adorned, I say, not with the comely beauty of the exterior person, but by the pious chastity of the interior].

Despite wording that seems to imply that a woman can claim virginitas without castitas, this is not the case. The logic pervading Aldhelm's Prosa de virginitate implies that (physical) virginity without castitas is not in fact virginitas at all. Through this and all the other associations that Aldhelm draws between virginitas and castitas, Aldhelm by implication draws his previously married readership into the realm of the virgin. Although those women who have had intercourse can never again belong to the top category, there is nonetheless a significant semantic space that virginitas and castitas share. For this, Aldhelm has Jerome, for example, as precedent: in his Letter to Eustochium, Jerome, using the conventional viduitas [widowhood] as his second grade of sexual purity, notes that "centesimus et sexagesimus fructus de uno sunt semine castitatis" [(t)he fruit that is an hundredfold and that which is sixtyfold both spring from one seed, the seed of chastity].


93. "Ad Eustochium," CSEL 54, 163, 8-9; trans. Wright, "Letter 22 to Eustochium," 83. Jerome uses the term "secundum pudicitiae gradum" to describe widowhood, unlike the "secundum castitatis gradum" that Aldhelm uses to refer to chastity in Gwara, Pdv 161, 37. Such an appellation underscores Aldhelm's deliberate use of a very general term to name his second state.
particular clarity how broadly the semantic range of *castitas* can be stretched, and thus
with what facility a writer like Aldhelm can appropriate such a term to very different
ends.

1.5 Aldhelm's Three Degrees of Purity in the *Carmen de virginitate*

In the *Prosa de virginitate*, Aldhelm establishes some degree of
incommensurability between *virginitas* and *castitas*, based on whether or not a woman
had ever been married; that is, on the presumed state of her hymen. Such
incommensurability can exist because Aldhelm first names the two states, and then
defines the conditions underlying these states. This condition, however, does not obtain
in Aldhelm's poetic version of his treatise, the *Carmen de virginitate*. This is because
Aldhelm does not even include the terms *castitas* and *iugalitas* to define the two inferior
grades of purity: by granting a name only to the first state, Aldhelm betrays a clear
reluctance to define the inferior states at all:

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Humani generis triplex distantia fertur,
Quae modo per mundum triquadro cardine degit
Et studet in terris mercari regna Tonantis:
Denique nonnullos sortitur vita iugalis,
Qui recte vivunt concessa lege tororum
Et praecepta Dei toto conamine mentis
Conservare student thalami sub iure manentes;
Post haec castorum gradus alter et ordo secundus
Subsequitur, nupti qui iam conubia spernunt
Ac indulta sibi scindunt retinacula luxus
Lurida linquentes spurcae consortia carnis,
Ut castis proprium conservent moribus aevum,
Dum conexa prius thalamorum vincula rumpunt;
Tertia virgineis fulgescit vita lucernis,
Cuius praecellit praefatos infula ritus:
Mundani luxus calcans ludibria falsa
Virginitas summo virtutum vertice paret,
Dum soror angelicae constet castissima vitae,
In qua non regnat fallax petulantia saecli,
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Sed potius certat carnem frenare rebellem
Spiritus, ut tetras possit compescere noxas
Et facinus scelerum superans explodat inorme,
Quae plerumque solent ferratas vincere mentes,
Quamlibet existant praedurae cotis adinstar.

[There is said to be a three-fold diversity in the human race which now lives throughout the three corners of the world and strives on earth to obtain the kingdom of the Thunderer. Accordingly, matrimonial life receives some who, in the permitted law of wedlock, live their life virtuously, and by all the endeavours of their minds strive to preserve God's teachings while remaining under the law of marriage. There follows another grade and a second order of the chaste, who having once been married reject the union and sever the restraining bonds of indulgence allowed to them, abandoning the lurid associations of impure flesh so that they may preserve a lasting age (by means of their chaste customs) when they rend the chains of marriage previously enjoined. A third life glows in the lamp of virgins whose distinction surpasses the customs mentioned above. Virginity, treading upon the false frivolity of worldly indulgence, appears at the highest station of the virtues, since it is the most chaste sister of the angelic life: in her the false wantonness of this world does not hold sway, but rather her spirit struggles to curb the rebellious flesh so that it can constrain hideous sins, and thus, gaining victory, destroys the enormous act of sin, which is normally accustomed to overcome even iron-clad minds, even though they appear to be as strong as whetstone.]

Even though Aldhelm does use the term virginitas here to define the optimum state of purity, he eliminates any allusion to hymeneal intactness from its definition. As a result, Aldhelm does not exclude women who have had sexual relations from virginitas as he construes the term in the Carmen de virginitate. The verse text evidently changes the notion of purity found in Aldhelm's prose treatise. Aldhelm uses the Carmen de virginitate to emphasize one's attitudes towards God and the world—the latter associated with the flesh—as the necessary and sufficient signs of all of his states. Those who


95. Peter Brown offers this résumé of Paul's teaching on the flesh: "'The flesh' was not simply the body, an inferior other to the self, whose undisciplined stirrings might even at times receive a certain indulgent tolerance, as representing the natural claims of a physical being. . . . [S]omehow, as 'flesh,' the body's weaknesses and temptations echoed
choose the *vita iugalis* [matrimonial life], for example, and who "praecpta Dei toto conamine mentis / Conservare student" [by all the endeavours of their minds strive to preserve God's teachings] receive the poet's approbation.\textsuperscript{96} The "castorum . . . ordo secundus" [second order of the chaste] includes those "nupti qui iam conubia spernunt / Ac indulta sibi scindunt retinacula luxus / Lurida linquentes spurcae consortia carnis" [who having once been married reject the union and sever the restraining bonds of indulgence allowed to them, abandoning the lurid associations of impure flesh].\textsuperscript{97} In light of the definition of *virginitas* that follows, this involves more than simply repudiating marriage and intercourse. *Virginitas*, "soror angelicae . . . castissima vitae" [the most chaste sister of the angelic life] works to overcome the flesh "ut tetras possit compescere noxas" [so that it can constrain hideous sins]—not simply the sexual sin strongly implied by Aldhelm, but anything of the world, which separates one from God.\textsuperscript{98}

Aldhelm's reference to *virginitas* as the "soror angelicae . . . castissima vitae" [most chaste sister of the angelic life] is worth noting. Where *castitas* is Aldhelm's term to describe the second grade in his earlier prose work, it does not appear in the verse counterpart except as the genitive plural "castorum." The poet's use of the term

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{96}] Ehwald, *Cd v* 89-90; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 105.
\item[\textsuperscript{97}] Ehwald, *Cd v* 91 and 92-94; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 105.
\item[\textsuperscript{98}] Ehwald, *Cd v* 101 and 104; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 105.
\end{itemize}
"castissima" in his revised definition of virginitas makes clear that, as in the Prosa de virginitate, all terms relating to "chastity" or to the "chaste" are extremely flexible. In the Carmen de virginitate, words associated with castitas can refer, with a certain specificity, to anyone who has repudiated sexual intercourse. But as in the Prosa de virginitate, Aldhelm also uses castitas as a blanket term, which refers this time to any practice in accord with the will of God. The "castorum" of "castorum . . . ordo secundus" [the second order of the chaste] may, then, be best understood as a subjective rather than as an objective genitive; for Aldhelm, there are really three orders of the "chaste," comprising those who are married, formerly married, or who have never been married. This being the case, those women who live in devout, Christian wedlock are as castae [chaste] as those who have repudiated marriage or, indeed, as those who are called to virginitas.

As in the Prosa de virginitate, Aldhelm carefully observes that his tract is not intended to disparage those who "iuste vivunt castorum iure totorum" [live justly by the right of chaste marriage]. At the same time, the abbot links his saintly exemplars, who were blessed "castis moribus" [by means of their chaste customs] with those who have repudiated marriage and who conduct their lives "castis . . . moribus" [by means of their

99. Ehwald, Cdv 242; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 108. There follows an allusion to Old Testament marriage, dealt with at length by Augustine in De bono contigali. Aldhelm notes that

[our ancestors led an excellent life, and by holy inspiration proclaimed the future gifts of God, when the Saviour Christ blessed the world.]

chaste customs]. Aldhelm uses the same phrase, in the form "[m]oribus . . . castis," to refer to the means by which Chrysanthus and Daria live out their spiritual marriage: that is, without physical consummation. In addition, Aldhelm notes that Lucy rejects marriage "[m]ores ob castos" [because of her chaste customs]. The perfect union of divine and human will inherent in *castitas* both mirrors the oneness of will that Adam and Eve had lost in the Fall, and foreshadows the eternal life that awaits the faithful.

Aldhelm completes the incorporation of his divorced patrons into his discourse of purity by imbedding another element—readiness for martyrdom—in the *Prosa de virginitate* and in the *Carmen de virginitate* alike. Aldhelm uses his narratives of female virgins—who are almost invariably martyrs as well—to make this point. Just as a virgin can fall from *virginitas* through pride or from dressing seductively, so too can a divorced woman edge up the scale through her desire for martyrdom, even if that performance is never actually realized. Here, Aldhelm draws upon Ambrose's and Augustine's didactic strategies concerning virginity. Ambrose begins the second chapter of *De virginibus ad Marcellinam* with a panegyric of Agnes, a young virgin martyr whom Aldhelm also includes as an exemplar of virginity in his two treatises. Here, Ambrose establishes a necessary connection not just between the virgin and sexual innocence, but between the virgin and self-sacrifice in the name of Christian belief. Indeed, Ambrose maintains,

100. Ehwald, *CdV* 33 and 95; my translations. Rosier's translation, "by virtue of their chaste natures" (103) is misleading, since Aldhelm does not establish sanctity as a "fixed" quality (as exemplified by the *Psychomachia*-like combat between the virtues and vices that concludes the *Carmen de virginitate*). Rosier does not include the latter occurrence of the term in his translation.


"[n]on enim ideo laudabilis virginitas, quia et in martyribus reperitur, sed quia ipsa
martyres faciat" [virginity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs, but because
(it) itself makes martyrs].\textsuperscript{103}

In other words, for Ambrose, the worth of \textit{virginitas} arises from its position as the
genesis of martyrdom. But this is not all: the idea of a woman's readiness for martyrdom
not only bespeaks the complex nature of \textit{virginitas}, but also disrupts the reward system
attributed to the three traditional categories of sexual purity. Augustine, for instance,
concedes that any three-fold distinction of purity (in this case, of \textit{virginitas}, \textit{viduitas} and
\textit{iugalitas}) becomes impossibly murky when a woman's readiness for martyrdom is added
to the equation:

\begin{quote}
\textit{sed quid significet fecunditatis illa diuersitas, uiderint, qui haec melius
quam nos intellegunt: siue uirginalis uita in cento fructu sit, in sexageno
uidualis, in triceno autem coniugalis; siue centena fertilitas martyrio potius
inputetur, sexagenae continentiae, tricena conubio; siue uirginitas accedente
martyrio centenum fructum inpleat, sola uero in sexageno sit, coniugati
autem tricenum ferentes ad sexagenum perueniant, si martyres fuerint;
siue, quod probabilius mihi uidetur, quoniam diuinae gratiae multa sunt
munera et est aliud alio maius ac melius—unde dicit apostolus: imitamini
autem dona meliora—intellegendum est plura esse quam ut in tres
differentias distribui possint.}
\end{quote}

[Let those who understand these things better than we do investigate what the
distinction of fruitfulness signifies, whether the virginal life is found in the
hundredfold fruit, widowhood in the sixtyfold, and conjugal life in the thirtyfold;
or whether the hundredfold fruitfulness is rather attributed to martyrdom, the
sixtyfold to continence, and the thirtyfold to marriage; or whether virginity,
together with martyrdom, constitutes the hundredfold fruit, virginity alone is
discovered in the sixtyfold, but spouses, who bear the thirtyfold, advance to the

\textsuperscript{103.} \textit{De virginibus ad Marcellinam sororem suam libri tres}, in \textit{Sancti Ambrosii
col. 191; trans. H. de Romestin, "Concerning Virgins," in \textit{St. Ambrose: Select Works and
365.
sixtyfold if they become martyrs; or whether (and this seems more probable to me), since the gifts of divine grace are manifold, and one is greater and better than another (whence the Apostle says: "Strive for the greater gifts") it must be understood that they are too numerous to be divided into three categories.]  

For Augustine, then, the lines used to distinguish among the three categories can only be drawn with contingent fixity; the notion of a woman's readiness for martyrdom frustrates any effort to quantify degrees of purity. Aldhelm underscores this point with his use of the Old Testament Judith as the final exemplar in the Prosa de virginitate, and the last female exemplar in the Carmen de virginitate. In the biblical book of the same name, the widow Judith, in her plot to ensnare Holofernes, is ready to die in defense of her people: she is to enter the Assyrian camp unarmed. But she does so dressed like a harlot; for Aldhelm, her seductiveness therefore complicates her portrayal as a figure of exemplary purity. Lest any of the women at Barking get the idea that Aldhelm's inclusion of Judith might give them licence to adorn themselves similarly, Aldhelm explains that Judith lived "pia castitate" [in . . . devout chastity] after her husband Manasses's death. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the circumstances of the time in which she was living justified her mode of dress as part of her planned "seduction" of Holofernes. The ostentatiously dressed Judith triumphed over Holofernes not because she was lustful, but, Aldhelm observes, "quia hoc in arta Betuliae obsidione pro  


contribulibus dolitura compatientis affectu, non castitatis defectu fecisse memoratur"

[because she is known to have done this during the close siege of Bethulia, grieving for her kinsfolk with the affection of compassion and not through any disaffection from chastity]. Aldhelm is patently nervous about using a seductively dressed woman as an exemplar; as a result, he takes great pains to make it clear that Judith is an exception to the general rule that those who aspire to purity are not to parade about in seductive attire. In the spirit of Cyprian's "true" virgins, Judith does not harbor sexual desire. Even though she incites desire in Holofernes, it is not for the goal of intercourse, but of saving the Bethulians. Indeed, the Carmen de virginitate relates how Judith, embodying "[i]ntegritas . . . casta" [chaste integrity] in fact rejected Holofernes with "corpore puro" [her pure body] as well as with "virgineis . . . sagittis" [virginal arrows]. In his narratives of Judith, Aldhelm's task of adapting orthodox church tradition for Anglo-Saxon sisters living in an age of Christian conversion comes to its logical close in a formerly married figure who nevertheless embodies all the virtues of virginitas. However uneasy Aldhelm might have been about using Judith as an exemplar of virginitas, the abbot nonetheless made of her a model for all women—from the untouched to the divorced—who wished to maintain or enhance their status in the eyes of God.


CHAPTER 2

KING OSWALD'S HOLY HANDS: METONYMY AND THE MAKING OF A SAINT IN BEDE'S ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, completed in 731, includes the first recorded episodes from the life and death of Oswald, king of the Northumbrians.¹ In this text, Bede portrays Oswald as a holy warrior-king—both benevolent and battle-ready, humble and fierce. This Christian king, whom Bede clearly admires, nevertheless embodies a mixture of pagan Germanic kingship and Christian piety. Although Bede's portrayal of Oswald therefore presents uneasy paradoxes to some modern scholars, it in fact reveals that warrior kingship is, to Bede's mind, an ideal means of rule for an early English Christian monarch to undertake.² Indeed, Bede would have scarcely depicted

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¹Latin citations from Colgrave and Mynors will be given by book and chapter numbers, followed by page and line numbers. I have adopted Colgrave and Mynors's English translations unless otherwise noted; these will be cited by page and line numbers.

1. Two excellent monographs on Bede's career and works, including the *EH*, are George Hardin Brown's *Bede the Venerable* (Boston: Twayne Press, 1987), and Peter Hunter Blair's *The World of Bede*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Oswald in such unambiguously positive terms—and certainly not as a saint—had he any doubts about the king's righteousness. Through deeds ranging from fierce battle to contemplative prayer as depicted by Bede in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Oswald establishes his temporal power as well as his holiness.

Bede's representation of Oswald's body plays an important role in his construction of the king's sanctity. At several places in his account concerning the king, Bede gives one or both of Oswald's hands very close narrative attention. Through most of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede does not foreground the participation of hands in activities like fighting, almsgiving, and praying. Oswald's portrayal, however, is distinctive in its concentration of vignettes about hands. That Oswald's hands are so distinctively treated is certainly no textual accident; to the contrary, the textual emphasis that Bede places on these body parts, as well as on the actions in which they participate, are critical elements underlying his narrative creation of Oswald's holiness. In effect, the syncretism of warlike and peaceful qualities that characterize Oswald in the *Ecclesiastical History*, along with the particularly close ties between church and monarchy in force during his reign, are metonymically represented in the spectacle of the king's incorrupt hands—a display emphasizing the role that Oswald played to bring about Christianity's triumph in Anglo-Saxon England.

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observations concerning the development of Oswald's cult, in "Membra disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 97-127, at 97. See also Clare Stancliffe, "Oswald, 'Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,'" in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, 33-83.
2.1 Historiography and Hagiography in the *Ecclesiastical History*

An examination of some principles behind Bede's historiographic writing, and the relationship between Bede's historiography and hagiography, provides a foundation for understanding how the narrative representation of Oswald's hands operates discursively in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Bede's historiographic method as preserved in the *Ecclesiastical History* has been extensively studied. It is by now a truism that the information Bede presents in this work produces only a partial narrative of the early English church, focusing largely on Northumbria while leaving the rest of Anglo-Saxon England underrepresented. The extent of Bede's indebtedness to the historiographers Eusebius (whose own ecclesiastical history Bede knew in Rufinus's Latin translation) and Gildas, to the Old Testament book of Samuel, and to works by Augustine, Isidore, Gregory the Great, and Gregory of Tours has been a subject of scholarly debate for years. Examining Bede's understanding of the *vera lex historiae*, the true law of history, 


Roger D. Ray grounds Bede's text in a historiographic tradition rooted in the mores of sacred history as transmitted by the writers of the four gospels and made evident through Bede's biblical commentaries. Following Augustine's *De consensu evangeliistarum*, Ray observes, Bede writes with a primary concern for *res* [matter], a term that "expresses not the literal occurrence but the edifying shape of the actual happening." Bede thus subordinates "fact" and chronology to this end. Furthermore, Ray notes, the tenets of *vera lex historiae* "required that the narrator make his point through the use of widely familiar materials. What mattered was the message of narrative, not its details. If details were corrected for their own sake and thus made strange to the audience . . . the narrative might lose verisimilitude and become rhetorically ineffective."

Here, an important connection can be made between Bede's historiography and his hagiography. Bede does distinguish between the two types of writing; both are found in the *Ecclesiastical History*. The method that Bede used to compile material of each genre, however, is similar. For instance, the *vera lex historiae* involves the compiling of ____________


5. "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 131.


7. That Bede differentiates between *historia* and *vita* is clear upon examination of his accounts of the saintly bishop Cuthbert. Bede wrote three narratives concerning Cuthbert: an *opus geminatum* comprising a verse and a later prose account of the bishop's life, as well as the episodic account in *EH* 4.27-4.32. In the conclusion to his study of Cuthbert's miracles in Bede's prose *Vita Cuthberti* and in the *EH*, Karl Lutterkort observes that "in [Bede's] *vitae* all the attention is focused on the saint himself, his acts
historical narratives not simply by a single "author," but by a community of stakeholders in the historiographical project. The methods behind Bede's historiography are therefore the same as those claimed for hagiographic writing.  

In the Preface to the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede notes that he has relied on various written and oral sources for his accounts of the rise of the English church. Bede first cites the contributions of his principal informant, the abbot Albinus, who confirmed information concerning the Gregorian mission to Kent "uel monimentis litterarum uel seniorum traditio" [(either) from written records or from the old traditions]. Bede then acknowledges several other sources for his work, both named and anonymous, concerning events for which they were either eyewitnesses or of which they had some and his relation with Higher Forces; in the hagiographical stories in the *Historia ecclesiastica* more stress is laid on the story or event as such and its place within the framework of English history, as Bede sees it." See "Beda Hagiographicus: Meaning and Function of Miracle Stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* and the *Historia ecclesiastica,*" in *Beda Venerabilis*, 81-106, at 105. The verse text of Bede's *vita* of Cuthbert is in *Bedas metrische vita Sancti Cuthberti*, ed. Werner Jaager, Palaestra 198 (Leipzig: Mayer and Muller GMBH, 1935). The prose version is in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 142-307.

8. Bede states that the material used to put together both his *vita* of Cuthbert and the accounts of the holy bishop in the *Ecclesiastical History* come "partim ex eis quae de illo prius a fratribus ecclesiae Lindisfarneensis scripta reperti adsumi, simpliciter fidei historiae quam legebam accommodans, partim uero ea quae certissima fidelium uirorum adestatione per me ipse cognoscere potui, solleter adicere curau" [partly from what I had previously found written about him by the brethren of the church at Lindisfarne, accepting the story I read in simple faith; but in part I also made it my business to add with care what I was able to learn myself from the trustworthy testimony of reliable witnesses]: Colgrave and Mynors Praefatio, 6, 12-16; trans. 7, 14-18.


other form of knowledge. Finally, Bede highlights the link between his understanding of the *vera lex historiae* and the nature of the *Ecclesiastical History's* authorship when he implores his imagined reader not to impute to him alone any error that the text may contain. In accordance with the *vera lex historiae*, Bede writes, "simpliciter ea quae fama uulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus" [I have simply sought to commit to writing what I have collected from common report, for the instruction of posterity]. Bede maintains that his working of such "common report" into the *Ecclesiastical History's* fabric is done with the interests of his imagined audience in mind: the text includes, he states, those things "quae memoratu digna atque incolis grata credideram" [which I believe to be worthy of remembrance and likely to be welcome to the inhabitants].

Bede's refusal to accept sole responsibility for the material included in the *Ecclesiastical History* underscores the notion that the text's authorship is to a certain extent communal. It was, of course, ultimately incumbent on Bede to decide who his informants would be and how he would treat information he received concerning both recent and remote events. But his stated reliance on myriad sources and his claim to have

11. Colgrave and Mynors Praefatio, 6, 19-21; trans. 7, 21-23. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill notes, however, that this statement may refer specifically to the narrative of Cuthbert just as readily as it might generally apply to the *Ecclesiastical History*. Wallace-Hadrill observes that Bede borrowed this phrase from Jerome's *Adversus Helvidium de Mariae virginitate perpetua*. See *De perpetua virginitate B. Mariae, adversus Helvidium, liber unus*, in *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri opera*, PL 23 (n.p., 1845), cols. 183-206, at col. 187C; see also Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of the English People": *A Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988; reprint 1991), 5. This borrowing, in its implicit appeal to Jerome's *auctoritas*, adds patristic weight to Bede's stated methodology and thus serves to reinforce the text's credibility.

shaped the project both to edify and to please his audience (however rhetorical a trope this is) indicate that Bede would not likely have incorporated material that would have provoked significant disagreement among the "incolis" [inhabitants]—especially among his informants. In this respect, Bede's historiographical method is the same as that underlying the writing of hagiographic texts. Indeed, Thomas J. Heffernan's exploration of what he calls "sacred biography" (the term he uses instead of "hagiography") emphasizes that "[t]he author for sacred biography is the community, and consequently the experience presented by the narrative voice is collective."\textsuperscript{13} Acknowledging that saints' cults tend to have local origins, Heffernan argues that even with the advent of institutionalized canonization (that is, several centuries after Bede wrote the \textit{Ecclesiastical History}), the official version of a saint's narrative, recast to conform to Vatican policy, "could not conflict too greatly with the original community's stories lest it risk alienating itself from its cultic center."\textsuperscript{14} Heffernan uses the term "audience" to refer to "the community of belief" that has (an apparently common) interest in the veneration of a given figure; he claims that this "community" may be (somewhat paradoxically) an individual, such as a bishop who commissions a given \textit{vita}, or a group of unspecified individuals, "a congregation."\textsuperscript{15} Heffernan's definitions of "author" and "audience" highlight the complex relationship between these two terms. In effect, audiences can

\textsuperscript{13} Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19.


\textsuperscript{15} Sacred Biography, 19.
exert varying degrees of "authorial" control over a given work, in the sense that they do influence the particular shape that a writer gives to a text.\(^\text{16}\)

Some degree of authorial control over Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was wielded by the Northumbrian king Ceolwulf, to whom Bede addresses the work:

Gloriosissimo regi Ceoluulfo Beda famulus Christi et presbyter.  
Historiam gentis Anglorum ecclestiasticam, quam nuper edideram,  
libentissime tibi desideranti, rex, et prius ad legendum ac probandum  
transmisi, et nunc ad transcribendum ac plenius ex tempore meditandum  
retransmitto.

[To the most glorious King Ceolwulf, Bede, servant of Christ and priest.  Your Majesty has asked to see the *History of the English Church and Nation* which I have lately published.  It was with pleasure, sire, that I submitted it for your perusal and criticism on a former occasion; and with pleasure I now send it once again, for copying and fuller study, as time may permit.]\(^\text{17}\)

Apart from Bede's reference here to Ceolwulf's reading and commenting on his text, however, little is known about the king's influence upon the development of the *Ecclesiastical History*.\(^\text{18}\) It is nevertheless difficult to imagine what particular influence laypeople such as Ceolwulf might have had upon the text's creation.\(^\text{19}\) To compose his

\(\text{16. This has already been seen in Chapter 1, where the "patronage" of the sisters of Barking monastery was clearly behind Aldhelm's choices of and modifications to the saints' *vitae* and *passiones* that he used to authorize his replacement of *viduitas* [widowhood] with *castitas* [chastity] as the second state of sexual purity.}\)

\(\text{17. Colgrave and Mynors Praefatio, 2, 1-6; trans. 3, 1-7.}\)


\(\text{19. In his preface to the *EH*, however, Bede tells Ceolwulf that "satisque studium tuae sinceritatis amplector, quo non solum audiendis scripturae sanctae uerbis aurem sedulus accommodas uerum etiam noscendis priorum gestis siue dictis, et maxime nostrae gentis uirorum inlustrium, curam uigilanter inpedis" [I gladly acknowledge the unfeigned enthusiasm with which, not content merely to lend an attentive ear to hear the words of Holy Scripture, you devote yourself to learn the sayings and doings of the men}\)
text, Bede required information—that is, "fact" according to the conditions that he understood to constitute the *vera lex historiae* [true law of history]. As mentioned previously, Bede relied on numerous informants to gather information for him. But given Bede's concern with *auctoritas* and his belief in the ultimate textual authority of the Scriptures, it is difficult to imagine a role for informants who were not steeped in scriptural learning. Paul Meyvaert argues that

> Though he feels the need to submit to the normal "law" of history in cases where a full control of the evidence is not possible, Bede nowhere identifies himself with the *vulgi*, but rather with the *docti* or *eruditi* whose task is to try and determine *quomodo se veritas habet, quid verisimilius est*, through a critical examination of the *auctoritates* on which a given statement depends.²⁰

Bede writes that the narratives concerning the Northumbrian church from its beginnings to his own time, when not stemming from his personal knowledge of these events, come "non uno quolibet auctore sed fidelis innumerorum testimium, qui haec scire uel meminisse poterant" [not from any one source but from the faithful testimony of innumerable witnesses, who either knew or remembered these things].²¹ This mass of learned witnesses would have provided the author with the most accurate information possible. Indeed, Bede's concern for precision is not lost in this text, for his understanding of the

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of old, and more especially the famous men of our own race]: Colgrave and Mynors Praefatio 2, 6-10; trans. 3, 7-11.

²⁰. "Bede the Scholar," in *Famulus Christi*, 40-69, at 67. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill notes that Bede's use of *incolis* to refer to the audience of the *EH* leaves unclear whether Bede means the inhabitants of Britain generally or ecclesiastics; in the end, he reasons that "[t]he latter seems acceptable provided that one does not suppose that such communities were cut off from intercourse with the surrounding secular world": see *Commentary*, 6.

²¹. Colgrave and Mynors Praefatio, 6, 8-9; trans. 7, 10-12.
vera lex historiae as applied to the Ecclesiastical History positions veritas [truth] as its most important component. His disclaimer thus functions as a recognition that his information likely contains some degree of factual error stemming from the opinio vulgi inevitably contained within it, and also absolves Bede of responsibility for these inaccuracies.

2.2 Bede's Ideals of Christian Kingship

The material concerning King Oswald in the Ecclesiastical History reflects Bede's concern for the vera lex historiae and for the auctoritas of the work's sources overall. The episodes comprising this ur-narrative of the saintly Oswald portray the monarch as a warrior, a generous almsgiver, and a man of prayer. Although Bede does not draw on any particular vita for his narrative portrait of the Northumbrian ruler, he relies on his principal written authority—Scripture—for its development. Bede's debt to the first book of Samuel (which later became known as the first book of Kings) and to his commentary upon it for his notion of holy kingship has been well documented by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill and Judith McClure. The explanation that both scholars offer for Bede's

22. Ray, "Bede's Vera lex historiae," 13; see also p. 79, n. 11 above. Ray points out that Bede's particular use of vera lex historiae is unique only to some parts of the Ecclesiastical History (different principles apply to the Aidan narrative in EH 3.17) and outlines how it differs both from Jerome's use of the concept in Adversus Helvidium and Bede's adaptation of it in his commentary on Luke; see "Bede's Vera lex historiae," 10-11. Bede's commentary on Luke's gospel, In Lucae evangelium expositio, is in Bedae Venerabilis opera 2.3, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), 3-425. Ray also makes an important distinction between the fama vulgans that Bede uses as a source and the factually erroneous opinio vulgi, which he does not, at 17-19.


portrayal of a warlike Christian king—the qualities of "warlike" and "Christian"
appearing somewhat oxymoronic to modern critics—is that the ideal Old Testament king
combines concern for his people's welfare (including the conquest of enemies) with
obedience to God. Indeed, should a monarch lack one of these qualities—such as Saul,
who lacked obedience—disaster strikes. McClure particularly highlights the importance
of humility to a successful warrior-king: she observes that in Bede's commentary, "[t]he
career of Saul showed quite clearly the success in battle which attended a king who
followed God's commands, as well as the ignominious failure and defeat, and divine
rejection, consequent upon disobeying the word of a prophet." Kingly humilitas is
ultimately oboedientia to the rex regum [king of kings] and thus, by extension, to earthly
representatives of God's church.

25. Bede's portrayal of the warrior Oswald contrasts with his portraits of such
"monk-kings" as Oswiu and Sebhi, who abdicated (or at least intended to abdicate) their
kingly offices to enter a monastery or go on pilgrimage to Rome. See Wallace-Hadrill,
Early Germanic Kingship, 87-91, and Alan Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," in Ideal
and Reality, 130-53, at 146. For more complete discussion of monk-kings, see Clare
Stancliffe, "Kings Who Opted Out," in Ideal and Reality, 154-76, and Susan J. Ridyard,


Given such a model of ideal kingship, it is therefore hardly a coincidence that Bede frequently depicts Oswald interacting with a prophet of his own: the Irish bishop Aidan. A cleric brought to northern Britain at the king's request and, like his patron, later the object of a saint's cult, Aidan is portrayed as an ideal royal advisor in the Ecclesiastical History. Bede relates that when Oswald first summoned a bishop to minister to his people, the Irish sent another missionary whose teachings the Northumbrians did not accept. In this narrative, Aidan's disposition diametrically contrasts with that of the first bishop. Because Aidan is "gratia discretionis, quae uirtutum mater est, ante omnia probabatur inbutus" [pre-eminently endowed with the grace of (discernment), which is the mother of all virtues], he is consecrated bishop and sent to Northumbria. Since Aidan possesses the gift of discretio [discernment], Oswald would be very unwise not to heed his bishop's counsel. Indeed, Bede's narrative casts the bond between king and clerical advisor as one of perfect concord: Bede at least does not suggest that disharmony ever sours the relationship between the two men or between church and monarchy, the institutions that these men metonymically represent.

Aidan's counsel, however, is not always heeded over the course of the Ecclesiastical History. For example, after Oswald's death, Aidan becomes advisor to the Deiran king Oswine. When Oswine chides Aidan for giving one of his best horses to a beggar, Aidan, unruffled, explains his action in terms of the superior worth of the poor

28. Colgrave and Mynors 3.5, 228, 27-28; trans. 229, 30-32. I have changed Colgrave and Mynors's translation of "discretio" from "discretion" to the more precise term "discernment." For more on the significance of discretio for Bede, see Wallace-Hadrill, Commentary, 96.
In plain view of Aidan, Oswine then gives one of his swords to a thegn and asks Aidan pardon for dictating what and to whom the bishop should give the king's goods. Alarmed and finally tear-stricken, Aidan tells an Irish-speaking priest in their own tongue "'[s]cio . . . quia non multo tempore uicturus est rex; numquam enim ante haec uidi humilem regem. Vnde animaduerto illum citius ex hac uita rapiendum; non enim digna est haec gens talem habere rectorem'" ["I know that the king will not live long; for I never before saw a humble king. Therefore I think that he will very soon be snatched from this life; for this nation does not deserve to have such a ruler"].

Bede reports that the "dira antistitis praesagia" [bishop's gloomy forebodings] were soon fulfilled when Oswine died at the hands of Oswiu's reeve Æthelwine; Aidan, apparently heartbroken, himself died only twelve days later. It turns out, then, that _humilitas_ in the _Ecclesiastical History_ is not always synonymous with obedience to church authority. Although the text states that Oswine's key virtue is in fact _humilitas_, it then offers Bede's account (or, rather, cautionary tale) of Oswine's sword-giving and his ultimate downfall as a prime illustration of this quality.

29. "Cui statim episcopus 'Quid loqueris' inquit, 'rex? Num tibi carior est ille filius equae quam ille filius Dei?'" [The bishop at once replied, "O King, what are you saying? Surely this son of a mare is not dearer to you than that son of God?"]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.14, 258, 17-18; trans. 259, 18-19.


32. "Cuius inter ceteras uirtutis et modestiae et, ut ita dicam, specialis benedictionis glorias etiam maxima fuisse fertur humilitas, ut uno probare sat erit exemplo" [Among all the other graces of virtue and modesty with which, if I may say so,
In this context, *humilitas* is not always an unambiguously positive trait in Bede's kings; in fact, this passage implies that some kind of fundamental disobedience on Oswine's part ultimately contributed to his treacherous death. It simply appears that Oswine misunderstands rather than disobeys Aidan, interpreting his bishop's giving away the horse as a sign that he too should give his possessions to those who have less material wealth than he does. But on closer examination, Oswine's generosity is clearly indiscriminate: he proffers a weapon to a subordinate (which action narratively foreshadows the nature of the king's demise). What Aidan likely recognizes in Oswine's action is that, unlike his former patron Oswald, Oswine in a very real sense divests himself of his role as the people's protector. The breach in Oswine's *oboedientia* thus emanates from his abdication of one of his principal responsibilities as Deiran monarch—and defender of the Christian faith. Indeed, Aidan understands the requirements of Oswine's Christian kingship much better than the monarch himself.\(^{33}\) This is nevertheless not to say that only warlike kings fare well in the *Ecclesiastical History*. While monarchs like Oswine and the monkish Sigeberht, who meets the Mercian army with a stick rather than with a sword, meet violent ends (in the latter's case, along with his warriors), Cenred of Mercia ends his life in peace after renouncing his

\[^{33}\text{That Aidan comes from the Irish church and upholds its misdating of Easter does not rob the bishop of any worth as royal prophet and counsellor. Bede painstakingly emphasizes that he recognizes an important distinction between Aidan's impeccable Christian virtues and the bishop's disagreement with the Roman church's Paschal calculations. See Colgrave and Mynors 3.17, 264, 34-266, 26; trans. 265, 35-267, 32.}\]
throne and going on pilgrimage to Rome. At issue for Bede is the importance that a king be attuned to what God, through his ecclesiastical representatives (whether named or unnamed), would have the monarch do under specific political circumstances.

However Bede may rhetorically cast the relationship between kings Oswald and Oswine and bishop Aidan, a key thread running through the *Ecclesiastical History* is that of the symbiotic relationship between church and monarchy: each institution relies on the other for its perpetuation and expansion. N. J. Higham suggests that Christianity supplanted other belief systems in early Anglo-Saxon England primarily because the institutional church offered "useful mechanisms for social control and political advantage" unavailable from the structures of pagan religion; kings therefore adopted these mechanisms in their quests for expanded territory and power. A continuously harmonious relationship between church and monarchy was thus essential to Oswald's success as king, and paramount to Bede's portrayal of him as a saintly figure.

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35. *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 2. Higham argues that Oswald's choice of the Christian God was motivated by his desire to distance himself from his apostate half-brother Eanfrith and "his death at the hands of his enemies [which] discredited the non-Christian cults he had once again begun to favour"; he also argues that Oswald's choice of an Ionan bishop rather than a Roman prelate stemmed from the king's wish to distance himself from his Deiran uncle Edwin. See *The Convert Kings*, 209 and 210.
2.3 Arms and the (Holy) Man: Bede's Textual Construction of a Saintly King

In the Ecclesiastical History, Bede metonymically represents the intimate tie between church and monarchy in his images of hands and arms.\textsuperscript{36} Such significance of hands and arms is not limited to the portrayal of Oswald found there: Bede uses various other figures in the Ecclesiastical History to demonstrate the narrative importance of these body parts in establishing and reinforcing ties between the two institutions. For instance, the exemplary Northumbrian king Edwin (d. 633) converts to Christianity after he has a vision. While in exile to escape the predations of his adversary Æthelfrith, Edwin learns that his host, Rædwald, intends to kill him. A spirit then appears to Edwin, promising the exiled king both physical and spiritual salvation if he would believe in the one who could make such salvation possible. Edwin agrees to believe; thereafter, the spirit "confestim . . . eo inposuit dexteram suam capiti" [immediately laid his right hand on his (i.e., Edwin's) head] and tells him to remember his promise when this sign is made once again.\textsuperscript{37} Although Rædwald changes his mind about killing his guest, Edwin nevertheless hesitates to accept the preaching of bishop Paulinus, who had been trying for some time to turn Edwin to Christianity. Finally, Paulinus "inposuit dexteram capiti eius et, an hoc signum agnosceret, requisuit" [placed his right hand on (his; i.e, Edwin's)


\textsuperscript{37} Colgrave and Mynors 2.12, 178, 35-180, 1; trans. 179, 38-181, 1.
head, and asked him if he recognized this sign]. The bishop then reminds the trembling monarch that, among other divine benefits, "hostium manus, quos timuisti, Domino donante euasisti" ["you have escaped with God's help from the hands of the foes you feared"].

These incidents metonymically focus on hands as the means by which Edwin is held captive by his enemies. They also make it clear that the right hand is the instrument that reverses Edwin's fortunes: it is the *signum* of his earthly and spiritual salvation. The hand and its performance of the two blessings, first by the spirit and then by Paulinus, represent the intimate tie between king and bishop—indeed, between monarchy and church—that provides the base for the institutionalization of Christianity in Northumbria. To reinforce the right hand's narrative importance in this historical context of conversion, Bede reports that Edwin's chief priest Coifi, after casting aside his pagan beliefs for Paulinus's Christian teachings, "Accinctus . . . gladio accepit lanceam in manu" [girded with a sword . . . took a spear in his hand] and then proceeded on the king's stallion to destroy idols.

Bede observes that "Non . . . licuerat pontificem sacrorum uel arma ferre uel praeter in equa equitare" [a high priest of their religion was not allowed to carry arms or to ride except on a mare]. In this scene, Coifi's carrying weapons and riding the stallion are therefore acts that display his conversion to the Christian faith. While Bede emphasizes the importance of both acts to Coifi's "official" renunciation of paganism, he

38. Colgrave and Mynors 2.12, 180, 33-34; my translation.


40. Colgrave and Mynors 2.13, 184, 32-33; trans. 185, 35-36.

41. Colgrave and Mynors 2.13, 184, 31-32; trans. 185, 34-35.
specifically draws attention to the (implied right) hand by mentioning it as Coifi's means of carrying the spear, rather than merely implying the hand's involvement in transporting it. Through this narrative strategy (along with its allusion to St. Martin's propensity for idol-smashing), Coifi's hand is directly involved in the subversion of pagan belief and the establishment of Christianity in Edwin's kingdom.

The significance of Bede's focus on hands can be more fully illustrated with reference to other passages in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Bede writes that after Edwin's death, the British king Cædwalla justly struck down the apostate kings Osric of Deira and Eanfrith of Bernicia, although with "impia manu."\(^{42}\) Colgrave and Mynors call attention to the word's metonymic function when they translate "impia manu" as "with unrighteous violence."\(^{43}\) But in this instance, "manus" also signifies the part of the body holding the weapon that slew these apostate rulers. That "manus" means both "hand" and "violence" here is a signal that any occurrence of the Latin term in Bede's text might carry multiple meanings—not just any meanings, but such indicating that Bede might place important narrative weight on his depictions of hands. This is of special consequence to his account of Oswald, where portrayals of hands are particularly concentrated.\(^{44}\)

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42. Colgrave and Mynors 3.1, 212, 17-18.

43. Colgrave and Mynors 3.1, 212, 17; trans. 213, 21-22.

44. On the multiple significations of *manus*, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. "manus." *Manus*, of course, does not always carry multiple significations, and does not always make reference to hands. For example, *manus* is often properly translated as "violence" in a way that does not highlight the involvement of the hands in violent action. For instance, Bede writes that once Lupus and Germanus had defeated Pelagian sympathizers in debate, the "populus arbiter uix manus continet" [people who were judging found it hard to refrain from violence]: Colgrave and Mynors 1.17, 58, 10; trans. 59, 10-11.] *Manus* also denotes a group of people, whether armed or not. *EH* 2.7 notes
At several different places in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede gives at least one, if not both, of Oswald's arms very close attention. Through most of the text, Bede does not foreground the participation of hands in such activities as fighting. Oswald's portrayal is distinct, however, in its concentration of vignettes about hands. The arms themselves are as important as the gestures in which they participate, highlighting the qualities that make Oswald an ideal—and holy—early Anglo-Saxon king. The first focus occurs just before Oswald engages in his victorious fight against Cædwalla at Heavenfield, the battle that establishes Oswald's supremacy over the British warleader. Bede notes that just prior to the battle, a makeshift cross was constructed and a hole made in which to place it. At this

that when the ill bishop Mellitus had asked to be placed in the path of the flames ravaging Canterbury, "[i]bi ergo perlatus obsequentum manibus episcopus" [the bishop was carried to this spot by his followers]: Colgrave and Mynors 2.7, 158, 1-2; trans. 159, 2-3. Bede relates that when Ecgfrith sent his troops to attack Ireland, "ita ut ne ecclesiis quidem aut monasteriis manus parceret hostilis" [his hostile (band) spared neither churches nor monasteries]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.26, 426, 4-5; trans. 427, 4-5.

In contrast, there are instances in the *Ecclesiastical History* where translation of *manus* as "hands" (in the accusative plural) is perfectly acceptable even when other translations are possible. This can be seen in several instances where Colgrave and Mynors do not translate *dare manus* in the very literal sense of "to give one's hands." Bede notes that the famine that prompted Vortigern's call for help to the Saxons caused many of the Britons to give themselves up to the plundering Irish, and observes that this famine "multos eorum coegit uictas infestis praedonibus dare manus" [compelled many of them to surrender (lit., "to give their fettered hands") to the plundering foe]: Colgrave and Mynors 1.14, 46, 2-3; trans. 47, 2-3. When the Angles, Saxons and Jutes attacked the Britons, some of the latter were captured and killed, while "alii fame confecti procedentes manus hostibus dabant" [others, exhausted by hunger, came forward and submitted themselves (lit., "gave their hands") to the enemy]: Colgrave and Mynors 1.15, 52, 22-23; trans. 53, 24-25. Once Wilfrid had introduced Roman church customs to England, Bede recounts, the Irish living there "aut his manus darent aut suam redirent ad patriam" [either gave way (lit., "gave their hands") or returned to their own land]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.28, 316, 29-30; trans. 317, 27. Regarding Theodore's archbishopric, Bede writes that "primus erat in archiepiscopis, cui omnis Anglorum ecclesia manus dare consentiret" [(h)e was the first of the archbishops whom the whole English Church consented to obey (lit. "to give their hands"): Colgrave and Mynors 4.2, 332, 8-9; trans. 333, 8-9. This last quotation alludes to the act of consecration, where the placing of hands in the archbishop's lap is part of the ceremony.
point, the account continues, Oswald "ipse fide feruens hanc arripuerit ac foueae
inposuerit atque utraque manu erectam tenuerit, donec adgesto a militibus puluere terrae
figeretur" [seized the cross himself in the ardour of his faith, placed it in the hole, and
held it upright with both hands (lit., "with each hand") until the soldiers had heaped up
the earth and fixed it in position].

In this vignette, Oswald's two hands are narratively
brought into sharp relief as they hold the cross in place. These are, of course, the same
hands that soon lead the king, who had notably come "cum paruo exercitu, sed fide
Christi munito" [with an army, small in numbers but strengthened by their faith in
Christ], to victory. This fact strengthens Bede's point that it is clearly with God's help
that Oswald's forces overcome those of Cædwalla.

45. Colgrave and Mynors 3.2, 214, 6-8; trans. 215, 6-9.

46. Colgrave and Mynors 3.1, 214, 9; trans. 215, 9-10.

47 The Old English poems Judith and Exodus portray the use of hands to
perpetrate righteous violence in God's name, especially through the phrase "purh mine
hand" [through my hand]. Displaying the head of the Assyrian general Holofernes,
whom she has just decapitated, Judith uses the phrase to indicate the means by which
God signifies the Bethulian people's eventual victory over the Assyrians: see Judith, ed.
Mark Griffith (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 198b. Similarly, Moses
indicates to his troops that it is "purh mine hand" that God desires to grant the Israelites a
decisive victory over the Egyptians; the text later indicates that it is "purh Moyses hand"
[through the hand of Moses] that the waters of the Red Sea, having been parted through
Moses's manual gesture, then fall upon and drown Pharaoh's troops. See Exodus, ed.
both poems, the hand is as much a pledge of a fulfillment of God's promise as it is a
material means of accomplishing God's will. This is not the case in Beowulf, however,
where Beowulf uses "purh mine hand" to describe his slaying of a ferocious seabeast with
a sword during his swimming contest with Breca—an accomplishment which, he says,
"me gyfe weard" [was given to me] by an unnamed agent. See Beowulf, ed. F.
Klaeber, 3d ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), 558b and 555b; my
translation.
Whatever factors may have been responsible for the discrepancy in numbers between the two armies (poor timing, tactical miscalculation, or plain bad luck), Bede portrays the king as the fortunate recipient of divine favor. Indeed, Bede's account relates that Oswald is divinely granted the ability, under rather unfavorable circumstances, to defeat another Christian king who "quamuis nomen et professionem haberet Christiani, adeo tamen erat animo ac moribus barbarus, ut ne sexui quidem muliebri uel innocuae paruulorum parceret aetati" [although a Christian by name and profession, was nevertheless a barbarian in heart and disposition and spared neither women nor innocent children].

Here, Cædwalla's savage conduct contrasts with Oswald's cross-planting action, which is recounted two chapters later. In effect, Bede masks the brutality that Oswald and his forces showed to the British warriors—and probably also to Britons as defenseless as those Anglo-Saxon women and children killed by Cædwalla's men. In Bede's final analysis, this battle is a just war pitting the righteous Oswald against a particularly brutal king who does not really deserve to be called a Christian.

Oswald's holy hands, in contrast with Cædwalla's "impia manu," are quite literally "in touch" with God, ardently seizing pieces of wood representing the cross onto which the body of Christ was nailed. Moreover, Bede's association of Oswald with the cross evokes


49. This portrayal also produces a very favorable comparison between Oswald and his saintly predecessor Edwin, whose reign was characterized by a peace rumored to be so complete that "mulier una cum recens nato paruulo uellet totam perambulare insulam a mari ad mare, nullo se ledente ualeret" [a woman with a new-born child could walk throughout the island from sea to sea and take no harm]: Colgrave and Mynors 2.16, 192, 23-25; trans. 193, 23-24.

50. In the cross-planting passage, Bede notes that Oswald performed three particular actions upon the cross with his hands: he "arripuerit" [seized], "inposuerit"
images of the devout convert-emperor Constantine, who won his definitive military victory under the sign of the cross.51

Bede reinforces the connection that was established between church and monarchy during Edwin's reign in the narrative concerning Oswald's Easter banquet with Bishop Aidan: indeed, the relationship between Oswald and Aidan mirrors that between Edwin and his own bishop, Paulinus. Bede uses the banquet scene to highlight the principal components of Oswald's exemplary kingship. The author claims that "[q]uo regni culmine sublimatus, nihilominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit" [(t)hough he wielded supreme power over the whole land, he was (nevertheless) always wonderfully humble, kind, and generous to the poor and to strangers]: this characterization of Oswald evokes the peace associated with Edwin's reign and contrasts yet again with Cædwalla's brutishness.52 Bede subsequently reports that both Oswald and Aidan "iamiamque essent manus ad panem benedicendum missuri" [had just raised their hands to ask a blessing on the bread] when one of the king's ____________

[placed], and then "tenuerit" [held] it: Colgrave and Mynors 3.2, 214, 6,7; trans. 215, 6,7. The violent nature of these gestures suggests Oswald killing someone with a sword rather than placing a cross in the ground, but the apparent lack of excess in this use of force (as compared with Cædwalla's uncontained brutality) combined with its ecclesiastical overtones portrays Oswald's measured violence as ultimately righteous.

51. Comparisons with Constantine, however, are limited when Bede's story of Oswald is compared with Rufinus's account of Constantine's victory in Book 9 of his Ecclesiastical History. While emphasis on the sign of the cross, conversion, and on Constantine's right hand are found here, I agree with George Brown's observation that "Bede does not expressly call attention to the typology." See Bede the Venerable, 92. Rufinus's translation of Eusebius is in Eusebius Werke, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 9, vol. 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908), 827, 26-839, 9.

52. Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 8-10; trans. 231, 9-11. I have added "nevertheless," which Colgrave and Mynors omit from their translation.
officers enters to say that a multitude of paupers is seeking alms. In this image, Bede focuses on both Oswald's and Aidan's hands as they raise them in prayer, emphasizing the piety of both men. Oswald immediately orders the food to be distributed and the silver plate on which the food sits to be broken up and given away.

Oswald's command then inspires Aidan to an action that will have long-lasting significance: the bishop, "delectatus tali facto pietatis, adprehendit dexteram eius et ait: 'Numquam inueterescat haec manus'" [delighted with this pious act, grasped him by the right hand, and said, "May this hand never decay"]. What follows in the narrative underscores Bede's particular construction of Oswald's sanctity. Nowhere does Bede state that Oswald's goodness accounts for the hand's later incorruptibility; instead, he attributes this phenomenon to Aidan. In other words, Bede represents the preservation of the king's otherwise corruptible flesh as an answer to Aidan's request: "Numquam inueterescat haec manus" [May this hand never decay]. To this effect, Bede notes that "[q]uod et ita iuxta uotum benedictionis eius prouenit" [(h)is blessing and his prayer were fulfilled in this way], signalling that Aidan's words are no idle wish, but manifest themselves in the miracle of the hand's incorruption.

Oswald's act of giving receives Aidan's approbation in the form of a blessing, which then is transformed into a permanent physical sign of the king's sanctity. The banquet scene makes it clear that Oswald's act of charity is not a literally "hands-on" undertaking for the monarch: as befits a king, Oswald orders it but does not execute it himself. Oswald's purported generosity thus arises as a result of his speech act rather than through his own manual labor. He commands, and his request is carried out by others' hands. Oswald's apparently characteristic generosity is later commemorated with a visible "proof" of the king's sanctity—the right hand that Aidan grasps and upon which the bishop confers incorruption. Evidently, Aidan's words, "[n]umquam inueterescat haec manus," are no idle wish. In a sense, this "miracle" and the sanctity it involves are Aidan's, not Oswald's.

Aidan's role in the incorruptibility of Oswald's limb illustrates a fundamental component of any future claims to Oswald's sainthood—the king's strong ties to the church. Through the banquet scene, Bede highlights the church's claim to Oswald's holiness through Aidan. The conferral of saintly status is not possible without the sponsorship of a church: in Anglo-Saxon England, local churches determined who was a "saint" long before canonization became a practice institutionalized by the Catholic Church. In the case of Oswald, Bede made a case for the king's sanctity in part because Aidan had blessed Oswald's hand, because that hand was later found incorrupt in keeping with Aidan's blessing, and because Bede greatly admired the Irish bishop. It therefore appears that Bede desired to create a vita of Oswald partly out of a wish to commemorate and confirm the belief of Aidan, a clergyman for whom Bede had high regard, that the king was holy.
It is significant that Aidan grasps and blesses only the king's right hand. The right side has overdetermined theological signification; in Scripture, the right is associated with that which is good (in other words, for God), the left with what is evil.\(^{57}\)

Furthermore, as Bruce Lincoln points out, the right hand "signifies power (i.e. the ability to employ direct, open, and effective physical force), honor (a pattern of actions consistent with and constrained by the requirements of established norms), and legitimacy (official sanction and validation for one's position)"; as such, it is an especially important part of a king's body.\(^{58}\) While Aidan confers incorruption only upon Oswald's right hand, however, Bede observes that both hands, plus one unspecified arm, are removed by Penda's forces and are later preserved in an undecayed state:

> cum interfecto illo in pugna manus cum brachio a cetero essent corpore resectae, contigit ut hactenus incorruptae perdurent. Denique in urbe regia, quae a regina quondam uocabulo Bebbia cognominatur, loculo inclusae argenteo in ecclesia sancti Petri servantur ac digno a cunctis honore uenerantur.

[when Oswald was killed in battle, his hands, with an arm, were cut off from the rest of his body, and they have remained uncorrupt until this present time; they

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\(^{57}\) In a different context, neither early nor late Anglo-Saxon law distinguishes between right and left hands in its allotment of punishment for various injuries to a hand or for theft, the latter of which is punishable by amputation of a hand or foot. The Anglo-Saxon laws from Æthelberht to Alfred are in F. Liebermann, ed., Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903-16; reprint, Aalen: Scientia, 1960), 3-123. An English translation is in F. L. Attenborough, ed. and trans., The Laws of the Earliest English Kings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922; reprint, New York: AMS, 1974). See also the new editions and translations of the laws of Æthelberht, Hlohere, and Eadric, and Wihtred in Lisi Oliver, The Beginnings of English Law (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), at 59-81 (Æthelberht), 125-33 (Hlohere and Eadric), and 151-63 (Wihtred).

are in fact preserved in a silver shrine in St. Peter's church, in the royal city which is called after Queen Bebbe (Bamburgh) and are venerated with fitting respect by all].  

Moreover, the number of Oswald's arm relics increases from one to two later in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Bede relates that when Oswald is killed, Penda orders his head, in addition to both arms and hands, to be severed and placed on stakes for all to see:

"Porro caput et manus cum brachiiis a corpore praecisas iussit rex, qui occiderat, in stipitibus suspendi. Quo post annum deueniens cum exercitu successor regni eius Osuiu abstulit ea, et caput quidem in cymiterio Lindisfarnensis ecclesiae, in regia uero ciuitate manus cum brachiiis condidit" [The king who slew him ordered his head and his hands, with the arms, to be severed from his body and hung on stakes. A year afterwards, his successor Oswiu came thither with an army and took them away. He buried the head in a burial place in the church at Lindisfarne, but the hands and arms he buried in the royal city of Bamborough (sic)].

Alan Thacker argues that the burial of the head may have been an attempt by Lindisfarne's inmates to hide it; he hypothesizes that they would have been uneasy about possessing a warrior-king's relic, especially one for which pagans had particular

59. Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 22-27; trans. 231, 24-28. Here, I have modified Colgrave and Mynors's translation that incorrectly renders "manus cum brachio" as "hand and arm" in order to make this subject agree with the plural verbs that follow. The removal of Oswald's right hand signifies in effect "the negation of kingship": see Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice*, 249.

60. Colgrave and Mynors 3.12, 250, 30-252, 4; trans. 251, 33-253, 4. I have modified Colgrave and Mynors's translation of this phrase, which omits mention of the arms.
reverence. Bede does not mention either by whom or under what circumstances Oswald's upper limbs were unearthed, nor does he account for the fate of one arm: the *Ecclesiastical History* reports that only one unspecified arm, along with both hands, was enshrined at Bamburgh, while the other arm disappears from the narrative. Comparison with several other texts does not solve this mystery. For example, MS E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records s.a. 641 that Oswald's "handa sindon on Bebbanburh ungebrosnode" [hands are undecayed at Bamburgh], without mentioning Aidan's blessing. Alcuin's *Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* reports the severing and

61. "Membra disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, 97-127, at 102-04. Richard N. Bailey examines the evidence for various later claims to possession of Oswald's head in "St. Oswald's Heads," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, 195-209. He concludes that the Cuthbert shrine in Durham priory is the most likely candidate to house the genuine relic.

The import of decapitation in Anglo-Saxon texts has received close attention by various scholars. Among them, Ann W. Astell, noting the allegorical significance of Holofernes's head in the Old English poem *Judith*, argues that "Like Satan in the Blickling homily *Dominica prima in quadragesima*, Holofernes as *heafod* of the Assyrians is the source of unrighteous deeds, and his thegns, in a grim parody of the *corpus Christi mysticum*, are his extended self, his members, his limbs: 'se awyrda [sic] gast is heafod ealra unrihtwisra dæda, swylce unrihtwisse syndon deofles leomo' [the accursed spirit is the head of all unrighteous deeds; likewise, the unrighteous are the devil's limbs]": see "Holofernes's Head: *Tacen* and Teaching in the Old English *Judith,*" *ASE* 18 (1989): 117-33, at 124. The Old English passage Astell cites is in *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. R. Morris, EETS, o.s., 58, 63, and 73 (London: Oxford University Press, 1874-80; reprint, 3 vols. in 1, 1967), 33, 7-8; my translation. While, as Astell argues for *Judith* and *Elene*, "The battle-cry 'In hoc signo' sounds in both poems and reflects a historical tendency to literalize the allegory of the cross, converting a supra-temporal victory over Satan, sin and death into a temporal triumph over pagan foes," Bede's text does not explicitly foreground an allegorical reading of Oswald's victory. See "Holofernes's Head," 131. John Edward Damon investigates the broader cultural significance of beheading in "Desecto capite perfido: Bodily Fragmentation and Reciprocal Violence in Anglo-Saxon England," *Exemplaria* 13 (2001): 399-432.

incorruption of Oswald's right hand alone. Aidan prays for the right hand's incorruption, as Alcuin observes,

Quod fuit et factum; sancto nam rege perempto, gentili gladio praecisam a corpore dextram stipite suspendunt. Veniens rex illius heres, Osuui germanus germani et sanguinis ultor, arripuit dextram Bebbamque ferebat in urbem, argenti condens loculo sub culmine templi, quod prius ipse Deo statuit sub nomine Petri. Hactenus integram fore signo est ungula crescens, flexilis et nervus, viridis caro, forma venusta.

[And so it came about: for after that holy king was slain, they hung his right hand, severed by a pagan's sword, upon a stake. King Oswiu his heir, his brother, and the avenger of his blood came, seized that hand, and carried it off into the city of Bamburgh, where he placed it in a silver casket within the lofty temple, which he had dedicated to God in the name of St. Peter. As a sign of incorruptibility, its nails grow still, its sinews are supple, its flesh has life, its shape is handsome.]

In contrast to these two accounts, the Old English version of the *Ecclesiastical History* notes that Penda's forces severed "pa hond mid þy earme" [the hand with the arm], and that both "nu gena oð þis ungebrosnade wuniað" [still remain undecayed to this day]. Furthermore, it recounts that "his hond mid þy earme" [his hand with the arm] were hung up while Oswald's head was placed on a pole. Here, both "hond" and "earme" are singular, not plural, nouns as in the Latin Bede; the right arm is understood to be the arm referred to here. Finally, in another significant departure from the Latin


64. *OE Bede*, 3.4, 166, 13; trans. 167, 13-14; *OE Bede*, 3.4, 166, 14; trans. 167, 14-15.

text, the Old English text reports that only Oswald's head was actually ever buried: "Pa
cwom æfter geres fæce mid herige se æfterfylgend his riices Osweo his læg 7 heo þær
genom: 7 his heafod mon lædde to Lindesfearena eae, 7 þær in cirican bebyrgde; 7 his
hond mid þy earme in þære cynelican ceastre in Bebbanbyrig gehealdene syndon" [Then
after a year's time, his brother Oswio, who succeeded to his throne, came with a host and
took them away from that place: and his head was brought to Lindisfarne and was buried
in the church; but his hand and arm are preserved in the royal town of Bamborough
(sic)]. Instead of mentioning any interment of the right arm and hand, the text states
only that they "gehealdene syndon" [are preserved] at Bamburgh.

In effect, the Latin and Old English versions of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*
render Aidan's blessing greater in its realization than in its utterance: Aidan does not
bless Oswald's right arm along with the right hand, let alone the left hand and arm. Bede
thus casts Oswald's sanctity as in excess of Aidan's approval and benediction. The
Bamburgh shrine, whether it contains Oswald's preserved hands and one arm (as in the
Latin), or just the right arm and hand (as in the Old English), offers an important display


67. Ælfric's *vita* of Oswald in his *Lives of Saints* relates that the king's "heafod
and his swiðran hand" [head and his right hand] are brought to Lindisfarne; no burial of
any body part is noted. See Skeat 2: 136, 167; trans. 137, 167. Ælfric's diction at 136,
162-75 makes it clear that he uses the terms "earm" [arm] and "hand" interchangeably.
This is possibly in accordance with the alliterative prose style that Ælfric uses, although
J. C. Pope's careful analysis of this style highlights its relaxation of the more rigid norms
of rhythm and alliteration that govern Old English poetry. See *Homilies of Ælfric: A
Supplementary Collection*, vol. 1, EETS, o.s., 259 (London: Oxford University Press,
1967), 105-36.
as far as Bede's narrative is concerned. Through the apparently incorrupt state of its contents, the shrine metonymically demonstrates that Oswald was a monarch whose holiness overflowed its bounds.

The Latin text's image of both hands in an incorrupt state is linked with the last of Bede's vignettes focusing on Oswald's upper body. This image centers upon Oswald's right and left hands alike. Here, Bede turns his attention to Oswald as a prayerful monarch, emphasizing the king's connection with the ruler of heaven when he cures a boy from Bardney monastery sitting at his tomb. Bede reports that "denique ferunt, quia a tempore matutinae laudis saepius ad diem usque in orationibus persteterit, atque ob crebrum morem orandi siue gratias agendi Domino semper, ubicumque sedens, supinas super genua sua manus habere solitus sit" [(i)t is related, for example, that very often he would continue in prayer from mattins (sic) until daybreak; and because of his frequent habit of prayer and thanksgiving, he was always accustomed, wherever he sat, to place

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69. "Nec mirandum preces regis illius iam cum Domino regnantis multum ualere apud eum, qui temporalis regni quondam gubernacula tenens magis pro aeterno regno semper laborare ac deprecari solebat." [It is not to be wondered at that the prayers of this king who is now reigning with the Lord should greatly prevail, for while he was ruling over his temporal kingdom, he was always accustomed to work and pray most diligently for the kingdom which is eternal]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.12, 250, 16-19; trans. 251, 17-21.

his hands on his knees with the palms turned upwards]. Both hands figure here in a gesture of prayer, an act that augments Bede's claims to Oswald's sanctity. In this image of the prayerful king, Bede ties in the previous closeups of Oswald's hands: the king's erecting the cross at Heavenfield, his raising his hands in prayer with Aidan, and the bishop's blessing of the monarch's subsequently incorruptible right hand.

As befitting a saint, any part of his or her body is holy material that has the power to abet miracles. Saints' bodies, whether whole or fragmented, are not inert human remains. Bede does not, however, report that any miracles were brought about through direct, immediate contact with Oswald's fragmented physical relics. The absence in the Ecclesiastical History of miracles attributed to Oswald's buried head, for example, quite possibly occurs because Bede's informants were not aware of any that had taken place. This absence might also occur because Bede shared the Lindisfarne community's concern

70. Colgrave and Mynors 3.12, 250, 20-23; trans. 251, 22-26. Bede's impersonal reference to source here is typical of his accounts of remote events in the Ecclesiastical History and, like the disclaimer in the preface, further removes Bede from responsibility for any inaccuracies in the information he provides.

about the pagan significance attached to the head relic, yet Bede does include a miracle about an Irish scholar being healed of the plague when the man drinks water containing a splinter from the stake that had displayed Oswald's head.\textsuperscript{72}

That Oswald's head remains buried precludes its examination for evidence of incorruptibility. But physical incorruptibility was not a necessary condition for the attainment of sainthood in Anglo-Saxon England; furthermore, the relative merits of a saint were not tied to the state of his or her corpse at a point when the body's decomposition would normally be expected. Bede does not claim that Oswald's entire body remained incorrupt after death; he is clear that one arm and both hands were undecayed. Unlike these members, the rest of Oswald's body, minus the head and one arm, was reduced to bone. Bede uses \textit{ossa} [bones] to refer to a decomposed and fragmented corpse, rather than to an incorrupt body (which he describes as \textit{corpus}, with an adjective or adjective phrase indicating an incorrupt state). He uses \textit{ossa} to refer to Oswald's remains more often than to any other decomposed or decomposing body in the \textit{Ecclesiastical History}. In Book 3, chapter 11, he emphasizes the natural course of Oswald's physical fragmentation (as opposed to his dismemberment by Penda's warriors) in his account of the translation of the king's relics—that is, those not preserved at

\textsuperscript{72} Colgrave and Mynors 3.13, 252, 5-254, 24; trans. 253, 5-255, 26. Bede clearly attributes the miracle to Oswald despite the fact that Willibrord blessed the water before placing the splinter in it and giving it to the man to drink. Richard N. Bailey notes that "no miracles were recorded in connection with the head during the period before the early ninth century when the Cuthbert Community apparently had the skull in its care": see "St. Oswald's Heads," 195-209, at 198. Victoria Tudor notes two instances concerning the head recorded in Reginald's \textit{Vita Oswaldi}—a light shining upon its burial place at Lindisfarne and Cuthbert's complaining of its removal from Lindisfarne—but does not indicate any miracles of healing; see "Reginald's \textit{Life of Oswald}," 178-94, at 188.
Bamburgh—to Bardney. Bede then repeatedly refers to Oswald's *ossa* throughout that chapter, reinforcing the idea that most of the monarch's body has been reduced to bone. He does not use *corpus* to refer to Oswald's remains except in the immediate aftermath of his death; here, *corpus* refers to his corpse both with and without the arms. Instead, Bede highlights the decomposed state of the king's body by placing emphasis on fleshless, fragmented relics. That most of Oswald's body decayed nevertheless does not diminish his sanctity in any way, despite the use to which Bede puts *ossa* otherwise in the *Ecclesiastical History*.

73. This is the case right from the beginning of the chapter: "Inter quae nequaquam silentio praetereundum reor, quid uirtutis ac miraculi caelestis fuerit ostensum, cum ossa eius inuenta atque ad ecclesiam, in qua nunc seruantur, translata sunt." [Among these stories, I think I ought not to pass over in silence the miracles and heavenly signs which were shown when his bones were discovered and translated to the church in which they are now preserved]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.11, 244, 1-246, 1; trans. 245, 1-247, 2.

74. Bede also uses the term *reliquiae* to refer to Oswald's remains, but not with the same frequency with which he repeats *ossa*. As with *ossa*, Bede uses *reliquiae* not as a metonymic term to refer to a corpse with all of its parts intact, but instead to refer to a dead body in a fragmented state. But while Bede uses *ossa* exclusively to refer to the components of the skeleton, Bede employs the more general term *reliquiae* to designate either the fragmented body as a whole, or parts of an incorrupt body that can be removed for the healing of the faithful, such as Cuthbert's hair. Regarding Bede's use of *reliquiae* with regard to Oswald, see Colgrave and Mynors 3.11, 246, 13 and 21; 3.11, 248, 3 (here definitely synonymous with "bones"); 3.13, 252, 7, and 3.13, 254, 12-13. With regard to the use of the term for Cuthbert's salubrious hair, see Colgrave and Mynors 4.32, 446, 1, and 4.32, 448, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 25.

75. Bede notes that "cum interfecto illo in pugna manus cum brachio a cetero essent corpore resectae" [when Oswald was killed in battle, his hands, with an arm, were cut off from the rest of his body]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 22-23; my translation. Later, Bede observes that "Vnde contigit ut puluerem ipsum, ubi corpus eius in terram conruit, multi auferentes et in aquam mittentes suis per haec infirmis multum commodi adferrent" [It has happened that people have often taken soil from the place where his body fell to the ground, have put it in water, and by its use have brought great relief to their sick]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.9, 242, 8-11; trans. 243, 8-11.
With the exception of his narrative concerning Oswald, Bede uses ossa to refer to
the decomposed remains that are expected to be found upon the translation of a holy
body, but which are not in fact found. This text relates three accounts of this type: those
concerning the translationes of Æthelburh of Faremoutier-en-Brie, Æthelthryth, and
Cuthbert.76 The first of these saints, Æthelburh, was a daughter of Anna, king of the East
Angles, and was made abbess of the Frankish double monastery at Brie. When the
brothers at Æthelburh's monastery decide to abandon completely the construction of the
church that the abbess had ordered to be built, after leaving it idle for seven years, they
"statuerunt . . . ossa uero abbatissae illo de loco eleuata in aliam ecclesiam, quae esset
perfecta ac dedicata, transferre" [resolved to raise the bones of the abbess from their
resting place and translate them to another church which was already finished and
dedicated].77 What they then find surprises them: "aperientes sepulchrum eius, ita
intemeratum corpus inuenere, ut a corruptione concupiscentiae carnalis erat inmune"
[(o)n opening her sepulchre they found her body as untouched by decay as it had also
been immune from the corruption of fleshly desires].78 Here, Bede establishes a causal
link between Æthelburh's incorrupt flesh and her virginity: the abbess's sexual purity
underlies the phenomenon of her undecayed corpse. Furthermore, Bede observes that the

76. This pattern of expectation versus result does not hold for all incorrupt bodies
in the Ecclesiastical History. In the only remaining case of incorruption that Bede notes,
Fursa of Lagny's remains are reportedly found undecayed after two translations—one
twenty-seven days and the other four years after Fursa's death—but the account does not
include the expectation that bones will be all that remain of the holy man's corpse. See

77. Colgrave and Mynors 3.8, 240, 14-16; trans. 241, 16-18.

78. Colgrave and Mynors 3.8, 240, 16-17; trans. 241, 18-20.
incorrupt state of Æthelburh's body is an important sign of the abbess's sanctity. He relates that Æthelburh "Deo dilectam perpetuae virginitatis gloriam in magna corporis continentia seruauit; quae cuius esset uirtutis magis post mortem claruit" [preserved the glory, well pleasing to God, of perpetual virginity in great continence of the body; after whose death that (i.e., the glory) of her virtue was made more clear].

Bede further elaborates the notion that bodily incorruption is a visible sign of sexual purity in his treatment of the *translatio* of Æthelthryth (d. 679), another one of King Anna's daughters. Æthelthryth became queen of the Northumbrians upon her marriage to King Ecgfrith (d. 685). This was not, however, her first marriage, for she had been previously married to an *ealdorman* of the South Gyrwas named Tondberht. Her marriage to Ecgfrith, unlike her union with Tondberht, did not last until her husband's death. Bede claims that the queen left Ecgfrith to enter the monastery at Coldingham, but only after receiving his permission—an apparently difficult accomplishment. One year later, Æthelthryth became abbess of the monastery at Ely, where she eventually died.

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79. Colgrave and Mynors 3.8, 240, 4-7; my translation. Colgrave and Mynors's translation misses the reference to Æthelburh's "great continence of the body," rendering "in magna corporis continentia" more vaguely as "lived a life of great self-denial": Colgrave and Mynors 3.8, 241, 4-5.

80. "Quae multum diu regem postulans, ut saeculi curas relinquere atque in monasterio tantum uero regi Christo seruire permetteretur, ubi uix aliquando impetravit, intrauit monasterium Aebbae abbatissae, quae erat amita regis Ecgfridi, positum in loco quem Coludi urbem nominant, accepto uelamine sanctimonialis habitus a praefato antistite Uilfrido" [For a long time she had been asking the king to allow her to relinquish the affairs of this world and to serve Christ, the only true King, in a monastery; when at length and with difficulty she gained his permission, she entered the monastery of the Abbess Æbbe, Ecgfrith's aunt, which is situated in a place called Coldingham, receiving the veil and habit of a nun from Bishop Wilfrid]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 392, 10-15; trans. 393, 12-17. On possible alternative explanations for the dissolution of Æthelthryth's and Ecgfrith's marriage, see Chapter 1, 27-28.
Bede reports that Æthelthryth remained a virgin through not just one, but through both of her marriages: the first had apparently lasted only a short time, while her union with Ecgfrith had, Bede states, lasted for twelve years.\textsuperscript{81} The idea that Æthelthryth retained her virginity was apparently so incredible to some that Bede took it upon himself to ask bishop Wilfrid, Æthelthryth's confidante, to verify his "facts" before recording them in the \textit{Ecclesiastical History}. Wilfrid's "testem . . . certissimum" [most definite witness] to the queen's purity consisted of the claim that "Ecgfridus promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginae posset persuadere eius uti connubio, quia sciebat illam nullum uirorum plus illo diligere" [Ecgfrith promised to give him (i.e., Wilfrid) much land and money if he could persuade (Ecgfrith's) queen to make use of the marriage, because he knew that she loved no man more than him].\textsuperscript{82} Bede then relates 

\textsuperscript{81} "Sed illo [i.e., Tondberht, Æthelthryt's first husband] post modicum temporis, ex quo eam accepit, defuncto, data est regi praefato. Cuius consortio cum XII annis ueretur, perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa" [But when he (i.e., Tondberht) died after a short time, right after he had received her (i.e, very soon after the marriage), (Æthelthryth) was given to the previously mentioned king (i.e., Ecgfrith). Although her partnership (with him) lasted twelve years, she nevertheless remained glorious by means of the perpetual integrity of virginity]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 390, 5-8; my translation.

\textsuperscript{82} Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 390, 10-392, 1; Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 392, 1-3; my translations. Bede also makes an appeal to accounts of the past as of "proof" that Æthelthryth could have remained pure: "Nec diffidendum est nostra etiam aetate fieri potuisse, quod aevo praecedente aliquoties factum fideles historiae narrant, donante uno eodemque Domino, qui se nobiscum usque in finem saeculi manere pollicetur" [Nor is it to be doubted that this, which sometimes happened in a previous age, as trustworthy accounts relate, could also happen in our time through the help of the one and the same Lord, who has promised to remain with us even to the end of time]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 392, 3-7; my translation. Neither of these "proofs" of Æthelthryth's virginity makes even the slightest allusion to the state of the queen's body; in short, the condition of Æthelthryth's hymen is of no consequence to Bede's narrative construction of her \textit{virginitas}. Through Æthelthryth, the \textit{Ecclesiastical History}'s most striking exemplar of sexual purity, Bede, like Aldhelm before him, demonstrates the fundamentally performative nature of \textit{virginitas}.
that, as a result of the queen's purity, the "signum diuini miraculi, quo eiusdem feminae sepulta caro corrumpi non potuit, indicio est quia a virili contactu incorrupta durauerit" [sign of the divine miracle whereby the flesh of the same woman could not decay after she was buried was an indication that she had remained uncorrupted by contact with a man].

As in the case of Æthelburh's reburial, the expectation is that Æthelthryth's corpse will have been reduced to bone. Bede relates that Seaxburh, Æthelthryth's sister and successor as abbess of Ely, decided sixteen years after the queen's death that "leuari ossa eius et in locello nouo posita in ecclesiam transferri" [her bones should be raised, and, once placed in a new coffin, moved into the church]. But once Æthelthryth's old tomb was opened, her body "ita incorruptum inuentum est, ac si eodem die fuisset defuncta siue humo condita" [was found to be as uncorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day]. Bede emphasizes that this finding was contrary to the expectations of Seaxburh and her community. He repeats that when Æthelthryth's "eleuanda essent ossa


84. Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 394, 1-2; my translation.

de sepulchro" [bones were to be taken out of the sepulchre], Seaxburh and several others entered the tent erected above the old burial site "ossa elatura et dilutura" [for the purpose of raising and washing the bones].

Despite what the examples of Æthelburh and Æthelthryth might imply, Bede does not attribute bodily incorruption to sexual purity alone—at least not for a man. Other than Fursa (for whom Bede also makes no claim to virginity), the holy bishop Cuthbert is the other male in the Ecclesiastical History whose entire body purportedly remains

86. Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 394, 24; trans. 395, 25-26; Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 394, 27; trans. 395, 29. As in the Ecclesiastical History's narrative of King Oswald, Bede focuses, however briefly, on a particular part of Æthelthryth's body: her neck. For testimony concerning the incorrupt nature of Æthelthryth's long-dead body, Bede states that he relied on Bishop Wilfrid, several unnamed witnesses, and also upon Cynefrith, a doctor. Cynefrith's testimony is crucial to Bede's narrative of Æthelthryth. Bede records it as though it were told by the physician himself, a technique that he appears to use to record particularly important information that was available to him, whether or not it came from those people whom he reports speaking in the first-person, or from other living witnesses. Bede's record of the debate between bishop Wilfrid and the Irish bishop Colman about the dating of Easter at the Synod of Whitby (664) is a prominent example of this: see Colgrave and Mynors 3.25, 298, 13-308, 2. The importance of Cynefrith's testimony lies in his attestation that he had treated Æthelthryth for a very painful tumor beneath her jaw. He lanced it, but Æthelthryth died only three days later. Cynefrith attested that once Æthelthryth's body had been taken out of her old tomb, he was called in to be shown that the wound that he had made was healed, "ita ut mirum in modum pro aperto et hiantes ulnere, cum quo sepulta erat, tenuissima tunc cicatricis uestigia parerent" [so that instead of the open, gaping wound with which she had been buried, there now appeared, marvellous to relate, only the slightest traces of a scar]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 394, 33-35; my translation. Bede includes this detail to demonstrate that Æthelthryth's corpse showed signs not just of her "perfect" virginity (in its lack of decay), but also of her exemplary repentance and asceticism (in the sign of the healed scar). Again using first-person narrative, Bede has the queen acknowledge that she used to wear extravagant necklaces as a girl; she subsequently welcomed the pain of her tumor "ut sic absolution reatu superuacuae leuitatis, dum mihi nunc pro auro et margaretis de collo rubor tumoris ardorque promineat" [that I may thus be absolved from the guilt of my needless vanity. So, instead of gold and pearls, a fiery red tumour now stands out upon my neck]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.19, 396, 6-8; trans. 397, 7-9.
undecayed.\textsuperscript{87} Unlike the accounts of Æthelburh's and Æthelthryth's \emph{translationes}, Bede's narrative concerning the relocation of Cuthbert's body foregrounds, rather than merely implies, the discrepancy between the expectations of those handling the body and what they eventually find. Bede reports that eleven years after Cuthbert had died, God "\textit{inmisit in animo fratrum, ut tollerent ossa illius, quae more mortuorum consumto iam et in puluerem redacto corpore reliquo sicca inuenienda putabant, atque in nouo recondita loculo in eodem quidem loco sed supra pauimentum dignae uenerationis gratia locarent}" [put it into the heart of the brothers . . . to take his bones—which they expected to find quite dry, the rest of the body, as is usual with the dead, having decayed away and turned to dust—and to put them in a new coffin in the same place, but above the floor, so that they might be worthily venerated].\textsuperscript{88} Bede does not cite the incorrupt state of Cuthbert's body, however, as proof of Cuthbert's sexual purity; instead, Bede observes that "\textit{[u]olens autem latius demonstrare diuina dispensatio, quanta in gloria uir Domini Cudberct post mortem uiueret, cuius ante mortem uita sublimis crebris etiam miraculorum patebat indiciis}" [(b)ut the divine providence wished to show still further in what glory Saint (lit., "the man of God") Cuthbert lived after his death, whose sublime life had been attested before his death by frequent signs (of) miracles].\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} For Bede's account of Fursa, see Colgrave and Mynors 3.19, 268, 1-276, 24\textsuperscript{; trans. 269, 1-277, 28.} Bede is, however, in both cases working from sources that might be simply repeating an old hagiographical commonplace that attributes virginity to women rather than to men. This is not to say, however, that male saints never have virginity listed among their attributes, as legends concerning saints Chrysanthus and Julian (to name but two examples) attest.

\textsuperscript{88} Colgrave and Mynors 4.30, 442, 4-8; trans. 443, 4-9.

\textsuperscript{89} Colgrave and Mynors 4.30, 442, 1-3; trans. 443, 1-3. By way of contrast, Bede states that he focuses on Fursa's incorruption "\textit{ut quanta esset uiri sublimitas,}
In contrast to the incorrupt bodies of Æthelburh, Æthelthryth, and Cuthbert, only the hands and one arm of Oswald remain undecayed. Moreover, Bede does not attribute any of Oswald's many miracles to these incorrupt relics. Bede merely relates that the king's arm and hands "digno a cunctis honore uenerantur" [are venerated with fitting respect by all] in their shrine at St. Peter's church, Bamburgh. Because these relics are a focus of veneration and not a medium for miracles, they must serve some function specifically related to their display. Indeed, the display of Oswald's incorrupt arm and legentibus notius [sic] existeret" [so that readers may clearly know how eminent a man he was], foregrounding Fursa's past rather than his eternal life: Colgrave and Mynors 3.19, 276, 22-23; trans. 277, 25.

90. Bede does not even use the term *miraculum* [miracle] to describe the incorruption itself.

91. Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 26-27; trans. 231, 28. Wilfrid Bonser claims that most of Oswald's miracles were associated with the right arm and hand, relying especially on the Peterborough chronicle: see The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study in History, Psychology, and Folklore (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1963), 185-86. The absence of such miracles in the Ecclesiastical History, however—as in the case of the corruption of the rest of Oswald's corpse—does not in any way diminish either the holiness of the members in question, or, by extension, the king's overall sanctity. Bede, apparently following Gregory the Great in a letter he cites from the pope to Augustine of Canterbury, rather subscribes to the notion that "(n)on . . . omnes electi miracula faciunt, sed tamen eorum nomina omnium in caelo tenentur adscripta" [not all the elect work miracles, but nevertheless all their names are written in heaven]: see Colgrave and Mynors 1.31, 110, 10-11; trans. 111, 11-12. See also Bertram Colgrave, "Bede's Miracle Stories," in Bede: His Life, Times, and Writings, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 201-29, at 227-28, and Joel T. Rosenthal, "Bede's Use of Miracles in 'The Ecclesiastical History," Traditio 31 (1975): 328-35, at 335.

92. Bede does, however, attribute miracles to such contact relics as the splinters of the cross that Oswald plants at Heavenfield, the ground upon which the king dies, soil into which water used to wash his bones is poured, his tomb at Bardney, and even splinters from the stake on which Penda hangs the slain king's head. These examples illustrate how the *praesentia* of the saint is complete even in the smallest relic fragment. See Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity, Haskell Lectures on History of Religions, n.s., 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
hands mirrors Penda's victorious exhibition of them—the very instruments with which Oswald had fought against the enemy king. But more importantly, the enshrinement at Bamburgh transforms the pagan spectacle into a perpetual symbol of victory for Christianity, even in the face of Oswald's own death (and, it is presumed, the defeat of his army). By whom and for whatever reason the arm and hands were disinterred—for Bede uses the verb condere to describe what Oswiu does with both the head (noting its placement "in cymiterio" [in a burial place] at Lindisfarne) and with the limbs—the fact remains that the initial inhumation removed them from sight. The unearthing of these remains and the discovery of their apparent incorruption would have offered visible proof of Oswald's sanctity to the Bamburgh clerics—church authorities who would have subsequently ordered their translatio and enshrinement. That Bede reports the veneration of these relics "a cunctis" constructs the recognition of Oswald's sanctity as a phenomenon that gained unqualified, widespread acceptance.


93. John Edward Damon describes such a phenomenon as "reciprocal trophication," which he elaborates especially with regard to heads in "Desecto capite perfido," 405.

94. Oswiu "caput quidem in cymiterio Lindisfarnensis ecclesiae, in regia uero ciuitate manus cum brachiis condidit" [buried the head in a burial place in the church at Lindisfarne, but the hands and arms he buried in the royal city of Bambrorough (sic)]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.12, 252, 3-4; trans. 253, 2-4.

95. Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 26. Bede later notes that "n[ec] solum inclyti fama uiri Brittaniae fines lustrauit uniuersos, sed etiam trans Oceanum longe radios salutiferae lucis spargens Germaniae simul et Hiberniae partes attigit" [(n)ot only did the fame of this renowned king spread through all parts of Britain but the beams of his healing light also spread across the ocean and reached the realms of Germany and Ireland]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.13, 252, 1-3; trans. 253, 1-3.
The preserved hands and arm thus function in Bede's text as important evidence of Oswald's sanctity and as a focal point of veneration; this is so even though the *Ecclesiastical History* does not report any miracles among Oswald's devotees that can be attributed to them. What Bede emphasizes instead through the image of Oswald's incorrupt relics is the king's prayerfulness. Indeed, a principal criterion for Oswald's sanctity is his intercessive power—the efficacy of his intermediary prayer to God on behalf of supplicants. Intercession does not necessarily require the presence of a relic (well-preserved or not), as Bede demonstrates in his final account of Oswald. Imbedded in Book Four is a narrative concerning what Alan Thacker argues is the formal establishment of Oswald's cult: the recognition of the king's sanctity by a church authority through the yearly saying of masses on what is not simply the anniversary of the monarch's death, but what becomes Oswald's *dies natalis*, the anniversary of his "rebirth" in heaven.\(^96\) In this account, the brothers of the monastery at Selsey, as well as people from the surrounding region, are greatly afflicted by a plague. Many are left dead in its wake. Bede relates that in response to the pestilence, the brothers plan a three-day fast during which they are to pray for the sick and for the dead.\(^97\) On the second day of the fast, the saints Peter and Paul appear in a vision to a plague-stricken boy at the

\(^{96}\) "*Membra disjecta,*" 108-09. This narrative is a later addition to Bede's *EH*, occurring as it does only in the M class of manuscripts; see Colgrave and Mynors xl-xlii and 326, note a.

\(^{97}\) "uisum est fratribus triduanum ieiunium agere et diuinam suppliciter obsecrare clementiam, ut misericordiam sibi dignaretur inpendere, et siue periclitantes hoc morbo a praeamenti morte liberaret seu raptos e mundo a perpetua animae damnatione seruaret" [it seemed right to the brothers to observe a three-day fast and humbly implore God in His mercy to show pity on them, either by delivering those who were threatened by this disease from instant death or by preserving the souls of those who died from everlasting damnation]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.14, 376, 14-18; trans. 377, 15-19.
monastery, telling him that he will be the last of the monastery's residents to die of the pestilence. Furthermore, they tell the boy that the brothers' prayers for relief from the plague are to be granted through Oswald's intercession. Here, Oswald is portrayed as something of a super-intercessor, who intercedes on behalf of the monastery's brothers without, it appears, even being asked by them to do so: the brothers pray to God for mercy without reference to Oswald or to any other holy intermediary. Nevertheless, the boy is told in his vision that the brothers' prayers are to be granted through Oswald's intercession.

Bede thus leaves a final image of the holy king at prayer, continually working for the salvation of his people from heaven. This last vignette concerning the king recalls all of Bede's previous images of the king's hands: the planting of the cross at Heavenfield, Aidan's blessing upon the right arm and hand, and the king's habitual prayerful posture with upturned palms. Clearly, to Bede's mind, the king attains his sanctity largely through the help of his hands—hands turned upward in supplication to God, as well as hands that perish in battle against a pagan foe. Given the nature of Oswald's death, it

98. "Quod divina uobis . . . per intercessionem religiosi ac Deo dilecti regis Osualdi, qui quondam genti Nordanhymbrorum et regni temporalis auctoritate et Christianae pietatis, quae ad regnum perenne ducit, deuotione sublimiter praefuit, conferre dignata est" ["This the divine mercy has deigned to grant the brethren by the intercession of the saintly King Oswald, beloved of God, who once reigned gloriously over the Northumbrian people with the authority of a temporal kingship and with the devotion and Christian virtue which brought him to the everlasting kingdom"]: Colgrave and Mynors 4.14, 378, 8-12; trans. 379, 10-14. Colgrave and Mynors use the ellipsis to indicate a lacuna in the parent manuscripts and note words (misericordia, gratia, clementia, and pietas) that later copyists include in their manuscripts; see 378, note b.

99. Immediately following the narrative image of Oswald praying with upturned hands, Bede reinforces the depth of Oswald's sanctity with reference to the tradition that the king prayed for his army, rather than for himself, when his death was imminent: see Colgrave and Mynors 3.12, 250, 23-28; trans. 251, 26-31.
would seem fitting to describe Oswald as a martyr. But Bede does not refer to Oswald as a martyr anywhere in the *Ecclesiastical History*. This omission on the part of Bede, however, does not detract from Oswald's holiness. Victoria A. Gunn observes that Bede's omission of the term *martyr* places emphasis on the sanctity that Oswald achieved during his life, rather than on the holiness he achieved in the manner of his death. 100 Indeed, it will be recalled that Bede emphasizes through the pivotal Easter banquet scene—where Aidan blesses Oswald's right hand into incorruption—that although Oswald wielded great

100. "Bede and the Martyrdom of St. Oswald," in *Martyrs and Martyrologies: Papers Read at the 1992 Summer Meeting and the 1993 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 30 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 57-66. Alan Thacker notes that Oswald was also omitted not only "from the original version of Bede's martyrology," but that "[e]ven more significantly, in the *Chronica Maiora* [...]. Oswald and his protégé Aidan are not mentioned and instead Edwin and Paulinus are named as the progenitors of Northumbrian Christianity"; Thacker concludes that "Bede was perhaps a late convert to Hexham's royal cult." See "Membra disjecta," 112. An extensive study of Bede's *Martyrology*, along with the text, is found in Henri Quentin, *Les martyrologes historiques du moyen âge: Étude sur la formation du Martyrologe Romain* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1908), 17-119. The *Chronica maiora* is chapters 66 to 71 of Bede's *De temporum ratione*; see Bedae *Venerabilis opera* 4.2, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 463-544. Bede does mention that Oswald "occisus est, commisso graui proelio, ab eadem pagana gente paganoque rege Merciorum, a quo et prodecessor eius Eduini peremptus fuerat" [was killed in a great battle by the same heathen people and the same heathen Mercian king as his predecessor Edwin]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.9, 240, 8-242, 2; trans. 241, 8-243, 2. But Bede makes no claim that Oswald died defending the Christian faith. Instead, he notes that the king died "pro patria" [for his fatherland]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.9, 242, 6-7; trans. 243, 7. Bede does not use this phrase for Edwin, but nor does he refer to him in the *EH* as a martyr either. Neither MS A (s.a. 642) nor MS E (s.a. 641) of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle includes descriptions of Oswald's death that provide any further illumination. For MS A, see Janet Bately, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983); for MS E, see p. 100, n. 62 above. Robert Folz insists on Oswald's martyrdom, classifying him as "roi martyr de la foi" even in light of Bede's omission of the term: see *Les saints rois du moyen âge en Occident (6e-13e siècles)*, Subsidia Hagiographica 68 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1984), 45-48. Folz offers a more comprehensive analysis of the development of Oswald's cult in "Saint Oswald roi de Northumbrie: Étude d'hagiographie royale," *AB* 98 (1980): 49-74.
power, he "nihilominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit" [was (nevertheless) always wonderfully humble, kind, and generous to the poor and to strangers].

That the passage just cited immediately precedes the Easter banquet scene underscores the importance of Oswald's incorrupt limb to the portrayal of the king as a saint: in Oswald, victoriousness in battle is blended with meeker, prayerful attributes. In fact, Bede describes Oswald, standing godfather for the West Saxon king Cynegils, as "sanctissimum ac uictoriosissimum regem Nordanhymbrorum" [most saintly and victorious king of the Northumbrians]. Using the adjectives "sanctissimum" and "uictoriosissimum," Bede makes two important statements about Oswald. First, Bede otherwise uses "sanctissimus" in the Ecclesiastical History only with reference to clergymen. Applying such a term to Oswald therefore aligns him semantically with these clerics, attributing to him a sacerdotal dignity (if not a kind of Christian sacrality) absent from Bede's descriptions of other holy kings. Moreover, Bede uses "uictoriosissimus" only on this one occasion in the Ecclesiastical History: he certainly depicts Oswald as a champion, both on earth (as a warrior, almsgiver, and prayerful contemplative) and in heaven (in his continuing "battle," through intercessory prayer, against such evils as the plague).

101. Colgrave and Mynors 3.6, 230, 8-10; trans. 231, 9-11. See also p. 95, n. 52.

102. Colgrave and Mynors 3.7, 232, 14-15; my translation. The Colgrave and Mynors translation (3.7, 233, 16-17) simply reads "the saintly and victorious king of the Northumbrians," which does not accurately convey from Bede's Latin the sense of Oswald's superlative prayerfulness and fighting ability.

103. Bede also calls Oswald "Christianissimus rex Nordanhymbrorum" [the most Christian king of Northumbria]: Colgrave and Mynors 3.9, 240, 1-2; trans. 241, 1. Bede
One last description places Oswald most firmly among Bede's ecclesiastics, using another term that Bede uses with reference to clergymen. Referring to Oswald, Bede reports that Acca relates how he and Wilfrid used to hear Willibrord tell of the miracles that occurred in Frisia "ad reliquas eiusdem reuerentissimi regis" [at the relics of the most reverend king]. There is but one other instance of Bede's use of "reuerentissimus" in the Ecclesiastical History that does not apply to clerics. Bede applies the phrase "reuerentissimus Dei confessor" [the most reverend confessor (of God)] to Alban, the first British martyr, as the holy man mounts the hill to his execution. Bede never refers to Oswald as a martyr, but this semantic linking of holy overlord and protomartyr connects the king most intimately with the Northumbrian church and the saints whose cults it supports. By connecting narratives of the British past with more recent accounts first uses this term to describe Oswald in his list of bretwaldas [overlords], as "Nordanhymbrorum rex Christianissimus" [the most Christian king of the Northumbrians]: Colgrave and Mynors 2.5, 150, 1-2; trans. 151, 1-2. The only other figure to receive this description is King Sigeberht of the East Angles. Bede introduces Sigeberht, a "uir per omnia Christianissimus ac doctissimus" [most Christian man and most learned in all respects], as a king who, with the support of Bishop Felix, delivers his kingdom from the errors of paganism. See Colgrave and Mynors 2.15, 190, 16-17; my translation. Despite the monkish Sigeberht's rather ignominious death in battle carrying a staff rather than a weapon, I believe that Bede's diction is meant to convey a sense of peaceableness to Oswald to counterbalance the fierceness implied in the battle narratives and is not meant to ridicule the Northumbrian king.

104. Colgrave and Mynors 3.13, 252, 7; trans. 253, 8-9. 105. Colgrave and Mynors 1.7, 32, 15; trans. 33, 19. One wonders if the fact that Alban disguises himself in the robes of the cleric whose life he saves has something to do with Bede's use of "reuerentissimus" to describe the saint. This suggests that conversion and clerisy are performative phenomena in which one becomes as one acts—a point which Bede reinforces time and again through Oswald's various hand gestures. The image of Edwin's high priest Coifi taking up a sword and destroying idols (see pp. 90-91 above) in his own performance of conversion certainly adds weight to this idea.
of Northumbrian history, Bede underscores the notion that God acts through time, abetting Christianity's triumph in England largely through the efforts—not to mention the holy hands—of warrior-kings like Oswald.
CHAPTER 3

NAKEDNESS AND REPENTANCE: MARY MAGDALENE AND PELAGIA IN THE

OLD ENGLISH MARTYROLOGY*

The Old English Martyrology has the distinction of being the "earliest prose vernacular martyrology in Europe."¹ This anonymous work is a compilation of abbreviated vitae and passiones, which are arranged in calendrical order according to the feast days of the saints represented therein. Among the Old English Martyrology's 202 accounts of holy men and women are three narratives concerning penitent harlot saints: Mary Magdalene (July 22), Afra (August 8), and Pelagia (October 19).² These three accounts are similar in their depictions of the harlots as models of conversion, especially in their renunciation of sexual sin and their subsequent devotion to Christ. Mary

* Citations from Kotzor will be given by volume, page and line numbers. All translations (except from the Vulgate) are my own, unless otherwise noted.


2. The accounts of these saints are found in Kotzor's edition of the OEM as follows: Mary Magdalene, Kotzor 2: 156, 1-157, 16; Afra, Kotzor 2: 173, 12-175, 4; and Pelagia, Kotzor 2: 233, 10-235, 17. Genesius the comedian (August 25; Kotzor 2: 188, 8-189, 4) is a variation on this theme, being a male who performs lewd songs and dances.
Magdalene and Pelagia appear particularly similar in their tearful performances of repentance and retreats to the eremitic life. In contrast, the Martyrology's narrative of Afra neither records such a performance on the saint's part, nor relates that Afra lived the life of a hermit after her conversion: instead, she is bound naked to a stake and burned alive by order of the heathen persecutor Gaius.

The textual depiction of nakedness is not unique to the Martyrology's narrative of Afra. Nakedness also figures, for instance, in the account of Pelagia found there. The

3. I use the terms "naked" and "nakedness," rather than "nude" and "nudity," keeping in mind art historian Kenneth Clark's distinctions between "naked" and "nude." Clark states that "to be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition. The word 'nude,' on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed": see "The Naked and the Nude," in Clark's book The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form, Bollingen Series 35, no. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 3-29, at 3. Although these distinctions were originally applied to representations of unclothed figures in the visual arts, they can also be useful for describing bodies that are textually represented: see, for example, Margaret R. Miles, Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1989), passim. In the context of the present chapter, the term "naked" is especially appropriate to describe the unclothed bodies of repentant, ascetic ex-prostitutes.

4. The martyrologist in fact depicts nakedness in a number of accounts in the OEM. For instance, the masspriest Felix (January 14) is sent naked to prison and scourged there, and the handsome Abdo and Sennes (July 30) are sent naked into the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts that, in the end, do not touch them. Nakedness also occurs in the narratives of two other holy men, but the saints themselves are not unclothed: Hilarion (October 21) successfully overcomes temptation brought on by demons shaped like naked women, while the first "wundor" [miracle] of Martin (November 11) consists of his giving half of his cloak to a cold and naked man. In the accounts of the virgin martyrs Agnes (January 21) and Eulalia of Barcelona (December 10), there is the suggestion that the saints are stripped bare on the orders of their persecutors, but the narratives do not make it clear whether or not the virgins are actually seen naked by anyone. Agnes, for example, refuses to wed the son of the prefect Symphronius; Symphronius then "het . . . hi nacode lædan to sumum scandhuse. Þær hire brohte Godes engel swyclene gerelan swyclene næfre nænig fulwa—Þær is nænig webwyrlhta—Þær mihte don on eorðan" [ordered her to be led naked to a certain brothel.
eremitic Mary Magdalene, however, does not appear naked in the Old English text. Although the Latin source account of her ascetic life clearly depicts her without clothing, the Old English martyrrologist elides Mary's nakedness in his translation. The different ways in which the martyrrologist handled his source material concerning the Magdalene and Pelagia demonstrates that the compiler paid careful attention to the shape that he gave to the Old English vitae of these two women. Specifically, in the transition from Latin to the vernacular, the martyrrologist accentuated certain narrative details (and, at the same time, downplayed or eliminated others) in order to highlight the exemplary repentance that these two former sinners demonstrated. By first examining the generic conventions of the martyrrology, the basis of the martyrrologist's narrative methods in these two texts becomes more clear.

There, God's angel brought her such clothing as no fuller—that is, no weaver—could ever make on earth]: Kotzor 2: 22, 19-22. After several attempts at torture that leave Eulalia neither troubled nor harmed, Eulalia's persecutor Datian "[p]a het . . . hys leasere hig behamelian, and hig [p]a nacode geunarian" [then ordered his jester to mutilate her, and then to dishonor her in nakedness]: Kotzor 2: 261, 22-23.

5. I will refer to the Old English martyrrologist with masculine pronouns, since no female authors of Old English texts have been identified so far. Furthermore, I will keep references to the martyrrologist in the singular, even though the OEM might have had more than one compiler.

6. This cannot be said with the same certainty with regard to the OEM's account of Afra: the entry for Afra in the "Acta sanctorum" section of Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture reports that while this Old English text "appears to draw on BHL 108-09," it cautions that "[a] more precise sourcing is needed." See Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture, vol. 1, ed. Frederick M. Biggs et al. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 51-52, at 51. Because such sourcing is beyond the scope of this chapter, a detailed analysis of nakedness in the OEM's Afra legend will not be undertaken here. An edition of BHL 108-09 is in Bruno Krusch, ed., Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi merovingici et antiquiorum aliquot, MGH, Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum 3 (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1896), 55, 1-64, 12.
3.1 The *Old English Martyrology* and the Latin Tradition of Martyrologies

René Aigrain offers a concise and useful general definition of the term "martyrology":

"martyrology":

> Un *martyrologe* n'est pas, comme le suggérerait l'étymologie, un discours ou un traité concernant tels martyrs en particulier ou les martyrs en général . . . ni un classement des martyrs ou des saints, quel que soit l'ordre adopté . . . mais une liste des saints d'après les anniversaires qui ont coutume d'être célébrés dans les églises, plus ou moins solennellement; l'ordre que comporte un martyrologe est donc celui du calendrier, mois après mois et jour après jour.

[A martyrology is not, as its etymology might suggest, a discourse or a treatise concerning certain martyrs in particular or martyrs in general . . . nor a classification of martyrs or saints, whatever the order adopted . . . but a list of saints according to the feasts which churches customarily celebrate, more or less solemnly; the order of the martyrology is therefore that of the calendar, month after month and day after day.]

Martyrologies can begin on different days: for example, while the *Old English Martyrology* begins on December 25, Bede's *Martyrology* begins on January 1 and Usuard's on December 24. The Latin tradition of martyrologies began with the


Martyrologium Hieronymianum, so named because of its (false) attribution to Jerome.\(^9\)

For the most part, entries in the Martyrologium Hieronymianum only include a date, the names of saints celebrated on that day, and an indication of the place where the saints' deaths (in the case of confessors) or martyrdom occurred. A martyrology of this type can therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate from a calendar.\(^10\)

The Old English Martyrology, however, is a historical martyrology. Once again, Aigrain provides a definition that distinguishes this type of martyrology from the calendar and (whenever such a distinction can be usefully made) from martyrologies that furnish information of the type that the Hieronymian contains:


\(^10\) Aigrain offers a qualified distinction between martyrologies and calendars:

"Quand on emploie expressément le mot calendrier au lieu de martyrologe, c'est, dans l'acceptation la plus restreinte, pour désigner le catalogue où figurent, sans détails, les anniversaires observés dans une seule et même église, tandis que les martyrologes, s'ils peuvent être en théorie des listes d'anniversaires locaux, y mêlent d'ordinaire des commémorations provenant des fastes d'autres églises, ou même prétendant embrasser, du moins en principe, les saints de l'Église universelle" [When the word calendar is expressly used instead of martyrology, it is, in its most limited accepted sense, meant to designate the catalogue where, without details, the feast days observed in a single church are indicated, while martyrologies, if they are in theory lists of local feasts, usually combine commemorations stemming from other churches' registers, or even claim to include, at least in principle, the saints of the universal Church]: *L'hagiographie* 11. But Aigrain also notes that martyrolgies classified as "local" "sont tout proches des calendriers ou se confondent pratiquement avec eux" [are very close (in nature to) calendars or are, in practice, merged with them]: *L'hagiographie*, 11. In the preface to his edition of English calendars, Francis Wormald gestures toward this lack of generic distinction, noting that the texts he includes "have no real liturgical significance, and are more akin to the Breviates of the Hieronymian Martyrology": see *English Kalendars before A. D. 1100*, Henry Bradshaw Society 72 (London: [Harrison and Sons], 1934; reprint, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), v.
[T]andis que la mention d'un saint dans un calendrier ne comporte, après la date, que le nom et une indication sommaire de lieu, beaucoup de martyrologes y joignent un résumé, plus ou moins développé, de l'histoire du saint avec son genre de mort, la mention des persécuteurs sous lesquels il a souffert; c'est à de tels détails, quelle que doive apparaître leur valeur aux yeux de l'historien, que les martyrologes de cette classe doivent leur nom reçu de martyrologes historiques.

While the mention of a saint in a calendar only contains, after the date, the name and summarized information about place, many martyrologies add a more or less developed summary of the saint's history with his type of death, and mention of the persecutors under whom he suffered: it is to such details—whatever their value might appear to be in the historian's eyes—that the martyrologies of this class owe their conventional name historical martyrologies].

Bede is credited with compiling the first historical martyrology, possibly as early as 725, comprising 114 long and 158 short notices for a total of 272 entries. Henri Quentin notes Bede's significant debt to the first manuscript family of the Martyrologium Hieronymianum (among many other sources) in a form somewhat more developed than that found in the early eighth-century Echternach manuscript (Paris, BN, lat. 10837). From the second manuscript family of Bede's text stemmed, in a line of direct descent, a series of ninth-century martyrologies: the martyrology by the "Anonymous" of Lyon, that


12. The date 725 refers to the first family of extant manuscripts and is given in Dubois and Renaud, *Édition pratique*, vi. The number of entries is given in Dubois, *Les martyrologes du moyen âge latin*, 38. Dubois notes that these figures are debatable because of uncertainties regarding textual transmission, yet asserts that they do reflect the scope of Bede's work; see 38, n. 43. See also Quentin's comprehensive study of Bede's Martyrology in *Les martyrologes historiques*, 17-119.

by Florus of Lyon, and the idiosyncratic martyrology by Ado of Vienne. Usuard's martyrology—a work widely adopted in the Western church and later a principal source of the Martyrologium Romanum still used by the Catholic Church today—stands outside the linear pattern just outlined: its principal sources are the second recension of Florus and the first recension of Ado. Other martyrologies with a nonlinear descent from Bede include the Vetus or Parvum Romanum (a key "ancient source" of Ado's martyrology that was actually fabricated post facto by Ado himself) and the martyrologies of Hrabanus Maurus, Notker, Hermann Contract, Wolfhard, and Wandelbert.

14. The Martyrologium of Ado is in Usuardi Martyrologium praemittuntur Sancti Adonis opera, PL 123 (Turnhout: Brepols, n.d.), cols. 201-436. Quentin summarizes the linear relationship of these texts in a flow chart in Les martyrologes historiques, 683. Quentin discusses his dating of the "Anonymous" text to before 806 in Les martyrologes historiques, 219-21. He dates the first recension of Florus's martyrology to the first third of the ninth century and the second recension to the second third, while Dubois narrows the respective dates to ca. 825 and ca. 840. See Quentin, Les martyrologes historiques, 383-85, and Dubois, Les martyrologues du moyen âge latin, 41. Dubois narrows Quentin's dating of Ado's first recension to between 853 and 860, the date of Ado's accession to the archbishopric of Vienne, and speculates that a more precise date of ca. 855 might be tenable. See Les martyrologues du moyen âge latin, 42; cf. Quentin, Les martyrologes historiques, 672-74.

15. For a full discussion of Usuard's sources, see Dubois, Le martyrologe d'Usuard, 38-74. Dubois argues that Usuard began composing his martyrology ca. 850 and dates its completion to ca. 865: Le martyrologe d'Usuard, 134-37. For the history of the Martyrologium Romanum, see Aigrain, L'hagiographie, 91-99, and Dubois, Martyrologes: D'Usuard au Martyrologium Romanum (Abbéville: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1990).

The identification of compilers' source materials—older martyrologies, *vitae* and *passiones*, the Bible, and other writings—has been an integral part of the study of the genre of martyrology. Unlike the martyrologies discussed above, the *Old English Martyrology* does not have a direct source relationship to any Latin martyrology descended linearly from Bede, nor to the martyrologies of Hrabanus or Usuard.¹⁷ No single Latin or vernacular martyrology has been traced as a direct source for the *Old English Martyrology*.¹⁸ Instead, the Old English martyrologist, as J. E. Cross has demonstrated, used a wide range of Latin sources as the basis for his entries.¹⁹

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martyrologists whose works are discussed above tended not to cite their sources verbatim, but instead modified them in various ways. For example, they changed dates; they also added, deleted, expanded and abridged entries. Investigations of compilers' treatments of their source texts, once these have been identified, have been important to studies of the genre of martyrology.\textsuperscript{20} The case is no different for the \textit{Old English Martyrology}. Cross's various articles dealing with individual entries of the \textit{Martyrology}, as well as Günter Kotzor's source work published in his edition of the text, have improved understandings of both the scope of the compiler's source material and his adaptations of it in his vernacular text.\textsuperscript{21}

Believed to be of Mercian origin, the \textit{Old English Martyrology} has been dated based on what Cross has identified as the latest datable material included in the work: the Latin sermon "Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis," found in a manuscript of the second quarter of the ninth century.\textsuperscript{22} The language of the \textit{Martyrology} reveals that the compiler had a solid working knowledge of Latin, regardless of the language in which the text was

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\textsuperscript{20} Quentin's painstaking studies of the methods of Bede, the "Anonymous" of Lyon, Florus, and Ado clearly demonstrate this point. See \textit{Les martyrologes historiques}, passim.

\textsuperscript{21} See Kotzor 1: 244-80, and Kotzor 2: 277-375.

\end{flushright}
originally composed. If more than one source for a given entry was available to the martyrrologist, he would "collate and fuse" them. Furthermore, the martyrrologist "was a good précis writer who was concerned to transmit varied information about saints, and some of his notices record for hagiographers rarer versions of a legend." Overall, Cross's work has demonstrated that the martyrrologist's method of composition involved sifting through multiple sources of information and compiling the information he believed necessary to include in his work.

Two key points emerge here: first, the interaction of two languages, Latin and Old English, in the creation of the vernacular martyrology; and second, the editorial freedom of the compiler to accept or reject material as he saw fit. Regardless of the original language in which the Martyrology was composed, the martyrrologist's engagement with


25. Cross, "English Vernacular Saints' Lives," 424. When taken together, the extant manuscripts of the OEM do not cover every day of the calendar year, as does Ado's martyrology. They nevertheless do indicate that the hypothesized original OEM covered the year's span. There are, however, blocks of entries missing from all of the extant texts: Cross notes those for almost the entire month of February, possibly beginning around January 26; those between March 14 and 16 inclusively; and those between December 14 and 24 (this claimed despite the inclusion of Thomas's feast day on December 21); see Cross, "English Vernacular Saints' Lives," 422.
both Latin and Old English languages must be taken into account when any of the Old English Martyrology's entries is closely examined. A consideration of the Martyrology as a text that is fundamentally dialogic sheds light on the compiler's method of shaping the various accounts that comprise this text. As Martin Irvine explains,

At the intertextual level, most Old English poetry and nearly all of the prose is dialogic, in Bakhtin's sense of the term: the Old English texts set up an interpretive dialogue with prior texts, and their own textuality is formed from an internal dialogue between the discursive systems that make up English and Latin literary discourse. The resulting dialogical hybrid, formed of the literatures of both languages, is a distinctive feature of Old English textuality. And here I mean "both languages" in two senses: Latin and English as ordinary languages, and the systems of literary discourse produced in those languages which were culturally encoded in very specific ways.26

Considering the literary method of compilatio [compilation] in relation to this dialogism, Irvine notes that "[t]he main principle of compilatio was the selection of materials from the cultural library so that the resulting collection forms an interpretive arrangement of texts"; he defines the "cultural library" as "the repertoire of all discursive possibilities realized in texts."27 As a vernacular compilation of saints' narratives ultimately culled from Latin sources, the Old English Martyrology reflects and deploys notions of sanctity that its compiler inherited from Latin hagiographic tradition and then filtered into an Anglo-Saxon milieu—possibly one in which Latin was not understood, at least to some


27. The Making of Textual Culture, 428 and 429; original emphasis.
degree. Unfortunately, given the uncertainty about the martyrology's exact date and place
of origin, it is difficult to posit an audience for whom the martyrologist may have
intended his text. Nevertheless, what the Old English text both reveals and conceals of
its sources suggests what notions of sanctity the compiler may have particularly
championed and wished to transmit to others.

28. Although the only manuscripts containing the Old English Mary Magdalene
legend (MSS B and C) date to the eleventh century, J. E. Cross asserts that "it is
reasonably assumed that the relevant section had been in late ninth-century manuscripts,
since two fragments of this date [MSS A and E] exist for the Martyrology": "Mary
Magdalen in the Old English Martyrology: The Earliest Extant 'Narrat Josephus' Variant

29. Regardless of the exact location of its composition and the audience for which
it may have been originally intended, it is possible that the OEM, like other
martyrologies, was read out loud in a public setting. Baudouin de Gaiffier surveys
various liturgical and legislative texts mandating the announcement of saints' feast days
in "De l'usage et de la lecture du martyrologe: Témoignages antérieurs au 9e siècle," AB
79 (1961): 40-59. Günter Kotzor's discussion of the issue with regard to the OEM does
not reach any definite conclusions: see Kotzor 1: 233-43. In contrast, Helmut Gneuss
asserts that while martyrology entries for the following day were typically read during the
chapter Office after Prime or morning mass, no evidence suggests that the OEM was put
to this use. See "Liturgical Books in Anglo-Saxon England and Their Old English
Terminology," in Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to
Peter Cleemos on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Michael Lapidge and
Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 91-141, at 128. Mary
Clayton argues that "[t]he extra non-martyrological entries suggest that the Old English
text [i.e., the OEM] functioned more as a reference book for private readers than as a
book for public liturgical use. This is also supported by the form of the entries, which
incorporate the date in the text, instead of the usual marginal indications or headings": see
should add that the entries for March 2 (Chad), May 7 (John of Beverley), May 26
(Augustine of Canterbury), August 1 (Germanus of Auxerre), October 3 (the two
Hewalds), October 26 (Cedd), and December 14 (Higebald) offer abbreviated versions of
entries from Bede's Ecclesiastical History with a note to the effect that Bede has written
about these saints "on Angelecynnes bocum" [in the book of the English]. The compiler
does not, however, treat all entries from Bede in this manner: no such phrase, for
example, accompanies his relatively lengthy account of Æthelthryth (June 23). The
martyrologist notes that Aldhelm's [Carmen] de virginitate is a source for his April 3
entry (Agape, Chionia, [Irene]), although numerous other entries which, as Cross has
noted, also use Aldhelm's verse and / or prose treatise as "additional (not main) sources"
E. Gordon Whatley notes a tendency of prose saints' narratives translated from Latin into Old English to abbreviate source material; he argues that the study of the ways in which translators abbreviate their sources can reveal important points about the interpretive settings in which these narratives were composed. Examining the Old English martyrologist's treatment of his source materials for his entries on Mary Magdalene and Pelagia thus illuminates the interpretive field in which these legends were composed: it especially sheds light on the particular traits that the compiler believed a reformed harlot saint should exhibit, and of which his audience should be aware.

3.2 Mary Magdalene's Tearful Repentance and (Un)clothed Eremeticism

The Old English martyrologist's portrayal of Mary Magdalene is based upon the exegetical traditions of Bede and Gregory the Great concerning Mary's sin and later penitence. Much critical attention has been paid to the Magdalene's cult in late antiquity, do not specifically acknowledge their debt to Aldhelm. See "On the Library of the Old English Martyrologist," 227-49, at 230. Nevertheless, the form of the numerous entries from Bede suggests direction to one reader, or possibly to a very small number of readers (either of which audience might be reading silently or aloud) to consult the *Ecclesiastical History* for further information. The form of the entries whose material originates with Bede seems to make little sense in the context of reading aloud to a larger audience. That the OEM does not include entries for all days of the calendar year might also have limited its potential utility in the chapter house.

30. "Abbreviating a text, either by compressing its language or by omitting whole episodes, can be a means of controlling its meaning and averting possibly undesirable effects on the reader or listener. The character of such abbreviation in a given text raises questions about the translator, his own attitude to the text, his cultural context and his implied audience": "Lost in Translation: Omission of Episodes in Some Old English Prose Saints' Legends," *ASE* 26 (1997): 187-208, at 189. One study that investigates the implications of such textual adaptation is Hugh Magennis, "'Listen Now All and Understand': Adaptation of Hagiographical Material for Vernacular Audiences in the Old English Lives of St. Margaret," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 27-42.
as well as in the Middle Ages. But the only study to date on Mary in the Old English Martyrology has been J. E. Cross's identification of the source for the second part of the legend, a "Narrat Josephus" version of the Magdalene's narrative listed as BHL 5453. Cross does not, however, seek to interpret the vernacular account in light of this source. This chapter will examine Mary Magdalene's portrayal in the Old English Martyrology in light of Cross's division of the legend into two parts. It will demonstrate the complexity of the martyrologist's compilation methods in the first part of the vernacular legend, where he adapts material from the Bible, Gregory the Great's Homiliae in evangelia


Furthermore, it will investigate the martyrologist's avoidance of the narrative representation of the Magdalene's naked body—which is present in BHL 5453—from the second part of the Old English account. This study will be anchored in a consideration of the Old English Martyrology qua martyrology and the Latin martyrological tradition from which it stems, so that the compiler's particular use of his source material can be better understood.

The martyrologist's treatment of Mary Magdalene in the first part of the legend relies on his identification of her with Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, and the unknown peccatrix of Luke 7:37. Gregory the Great codified this identification in his Homiliae in evangelia 25 and 33. While the conflation of these three women never took hold in the Eastern church, where they were considered to be separate individuals, Gregory's interpretation of them as one woman exercised considerable influence on portrayals of the Magdalene in the western Middle Ages. Gregory upheld the notion


34. See Saxer, Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident, 1-6, and "Les origines du culte en Occident," 33-47.

35. For Mary's cult in the East, see Saxer, "Les saintes Marie Madeleine et Marie de Béthanie dans la tradition liturgique et homilétique orientale," Revue des sciences religieuses 32 (1958): 1-37. Saxer observes that most eastern liturgical books place Mary Magdalene's feast day on July 22; a minority indicate June 30 or August 4. Mary of Bethany's feast day was June 4, while there is no evidence that the anonymous sinner was venerated. See "Les saintes Marie Madeleine et Marie de Béthanie," 11-12. There is no
that Mary Magdalene was a sinner, stemming from his identification of Mary with Luke's *peccatrix*. Victor Saxer notes that the church's choice of John 20:11-18 and Luke 7:36-50 as gospel readings, and Gregory's choice to write commentaries on these particular passages, reflect a desire to exhort the faithful to Mary's example of faith and penance, rather than to encourage her veneration. Such a motive offers a useful clue to the Old English martyrologist's narrative strategy in his representation of Mary. This is of

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feast of Mary Magdalene mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*: Bede's *Martyrology* is the first text of the Western church to mention a feast for Mary Magdalene at all, and that on July 22, which date Quentin believes Bede derived from Greek liturgical books. Quentin notes resemblances between Bede's *Martyrology* and the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople: see *Les martyrologes historiques*, 586, and also Saxer, "Les saintes Marie Madeleine et Marie de Béthanie," 25. Saxer notes that, in the Western church, there were once two different feast days for Mary Magdalene—either January 19 / 20, or on July 22. The feasts of both Mary and Martha of Bethany were celebrated on the January date due to various confusions of orthography and identification among the Persian martyrs Marius and Martha (who died with their children Audifax and Abacuc), Lazarus's two sisters, and Mary Magdalene: see *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident*, 35-39, and Richard W. Pfaff, "The Hagiographical Peculiarity of Martha's Companion(s)," in *Liturgical Calendars, Saints, and Services in Medieval England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 1-22.

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36. There is a longstanding tradition that understands Mary to be a sexual sinner. This tradition, however, only euphemistically refers to the sexual nature of Mary's sins: see Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 15 and 18. Whether this tradition is symptomatic of a general and "powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation of the flesh," or, more specifically, reproduces the "exegetical distortion" of facts concerning Mary that are not substantiated in the Gospels is not at issue in this chapter: see Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 225, and Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others*, 30. There is no reason to believe that the martyrologist understands Mary's sins in any different way.

37. "L'objectif principal de l'Église dans le choix de ces lectures évangeliques, et de Grégoire le Grand dans leur commentaire, n'est pas de proposer un saint, en l'occurrence sainte Marie Madeleine, à la vénération des fidèles, mais d'exhorter ceux-ci, à son exemple, à la foi et à la pénitence dans l'esprit de l'évangile" [The principal objective of the church in the choice of these gospel readings, and of Gregory the Great in commenting on them, is not to propose a saint—in this case, Mary Magdalene—for veneration by the faithful, but to exhort these people by her example to faith and penitence in the spirit of the Gospel]: "Les origines du culte en Occident," 33-47, at 41.
special interest considering the paucity of information about Mary Magdalene contained in other narrative martyrologies. The martyrologies of Bede, Ado, Usuard and Hrabanus record only Mary's name and feast day; those by the "Anonymous" of Lyon and Florus do not mention her at all. The martyrologies of Notker and Wandelbert include entries that, while to some degree "narrative" in that they contain more information than the others, do not include material of significant depth and detail. Notker, for example, records for July 22 the "[n]ativitas sanctæ Mariæ Magdalenæ, de qua, ut evangelistæ referunt, dæmonia septem Dominus ejectit. Quæ etiam, inter alia dona insignia, Christum a mortuis resurgentem prima videre et apostolis prædicare promeruit" [birth of Saint Mary Magdalene, from whom the Lord cast out seven demons, as the gospels relate; and who, among other honors that were given, deserved (to be) the first to see Christ raised from the dead and to announce (this) to the apostles].38 In his verse martyrology, Wandelbert takes note that

Undecimam Christo felix miserante Maria
Ornat, septeno caruit quae daemone, quamque
Magdala progenitam signat cognomine origo.

[Mary, blessed by Christ's pity (lit., by Christ pitying), adorns the eleventh (kalends of August; i.e., July 22), who was freed from seven demons and whom her origin designates by her cognomen as born at Magdala.]39

Neither of these accounts makes any reference to Mary's sins (except euphemistically in their references to the seven demons cast out of her), nor do they include material beyond the scope of the gospels. These very brief narratives record certain justifications for


Mary's status as saint (and thus as the object of a feast day), but they do not mention the tearful penitence that is at the heart of her sanctity.

Mary Magdalene's extended portrayal in the *Old English Martyrology* therefore stands in marked contrast to the brief notices given (if given at all) in several Latin martyrologies. Some possible reasons for this extended treatment are brought to light when two key points are considered: first, the notion that the western church considered Mary to be a sinful woman, and second, the nature of her supposed sin and its relation to her repentance. That Mary was considered a sinner by such authorities as Bede and Gregory the Great stemmed, in part, from mention in two gospels that she had had seven demons cast out (Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2). This is not a case of confused identity: in both accounts, Mary Magdalene is clearly named. Mary required exorcism but, as Susan Haskins argues, demonic possession was not "synonymous with sin" in the New Testament. Moreover, there is no solid basis in Scripture for the belief that the *peccatrix's* sin was necessarily sexual:

40. Mark 16:9: "surgens autem mane prima sabbati apparuit primo Mariae Magdaleneae de qua eiecerat septem daemonia" [But he rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils]. Luke 8:1-3: "Et factum est deinceps et ipse iter faciebat per civitatem et castellum praeedicans et evangelizans regnum Dei et duodecim cum illo et mulieres aliquae quae erant curatae ab spiritibus malignis et infirmitatibus Maria quae vocatur Magdalene de qua daemonia septem exierant et Iohanna uxor Chuza procuratoris Herodis et Susanna et aliae multae quae ministrabant eis de facultatibus suis" [And it came to pass afterwards, that he travelled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God; and the twelve with him. And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto him of their substance].

The Greek word for "sinner," *hamartolos*, used here in Luke 7, has various connotations in the New Testament: in a Jewish context, it could be applied to someone who had forfeited his or her proper relationship with God by disobeying the Law; it could also refer to anyone who lived an immoral life, such as a murderer or thief, or who followed a dishonourable profession. Although the Greek word for a harlot, *porin*, which appears elsewhere in Luke (15:30), is not used in this account, the emphasis given to Luke's phrase "a sinner in the city," and the word "sinner" used by the Pharisee, both seem to indicate the latter's conviction that the woman's "sin" is sexual, that she is a prostitute.  

J. E. Cross states that, in the *Old English Martyrology's* version of the Magdalene legend, "the signification of the 'seven devils' with which she is possessed . . . as 'mid eallum uncystum' [with all vices] derives ultimately, at least, from Gregory's interpretation, 'universa vitia' [the totality of vices], although Bede drew on Gregory in his commentaries on Mark and Luke and could have been an intermediary." The Old English account also states that Mary "wæs ærest synnecege" [was first a sinner], reflecting the conflation of Mary with the anonymous *peccatrix* of Luke 7:37 as in Gregory's *Homiliae* 25 and 33. 

The Old English account runs the notion of Mary's sinfulness together with that of her demon possession, so as to underline the connection between the two: "seo wæs ærest synnecege, ond heo wæs mid seofon deoflum full, þæt wæs mid eallum uncystum" [she was first a sinner, and she was filled with seven devils

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43. Cross, "Mary Magdalen in the *Old English Martyrology*," 16. "[M]id eallum uncystum" occurs in Kotzor 2: 156, 4; "uniuersa uitia" is found in *Homilia* 33: 288, 10.

44. Cross, "Mary Magdalen in the *Old English Martyrology*," 16. The Old English line cited above is in Kotzor 2: 156, 2-3. Gregory's references to the Magdalene as *peccatrix* are in *Homilia* 25: 205, 1, and *Homilia* 33: 288, 2-3. Luke 7:37 specifically refers to "mulier quae erat in civitate peccatrix" [a woman that was in the city, a sinner].
The term "synnecge" has not been understood to be synonymous with "sinnig" [sinful, in a general sense]. Instead, it is a hapax legomenon, which—given its association with Mary Magdalene—has been understood to mean not only "[a] sinner, a sinful woman; peccatrix," but also "a loose woman" (a definition also given to cwene and scylcen).46

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it appears that the Old English martyrrologist, following Bede and Gregory, understood that Mary's sins were sexual in nature. Bede's commentary on Luke 7:36-37—which was possibly one immediate source for the Old English Martyrology's entry on Mary—makes it clear that Mary was, in Bede's view, a prostitute. While making a firm connection between the anonymous peccatrix, Mary of Bethany, and the Magdalene, Bede calls this composite figure a meretrix:

Quidam dicunt hanc eandem non esse mulierem quae[,] imminente dominica passione[,] caput pedesque eius unguento perfudit[,] quia haec lacrimis lauerit et crine pedes terserit et manifeste peccatrix appelletur[;] de illa autem nihil tale scriptum sit[,] nec potuerit statim [caput] domini meretrix digna fieri [tangere]. Verum qui diligentius inuestigant inueniunt eandem mulierem Mariam uidelicet Magdalenam sororem Lazari sicut Johannes narrat bis eodem functam fuisse obsequio semel quidem hoc


46. The first definition is from Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "synnicge (-cege)." The second definition is from Jane Roberts and Christian Kay, A Thesaurus of Old English (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1995), 12.08.08.01.02.01.01. Clark Hall's definition reads "female sinner": see J. R. Clark Hall, with supplement by Herbert D. Merritt, A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, 4th ed., Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960; reprint, 1991), s.v. "synnecge." Each of these definitions reiterates the gender bias (more or less euphemistically) that underlies the exegesis of Gregory and Bede—a bias that, in the absence of firm scriptural support, brands the sin associated with a female as necessarily sexual in nature.
loco cum primo accedens cum humilitate et lacrimis remissionem meruit peccatorum, nam et Iohannes hoc quamuis non ut Lucas quo modo factum sit narrauerit tamen ipsam Mariam commendans commemorauit ubi de resuscitando fratre eius coepit loqui, *Erat autem quidam*, inquiens, *languens Lazarus a Bethania de castello Mariae et Marthae sororis eius, Maria autem erat quae unxit dominum ungento et extersit pedes eius capillis suis*, secundo autem in Bethania, nam prius in Galilea factum est, non iam peccatrix sed casta sancta deuotaque Christo mulier non solum pedes sed et caput eius unxisse repperitur.

[Certain people say that this is not the same woman who, with the Lord's passion approaching, bathed his head and his feet with ointment, because the latter washed with tears and dried his feet with her hair and is plainly called a sinner; however, no such thing is written about the former, nor could a prostitute straightway become worthy (to touch) the Lord's (head). Truly, those who investigate carefully (will) find that the same woman Mary, that is to say, the Magdalene, sister of Lazarus, as John relates, twice performed the same service with obedience, once at this point (i.e., in Luke's gospel), when, on the first occasion, approaching with humility and with tears, she won forgiveness of her sins; for John related how this was done, although not in the same way as Luke, but he mentioned the same Mary, praising her when he began to speak about the resuscitation of her brother, "Now there was a certain man sick," he says, "named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and of Martha her sister. (And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair)"; but the second time, in Bethany (for it was done the first time in Galilee), no longer a sinner, this chaste, holy woman, devoted to Christ, is said to have anointed not only his feet, but also his head.]

Unlike Bede's commentary on Luke, neither his commentary on Mark nor Gregory's *Homilia* 33 refers to Mary Magdalene as a *meretrix* [prostitute]. The Old English martyrlogist does not provide a Latin form of the vernacular term "synnecge"; in contrast, in his account of Afra (August 8), the martyrlogist uses "forlegoswif" to

47. Bede, *In Lucam* 166, 23-167, 42; original emphasis. The translation is my own except the excerpt in quotation marks from John 11:1-2. Cf. Gregory: "Hanc uero quam Lucas peccatrixem mulierem, Iohannes Mariam nominat, illam esse Mariam credimus de qua Marcus septem daemonia eiecta fuisse testatur" [This woman, whom Luke calls a sinner, John names Mary. I believe that she is the same Mary of whom Mark says that seven demons had been cast out]: *Homilia* 33: 288, 7-9; trans. Hurst, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 269.
Given the martyrologist's reliance on Gregory (quite possibly through Bede) for other details concerning Mary's identity, and the lack of evidence to the contrary, it must be inferred that the compiler agreed with Gregory's views concerning Mary's sinfulness. Although he does not call her a prostitute, Gregory's thoughts on the Magdalene are clear, especially in *Homilia 33*. Gregory asks "quid septem daemonia, nisi uniuersa uitia designantur? Quia enim septem diebus omne tempus comprehenditur, recte septenario numero uniuersitas figuratur. Septem ergo daemonia Maria habuit, quae uniuersis uitiis plena fuit" [How should we interpret the seven demons except as the totality of vices? Since all time is comprehended in seven days, we correctly take the number seven to signify totality. Mary had seven demons since she was filled with the totality of vices].

Fornication is of course among these vices, but Gregory's figurative reading of the seven demons does not foreground this particular sin. This, however, changes quickly. Commenting on Mary's anointing of Jesus (Luke 7:37-38), Gregory asserts that

Liquet, fratres, quod illicitis actibus prius mulier intenta, unguentum sibi pro odore suae carnis adhibuit. Quod ergo sibi turpiter exhibuerat, hoc iam Deo laudabiliter offerebat. . . . Quot ergo in se habuit oblectamenta, tot de se inuenit holocausta. Conuertit ad uirtutum numerum numerum


49. J. E. Cross examines the use of patristic homilies in several entries of the OEM where borrowing is more extensive than in the Mary Magdalene legend: see "The Use of Patristic Homilies in the Old English Martyrology," *ASE* 14 (1985): 107-28.

50. Susan Haskins traces the rhetorical transformation of Mary from apostle and witness of the resurrection to repentant harlot, especially in the period between Hippolytus of Rome and Gregory, in *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 62-97.

It is evident, my friends, that a woman who had earlier been eager for actions which are not allowed had used the ointment as a scent for her own body. What she had earlier used disgracefully for herself she now laudably offered for the Lord. . . . She found as many things to sacrifice as she had had ways of offering pleasure. She converted the number of her faults into the number of virtues, so that she could serve God as completely in repentance as she had rejected him in sin.\textsuperscript{52}

It would be too simplistic to suggest that the omission of the term \textit{meretrix} in the \textit{Old English Martyrology} indicates that the compiler did not use Bede's commentary on Luke, for no evidence confirms that this was the case. In fact, the martyrologist might well have gleaned from \textit{In Lucam} the detail that Mary came to Jesus when the latter "wæs æt gereordum on sumes Iudisces leorneres huse" [was at a meal at a certain Jewish teacher's house].\textsuperscript{53} In addition, Bede's citation of Luke 7:37 notes the \textit{alabastrum} containing the ointment that Mary used to anoint Jesus.\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, the details of

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\item[53.] Kotzor 2: 156, 6-7; cf. Luke 7:36, "Rogabat autem illum quidam de Pharisaeis ut manducaret cum illo et ingressus domum Pharisaei discubuit" [And one of the Pharisees desired him to eat with him. And he went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat], cited by Bede in \textit{In Lucam} 166, 16-17.
\item[54.] Even if, as J. E. Cross cautions, the martyrologist might not have construed his Old English translation of \textit{alabastrum} as "glæsfæt" (Kotzor 2: 156, 8) from Pliny's elaboration of the term (also contained in \textit{In Lucam}), the fact that the martyrologist provides no further elaboration of "glæsfæt" still leaves open the possibility that he simply took the word \textit{alabastrum} from Bede, whether or not he had Pliny's meaning in mind when choosing "glæsfæt" as his Old English term. See "Mary Magdalen in the Old English Martyrology," 16-25, at 16, and \textit{In Lucam} 166, 17-23. Pliny's definition of \textit{alabastrum} is from his \textit{Natural History} 36, 12; the \textit{Natural History} is edited and translated by H. Rackham, W. H. S. Jones, and D. E. Eichholz, in \textit{Pliny: Natural History}, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938-83).
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Mary's weeping upon and kissing Jesus's feet, which is not found in the other gospel accounts of Jesus's anointing, is found only in Luke 7:38 and is cited verbatim by Bede.\textsuperscript{55} Bede does not comment on every line of Scripture, however: one of his omissions is the citation of Luke 7:48, where Jesus tells Mary "remittuntur tibi peccata" [Thy sins are forgiven thee]. The martyrologist nevertheless includes this line, compressing it with Luke 7:50: "Pa cwæp se Hælend to hire: 'Pe syndon þine synna forlætene; ac gang on sibbe" [Then the Savior said to her, "Your sins are forgiven you; therefore, go in peace"]).\textsuperscript{56} This could easily have been filled in by reference to Gregory's \textit{Homilia} 33, however, where the complete text of the incident at the Pharisee's house, Luke 7:36-50, is included.\textsuperscript{57} Of course, the martyrologist could also have opened his Bible to the appropriate scriptural reference, as he possibly did to Mark 16:9-10 where Jesus first appears to Mary, who subsequently reports this incident to the apostles.\textsuperscript{58} The relevant lines of Old English text state "[o]nd heo wæs siðan Criste swa gecoren ðæt he æfter his

\textsuperscript{55} The Old English reads "weop heo on ðæs Hælendes fet, ond drigde mid hire loccum ond cyste" [she wept on the Savior's feet, and dried (them) with her locks and kissed (them)]: Kotzor 2: 156, 9-19. Luke 7:38 reads: "Et stans retro secus pedes eius lacrimis coepit rigare pedes eius et capillis capitis sui tergebatur et osculabatur pedes eius et unguento unguebat" [And standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment]. Cf. \textit{In Lucam} 167, 53-55.

\textsuperscript{56} Kotzor 2: 156, 11-13.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Homilia} 33: 287, 1-288, 27.

\textsuperscript{58} Mark 16:9-10 reads: "surgens autem mane prima sabbati apparuit primo Mariae Magdalene de qua eiecerat septem daemonia illa vadens nuntiavit his qui cum eo fuerant lugentibus et flentibus" [But he rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalen; out of whom he had cast seven devils. She went and told them that had been with him, who were mourning and weeping].
æriste ærest monna hine hire æteawde, ond heo bodade his ærist his apostolum" [and she was chosen by Christ in such a way afterwards that after his resurrection, he himself appeared to her, first of (all) men, and she announced his resurrection to his apostles]: these lines leave out the detail of the seven demons (they had already been mentioned at the beginning of the Martyrology's narrative of Mary), and of the apostles' dejected state.59

In the first half of the Old English Martyrology's account of the Magdalene, then, the martyrologist relied on three principal sources: Gregory's Homiliae in evangelia, Bede's commentaries on Luke and Mark, and the Bible. Following Gregory's assertion that Mary's seven demons signified "uniuersa uitia" [the totality of vices], the martyrologist depicted the Magdalene as not just any sinful, adulterous woman, but as a woman who is in fact the epitome of sinfulness. For the martyrologist, as for Gregory, Mary is as bad as bad gets. But Mary appears in the Martyrology not because she remains so thoroughly sinful, but because she leaves her innumerable vices behind her. Indeed, the basis of Mary's sanctity is a contrition whose profundity equals the depth of her sin. The Martyrology's image of Mary's weeping upon Jesus's feet, and then drying them with her hair and kissing them, portrays in very physical terms the extent of Mary's sorrow for her faults: she performs her penitence with her tears, her hair, and her lips. The anointing of Jesus's feet cites the anointing of Mary's own body with sweet-smelling ointment in order to entice men to sexual sin, as Gregory relates in Homilia 33, but

59. Kotzor 2: 156, 13-157, 1. John 20:1 notes that Mary was alone at Jesus's tomb, but the account that follows shows Mary weeping, not the apostles. The Old English version leaves out any notion of Mary crying at the tomb, but this crying is perhaps compressed into the account of Mary's weeping on Jesus's feet at Kotzor 2: 156, 9.
reverses rather than repeats its significance: Mary's tears transform the anointing from a sign of her sin to an important sign of her repentance. Once she has repented, Jesus absolves her, after which time the Magdalene is favored by her Savior to such an extent that she is given the honor of being the first person to see the resurrected Christ. The eyes that once wept in bitter remorse become the eyes that later bear witness to the founding event of the Christian faith. It is here that the first part of the Old English Martyrology's narrative ends.

The second half of the Martyrology's account of Mary does not come from Gregory, Bede, or Scripture, but rather from a single source that is neither patristic nor biblical. J. E. Cross has identified this source as one "Narrat Josephus" variant of Mary Magdalene's story, listed as BHL 5453. Victor Saxer believes that the "Narrat Josephus" version was composed in Italy and was influenced by BHL 5415, a Latin version of the Mary of Egypt legend which he dates to the late ninth century.

60. "Mary Magdalen in the Old English Martyrology," 17. Cross includes an edition of BHL 5453 in his article, at 21-22. Cross observes that the majority of surviving manuscripts of this variant begin with the phrase "Narrat Josephus," hence the name given to the variant itself. The "Narrat Josephus" version is of the vita eremita, as opposed to the vita apostolica, branch of Mary's vita: the latter branch portrays Mary evangelizing southern France. One manuscript of BHL 5453 dates from the tenth century, the other from the tenth or eleventh centuries. Neither is listed in Helmut Gneuss's Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001). This may only suggest, however, that any earlier version(s) of this legend which may have been available to the martyrologist are no longer extant.

61. The vita eremitica "è derivato dalla leggenda latina di Maria Egiziaca, tradotta poco prima da Paolo Diacono e Anastasio il Bibliotecario. La fonte fissa un termine ante quem non alla vita eremita della Maddalena. Ma figurando già nel martirologio anglosassone . . . lo stesso testo deve essere anteriore alla fine del IX secolo" [is derived from the Latin legend of Mary of Egypt, translated a short time before by Paul the Deacon and Anastasius the Librarian. The source establishes a terminus post quem for
The Martyrology's narrative of Mary Magdalene reveals borrowing, compression, and, as it progresses, much elimination of material when compared with its Latin source text. For instance, the Old English lines that introduce the second part of the account, "[o]nd æfter Christes upastignesse heo wæs on swa micelre longunge æfter him þæt heo nolde næfre siðan nænge mon geseon" [and after Christ's resurrection, she was in such great longing after him that she did not wish to see anyone ever afterwards] slightly condense the lines in the Latin text which state that Mary, "post ascensum domini saluatoris pro ardente caritate domini et tedio eius quem habuit post eius ascensum numquam uirum uidere uoluit neque ullum hominem suis occulis" [after the ascension of the Lord, the Savior, because of her ardent love of the Lord and because of the weariness that she had for him, never desired to see a man, nor any person, with her own eyes after

the vita eremitica of the Magdalene. But (given that it was) represented already in the Anglo-Saxon martyrology . . . the same text must have existed before the end of the ninth century]: see "Santa Maria Maddalena dalla storia evangelica alla legenda e all'arte," in La Maddalena tra sacra e profana, ed. Marilena Mosco (Florence: Casa Usher, 1986), 24-28, at 24. BHL 5415 is printed under the title "Vita Sanctae Mariae Ægypticae, meretricis," in Vitae Patrum sive historiae eremiticae libri decem, PL 73 (Turnhout: Brepols, n.d.), cols. 671-90. The OEM does not contain an entry for Mary of Egypt.

On brief examination of the Mary of Egypt legend in question, it is easy to detect some degree of contact between it and the information contained in the much briefer narrative, BHL 5453. Major details that the two legends share are the same name, Maria, for the female characters—women living alone in the desert—their discovery by a holy man seeking solitude, their not needing food or drink, and their nudity. More specific details are not shared, however, such as the name Zosimus for the holy man (in the Mary of Egypt legend only), the amount of time the women spend in the desert (Mary of Egypt's forty-seven years versus the Magdalene's thirty years), the precise reasons for their retreats (penance for the Egyptian's base desires as opposed to the Magdalene's overwhelming desire for the resurrected Christ), and the circumstances of their respective burials (Zosimus buries Mary of Egypt with help from a lion, while the unnamed priest buries Mary Magdalene in his church).
his ascension."  The next few lines in the Old English version, "[a]c heo gewat on westenne ond ðær gewunade þritig geara, eallum monnum uncuð. Ne heo næfre æt mænniscne mete, ne heo ne dranc" [but she departed into the wilderness, and dwelled there for thirty years, unknown to all people; she never ate human food, nor did she drink] more closely translate "sed in heremum recessit et ibi mansit annos XXX omnibus hominibus incognita et numquam cibum humanum manducabat neque bibebat" [but she retreated to a private place and remained there for thirty years, unknown to all people, and never ate human food nor drank].

What emerges from these first few lines of the Old English translation is a clear portrait of a longing Magdalene who seeks solitude in response to her overwhelming desire for Jesus. This desire eliminates Mary's need for human companionship. Here, the Latin text alludes to Mary's sexual sins with its mention that Mary did not wish to see a "uirum" [man], before observing that she did not wish to see "ullum hominem" [any person] either. The Old English text, however, does not distinguish between people of any gender and those who are male: it uses the generic word "mon" [person] rather than ...
"wer" [man] to describe whom the Magdalene does not wish to see. Mary may have been a "synnecege" [female sexual sinner] at one time, but the martyrrologist omits any allusion to Mary's past once she has tearfully displayed her remorse and received absolution. It is likely that the martyrrologist did not make a narrative issue of "mon" [person] versus "wer" [man] because by drawing particular attention to the possibility of Mary's seeing a mortal man, he would have raised the issue of the Magdalene's sordid past—and by this point in the Old English account, recall of this past has no narrative place. The martyrrologist chooses to highlight Mary's repentance, not her sin, in keeping with his narrative focus on Mary's sanctity: after all, she appears here in a martyrrology, not in a book of "wikked wyves."

During her thirty years of penitent solitude, Mary neither eats nor drinks. At first glance, this fast appears to be a function of her longing, with Mary's body fading away to the degree that her spirit hungers for her beloved Savior. But this is not the case: her fast does not consume her vitality. In fact, the absence of food and drink from Mary's daily routine cannot be called a "fast" at all. The Latin source narrative is structured to give one the initial impression that Mary is pining away, and only gradually reveals that this is not the case. During the period that she neither eats nor drinks, she is taken up into the air by angels to pray at the canonical hours of prayer. An unnamed priest then arrives in the same wilderness for a Lenten period of solitude. He witnesses one of Mary's assumptions, sees her being returned to earth, and then approaches the entrance to the cave where she dwells, imploring her to tell him whether she is a human being or a spirit.

Mary identifies herself to the priest as the sinful Magdalene from the gospel, out of whom seven demons were cast. She then reiterates the opening lines of the Latin narrative, telling the priest about her history of longing for Christ and its causal relationship to her many long years of solitude. At this point the text finally reveals that there is a connection between Mary's repeated assumptions and her apparent "fast." Mary admits to the priest that when the angels take her up into the air, she is shown "partem suavitatis celestis" [a portion of heavenly sweetness]; once this is done, she tells him, "tam iocunda suavitate satiatam perducunt me iterum ad speluncam meas" [they lead me again to my cave, satiated with so much pleasant sweetness]. Mary relates that it is "pro suavitate celesti et angelorum aspectu" [because of the heavenly sweetness and the appearance of the angels] that her fullness is so complete; she neither hungers nor thirsts, nor does she even think about human food. In effect, the sweetness of heaven that the angels "ostendunt" [show] to her and the sight of the angels themselves are enough to sustain her physically, as well as spiritually. Through an act of tearful repentance—that of weeping upon Jesus's feet—Mary's eyes have been transformed. Her weeping, penitent eyes, once used to seeing men for the purposes of sexual sin, now see with pure, otherworldly vision.

The Latin text makes it clear that although Mary partakes of the *vita angelica*, the angelic life, she only does so to an imperfect extent. Mary is still fully embodied, a

68. Cross, "Mary Magdalen in the *Old English Martyrology*, 21, 32.
mortal human being. In fact, the text highlights Mary's embodied humanity with the idea that the saint is returned to her cave after each assumption. Although she is now free of sin, she is as much of her body as she is of the earth. The *Old English Martyrology's* adaptation of the Latin text—which, by this point, is highly abbreviated—still clearly reflects this notion. The *Martyrology* emphasizes the connection between Mary's assumptions among the angels and her having no need for food or drink: "[a]c æt gehwelcre gebedtide Godes englas coman of heofonum ond læddan hi on ða lyft, ond heo þær gehyrde ðære heofonlican wynsumnesse dæl, ond þonne gebrohtan hi eft on hire stanscræfe, ond forðon hi næfre hingrede ne ne þyrste" [but at each time of prayer God's angels came from heaven and led her into the air, and there she heard the portion of heavenly sweetness, and then they brought her again to her cave, and because of this she never hungered nor thirsted]. Unlike BHL 5453, however, the Old English account states that Mary hears, rather than sees, the "portion of heavenly sweetness." By avoiding mention of Mary's sense of sight, the martyrrologist sidesteps allusion to the harlot's sinful days when, as the Latin text suggests, she would perpetrate her sins after setting her eyes on men.

BHL 5453 and the *Martyrology's* Old English translation of it differ with respect to the sense organs that Mary uses to experience the heavenly realm. They also differ with respect to the state of her body while she is in the wilderness. In BHL 5453, Mary concludes her account of her eremetic life by telling the priest about her impending death:

Et nunc scio quia in proximo est quod possum de corpore perduci et eternaliter domini mei aspectu perfrui. Rogo te ut meam deprecationem suscipias sicut ego tuam; post dies septem ueni ad me et michi defer uestem humanam quia non possum cum hominibus esse sine ueste. Manifestauit michi dominus quod cum hominibus debeo uitam finire.

[And now I know that (the time) is near, that I can be led from my body and enjoy fully the sight of my Lord forever. I ask you to receive my prayer just as I have received yours: after seven days, come to me and bring me human clothing, because I cannot be among people without clothing. The Lord has shown me that I must finish my life among people.]^70

Once again, the Latin text makes reference to Mary's sense of sight: in this case, she anticipates seeing her Lord—and fully enjoying the sight of him—once she has died.

Mary avidly expects that her joy will be made complete upon finally being able to see, for eternity, the one and only man whose physical presence she has missed: Jesus. With this statement, Mary's vision receives a final transformation. She who had shunned the sight of mortal men ardently embraces the prospect of setting her eyes upon her immortal "lover." The account had earlier made a sidelong reference to the pre-repentant Mary's lustful gazing upon mortal men; now, Mary herself reveals—with similar sexual overtones—her desire for the eternally chaste Christ.

In the same passage, Mary makes another revelation, albeit indirectly: that she is naked. Indeed, until Mary asks the priest to bring her some clothing, the Latin account neither states nor implies this detail. The priest himself does not know until this point in the narrative that Mary lacks clothing, for he cannot see her: he speaks with her from outside the "speluncam clausam" [closed cave].^71 When he brings her the clothing she

70. Cross, "Mary Magdalen in the Old English Martyrology," 22, 6-9.

requests, however, his sense of embarassment is clear: he simply throws the clothes at the closed cave entrance to avoid any possibility of seeing the naked woman inside: "Propter sanctitatem eius et caritatem quam ad eam habuit et ipse presbiter sanctus sic fecit et deferebat et iac(i)ebat ad ianuam spelunce et illa eum exire iubet, et post tres dies iterum uenire ad eam et sic fecit" [Because of her sanctity and the love which he had for her, the same holy priest did so (i.e., fetched her some clothes) and brought it and threw it at the cave's entrance; and she ordered him to go away, and to return to her again three days later; and he did so].

The *caritas* [love] that the priest has for Mary mirrors the *caritas* that Mary has for Jesus. The chaste nature of this love is underscored by Mary's request that the priest go away—and that he go away not just briefly, but for three whole days while Mary performs an *imitatio Christi* [imitation of Christ], dwelling for three final days in her own version of Jesus's sealed tomb before at last emerging and becoming visible to the priest.

While a naked Mary asks the priest to provide her with clothing so that she can end her life among other people in BHL 5453, the Old English legend eliminates this episode completely. In fact, the martyrrologist pares down the entire encounter between Mary and the priest to but a few short phrases:

Ond þa æfter þrittegum gæara gemette hi sum halig mæsæpreost on ðæm westenne, ond he hi gelædde on his cyrican ond hire husl gesælde. Ond heo onsænde hire gast to Gode, ond se mæsæpreost hi bebyrgde, ond micle wundra wæron oft æt hire byrgenne.

[And then after thirty years, she met a certain holy mass-priest in the wilderness, and he led her into his church and gave her communion. And she sent forth her

72. Cross, "Mary Magdalen in the *Old English Martyrology*," 22, 10-12.
spirit to God, and the mass-priest buried her, and great miracles were (i.e., took place) often at her tomb.]73

Although the Old English Martyrology does not allude to the Magdalene's nakedness, Mary's body does not entirely disappear from the Old English narrative: she receives communion, and the priest buries her body after she dies. That Mary does not appear naked, however, offers a clue to the martyrologist's interpretation of the relationship between the former harlot's sin and her repentance. The martyrologist omits Mary's request for clothing in order to intensify his narrative emphasis on Mary's sanctity. The elimination of detail from the Latin source characterizes the end of the Old English account; the final lines of the latter text firmly place their narrative focus on Mary's encounter with a priest, her entering a church, receiving communion, and then dying. All of these events link the purified Mary with her beloved, risen Christ; that is, through the priest (Christ's earthly representative), the church (the Bride of Christ), communion (the body of Christ himself), and finally through Mary's own death, through which she is finally reunited with her beloved Lord. Any allusion to the saint's bare flesh would therefore have added unnecessary detail to a brief translation that otherwise highlights the depth of Mary's tearful repentance and her love for Christ. Alluding to Mary's nakedness would not have emphasized the martyrologist's central point concerning her: that the holy harlot's soul has been washed clean by her tears and by her Savior's forgiveness. In fact, a sidelong narrative glance at the former prostitute's unclothed body would have been not just unnecessary, but would have served as an

unwelcome—and frankly titillating—distraction from the issue of Mary's repentance, which is at the very heart of her sanctity.

Mary's nakedness and the request for clothes that she makes in BHL 5453 are omitted by the Old English martyrologist as one of his strategies of abbreviation; *brevitas* characterizes the *Old English Martyrology* in general. With this in mind, it would be wrong simply to assume that the *Martyrology's* elision of Mary's nakedness is merely symptomatic of a wholesale prudishness plaguing writing in Old English. While comparison of the vernacular legend with its Latin source does betray the martyrologist's unease with Mary's nakedness—especially in light of her sinful past—this unease is not evident when the Old English text is read simply on its own terms. In other words, only those who were familiar with the Latin source text (and it is impossible to guess what proportion of the martyrologist's unknown audience this may have comprised) would have seen beneath the surface of this narrative of repentant sanctity to whatever nervousness the compiler may have harbored concerning the naked harlot.

3.3 Pelagia's Repentant Transvestism and the Uncovering of Her Sex

In the *Old English Martyrology's* account of Mary Magdalene, any allusion to nakedness would have threatened the integrity of the narrative by distracting attention

74. See Hugh Magennis, "No Sex Please, We're Anglo-Saxons? Attitudes to Sexuality in Old English Prose and Poetry," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 26 (1995): 1-27. Writing specifically about prose translations of Latin saints' lives and romances, Magennis asserts that "[t]he de-emphasizing of sexual themes in these texts reveals an anxiety and discomfort on the part of the vernacular writers concerning the expression of such themes. The Latin works themselves . . . take a negative view of sexuality, as something to be subjugated and denied. Old English translators reflect and extend this subjugation and denial in their own work, which is often blander than the material on which it is based": 7-8.
from Mary's repentance. This is not always the case, however, in the Martyrology's accounts of repentant harlots. This is evident in the Martyrology's condensed adaptation of two Latin vitae of Pelagia, known as Redaction A\textsuperscript{1} and Redaction B. By comparing the martyrologist's adaptations of his source material concerning Pelagia with his adaptations of BHL 5453 for the Mary Magdalene legend, further light can be shed on the possible reasons why the martyrologist included (or did not include) depictions of nakedness in the Martyrology.

Pelagia, like Mary, is a repentant prostitute: within the narrative of Pelagia, the martyrologist uses the term "scericge" [actress] to translate the Latin word "mima." The Old English account relates that when the ostentatiously dressed and sweet-smelling Pelagia confesses her sins to the bishop Nonnus, she admits that "[i]c wæs synna georn, ____________

75. The martyrologist may have added a provocative detail to the account of the harlot saint Afra (August 8)—that she is naked when burned alive: "[H]et se dema hi nacode gebidan to anum stenge ond hi bærman mid fyre" [the judge ordered her to be bound naked to a stake and to be burned with fire]: Kotzor 2: 174, 12-13. This must remain in the realm of speculation, however, until the source of the account of Afra used by the martyrologist has been identified.

ond in deaðlicum listum ic wæs beswicen, ond ic beswac monige þurh me" [I was eager for sin, and I was deceived in mortal lusts, and I deceived many through me].

Like Mary Magdalene, Pelagia performs her repentance with a show of tears. As in the case of Mary, the depth of her repentance is made visible through this physical sign—in fact, a veritable flood of tears accompanies her confession. Following her conversion, Pelagia receives baptism and remains in the care of her godmother Romana. The martyrrologist greatly compresses several instances of crying that appear in both redactions of Pelagia's Latin vitae, not only by Pelagia herself but also by Nonnus, by those listening to his sermon concerning the eternal rewards coming to the faithful at the Last Judgment, by the demon who appears to Pelagia after her baptism, and by Romana upon learning of Pelagia's disappearance. He focuses all of this weeping on Pelagia alone: upon hearing Nonnus's sermon, she "weop . . . sona swa ðæt hyre fleowon þa tearas of ðam eagum swa swa flod" [immediately wept so that the tears flowed from her eyes just like a flood].

Pelagia describes the magnitude of her sinfulness in terms comparing the rather copious tears that she cries with the sea: "ic yðgode mid synnum swa sæ mid yðum" ["I welled with sins just as the sea (does) with waves"]. An audience familiar with Latin would certainly have understood the significance of Pelagia's very name in this context, since "pelagus" means "sea." The martyrrologist translates the Latin word "mima" into Old English, as has been seen, but he does not give an Old English equivalent for "pelagus" (such as flod, sæ, or any of the numerous other words from which he could

77. Kotzor 2: 234, 8-10.
78. Kotzor 2: 234, 4-5.
have chosen). In contrast, the Latin versions directly link Pelagia's name to her tears: Redaction A\(^1\) portrays Pelagia's describing herself to Nonnus as "pelagus peccatorum" [a sea of sins], while in Redaction B, Pelagia describes herself similarly as "pelagus iniquitatis" [a sea of iniquity].\(^80\) Considering the centrality of tearfulness to Pelagia's Latin vitae, this at first glance appears to be a curious omission; at the same time, however, the meaning of "pelagus" may have been so familiar to the martyrologist's audience that, in a work marked by brevitas, the word's translation into Old English may have been unnecessary. It is also possible that the significance of Pelagia's name would have been quite literally lost in an Old English translation, since no vernacular term for "sea" even remotely approximates the spelling or pronunciation of the saint's name.

The vernacular text's concentration of crying episodes into the tears of Pelagia alone particularly highlights the harlot's repentance. Indeed, the veritable flood of Pelagia's remorse for her sexual sins is the narrative turning point of her story, bridging —that is, both linking and separating—her past as a prostitute with her approaching baptism and asceticism. But even more importantly, Pelagia's tearful repentance cites and repeats the weeping of the anonymous peccatrix [sinner] of Luke's gospel.\(^81\) As previously noted, this woman was identified with Mary Magdalene in the western Middle Ages; furthermore, the martyrologist narratively portrays the peccatrix weeping upon Jesus's feet in his own account of the Magdalene. The vernacular narrative of Pelagia condenses the sequence of events carried out by the peccatrix in Luke's gospel: Pelagia is

\(^80\) "La réfection latine A\(^1\)," 207, 144, and "La réfection latine B," 239, 140.

\(^81\) See p. 144, n. 55 above.
not seen weeping specifically upon Nonnus's feet (and hence not drying his feet with her hair), nor kissing nor anointing them with ointment as the peccatrix does to Jesus's feet. Yet Pelagia's weeping clearly recalls that of Mary Magdalene in the Old English Martyrology, reinforcing the equation of the anonymous sinner with Mary, the reformed prostitute and proto-repentant.

While the Old English Martyrology's account of Pelagia leaves the allusion to Mary's particular episode of weeping implicit, the Latin sources foreground it. Both Redactions A¹ and B expressly link Pelagia's penitence with that of Luke's anonymous sinner. The first of these versions portrays Pelagia—whom Nonnus has just informed that baptism will be denied her, a prostitute, unless she has a sponsor who will guarantee that she will not relapse into sin—grasping the bishop's feet and tearfully explaining that God will not reward Nonnus as a saint unless he baptizes her. The allusion to Luke 7:38 is unmistakable, as the recension's editors make clear: the text reads that Pelagia "lacrymis suis pedes sancti lauit et capillis suis extergebat" [washed the saint's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair].¹⁸² The analogous episode in Redaction B similarly notes that Pelagia "fletu pedes rigabat et crine tergebat" [wet his feet with her crying and wiped them dry with her hair] when making her confession to Nonnus.¹⁸³

The allusions to Mary Magdalene, whose character was conflated not only with that of the anonymous sinner but also with that of Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus, reappear in one last episode that both Latin vitae of Pelagia relate. When Romana,


Pelagia's godmother, has discovered that Pelagia has unexpectedly gone away, she begins to cry. Nonnus then consoles her by citing Jesus's words to the grieving widow of Luke 7:13, when he finds her mourning her only son's death: "Noli flere" [Do not weep]. Not only do these vitae thus draw a distinct parallel between the godmother Romana's bemoaning the departure of her spiritual daughter and the mother's lamenting the death of her son, but they also allude to the story of Lazarus in that the mother's unnamed son is raised from the dead. The Latin sources reinforce the link between Pelagia and Mary of Bethany with their references to Jesus's preference for Mary's ministrations rather than Martha's. Nonnus consoles the weeping Romana by noting that, like Mary, she has chosen the better part. In the end, however, the Old English martyrologist, understanding these references to the composite figure of Mary Magdalene imbedded in Pelagia's story, trimmed them from his own abridged version of Pelagia's vita.

Abbreviation provides the martyrologist with a tool to concentrate narrative attention on


85. Cf. Luke 7:14-15: "et accessit et tetigit loculum hii autem qui portabant steterunt et ait adulescens tibi dico surge et resedit qui erat mortuos et coepit loqui et dedit illum matri suae" [And he came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it, stood still. And he said: Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother].

86. Redaction A I reads "Pelagia optimam portionem elegit sicut et Maria quam Dominus praefert in euangelio" [Pelagia has chosen the best portion like Maria, whom the Lord prefers in the gospel]: "La réfection latine A I," 213, 243-45. Similarly, Redaction B relates that Nonnus tells Romana that "Pelagia, sicut Maria, meliorem partem elegit quae non auferetur ab ea" [Pelagia, like Mary, has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her]: "La réfection latine B," 246, 254-55. My translations. Cf. Luke 10:42: "Maria optimam partem elegit quae non auferetur ab ea" [Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her].
tears as the bodily sign of repentance shared by the two sexual sinners. Through Mary's and Pelagia's respective acts of weeping, the martyrologist reinforces the notion that whatever differences of narrative detail might distinguish each saint from the other, remorseful repentance remains the fundamental component of sanctity that both harlots share.

There is, however, one noteworthy difference between the Old English accounts of these two women. Unlike Mary Magdalene, Pelagia does appear naked in the Martyrology, just as she does in the Latin source narratives. While the Magdalene's nakedness is omitted from the vernacular account, Pelagia's flesh is uncovered at her death. Pelagia dies after spending three years in a hermitage on the Mount of Olives, where "nænig mon wiste hwæðer hio wæs wer ðe [sic] wif ær ðon ðe heo forðfered wæs" [nobody knew whether she was a man or a woman before she died]. The martyrlogist reports that while preparing Pelagia's body for burial—an act presumably requiring that the corpse be undressed—the bishop of Jerusalem discovers that the deceased saint is in fact female. The Old English account diverges from its sources in two illuminating ways at this point. First, Latin Redactions A¹ and B relate that the deacon James, apparently the author of Pelagia's narrative, wishes to travel to Jerusalem and venerate the place where Jesus had risen from the dead. Nonnus, who is James's bishop, grants the deacon permission to undertake this pilgrimage, and also asks him to seek a certain reclusive monk named Pelagius while on his journey. Nonnus emphasizes both


88. "Đa onfand se biscop on Hierusalem, ðær he hyre lichoman gyrede, ðæt heo wæs wif" [Then the bishop in Jerusalem, when he was preparing her body, discovered that she was a woman]: Kotzor 2: 235, 13-15.
Pelagius's sexual purity and his masculine gender by describing him as "monachum et eunuchum" [monk and eunuch] in Redaction A, and as "integer monachus" [intact monk] in Redaction B.\(^89\) This intact monk and eunuch is, of course, Pelagia in disguise.

In contrast to the Latin texts, the *Old English Martyrology* makes no such references to Pelagia's masculine gender once she has moved to her cell. In fact, the martyrrologist highlights Pelagia's femaleness by using the feminine pronoun "heo" (also spelled "hio") to describe her.\(^90\) He does so despite Pelagia's having dressed in masculine-coded clothing—"mid byrnan, ðæt is mid lytelre hacelan" [with a byrnie; that is, with a little cloak], in addition to a hair-shirt—for her initial departure.\(^91\) Once she has

\(^89\) "La réfection latine A\(^1\)," 213, 254, and "La réfection latine B," 246, 265.

\(^90\) In contrast, the Latin sources use masculine as well as feminine pronouns to describe Pelagia both before and after her arrival in Jerusalem. Nonnus uses the masculine pronoun to describe her when requesting that James seek the monk Pelagius in Jerusalem; it is used again to describe her when James discovers that "Pelagius" has died. Between these occasions, feminine pronouns are used to indicate James's failure to recognize that Pelagius is of the female sex, a situation attributed to the emaciation caused by her fasting. On food abstinence and anorexia among pious women (although in the context of the later Middle Ages), see Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

\(^91\) Kotzor 2: 235, 7-8. This description of Pelagia's clothing translates the Latin lines indicating that Pelagia puts on a "tunicam tricinam (id est cilicinam) et birrum" [a tunic of poor quality (that is, of goat hair) and a cloak]: "La réfection latine A\(^1\)," 213, 240. The analogous lines in Redaction B note that she wears a "tunicam et byrrum cilicinum" [tunic and goat-hair cloak]: "La réfection latine B," 245, 249-50. The martyrrologist's choice of "byrne" to describe an item of Pelagia's clothing appears somewhat curious, since a "byrne" is a war-garment made of chain-mail. Given Pelagia's feminine gender, however, it is possible that the martyrrologist wished to emphasize Pelagia's vulnerability as a woman traveling alone; perhaps the garment affords her at least a symbolic protection from whatever attacks might befall her on her voyage. But cf. the *DOE*, s.v. "byrne": citing the account of Pelagia in the OEM, the *DOE* posits this term as vaguely
dressed in her hair-shirt and byrnie, "heo næs na leng ðær gesewen" [she was no longer seen there (i.e., at her godmother Romana's house)]. But Pelagia's "disappearance" is only apparent, for what really happens is that

heo gewat on Oliuætes dune ond hyre timbrede lytle cytan in ðære stowe ðe Crist him gebæd þa he wæs mon on eordan; þær hio wunode þreo gear; þær nænig mon wiste hwæðer hio wæs wer þe [sic] wif ærðon þe heo forðfered wæs. Ða onfand se biscop on Hierusalem, þær he hyre lichoman gyrede, þæt heo wæs wif.

[she went to the Mount of Olives and built for herself a little cell in the place where Christ himself prayed when he was a man on the earth. She remained there for thirty years, although nobody knew whether she was a man or a woman before she had died. Then the bishop in Jerusalem discovered, while he was preparing her body, that she was a woman.]

The byrnie's association with the male gender marks Pelagia as a cross-dresser. The Martyrology does not otherwise suggest, however, that Pelagia lives (or even passes) as a man through her tranvestism. Instead, the martyrrologist notes that Pelagia's gender is perceived as liminal and indeterminate: she appears to be androgynous, since it is not known whether she is a man or a woman until the bishop of Jerusalem uncovers her sex.

"referring to some kind of vestment." The martyrrologist's use of Old English "hacele" to gloss "byrne" also seems somewhat strange, neutralizing as it does the byrne's typical use in battle. Gale R. Owen-Crocker notes that the cloak, "hacele," would be worn by both sexes, but this is not the usual case for the byrnie. See Dress in Anglo-Saxon England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 69 and 205. François Dolbeau observes that certain Greek manuscripts of Latin Redaction B indicate that the clothes that Pelagia dons prior to her departure actually belong to Nonnus—a detail performatively signifying her transition to the masculine gender (especially if Nonnus's clothing was of a type worn only by men) as soon as she makes her decision to go to Jerusalem. See "La réfection latine A1," 213, n. 40.


once she has died.\textsuperscript{94} In contrast, the Latin versions emphasize Pelagia's / Pelagius's passing as a man in her eremetic milieu. It would appear that the martyrologist played down the masculinization of Pelagia found in his Latin sources—reflected there in her change to a masculine name and in the masculine pronouns used to describe her—so as not to weaken the narrative parallels linking Pelagia's and Mary Magdalene's legends. After all, Pelagia is a penitent prostitute like Mary, not a virgin martyr like the transvestite saint Eugenia.

In the vernacular and Latin accounts alike, the discovery of Pelagia's heretofore hidden female sex comes as a surprise to those gazing at her corpse. As in the case of the Martyrology's Mary Magdalene legend and its Latin source, Pelagia's nakedness is implied, not foregrounded, in all of the versions of her \textit{vita} examined here: words such as Latin \textit{nudus} or Old English \textit{nacod} are not used to describe the dead body. Presumably, preparation of Pelagia's body for burial would have required some viewing of her unclothed flesh. Indeed, it would have been counterproductive to turn one's eyes away in modesty when doing so, just as all the bishops convened at Antioch do (except for

\textsuperscript{94} Cf. the OEM's account of the virgin martyr Eugenia (December 25), which recounts Eugenia's cutting her hair in a man's style and wearing men's clothing. Like the account of Pelagia, this narrative uses feminine pronouns to refer to Eugenia during her time disguised as a monk; however, her gender is understood to be masculine by the monks among whom she lives (she is even elected abbot). Her ruse is so designed "\textit{þæt nan man ne mihte onfindan þæt heo wæs fæmne}" [that nobody could discover that she was a woman]: Kotzor 2: 4, 8-9. See the discussion of Ælfric's \textit{passio} of Eugenia in the \textit{Lives of Saints} in Chapter 4, pp. 221-45.
Nonnus) when the ornately dressed Pelagia makes her first appearance in the Latin texts.  

Pelagia's bare body functions in the *Old English Martyrology* and its Latin sources as visible proof of her biological sex; this sex contrasts with the gender—male in the Latin, indeterminate in the Old English—that she performs. In all three narratives, Pelagia's post-conversion gender performance signifies her separation from the sexual sins she had perpetrated while adorned in the trappings of a woman: elaborate jewelry, sumptuous dress, otherworldly perfume. With her tearful repentance and conversion, Pelagia strips herself of these almost surreally elaborate signifiers of her sex and of her profession when she begins her ascetic life. The notion of Pelagia's "stripping down" remains textually latent: it is euphemistically presented as the penitent's donning of meagre clothing, and as the obscuring of physical signs marking Pelagia's femininity. The obscuring of these physical signs is mentioned only in the Latin narratives, where it is noted that Pelagia passes as a man with emaciated face and sunken eyes—signs of severe weight loss caused by extreme fasting. (Such extreme fasting would also presumably lead to a significant loss of breast tissue, as well as to amenorrhea).

While Pelagia takes off the highly ornamented and perfumed trappings of her profession as a function of her repentance, the final dressing-down of her corpse is

95. The latter detail is not found in the OEM. In the Latin versions, Nonnus explains his gazing to his fellow bishops, saying that they should be as devoted to their episcopal calling as the beautiful Pelagia is to preparing her body for sin.

96. The vernacular version echoes the Latin sources' descriptions of the luxuriously ornamented and perfumed Pelagia: "Seo glengde hi swa þætte noht næs on hyre gesewn buton gold ond gimmas, ond eall hyre gyrela stanc swa ælces cynnes ricels" [She adorned herself so that nothing was seen on her except gold and gems, and all of her apparel smelled like incense of every kind]: Kotzor 2: 233, 13-234, 2.
undertaken by clerics who subsequently attest to the hermit's sanctity.\footnote{In comparison with the Latin accounts of Pelagia, the Old English martyrologist reduces the number of men who witness Pelagia's naked corpse. He limits the gaze to the bishop of Jerusalem alone although the sources relate that more than one ecclesiastical representative is present for this revelation. The number of men looking upon the saint's body, however, can be accounted for with reference to other narrative concerns in the Latin and to the rhetorical strategy of brevitas to which the martyrologist generally adheres. In response to Pelagia's request to see Nonnus, the Latin versions relate, the bishop writes that he is willing to meet with the prostitute, but that because he might be tempted by her, she must come to him in the presence of the other bishops. It is narratively fitting, then, that the ex-harlot's naked body be viewed by more than one man, even after she has repented, become an ascetic, and died. But the OEM does not contain the episode concerning this meeting; in this case, having more than one clergyman prepare Pelagia's body for burial would have been an act of narrative excess in a work where the paring down of source materials is the norm.} The Latin and vernacular accounts alike relate the wonder expressed at the discovery that Pelagia is a woman, a discovery made possible only by the uncovering of her genitals. The finding of this discrepancy between Pelagia's gender (masculine in the Latin texts, indeterminate in the \textit{Martytology}) and her biological sex leads those who look upon Pelagia's body to praise God for the existence of saints who are hidden throughout the earth. Latin Redaction B includes an exclamation that takes Pelagia's newly discovered sex into account: "Gloria tibi Deus, quia multos habes sanctos absconditos super terram non tantum uiros, sed et mulieres" ['Glory to you, God, because you have many hidden saints throughout the earth, not only men, but also women'].\footnote{”La réfection latine B,” 248, 297-99. Not all manuscripts of Redaction A\textsuperscript{1} include the parallel phrase ”non solum uiros sed etiam mulieres”: see ”La réfection latine A\textsuperscript{1}," 215, 285.} This exclamation serves as a narrative reminder that the holy Pelagia was once a sexual sinner, performing her gender (in this case, enticing others through lavish bodily ornamentation and fragrant anointing) in a way calculated to lead to the sexual enjoyment of her body. In contrast, the Old
English martyrrologist records this praise without distinguishing between male and female saints: "God, þe sy wulder. Du hafast monigne haligne ofer eordan ahyded" ["God, glory be to you. You have hidden many a saint over the earth"]. 99 "[M]onigne haligne" [many a saint] can refer to saints of both genders; however, this phrase, which is grammatically gendered masculine, points to an early medieval understanding of the default gender as male. Woman was understood to be lacking; through *virtus*, the ideal performance of virtue was gendered male. So Pelagia's exemplary penitence, performed with a penis lacking and a gender unreadable, is truly something marvelous. Indeed, her "nothing" produces a "something" that is of particular narrative noteworthiness: a sanctity predicated on a performance of repentance that, with its copious tears, is as profoundly embodied as the former harlot's sins.

Upon examining the *Old English Martyrology*’s accounts of Mary Magdalene and Pelagia, then, it is evident that these two narratives are constructed so as to emphasize the exemplary penitent sanctity that the two women share. This sanctity relies upon a turning away from sexual sin, signified by the tears of repentance that each woman sheds. The martyrrologist's account of Pelagia condenses its source materials in a way that draws attention to the narrative resemblances between Pelagia and the Magdalene, the church's proto-repentant. Although the Latin sources imply that Mary and Pelagia are both naked at some point, the martyrrologist selectively chose to allude—or not to allude—to this nakedness depending upon the narrative effect this would have had on the notions of sanctity that he wished to convey. On one hand, the display of Pelagia's body to the

bishop of Jerusalem stressed that her physical lack nevertheless produced an extraordinary sanctity. On the other hand, the martyrrologist effaced the nakedness of Mary Magdalene's living body, since such nakedness would have been a distraction in a narrative crafted to underscore the tearful penitence, and intense longing for Christ, that this harlot saint epitomized.
CHAPTER 4

ÆLFRIC AND CARNAL CHASTITY: AGATHA AND EUGENIA IN THE LIVES OF SAINTS*

During the last decade of the tenth century, Ælfric compiled the material for a collection of saints' *vitae* and *passiones* written in Old English. This collection, published by Walter Skeat under the title *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, followed Ælfric's composition of the two series of *Catholic Homilies* (990–994) and was completed no later than 998.¹ Ælfric served as mass-priest at Cerne during this period, arriving there

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¹Citations from Skeat will be given by volume, page, and line numbers. All translations (except from the Vulgate) are my own, unless otherwise noted.

sometime after 984 at the request of the ealdorman Æthelmær. Before coming to Cerne, Ælfric had received his education at the Old Minster, Winchester, which had been reformed under the direction of Bishop Æthelwold. The tenets of late-Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monasticism thus permeate his writings, including the Lives of Saints. Ælfric was highly selective in his choice of vitae and passiones for inclusion in this collection.


3. Ælfric refers to himself as "alumnus adelwoldi beneuoli et uenerabilis presulis" [a student of the benevolent and venerable prelate Æthelwold] in the Latin preface to his first series of Catholic Homilies, at CH 1: 173, 3; trans. Ælfric's Prefaces, ed. and trans. Jonathan Wilcox, Durham Medieval Texts 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994; corrected reprint, 1996), 127. He then makes reference to having been taught "in scola Aœlwaldi, uenerabilis praesulis" [in the school of the venerable prelate, [Æ]thelwold], in his Grammar, edited by Julius Zupitza, Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar (Berlin: Weidmann, 1880; reprint, with a foreword by Helmut Gneuss, Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), 1; trans. Wilcox, Ælfric's Prefaces, 130. Finally, he calls himself "Wontoniensis alumnus" [student of Winchester] in his Vita S. Æthelwoldi, edited by Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom, Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St. Æthelwold (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 71-80, at 71. Another vita of Æthelwold, Wulfstan's Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi, is found in the same volume with English translation, at 2-69. This edition of the two texts supersedes that of Michael Winterbottom, ed., in Three Lives of English Saints, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972), 15-29 (Ælfric) and 31-63 (Wulfstan). An English translation of Ælfric's vita, based on Winterbottom's 1972 edition, is available in EHD, 903-11. The first of these two vitae was written by Wulfstan not earlier than 996 (and probably not long after Æthelwold's translatio on September 10 of that year); Ælfric's vita is an abbreviation of Wulfstan's work, and was composed in 1006. On the dating of these two vitae of Æthelwold, see Lapidge and Winterbottom, Wulfstan of Winchester, xvi and c (Wulfstan), and cxxxvii (Ælfric). Lapidge and Winterbottom provide an extensive review of the evidence supporting the chronology of the two works, at cxxxvi-cv.
By situating Ælfric's text within the context of the Benedictine reforms, the principles that guided his selection of particular accounts can be better understood. To this end, this chapter will focus on the passiones of the virgin martyrs Agatha and Eugenia. It will be argued that Ælfric included these saints in his collection as exemplars of the sexual purity that rhetorically distinguished English Benedictine monks from those clerics who did not conform to the precepts of reformed Benedictinism. The study of these two legends in tandem derives its logic from Ælfric's use of the term breost in both accounts. The breost is a sexual feature that defines both Agatha and Eugenia in ways that illuminate the ideals of chastity which Ælfric strongly espoused. Given the hagiographic convention that associates chastity with the female gender, Ælfric's best exemplars of sexual purity—virtually by default—were women.

4.1 The Question of Audience for the Lives of Saints

In both the Latin and Old English prefaces to the Lives of Saints, Ælfric indicates that he included in the collection the vitae and passiones of the saints venerated by monks, in contrast to the accounts of saints venerated by the laity that he had incorporated into both series of Catholic Homilies:

Nam memini me in duobus anterioribus libris posuisse passiones uel uitas sanctorum ipsorum, quos gens ista caelebre colit cum ueneratione festi

4. Ælfric's account of Agatha is in Skeat 1: 194-208. The account of Eugenia is in Skeat 1: 24-50. This study will not examine the "companion piece" on the virgin martyr Lucy that follows the Agatha legend in Skeat 1: 210-218. For a discussion of the relationship between the accounts of Agatha and Lucy (which, according to the opening lines of the latter, Ælfric intended to place consecutively) in the best extant manuscript witness to the LS (London, BL, Cotton Julius E. vii), see Joyce Hill, "The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints: A Preliminary Survey," in Holy Men and Holy Women, 235-59, at 238.
diei, et placuit nobis in isto codicello ordinare passiones etiam uel uitas sanctorum illorum quos non uulgus sed coenobite officiis uenerantur.

[For I remember having set forth in two previous books the passions and lives of those saints which this people commonly honour with the veneration of a feast day and it has pleased us in this little book to arrange the passions and lives of those of saints which the monks and not the laity honour with offices.]\(^5\)

The Old English preface reads similarly:

\[\text{Þu [i.e., Æthelweard, to whom the preface is addressed] wast leof þæt we awendon on þam twam ærrum bocum þæra halgena þrowunga and lif þe angel-cynn mid freols-dagum wurþað. Nu ge-wearð [sic] us þæt we þas boc be þæra halgena þrowungum and life gedihton þe mynster-menn mid heora þenungum betwux him wurþiæð.}\]

[You know, dear sir, that we translated in the two previous books the passions and lives of the saints which the English honor with festivals; now it has pleased us to write this book concerning the sufferings and lives of the saints whom monks honor among themselves in their offices.]\(^6\)

Although Ælfric notes in these prefaces his inclusion of the accounts of saints venerated by monks—\(\text{and, indeed, monks as opposed to the laity, as he states in the Latin version—it is nevertheless erroneous to assume that monks were therefore among those for whom Ælfric compiled and translated the collection. Ælfric clearly had in mind members of the laity when he compiled and translated his texts for the } \text{Lives of Saints.}\) His addressee, Æthelweard, was not a monk, but an \textit{ealdorman} of the western shires; Æthelweard's son, Æthelmær (who, along with his father, had commissioned the \textit{Lives of Saints}), was also a layman and inherited Æthelweard's position upon his death.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Skeat 1: 2, 5-9; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 131.

\(^6\) Skeat 1: 4, 41-45; my translation. Wilcox does not provide translations of Ælfric's Old English prefaces.

observing that the audience for the Catholic Homilies probably consisted of both monks and laymen rather than the latter group exclusively, Mary Clayton concludes that the Lives of Saints, in addition to Ælfric's later homilies and Old Testament translations, "are reading pieces for those monks who had been in need of the kind of material with which the Catholic Homilies had provided them, as well as for the devout literate laity, who can always only have been a very small group." Clayton's remarks concerning the audiences for both works take into account that while the liturgy would certainly have been conducted only in Latin, the monks who, as she believes, formed part of the audience for both the Catholic Homilies and Lives of Saints probably had only rudimentary knowledge of that language. As a result, Ælfric—with noteworthy reluctance—translated a number of Latin texts into the vernacular for these collections: in the Latin preface to the Lives of Saints, he states categorically that "[n]ec tamen plura promitto me scripturum hac lingua, quia nec conuenit huic sermocinationi plura inseri; ne forte despectui habeantur ________________


8. "Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," Peritia 4 (1985): 207-42, at 241. A corrected reprint of this article is in Old English Prose: Basic Readings, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: Garland, 2000), 151-98; the above quotation is at 189. To Clayton's remark about the "devout literate laity," I should add that even the devout illiterate—and wealthy—laity could have benefitted from Ælfric's work if a literate person were to have read it aloud to them. Indeed, in his Latin preface to the LS, Ælfric relates that he wishes to profit those who come across his work "siue legendo, seu [a]udiendo" [either by reading or listening]: Skeat 1: 2, 4; trans. Wilcox, Ælfric's Prefaces, 131.

margarite christi" [(n)evertheless, I promise not to write (too many) in this language because it is not fitting to introduce more in this language, lest, perhaps, the pearls of Christ be held in disrespect].\textsuperscript{10} With regard to the audience for the Catholic Homilies, Clayton concludes that when Ælfric composed this work, he probably "had the Winchester or Cerne type situation in mind, where the laity would have been preached to in the monastic church, with the monks also present."\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} Skeat 1: 3, 9-12; trans. Wilcox, Ælfric's Prefaces, 131. Here, I have translated "plura" as "too many" (in the spirit of Skeat's "very many" at Skeat 1: 3, 11 rather than Wilcox's "more") since "too many" reflects Ælfric's intent most accurately with respect to his selectivity of texts for translation, as will be argued later especially with regard to his inclusion of Eugenia in the LS. This wording does not contradict Ælfric's claim at the end of this preface that "decreui modo quiescere post quartum librum [a] tali studio, ne superfluos iudicer" [I have resolved now to refrain from such endeavour after the fourth book (i.e., the LS) that I may not be judged superfluous]: Skeat 1: 4, 33-34; trans. Wilcox, Ælfric's Prefaces, 132. In fact, this statement can be taken to mean specifically that Ælfric did not wish to select any more \textit{vita}e or \textit{passiones} from his source texts, especially the Cotton-Corpus legendary (discussed below) for translation. It is conceivable that Ælfric believed that any further additions to his series of saints' lives would disrupt the unity of the completed whole. Moreover, if "quiescere" is rendered as "to pause," instead of "to desist," Ælfric could be simply indicating that he wished to move on to other projects for a time before taking up translation again—which he eventually did, as a glance at Clemoes's chronological summary of Ælfric's works demonstrates: see "Chronology," 34-35. Ann Eljenholm Nichols investigates Ælfric's various expressions of apparent intent to cease translating in light of the modesty \textit{topos}: see "Ælfric's Prefaces: Rhetoric and Genre," \textit{English Studies} 49 (1968): 215-23, at 219-20. See also Jonathan Wilcox's study of Ælfric's translation of Maccabees (Skeat 2: 66-120), which specifically demonstrates how Ælfric here addresses some of the concerns about translation that he had raised earlier in the preface to Genesis: "A Reluctant Translator in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Maccabees," in \textit{Proceedings of the Medieval Association of the Midwest}, ed. Mel Storm, vol. 2 (Emporia, Kans.: Emporia State University [Press], 1993), 1-18.

\textsuperscript{11} "Homiliaries and Preaching," 185. Cf. Milton McC. Gatch, \textit{Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 53-54. Here, Gatch's suggestion that the Catholic Homilies may have been originally composed for a monastic audience implies the necessary separation of monk and layman during preaching, a point that Clayton refutes.
While there is no question about the status of Winchester, Clayton's labeling of Cerne as a "monastic church" at the time of Ælfric's residence is, however, incorrect. Michael Lapidge argues that the church at Cerne was not a monastic establishment, based on his opinion that the Cerne foundation charter dated 987 is a "wholly spurious fabrication." Furthermore, Lapidge asserts that "no abbots of Cerne are attested before 1012"; he therefore concludes that the church at Cerne was situated on a private estate owned by the family of Æthelweard and Æthelmær. Lapidge's comments on the status of Cerne raise the possibility that, other than Ælfric, no monks (or at least no significant number of them) from other monasteries might have been present on this estate. Indeed, it is entirely conceivable that Ælfric had the laity—Æthelweard and Æthelmær, presumably along with the members of their familia—quite exclusively in mind when composing the Lives of Saints. Evidence from Ælfric's prefaces to the collection further supports this likelihood. While the Latin prefaces to the two series of Catholic Homilies—which, like the Lives of Saints, were written for Æthelweard and Æthelmær—are addressed to Archbishop Sigeric, no ecclesiastical authority is mentioned in the Latin


In addition, Ælfric's concern that he not translate too many accounts of saints into Old English "ne forte despectui habeantur margarite christi" [lest, perhaps, the pearls of Christ be held in disrespect] most plausibly derives from his ambivalence about lay access to his texts.\(^\text{15}\) That this is so can be clearly seen when the phrase that follows is taken into account: "Ideoque reticemus de libro uitæ patrum, in quo multa subtilia habentur quæ non conueniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere" [And so we remain silent concerning the book \textit{Vitas Patrum (sic)} in which many subtleties are found which are not suitable to be shown to the laity and which we ourselves are not able to fulfil].\(^\text{16}\) It is therefore likely that Ælfric envisioned the \textit{Lives of Saints} as a reading text for Æthelweard, Æthelmær, and the members of their household, men and women alike.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{14}\) "Ego ælfricus [sic] alumnus adelwoldi beneuoli et uenerabilis presulis salutem exopto domno archiepiscopo sigerico in domino" [I, Ælfric, a student of the benevolent and venerable prelate Æthelwold, send a greeting in the Lord to the lord Archbishop Sigeric]: CH 1: 173, 3-4; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 127. Similarly, the preface to the second series notes that "Ælfricus humilis seruulus christi honorabili et amando archiepiscopo Sigerico perpetuam sospitatem optat in domino" [Ælfric, the humble servant of Christ, wishes perpetual well-being in the Lord to the honourable and beloved Archbishop Sigeric]: CH 2: 1, 1-2; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 128.

\(^{15}\) Skeat 1: 2, 11-12; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 131.

\(^{16}\) Skeat 1: 2, 12-14; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 131.

\(^{17}\) Here, I concur with Clayton's observation regarding the collection's likely mode of use in "Homiliaries and Preaching," 186. That these items are for reading, not preaching (as in the case of the \textit{Catholic Homilies}) does not contradict Ælfric's statement that the faithful might come across the collection "siue legendo, seu [a]udiendo" [either by reading or listening]: Skeat 1: 2, 4; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 131. Instead of meaning "by listening (to a mass-priest preaching in church)," which is the sense of "audiendo" in the Latin preface to the first series of \textit{Catholic Homilies} ("Siue legendo[,] siue audiendo," at CH 1: 173, 8), "audiendo" in the LS means more generally "by listening (to someone reading aloud)." I disagree with Clayton, however, concerning the degree to which Ælfric's LS demonstrates "an increasing emphasis on providing
As both the Latin and Old English prefaces indicate, it was Ælfric himself who decided that this collection would comprise accounts of saints venerated by monks. This decision may be best explained in that—at least theoretically—the idea of "feast days of saints honored by monks" offered to Ælfric a framework within which he could choose narratives for translation. Although impossible to prove, it is conceivable that this set of accounts may have differed in some respects from that intended for the laity. If this were indeed the case, it would have offered Ælfric a ready mechanism enabling him to minimize duplication of the accounts found in the two series of Catholic Homilies that he had already issued to the same patrons. Given Ælfric's concern that he not translate "too much" for the members of his patrons' familia, the texts which he chose for inclusion in the Lives of Saints are therefore of special significance.

18. Observation of saints' feast days among Anglo-Saxon monks, however, varied to a certain degree among monasteries: see, for example, the calendars edited by Francis Wormald in English Kalendars before A. D. 1100, Henry Bradshaw Society 72 (London: [Harrison and Sons], 1934; reprint, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), and the calendar found in the missal of Robert of Jumièges, printed in The Missal of Robert of Jumièges, ed. H. A. Wilson, Henry Bradshaw Society 11 (London: [Harrison and Sons], 1896), 9-20.
4.2 Ælfric's Primary Source and His Criteria for the Inclusion of Material in the Lives of Saints

Patrick H. Zettel has identified the so-called "Cotton-Corpus legendary," a Latin compendium of saints' lives, as Ælfric's immediate source for his vernacular collection.¹⁹ The Cotton-Corpus legendary contains 165 vitæ and passiones arranged in calendrical order, beginning on January 1 with the feast of St. Martina.²⁰ Zettel believes that the collection likely originated in the north of France, given the large number of French and Flemish saints represented therein.²¹ Although the precise date of the legendary's composition is not known, it cannot have been before 877 or 878, when Hincmar's Vita et miracula S. Remigii, which is included in the collection, was composed.²² That Ælfric

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²¹. "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources," 9. Jackson and Lapidge provide a comprehensive listing of the saints in question, as well as a more precise probable location for the legendary's compilation; that is, "in the diocese of Noyon-Tournai (in the archdiocese of Reims)"; see "The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," 133-34 and 134.

²². Jackson and Lapidge, "The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," 134, and 146, n. 19. Five surviving manuscripts of the legendary (all of which are English in origin) were first identified by Wilhelm Levison, who also identified three different recensions of the legendary among them. See "Conspectus codicum hagiographicorum," in Passiones vitaeaque sanctorum aevi Merovingici, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH, Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum 7 (Hanover: Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1920), 529-706, at
relied heavily on some version of the Cotton-Corpus legendary in the compilation of the 

*Lives of Saints* (and, to a lesser extent, for entries in the *Catholic Homilies*) is beyond doubt. The precise version that he used is not verifiable, however, since the earliest 
extant manuscript of the Latin legendary postdates Ælfric's death by about half a century. 

Zettel observes that Ælfric included only about one-third of the feasts available in 
the Cotton-Corpus legendary for use in both the *Catholic Homilies* and the *Lives of 
Saints*, providing "some 50 of Ælfric's known sources" as well as "at least three 
previously unidentified sources." Ælfric's criteria for the selection of hagiographic 

545-46. Neil R. Ker localized the earliest extant copy of the legendary (London, BL, 
Cotton Nero E. i + Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 9) to Worcester in the mid-
eleventh century; see "Membra disiecta, Second Series," *British Museum Quarterly* 14 
(1940): 79-86, at 82-83. 

23. The significant exception to this rule for the LS is the *vitae* and *passiones* of 
English saints included there: Alban (June 22); Æthelthryth (June 23); Swithun (July 2); 
Oswald of Northumbria (August 5); and Edmund of East Anglia (November 20). A 
similar case is that of Cuthbert in the *Catholic Homilies* (March 20; CH 2: 81-91). 
Guthlac is the only English saint included in the Cotton-Corpus legendary: see Jackson 

be usefully compared to the listing of the contents of the Cotton-Corpus legendary 
provided by Jackson and Lapidge, "The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," 135-
44. The history of source study of the *Catholic Homilies* can be traced through the 
following studies: Max Förster, "Über die Quellen von Ælfrics exegestischen *Homiliae Catholicae*," *Anglia* 16 (1894): 1-61, who identified many of the ultimate patristic 
sources used by Ælfric; Cyril L. Smetana, "Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary," 
*Traditio* 15 (1959): 163-204, who identified the homiliary of Paul the Deacon as a 
principal immediate source for many of the texts sourced by Förster; Smetana, "Ælfric 
Ælfric's debt to the homiliary of Haymo (later correctly identified as Haymo of Auxerre); 
and Joyce Hill's numerous further studies of the collection vis-à-vis Ælfric's sources, 
including "Ælfric, Gelasius, and St. George," *Mediaevalia* 11 (1985): 1-171; "Ælfric and 
from the Catholic Homilies," in *Studies in English Language and Literature: "Doubt 
Routledge, 1996), 362-86; "Ælfric's Homily on the Holy Innocents: The Sources
material in the *Catholic Homilies* are relatively straightforward, Zettel argues, based on comparison between it and the tenth-century verse *Menology* (which indicates the feasts that the king apparently required the English populace to observe).\(^{25}\) Zettel states that Ælfric's three key omissions (St. Thomas, the Nativity of the Virgin, and St. Matthias) in the *Catholic Homilies* as originally issued are explicable with reference to the author's inclusion of the first two in later works (the *Lives of Saints* and a revised issue of the *Catholic Homilies*, respectively), and, concerning Matthias, with reference to the Cotton-Corpus legendary (which does not include an entry for this saint) as well as to Ælfric's "Letter to Sigeweard."\(^{26}\) In contrast to the *Catholic Homilies*, however, Zettel observes that the criteria for Ælfric's inclusion of material in the *Lives of Saints* are not as transparent. Zettel makes the case that Ælfric generally included (or did not include) a given saint's life there because of the relative importance of that saint's feast day to

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monastic communities, although he grants that saintly veneration differed significantly among monasteries.  

Ælfric writes in his Old English preface to the collection that saints "synd ungyrme swa hit gerisð gode ac we woldon gesettan be sumum þas boc mannum to getrymminge and to munde us sylfum þæt hi us þingion to þam ælmihtigan gode swa swa we on worulde heora wundra cyðað" [are innumerable, as it is fitting to God; but we desire to write concerning some (of them), for men's edification and for our own protection, that they may intercede for us to the almighty God, just as we make known their miracles in the world].  

M. R. Godden has examined Ælfric's various writings on saints, specifically in relation to their miracles, in connection with the troubles of Ælfric's own day. Ælfric, he argues,

clearly did see a similarity between the times of the early martyrs under persecution and the contemporary pressure, or at least temptation, to side with the Vikings, which he interpreted as abandoning the faith. He also saw both Old Testament history and the quasi-history embedded in saints' legends as providing parallels and precedents for the lay nobility and the clergy in the face of the troubles of his own time.

Godden's remarks, based both on internal evidence from several of Ælfric's texts as well as external evidence (such as the commissioning of the Lives of Saints by ealdorman Æthelweard, whom Godden states was "responsible for the defence of the south-west

27. See p. 177, n. 18 above.

28. Skeat 1: 6, 69-73. Ann Eljenholm Nichols argues that Ælfric uses the word gesettan (as opposed to awendan) to refer to the activity of translating from Latin to Old English using relatively free paraphrase; see "Awendan: A Note on Ælfric's Vocabulary," JEGP 63 (1964): 7-13. See also DOE, s.v. "awendan" (senses II.A.3.a and II.B.3) and Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "gesettan" and "settan."

against the Vikings"), provide another point of departure for considering Ælfric's particular choice of material in his *Lives of Saints*. That is, Ælfric's decision to include many of the accounts in the collection—especially the "early martyrs" to whom Godden refers, and to whom Ælfric devotes considerable space—was likely motivated in part by his desire to exhort the members of Æthelweard's and Æthelmær's household to courage and faith in the face of contemporary attack.

Accounts of early martyrs comprise the bulk of the hagiographic texts known to have been composed by Ælfric and included in the *Lives of Saints*: there are eighteen of these narratives in Skeat's edition. The number of accounts concerning martyrs rises to


31. I define a "martyr" as a saint whose narrative indicates that he or she was murdered for his or her faith; Skeat does not always use this term to represent such an individual. These accounts (which sometimes involve more than one saint) are, in calendrical order, those concerning Eugenia (December 25); Julian and Basilissa (January 9); Sebastian (January 20); Agnes (January 21); Agatha (February 5); Lucy (December 13: out of calendrical order, but its own narrative despite its intimate connection with the legend of Agatha); Forty Soldiers (March 9); George (April 23); Mark the Evangelist (April 25); Apollinaris (July 23); Abdon and Sennes (July 30); Maurice and his companions (September 22); Denys and his companions (October 9); Cecilia (November 22); Chrysanthus and Daria (November 29); Thomas (December 21); Vincent (January 22). The narrative of Vincent is published by Skeat as an "appendix" to the LS: although written by Ælfric, it is not included in Skeat's main manuscript witness, Julius E. vii. Clemoes ("Chronology," 26) argues on the basis of manuscript evidence that the passio of Vincent did not originally belong to an organized set. On the relationship of this account to the rest of the collection, see Alex Nicholls, "Ælfrics [sic] 'Life of St. Vincent': The Question of Form and Function," *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 38 (1991): 445-50; cf. Susan E. Irvine, "Bones of Contention: The Context of Ælfric's Homily on St. Vincent," *ASE* 19 (1990): 117-32. Four legends in the LS are known not to be by Ælfric: Seven Sleepers (July 27); Mary of Egypt (April 2); Eustace and his companions (November 2); and Euphrosyne or Euphrosyne (February 11; like Lucy, out of sequence). For the exclusion of these items from the Ælfric canon, see Clemoes, "Chronology," 9, and John C. Pope, ed., *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, vol. 1, EETS, o.s., 259 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), at 143, n. 6; see also the detailed studies by Hugh Magennis, "On the Sources of Non-Ælfrician Lives in the Old English Lives of
twenty-one when the narratives of three Anglo-Saxon saints, Alban (June 22), Oswald
(August 5), and Edmund of East Anglia (November 20), are added. Godden observes
that "relevance to contemporary troubles is strikingly evident in the non-hagiographical
pieces which Ælfric included . . . and may have prompted their selection"; he notes their
emphasis on warfare, idolatry, and falsehood. Another of Godden's observations,
however, points to concerns other than those directly related to the Viking invasions:

Indeed, it is noticeable that Ælfric's comments and extrapolations tend to
relate less to the dogmatic matters of Christ, the Church, sin and salvation
which occupy his homilies than to questions of ethics and moral doctrine
. . . . More commonly, it is such matters as clerical chastity and the
damnation of heathens and those who betray their lords that arise from the
narratives, or the canonical rules against clerical involvement in judicial
business.

Godden's citation of "clerical chastity" as one of Ælfric's concerns deserves close
attention. Indeed, a concern with chastity evidently looms large in the collection, given
the number of virgin saints represented there. That Ælfric wrote the Lives of Saints
during the Benedictine reform, and that reformers used the rhetoric of chastity to
distinguish between reformed and unreformed clerics, explains why Ælfric included a
large number of sexually pure saints in this collection. Even though Ælfric composed the
Lives of Saints for the laity, concerns emanating from the monastic environment
nevertheless influenced the Winchester monk's choice of texts for this compilation.

Saints, with Reference to the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," Notes and Queries, n.s., 32
Lives of Saints," Anglia 104 (1986): 316-48, which definitively excludes the four items
above based on their style and linguistic usage.


4.3 The Benedictine Reforms and the Rhetoric of Clerical Chastity

The term "reform" in the context of late tenth-century England is extremely complex: it involves numerous aspects of ecclesiastical life and assumes different forms in various church communities.\(^ {34} \) Ælfric's monastic training took place at the reformed monastery of Winchester: given Ælfric's intellectual pedigree as an *alumnus* of Æthelwold, judicious consideration given to the bishop's concerns—some of which evidently became Ælfric's own—adds insight into Ælfric's own writing.

Æthelwold's career at Winchester began in 963, following his consecration as bishop and after several years (between ca. 955 and 963) as abbot of Abingdon.\(^ {35} \) In 964, Æthelwold expelled the secular clerics from the Old Minster at Winchester, replacing them with monks from Abingdon; he subsequently expelled the secular clerics from the New Minster as well.\(^ {36} \) The term "secular cleric" requires elaboration, especially to avoid


\(^ {35} \) The year of Æthelwold's consecration derives from the two *vitae* of Æthelwold by Wulfstan and Ælfric. Æthelwold's consecration is mentioned in Wulfstan, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, chap. 16, trans. 31; and in Ælfric, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, chap. 11, trans. EHD, 907. For details concerning Æthelwold's abbacy at Abingdon, see Alan Thacker, "Æthelwold and Abingdon," in *Bishop Æthelwold*, 43-64.

\(^ {36} \) Wulfstan, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, chaps. 16-20, trans. 29-37; Ælfric, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, chaps. 12-16, trans. EHD, 907-08. Regarding the expulsion of the clerics
possible confusion with "layman." Wulfstan refers to the men expelled from both
minsters as *canonici*; Ælfric calls them *clerici.* Nevertheless, both terms describe the
same group: men—who were not reformed Benedictine monks—living in community.

Although the reasons underlying the expulsions were far more complex than the causes
Wulfstan and Ælfric present, the language used to refer to the expelled clerics is
instructive. Wulstan's *vita* of Æthelwold justifies the clerics' expulsion from the Old
Minster, which Æthelwold apparently undertook with King Edgar's permission, in terms
of their sinfulness:

and its related documentation, see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester,*
xlv-xlvi.

37. Wulfstan, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi,* chaps. 16 and 20; Ælfric, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi,* chaps. 12 and 16.

38. Julia Barrow explains the complexities attending the notion of secular clerisy
in her entry on "cathedral clergy" in the *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon
England,* 84-87. Barrow argues that the *Regula canonicorum* of Chrodegang, bishop of
Metz (742-66) (in its enlarged form; that is, augmented with part of the *Institutio
canonicorum* of 816-17) was apparently observed among Bishop Leofric's canons at
Exeter in the mid-eleventh century (where copies of the *Rule* in both Latin and Old
English translation were received and copied again), but, citing Frank Barlow, she
maintains that "[t]his is our first and only firm evidence for this rule [sic] being applied in
a community of secular canons in England": see "English Cathedral Communities and
Reform in the Late Tenth and the Eleventh Centuries," in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-
1193,* ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge:
Boydell Press, 1994), 25-39, at 32; see also Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-
214. Brigitte Langefeld presents evidence for the use of the original version of
Chrodegang's Rule at Christ Church, Canterbury in the early ninth century, in "*Regula
canonicorum or Regula monasterialis vitae?* The Rule of Chrodegang and Archbishop
canonicorum* was translated into Old English in the style of Æthelwold's Winchester
school. It is edited by Arthur S. Napier, *The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of
Erant autem tunc in Veteri Monasterio, ubi cathedra pontificalis habetur, canonici nefandis scelerum moribus implicati, elatione et insolentia atque luxuria praevuenti, adeo ut nonnulli illorum dedignarentur missas suo ordine celebrare, repudiantes uxores quas inlicite duxerant et alias accipientes, gulae et ebrietati iugiter dediti.

[Now at that time there were in the Old Minster, where the bishop's throne is situated, cathedral canons involved in wicked and scandalous behaviour, victims of pride, insolence, and riotous living to such a degree that some of them did not think fit to celebrate mass in due order. They married wives illicitly, (rejected) them, and took others; they were constantly given to gourmandizing and drunkenness].

Significantly, Ælfric's abbreviation of Wulfstan's vita does not excise any accusation of egregious misconduct among the clerics: in fact, its wording on this matter is identical to Wulfstan's. In the Old English treatise known as "An Account of King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries," Æthelwold himself relates less succinctly that, in Edgar's zeal for monasticism, "[h]alige stowa he geclænsode fram ealra manna fulnessum, no þæt an on Westseaxna rice, ac eacswylee on Myrcena lande. Witodlice he adref [sic] [cano]nicas

39. Wulfstan, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, chap. 16, trans. 31. Both Wulfstan (*Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, chap. 20, trans. 37) and Ælfric (*Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, chap. 16, trans. EHD, 908) report that King Edgar also gave permission for the expulsion of the New Minster clerics. On Edgar's support for Æthelwold's reforms, see Eric John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies*, Studies in Early English History 4 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), 154-80 and 181-209; and Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, xlv-xlviii. See also Eric John, "The Church of Winchester and the Tenth-Century Reformation," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 47 (1965): 404-29. It is interesting to speculate on the relationship between the rhetoric of clerical licentiousness and the implications of new arrangements for landholding and abbatial election during the reform. As John discusses in *Orbis Britanniae*, the available evidence suggests that the replacement of married clerics by monks who had no dependents led to new tenurial arrangements. These arrangements took land away from clerics’ heirs and left it with the new monastic communities practising communal ownership as mandated by the Rule of Benedict. The reforms also attempted to do away with appointments to abbacy based on kinship ties.

He on ðæm forseædum gyultum ofer[fe]de genihtsumedon, 7 on ðæm fyrmestum stowum [e]alles his andwealdes munecas gestæpolode to weorðfulre þenunge Hælendes Cristes" [(h)e cleansed holy places from all men's foulnesses, not only in the kingdom of the West Saxons, but in the land of the Mercians also. Assuredly he drove out canons who abounded beyond measure in the aforesaid sins, and he established monks in the foremost places of all his dominion for the glorious service of the Saviour Christ].

However, the proem to the *Regularis concordia*, an influential customary compiled by Æthelwold, betrays a specific concern about the possibility of sexual sin—but this time, among the monks rather than the expelled clerics. Here, for example, Æthelwold notes the establishment of King Edgar over monks and Queen Ælfthryth over nuns in order to avoid scandal; there is a prohibition against the monks' entering spaces set apart for nuns; and there is also a ban on their travelling with, embracing or kissing, and simply even being alone with young oblates.


43. These items are noted in Symons and Spath, *Regularis concordia*, chaps. 3, 7, and 12; trans. Symons, *Monastic Agreement*, chaps. 3, 7, and 11. That any of these derive from any of the sources used in the compilation of the *Regularis concordia* as a whole—a topic that is well beyond the scope of this chapter—is not the point. (Thomas Symons points out, for example, that the injunction enjoining the custos [master] of the monastic boys always to have a third-party witness when he is with one of his charges [Symons and Spath, *Regularis concordia*, chap. 12; trans. Symons, *Monastic Agreement*,
Æthelwold and Ælfric, it is clear that the reformed monks from Winchester were defining themselves *qua* reformed monks in distinction to the secular clerics. Furthermore, the definition of "reformed monk" relied, in part, on accusations of sin among the secular clergy. Pauline Stafford's recent elaboration of the term "church reform" in fact emphasizes chastity as one key factor that rhetorically defined clerical status. Stafford cites Ælfric's "Pastoral Letter for Wulfstige III" (caps. 2, 24 and 25) and his "First Old English Letter for Wulfstan" (caps. 12, 13, 34, 77, 85 and passim) in support of her remarks.\(^{44}\) Dorothy Whitelock dates the "Pastoral Letter for Wulfstige III" to not long after 992 on the basis of Ælfric's use of both non-rhythmical prose as well as the rhythmical prose style that became a hallmark of Ælfric's later works: this dating renders the letter and its references to chastity of special interest with regard to the question of Ælfric's particular inclusions of accounts in the *Lives of Saints*, since the letter predates chap. 11] has a Cluny parallel: see "Regularis concordia: History and Derivation," in *Tenth-Century Studies*, 37-59 and 214-17, at 49-50.) What is important here is simply the inclusion of these items in a document intimately connected with reform-era Winchester, items that reflect a concern with both male-female and male-male sexual danger.

44. "Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England," *Past and Present* 163 (1999): 3-35, especially 6-8. For Ælfric's letters, see *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, ed. Bernhard Fehr, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 9 (Hamburg: n.p., 1914; reprint, with supplement to the introduction by Peter Clemoes, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966). Ælfric's "Pastoral Letter for Wulfstige III" (Fehr I) is on pp. 1-34; trans. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 196-226; the "First Old English Letter for Wulfstan" (Fehr II) is on pp. 68-145; trans. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 260-302. Reference to the letters will be by Fehr designation, chapter and line number (quotations will use "g" rather than Fehr's yogh); Whitelock's translations for the bodies of the Old English letters will be referred to by chapter number; Jonathan Wilcox's translations of the Latin prefaces to these letters (from Ælfric's *Prefaces*) will be referred to by page number, as above.
the completion of this collection by only a short period of time.\textsuperscript{45} Wulfsige was the
bishop of Sherborne who, in 998, established monks in his cathedral.\textsuperscript{46} Ælfric's Latin
preface to the letter, addressed to Wulfsige—the rest of the letter is written as though
Wulfsige is addressing his clergymen—tells the bishop "quod sepius deberetis uestris
clericus alloqui et illorum neglegentiam arguere, quia pene statuta canonum et sancte
aecclesiae religio uel doctrina eorum peruersitate deleta sunt" [that you . . . ought to
speak to your clerics more often and point out their negligence, because canon law and
the religion and doctrine of the holy church have nearly been destroyed by their
perversity].\textsuperscript{47} The admonitions concerning chastity that follow this preface reveal the
same concerns about sexual sin that Ælfric (closely following Wulfstan of Winchester)
later outlined in his account of Æthelwold's expulsion of the clerics from the Old Minster
in his vita of Æthelwold.\textsuperscript{48}

Indeed, these concerns receive very ample treatment in the letter to Wulfsige. The
letter explores the issue from its second chapter: "Crist sylf astealde cristendom and
clænnysse, and ealle þa, þe ferdon on his fare mid him, forleton ealle woruld-þing and

\textsuperscript{45} Whitelock, Councils and Synods, 193. Wulfsige possibly became bishop in
993, and is referred to as episcopus in the letter's Latin preface; see Joyce Hill, "Monastic
Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context," in England in the
Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium, ed. Carola Hicks,
Harlaxton Medieval Studies 2 (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), 103-17, at 103, n. 1., and
Whitelock, Councils and Synods, 196.

\textsuperscript{46} Whitelock, Councils and Synods, 193.

\textsuperscript{47} Fehr I, "Incipit," 7-10; trans. Wilcox, Ælfric's Prefaces, 133.

\textsuperscript{48} It will be recalled that Ælfric's vita of Æthelwold largely abbreviates
Wulfstan's vita of the reforming bishop, and that it is therefore significant that Ælfric
repeats Wulfstan verbatim concerning the clerics' sins rather than truncating that account.
wifes neawiste. Forðan-þe he sylf cwæð on sumum godspelle: seðe his wif ne hatað, nis he me wyrðe þen" [Christ himself established Christianity and chastity, and all those who journeyed in his company abandoned all worldly things and the society of women. For he himself said in one of his gospels: "He who does not hate his wife is not a servant worthy of me"].

Of note here is Ælfric's abbreviation of Luke 14:26, which he casts only in terms of renouncing one's wife in the name of serving Christ: he omits Jesus's inclusion of one's father, mother, children, brothers, sisters, and even one's own life in the litany of items that one must renounce in order to be a worthy disciple.

Ælfric thus renders abstinence from sexual relations with women (indeed, the "wif" that Ælfric exhorts clerics to despise rhetorically stands in for such relations) the one and only condition for discipleship. Furthermore, by doing this so early in the letter, Ælfric, writing as though Wulfsige himself, unmistakably highlights a concern for the sexual continence of the bishop's clerics.

Wulfsige's addressees are not reformed monks: Ælfric uses the Latin term "clerici" in the preface, and the Old English term


50. Luke 14:26 reads as follows: "si quis venit ad me et non odit patrem suum et matrem et uxorem et filios et fratres et sorores adhuc autem et animam suam non potest esse meus discipulus" [If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple].

51. The Latin preface to the letter ends with Ælfric's statement that "Nos uero scriptitamus hanc epistolam, que anglice sequitur, quasi ex tuo ore dictata sit et locutus esses ad clericos tibi subditos" [Indeed, we have written this letter, which follows in English, as if it were dictated from your mouth and you had spoken to the clerics under your charge]: Fehr I, "Incipit," 12-14; trans. Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 133.
preoste [priests] to address the intended audience.\textsuperscript{52} This usage contrasts with that found in Ælfric's \textit{Letter to the Monks of Eynsham} (ca. 1005), which Ælfric addresses to the "fratribus" [brothers] of the monastery at Eynsham; Ælfric continues: "nuper . . . ad monachicum habitum ordinati estis" [you have recently been ordained to the monastic habit].\textsuperscript{53}

Ælfric continues his exhortation to chastity by turning to an extended discussion of the rationale for clerical purity, citing first the Council of Nicaea and its demand that members of the clergy not live with any women (certain close family relations excepted) on pain of losing their clerical status. Indeed, the rhetoric of the letter puts sexual incontinence among the clergy on the same level as the Arian heresy.\textsuperscript{54} Following this

\textsuperscript{52} The latter term occurs in Fehr I, chap. 1, 15 and 16. On Wulfsige's career at Sherborne before his reforms were introduced, see Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 104-05. Whitelock dates the establishment of monks at Sherborne to 998: see \textit{Councils and Synods}, 193. She believes that the "regol" [Rule] to which Ælfric refers (Fehr I, chap. 102, 10) and by which Wulfsige's clergymen are apparently not abiding may be the enlarged Rule of Chrodegang (in its Old English translation) or the \textit{De regula canonicorum} of Amalarius of Metz: \textit{Councils and Synods}, 216, n. 2.


\textsuperscript{54} Fehr I, chaps. 6-13; trans. Whitelock, \textit{Councils and Synods}, 197-98. As in the case of the \textit{Regularis concordia}, discussed above (pp. 187-88, n. 43), that Ælfric drew upon various sources in compiling this letter is not at issue here: the simple fact that he chose to include these items and give them such emphasis is what underlies my analysis. On Ælfric's sources for this particular section, see Whitelock, \textit{Councils and Synods}, 197, n. 2, and 198, n. 2. For a more extensive analysis of the sources used by Ælfric in his Latin and Old English pastoral letters, see Fehr, \textit{Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics}, lxxiii-cxxvi. Regarding Ælfric's use of associative memory in his compositions, see J. E. Cross, "Ælfric: Mainly on Memory and Creative Method in Two \textit{Catholic Homilies}," \textit{Studia Neophilologica} 41 (1969): 135-55, and "The Literate Anglo-Saxon: On Sources and Disseminations," \textit{Proceedings of the British Academy} 58 (1972): 67-100.
section, Ælfric devotes several chapters to an extended explanation of the rationale for clerical chastity, stating that while taking a wife was permitted under the Old Law, the reasons for marriage among clergymen are no longer valid. Finally, while Ælfric cites a long litany of sins that the clerics are to avoid—such as covetousness and drunkenness—no single sin listed here receives the focused attention that chastity gets.

"Chastity" is here at least as much an index of one's conformity to the tenets of reformed monasticism as it is a mark of a mass-priest's fitness to celebrate the Eucharist. Clearly, the rhetoric of sexual purity that Ælfric directs to Wulfsige's secular clerics does not take the form of an exhortation to maintain an already established sexual abstinence: tellingly, Ælfric uses the term "clænnysse" [chastity] in the sense of renouncing sexual activity rather than never indulging in it in the first place. Such rhetoric, however—as in the case of the other statements that the letter makes concerning clerical misbehavior—cannot be read as a reliable indicator of actual sexual practice taking place among Wulfsige's unreformed clerics. As Joyce Hill observes, Ælfric's letter for Wulfsige, along with his pastoral letters for Wulfstan,

point to a written tradition of ecclesiastical reform with which Wulfsige and Wulfstan wished to ally themselves. That such details are deployed in the letters is generally indicative of a secular church which they were convinced was below par, but their use has a rhetorical importance also in defining the bishops' position as authority figures who wished to establish standards and who saw the secular church contrastively, as a world far


removed from the regulated and reformed life which they themselves knew.  

Hill emphasizes that since Ælfric wrote his Letter for Wulfsige as though in the bishop's voice, "a genuine identity of purpose" can be understood to have existed between the two men.  

Such "identity of purpose" with regard to the issue of clerical chastity perfuses not only Ælfric's pastoral letters, but also Ælfric's adaptation of hagiographic tradition in his Lives of Saints. The context of Ælfric's concern with clerical chastity, as expressed in his Letter for Wulfsige, thus further illuminates some of Ælfric's choices of saints' vitae and passiones for this collection, as well as his particular rewritings of these narratives. Although the Lives of Saints was written for a lay audience, Ælfric did not simply leave behind his reformist concerns when compiling and translating the collection. In fact, as his letter to the layman Sigeferth suggests, the issue of clerical purity can arise even in a 

57. "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 111. This Wulfstan—not to be confused with Wulfstan of Winchester, author of Æthelwold's vita—was bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York at the time he commissioned two Latin pastoral letters from Ælfric in 1005, and two Old English translations of these missives in 1006.  


59. In the letters, Hill observes, "Ælfric surrenders authorial identity" as he writes in the names of the two bishops: furthermore, "the establishment of authorial identity was for him a functional device, motivated by a sense of theological responsibility, rather than being a concern to claim authorship as such. In the Pastoral Letters the responsibility was that of the bishops and it is thus their voices that we hear; in the Catholic Homilies, by contrast, the responsibility was Ælfric's own, so that he took care to guarantee the text by particularizing his identity in the Old English preface and by maintaining a sense of his presence, in attitude though not in name, throughout the collection." See "Ælfric, Authorial Identity and the Changing Text," in The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference, ed. D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 177-89, at 184 and 184-85. Hill's observations concerning Ælfric's attitude toward authorial identity in the Catholic Homilies also apply to the LS.
text written to someone who is neither a secular nor a reformed cleric.\textsuperscript{60} That a significant number of the saints whose \textit{vitae} and \textit{passiones} \AE lfric chose to include in the \textit{Lives of Saints} are virgins is therefore suggestive of \AE lfric's ongoing concern with chastity—including chastity among the clergy—given that these saints were selected from among those apparently venerated by monks, as \AE lfric states in his Latin and Old English prefaces. A problem arises, however, with the notion of \AE lfric's using female saints as exemplars of a virtue that he so vehemently encouraged among (male) clerics. Of all the narratives concerning male saints that \AE lfric included in the collection, however, only a small number incorporate sexual purity as a component of masculine holiness: the legends of Basil (January 1); Julian (with Basilissa, January 9); Martin (November 11); Edmund (November 20); and Chrysanthus (with Daria, November 29).\textsuperscript{61} In the accounts of Basil, Martin, and Edmund, chastity receives but cursory attention: it pales in importance when compared with such qualities as righteous leadership, active

\textsuperscript{60} The letter to Sigeferth appears under the title "\AE lfric: Be þære halgan clænnysse," in Bruno Assmann, ed., \textit{Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben}, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (1889; reprint, with supplementary introduction by Peter Clemoes, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 13-23. According to the letter's preface, \AE lfric wrote to Sigeferth to correct the error of the addressee's "ancor" [hermit], who maintained "þæt hit sy alyfed, þæt mæssepreostas wel motan wifian" [that it is permitted that mass-priests might well take a wife]: "\AE lfric: Be þære halgan clænnysse," 13, lines 4 and 5-6.

\textsuperscript{61} To this small list could be added the evangelists Luke and John (whose legendary chastity, however, is not noted here): they are not, however, accorded their own \textit{vitae} proper, only receiving brief mention in the "item alia" section appended to Mark's \textit{passio} (April 25) at Skeat 1: 330, 150-332, 173. Valerian, the pure bridegroom of the virgin martyr Cecilia (November 22), is of secondary narrative importance in the \textit{passio} concerning them. In an extended digression to his entry on the Chair of St. Peter (February 22), \AE lfric takes great care to explain that although Peter was not sexually pure—he had been married and had a daughter—he had been allowed a wife under the Old Law, but renounced sexual activity once he began to follow Christ. This passage is at Skeat 1: 232, 202-234, 231.
resistance to paganism, and the power to work miracles. Only in the narratives of the married (yet chaste) saints Julian and Chrysanthus does sexual purity play a major narrative role in constructing male sanctity. But because these saints are married—and because Ælfric was ardently opposed to married clergy—Ælfric's best, and most numerous, exemplars of chastity (indeed, of unblemished virginity *tout court*) were the female saints.\(^62\) In effect, the accounts of every female saint included by Ælfric in the *Lives of Saints* emphasize that, in hagiographic writing, virginity is virtually the *sine qua non* of female sanctity.\(^63\)

It is true, as Catherine Cubitt argues, that "Ælfric's women were created by a man for a primarily male audience" in that Ælfric selected, adapted, and translated Latin accounts of certain female saints for Æthelweard's and Æthelmær's consumption.\(^64\) A related argument by Cubitt regarding Ælfric's use of the *vitae* and *passiones* of holy women is problematic, however, at least with respect to the *Lives of Saints*:

Ælfric uses female images to create a male monastic elite, to promote the authority of the male virgin order over the clergy and the laity. The virtue of the monastic order is set primarily against the inadequacies of the

\(^{62}\) In contrast, although Ælfric emphasizes the importance of chastity for religious men and women alike in his letter to Sigeferth, the names of chaste saints punctuating his argument for clerical chastity are exclusively male. See "Ælfric: Be þære halgan clænnysse," passim.

\(^{63}\) The account of the reformed prostitute Mary of Egypt (April 2), which is included in the principal manuscript of the LS, Julius E. vii, was not composed by Ælfric. See above, pp. 182-83, n. 31.

clergy, whose inferiority resides in their failure to conform to monastic standards of sexual purity and learning.\textsuperscript{65}

These statements become less problematic when the intimate relationship between chastity and female sanctity is kept in mind, for then it is once again clear that Ælfric's best exemplars of chaste sanctity were holy women. But it is nevertheless difficult to reconcile such statements with the facts of the patronage relationship between Ælfric and his lay addressees—that the "female images" presented in the 

\textit{Lives of Saints} somehow "create a male monastic elite" in a work created for two laymen. Instead, Ælfric's general concerns about monastic chastity can be seen to filter into this collection by virtue of two factors: that the accounts are apparently chosen on the basis of monastic observances of the \textit{sanctorale}, and that such a significant number of the saints represented in the \textit{Lives of Saints} are female virgins.

Cubitt's mention of "monastic standards of sexual purity and learning," however, does offer a clue to the reasons behind Ælfric's inclusion of two particular female saints, Agatha and Eugenia, in this collection. Agatha and Eugenia certainly make perfect models of both "sexual purity and learning": two qualities that rhetorically separated reformed monks not only from the laity, but also from the unreformed clerisy.\textsuperscript{66} Both of these saints exemplify sexual purity in their vigorous spurning of sexual relations—in Agatha's case, even in the face of torture and death. But both women are also excellent exemplars of learnedness, albeit in different ways. Ælfric's Latin source text, as well as his Old English translation of it, both emphasize that Eugenia was a highly educated

\textsuperscript{65} "Virginity and Misogyny," 19.

\textsuperscript{66} Cubitt mentions reformers' tendency to attribute ignorance of Latin to the secular clerisy in "Virginity and Misogyny," at 19.
young woman: her pagan father arranged to have her instructed in Greek and Latin, and she apparently flourished in the wisdom and the knowledge of philosophy that resulted from her education. Her instruction in the classical languages paved the way for her encounter with the writings of St. Paul; these writings, in turn, provided Eugenia with the impetus to renounce paganism herself and convert to Christianity. Not only did her education lead to her conversion, but her learning (and related piety) were of such excellence that she, in the guise of a monk, was at last chosen abbot of her monastery.

Although neither Ælfric's Old English account of Agatha nor his Latin source relate that this saint received a formal education like Eugenia, Agatha certainly did not lack intelligence for want of instruction. In contrast to Eugenia, Agatha's intelligence was purely innate: it was not at all cultivated by secular instruction. The Latin and Old English passiones of Agatha narratively demonstrate the saint's knowledge in terms of her excellent ability to read. This ability comes not in the form of "book knowledge," but rather in Agatha's aptitude for discerning spiritual meanings in various situations. The virgin's verbal exchanges with her suitor-cum-persecutor Quintianus provide the clearest illustrations of this gift, where Agatha's proficiency at reading beyond a literal level is particularly emphasized. Her ability to grasp spiritual meanings baffles Quintianus, especially in terms of the multiple significations attached to a certain part of Agatha's body: her breast.

4.4 Reading the Dismembered Breost in Ælfric's passio of Agatha

Generally speaking, the entries in the Lives of Saints are spread evenly over the calendar year, with large gaps explainable in terms of intervening feasts from the
temporale. Agatha's feast day is noted here as February 5, following its source.Ælfric's source is not the version of Agatha's passio recorded in extant copies of the Cotton-Corpus legendary, but is actually closer to a text that Carla Morini has called the "Cistercian redaction." Patrick Zettel notes Ælfric's inclusion of Agatha in the Lives of Saints on the basis of her "second-class" saintly status according to early English calendars, which characterizes many of the saints included in that collection: saints of the "first class," he observes, had already (for the most part) been the subjects of Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. It nevertheless appears odd that Ælfric would include a second-

67. Lapidge, "Ælfric's Sanctorale," 119.

68. It is correctly listed as the nones of February in the "Cistercian redaction" of the legend that Carla Morini has identified (see n. 69 below) as closest to any extant version of Ælfric's possible sources for the legend. Cf. Lapidge, "Ælfric's Sanctorale," 136, which lists the date given in the rubric to the version of the Cotton-Corpus legendary preserved in London, BL, Cotton Nero E. i, part i (BHL 133) as February 3 (i.ii. non. Feb.) and the date given within the body of the text as January 31 (i.ii. ii. kl. Feb.).

69. Patrick Zettel identified the version of the Agatha legend represented in the Cotton-Corpus legendary as closest to the version represented in BHL 134, but differing substantially from it and all other identified BHL versions: see "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources," 14 and 17. Carla Morini subsequently discovered a version more likely to have been used by Ælfric: she has identified it as BHL 133, contaminated by elements from BHL 135 to form the hybrid text she refers to as the "Cistercian redaction" because of its transmission through an early twelfth-century Cistercian legendary known as Liber de natalitiis. This hybrid text had not been assigned its own BHL number at the time of Morini's study. See "Una redazione sconosciuta della Passio S. Agathae," AB 109 (1991): 305-30. The text is edited at 320-29. A full account of Morini's findings, along with a reprint of her edition of the Cistercian redaction, of BHL 134, of Ælfric's account of Agatha in LS, and a modern Italian translation of the Old English, is in La passione di S. Agata di Ælfric di Eynsham (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1993). Citations of the Cistercian redaction will be taken from the edition in AB and will be cited by page and line numbers.

70. Zettel explains this ranking system and its relation to the Catholic Homilies and the LS in "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources," 72-82.
ranked saint with an early spring feast day for his collection instead of, for example, Perpetua and Felicity (March 7): their feast was universally observed and they are included in the Cotton- Corpus legendary.\textsuperscript{71} It is of note that these saints do not appear anywhere in Ælfric's \textit{sanctorale} as reconstructed by Michael Lapidge, especially given that, in Lapidge's words, "[m]inor and local saints had no place in Ælfric's \textit{sanctorale}: he was concerned with the observance of the catholic church, as he conceived it."\textsuperscript{72} Zettel, however, argues that Ælfric does not include Perpetua and Felicity in the \textit{Lives of Saints} (or, for that matter, in the \textit{Catholic Homilies}) since they are not accorded either first- or second-class importance in extant English calendars.\textsuperscript{73}

Yet the question of "first-class" or "second-class" importance does not take into account the reformist influences that shaped Ælfric's compilation of his hagiographic collection. As a pillar of chastity, wisdom, and steadfastness in the face of persecution, Agatha—especially in Ælfric's Old English adaptation of her legend—perfectly exemplifies the ideals of reformed monasticism. Ælfric rewrites the account of Agatha found in his source in keeping with the stylistic principles set out in his Latin preface to the \textit{Lives of Saints}:

\begin{quote}
Nec potuimus in ista translatione semper uerbum ex uerbo transferre, sed tamen sensum ex sensu, sicut inuenimus in sancta scriptura, diligenter curauimus uertere \[s\]implici et aperta locutione quatinus proficiat \[a\]udientibus. Hoc sciendum etiam quod prolixiores passiones
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{73} "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources," 80-81.
breuiamus uerbis, non adeo sensu, ne fastidiosis ingeratur tedium si tanta prolixitas erit in propria lingua quanta est in latina; et non semper breuitas sermonem deturpat sed multotiens honestiorem reddit.

[We have not been able in this translation always to translate word for word but, rather, we have taken care to translate diligently according to the sense, as we find it in Holy Scripture, in such simple and clear phrases as will profit our listeners. It should also be known that we have abbreviated the longer passions, not so much in the sense as in the words, in order that boredom may not be inflicted on those hard to please if there were to be such prolixity in our own language as in Latin; and brevity does not always disfigure a narrative but many times it makes it more appropriate.]\(^74\)

\(^74\) Skeat 1: 4, 22-29; trans. Wilcox, \textit{Ælfric's Prefaces}, 131. Ælfric's characteristic \textit{brevitas} as an ideal for his vernacular writing, including his translations, has been the subject of much scholarship. \textit{Brevitas} informs the creation of the LS as well as his other works, whether they be translations, letters, or other genres of writing. Ælfric's clear, succinct Old English writing style differs markedly from the florid hermeneutic Latin of the Winchester school, as does his own Latin prose: see, for example, Michael Lapidge, "The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature," \textit{ASE} 4 (1975): 67-111, and Lapidge and Winterbottom, \textit{Wulfstan of Winchester}, cl. Cf. Christopher A. Jones's analysis of the various writing methods—all of which can be generally categorized as strategies of abbreviation—underlying Ælfric's Latin writing, in "\textit{Meatim sed et rustica: Ælfric of Eynsham As a Medieval Latin Author}," \textit{Journal of Medieval Latin} 8 (1998): 1-57.

Indeed, Ælfric's abbreviated vernacular version of his source portrays the virgin martyr of pure mind and body to an even more perfect degree than does the Latin text: the Old English narrative thus improves upon the source, making it even "honestior" [more appropriate] than the conventions of hagiographic genre dictate.

It is through the image of the virgin's breast [breast] that Ælfric narratively refurbishes Agatha's saintliness. Ælfric's version of the saint's passio gives greater emphasis to Agatha's breast than does the Latin pre-text: such increased emphasis highlights the connection among Agatha's body, her physical healing, and her faith. For instance, Ælfric relates that the morally corrupt Aphrodosia, after failing to persuade Agatha to accede to Quintianus's lustful intentions after a month of effort, tells him that "[s]tanæ magon hñexian and þæt starce isen on leades gelicnysse ærðan þe se geleafa mæge of agathes breoste beon æfre adwæsced" [(s)tones will be able to soften and that hard iron (will be able to become) like lead before the belief in Agatha's breast can ever be extinguished].

The Latin text, however, does not mention the breast at all. Instead, Aphrodosia reports that "[f]acìlius possunt saxa molliri et ferrum in plumbum conuerti, quam ab intentione christianæ mens istius puelle reuocari" [(s)tones can more easily be softened and iron be turned to lead, than the mind of this girl can be drawn away from its Christian intent].

76. AB 322, 3.
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English "breost" is not yet evident at this point in the text: it is only brought to light gradually as one continues to hear or read Agatha's *passio*.⁷⁷

This gradual narrative revelation functions in part to demonstrate Quintianus's ignorance of the figurative signification of Agatha's breast. As Shari Horner notes, in Ælfric's *passio* of Agatha, as well as those of Agnes, Lucy and Eugenia,

the saint's body acts as a text that displays the tensions between the practices of reading literally (like the pagans) and spiritually (like the saint herself and all Christian readers). The saint's body functions as the hermeneutic tool that enables spiritual signification, to the extent that it is precisely through the display of literal violence that spiritual meaning is achieved.⁷⁸

Ælfric indeed reveals that Quintianus is a very literal (and violent) reader of Agatha's body, someone who cannot see beyond the sexual import of that body part. Ælfric notes that the persecutor is "his galnysse undrepeod" [subject to his lust].⁷⁹ In effect,

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⁷⁷. A glance at the glosses on the DOE Corpus suggests that *mens* is overwhelmingly rendered by Old English *mod* and *gelpanc*, while conversely, Old English *breost* most often translates the Latin words *pectus* and *uber*. For *mens*, see <http://80-ets.umdl.umich.edu.libproxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Whole+word&type=simple&q1=mens&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=Gloss&size=First+100>. For *breost*, see <http://80-ets.umdl.umich.edu/lib-proxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Begins+with&type=simple&q1=breost&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=Gloss&size=First+100>. Both accessed August 25, 2003.


⁷⁹. Skeat 1: 196, 5. Ælfric significantly abbreviates the Latin passages outlining Quintianus's lust, thus understating his rapaciousness and loss of control to his shameful desires when he sees Agatha's beauty: cf., for example, "Vt auarus autem et rapax, etiam ad facultates eius cupiditatis sue frena laxabat" [For as he was greedy and rapacious, he
Quintianus's concupiscence, as a function of his heathen beliefs, blinds him to anything but lust-driven readings of Agatha. It is narratively fitting, then, that when Agatha refuses to sacrifice to Quintianus's gods, the Sicilian consul orders the virgin's body—specifically, her breast—to be tortured on the rack and then to be amputated.  

Quintianus is so lust-driven that he misunderstands the breast's signification in two important ways, which Agatha quickly attempts to correct. The first of these is the importance of the breast as the primary means of nourishing a baby. The Old English text closely follows the Latin account at this point: Agatha unabashedly shames her rejected suitor for depriving her body of that part which would have nurtured Quintianus as an infant. She does not narrate the torture of her breast as the painful rending of a body part demeaningly sexualized by her persecutor, a rhetorical tactic that would simply reflect Quintianus's lust and keep the meaning of her breast at a most superficial level.  

80. "Pæ gebealh hine se wælhtreowæ and het hi gewrīðan on ðam breoste mid þære henegeæne and het siððan ofaceorfan" [Then the cruel one became angry, and ordered her to be tortured on the breast (i.e., that her breast be twisted) with the rack and ordered it to be cut off afterwards]: Skeat 1: 202, 122-23.

81. As noted by Shari Horner, Agatha is one of Ælfric's virgin martyrs who, through direct discourse, "exposes the torturer's foolish ignorance—in particular . . . his excessive literalism, or rather his inability to understand other than literally." At the same time, Agatha, like Lucy and Cecilia, "simultaneously [teaches her audience] an important spiritual lesson about reading, interpretation, and understanding." See "Why Do You Speak So Much Foolishness?: Gender, Humor, and Discourse in Ælfric's Lives of Saints," in Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature, ed. Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 127-36, at 130 and 131. See also the chapter entitled "Jest in Hagiography" in Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,
Instead, Agatha's response casts her own virgin breast—which had never nourished an infant—as the metonymic representative of the breast of Quintianus's own mother and, by extension, of the generic female breast: "Agathes him cwæð to: Eala ðu arleasosta ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt þæt ðu sylf suce" [Agatha said to him, "O most wicked one, are you not ashamed to cut off that which you yourself have sucked?"]\(^{82}\). Agatha says this even though it is impossible that her breast would ever perform the nourishing function, given the saint's refusal to lose her virginity to Quintianus or to anyone else. Agatha's comment rhetorically keeps the physical breast at Quintianus's literal level of understanding; yet, at the same time, it also rhetorically equates virginal and maternal breasts. The Latin text reads similarly at this point: "Agatha uirgo fortissima dixit: Impie, crudelis et dire tyranne, non es confusus hoc amputare in femina, quod ipse in matre suxisti?" [Agatha, the most courageous virgin, said, "Wicked, cruel, and fierce tyrant, does it not trouble you to cut off from a woman, what you yourself have sucked of your mother?]\(^{83}\). By eliminating an Old English equivalent for "in matre" [of your mother], Ælfric's version in fact makes Agatha's rhetorical identification of virginal and maternal

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\(^{82}\) Skeat 1: 202, 124-25.

\(^{83}\) AB 325, 2-4.
breasts even more clear—as though Quintianus had actually suckled Agatha's own breast, an incongruity highlighting the utter ridiculousness of Quintianus's lust-driven literalness. Just as importantly, however, Agatha's rhetorical tactic instantly desexualizes her breast.

When Ælfric's translation at this point is compared with the Latin material, it is clear that the vernacular text is building on its first mention of *breost*. At this point, the Old English version of the *passio* more revealingly intimates the organ's significance in the triumph of Agatha's faith. The chaste saint suddenly withdraws the identification she has just made between her own fleshly breast and the maternal breast, rhetorically casting aside both the physical nature of her own body part and, in accordance with this denial of its corporeality, changing its function to that of nourishing her own "andgit" [understanding, intellect].

Immediately after chastizing Quintianus for desiring to amputate the virginal / maternal breast, Agatha begins to modify the import of her response with the conjunction "ac" [but]. Agatha continues, "ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle ansunde mid þam þæt eallunga afede" [I have my breast sound in my soul, with which I indeed feed my understanding].

In a grammatically small but figuratively significant departure from the Latin text, Ælfric here translates the plural "mamillas" as the singular "breost." In both the Latin

85. Skeat 1: 202, 126.
86. Skeat 1: 202, 126-27.
87. Cf. "Sed ego habeo mamillas integras intus in anima mea, ex quibus nutrio omnes sensus meos, quas ab infantia Domino consecraui" [But I have my unamputated breasts within, in my soul, from which I feed all of my understanding, which (breasts) I have consecrated to the Lord from childhood]: *AB* 325, 4-6; cf. Skeat 1: 202, 126.
and Old English versions, Quintianus threatens Agatha with the amputation of only a single breast.\(^{88}\) The notion in the Latin source that Agatha's soul harbors both breasts suggests that there exists within Agatha a reserve, as such, of faith which her persecutor could not touch through the excision of a single breast: the excision of one breast would still leave one behind unharmed. Nevertheless, rather than diminishing the extent of the virgin's devotion to Christ, \(Æ\)lfric's equation of the excised exterior breast with the sheltered interior "breast" actually highlights the singularity of Agatha's faith. By keeping the textual focus upon only one singular internal / external breast, \(Æ\)lfric emphasizes the saint's undivided commitment to the beliefs which this inner breast metonymically represents, and which ultimately leads to her martyrdom: a timely message to his addressees at a time of contemporary Viking "persecution."\(^{89}\)

\(Æ\)lfric significantly abridges the dialogue that follows in the Latin version between Agatha and the ghostly old physician (said to be St. Peter) who appears to her

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88. "Furens igitur Quintianus, iussit eam in mamilla torqueri et diutissime tortam, eandem mamillam iussit abscidi" [Infuriated, Quintianus therefore ordered her to be tortured on the breast, and, after it had been tortured for a long time, he ordered the same breast to be cut off]: \(AB\) 324, 33-325, 2.

89. That \(Æ\)lfric uses \textit{breost} to denote the seat of faith is not unusual in Old English usage. See the examples in the \textit{DOE}, s.v. "breost," especially sense 4.b. The opening comments to the entries for "breost" include mention that the word "frequently occurs in plural form with singular meaning." This being the case, it is especially clear that \(Æ\)lfric wished to make the singularity of Agatha's \textit{breost} narratively explicit by rendering the term in a singular form. While this strategy textually reduces the virgin to a body part with metonymic signification, it must be remembered that \(Æ\)lfric is conforming to hagiographic convention, part of which ultimately "reduces" all saints—female and male, virgin or not—to a set of largely fixed, generic qualities in their roles as servants of Christ. \textit{Breost} (which is neuter in grammatical gender, although the \textit{DOE} observes that it may be feminine in nominative and accusative plural forms ending in –a and –e) does not generally have the gendered implications of its Modern English counterpart; however, as I will argue, it is strongly associated with the female gender in the Agatha legend.
while she is in prison and who offers to heal her.\textsuperscript{90} In the process, he eliminates mention of Agatha's trepidation at the prospect—strongly implied, rather than directly stated—of the old man's looking at her body. Although it is a necessary component of any potential human cure for amputated flesh, the thought of being the object of the physician's gaze threatens the virgin's sense of modesty. The precise nature of the healing that the doctor offers is not clear: the Latin text does not offer clues as to exactly what extent the breast is maimed and what possible cure is in order. Even were the mammary flesh completely excised and discarded, leaving the physician with but a scar to restore, however, the physical and sexual implications of the breast would yet remain written on Agatha's body in the form of the wound remaining on her torso. Indeed, the Latin version's Agatha is trapped in her sense of threatened modesty: the absence of the breast paradoxically recalls more strongly the flesh's former presence, and, more disturbingly, the lewd misreadings of the virgin's pure body that the breast once incited in Quintianus's mind.

The Latin source includes an address, omitted by Ælfric, with which the divinely sent doctor first greets Agatha upon arriving in her prison cell. The old man's words consider that although the young woman has suffered much physically, Quintianus has already suffered more, and will continue to do so forever: "Licet te nimis corporalibus penis affecerit consularis insanus, tu tamen eum grauioribus suppliciis cruciasti responcionibus tuis. Et licet ubera tua torserit et fecerit amputari, sed et illius ubera in fel conuertentur, et in amaritudine erit anima eius in eternum" [Although the foolish consul has afflicted you exceedingly with bodily punishments, you have crucified him with your

\textsuperscript{90} The physician's identification as St. Peter is discussed by Santo D'Arrigo, \textit{Il martirio di Sant'Agata nel quadro storico del suo tempo}, vol. 2 (Catania: Istituto Catechistico Annunziazione di Maria, 1988), 1181-91.
many prayers and responses. And although he has twisted your breasts and caused (them) to be amputated, his breasts will be turned to bile, and his spirit will be turned to bitterness in eternity]. Here, the doctor sets up a distinction between Agatha's anatomical breasts and those of Quintianus, between one set of breasts that will be sent to their eternal reward (because they are also spiritual), and the other that will be consigned to eternal torment (because they are wantonly carnal). The last phrase, "et in amaritudine erit anima eius in eternum" [and his spirit will be turned to bitterness in eternity], establishes a disjunction between Quintianus's physical "ubera" and his ghostly "anima" in contrast to the oneness of breast and spirit within Agatha.

Keeping the focus on the physicality of Agatha's breast, the physician explains why he has come to the saint's aid: "Quia uero ibi eram qua hora hec patiebaris, consideraui et uidi, quia potest curam salutis tua mamilla suscipere" [Because I was there at the time that you were suffering these things, I reflected and saw that your breast could receive the cure of salvation]. While both Agatha and Quintianus have anatomical ubera [breasts], only the former has an amputated mamilla. The term mamillas is not used to refer to Quintianus's physical breasts: one of mamilla's specialized meanings is

91. AB 325, 14-18.

92. That St. Peter notes Agatha's breasts in the plural here—whereas Quintianus orders but one mamilla to be removed and St. Peter heals only one mamilla—can be explained in two commensurate ways. First, Peter goes for rhetorical effect in order to make for a better direct contrast between Agatha and her persecutor, since Quintianus has two physical breasts; furthermore, Agatha mentions that her mamillas—not her singular mamilla—are in her soul. See p. 205, n. 87 above.

93. AB 325, 18-20.
that of the lactating female breast.\footnote{See \textit{Thesaurus Linguae Latinae}, s.v. "mamilla," sense A.2.a. The word's connection with \textit{mamma} (meaning both "female breast" and "mother") underscores this gendered definition. \textit{Uber} has similar associations with fertility and lactation, but it is not nearly as gendered as \textit{mamilla}: see Lewis and Short, s.v. "uber," sense 1. Latin-Old English glosses most often render \textit{mamilla} (in singular or plural forms) as either \textit{breost} or \textit{titt} [teat, pap, breast] (singular or plural). See \textit{DOE Corpus}, <http://80-ets.umd1.umich.edu.lib-proxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Begins+with&\&type=simple &q1=mamilla &restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=Gloss&size=First+100>. Accessed August 26, 2003. See also Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "tit[t]."} Use of the term to refer to Agatha's body thus again highlights the incongruity between Agatha's virginity and the "natural" function that her breast was created to perform—a function that she shuns in her choice to be a bride of Christ rather than of any mortal man.

At this point in the Latin text, the physical and spiritual natures of the virgin's breast once again converge. This occurs not only due to the re-use of \textit{mamilla} (already used, in the plural, to refer to the seat of Agatha's faith and as a fundamentally interior entity) but also in the dual physical and spiritual connotations of \textit{salus} (which carries such multiple meanings as wholeness, health, safety, and deliverance). Agatha's subsequent exchange with the doctor, however, reveals her concern that her physical breast is gone. Furthermore, it betrays her anxiety about the prospect of an old man providing a cure for an intimate part of her untouched body:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\footnote{Lewis and Short, s.v. "salus."}

[Then Agatha said to him, "Dear old man, I have never used carnal medicine for my body, and it is shameful that I should now lose what I have preserved for so long from the earliest age." The old man says to her, " Daughter, I too am a Christian, and I know medicine. I do not want you to feel ashamed (because of) me." Agatha says to him, "And what shame can I have before you, since you are old and advanced in years, while I am a girl? In this way my entire body is racked with various tortures, so that even if I were not Christ's handmaiden, the wounds themselves would not permit my mind to be goaded into anything from which shame might be awakened. But I thank you, dear father, that you have deigned to expend your concern upon me. But please know this: that man-made medicines ought never come near my body." The old man said to her, "And why will you not permit me to cure you?" Agatha said, "Because I have my Lord Jesus Christ (as my) salvation, who cures all things with his Word, and who renews the entire world with only his speech. If he wishes, he can make me well.]96

What Agatha experiences is indeed not shame. As she implies, there is no reason for a young woman to lust after an old man. Besides, Agatha tells the senex, even if he were an attractive young man, the fleshly torments that she had undergone would keep her sexual desire at bay. But she does experience fear—fear that the old man will rape her—since her oblique reference to losing what she had preserved since her youth concerns, of course, her virginity. The old man next tells Agatha that he is the apostle of Christ, who has sent him to the virgin, and heals Agatha in Christ's name before disappearing. The Old English version retains this section of the Latin text.

By omitting the opening dialogue between Agatha and St. Peter, Ælfric keeps his text focused on the spiritual nature of Agatha's breast. Moreover, this omission

96. AB 325, 20-326, 6.
foregrounds the stalwart nature of Agatha's faith. In the Latin text, however, Agatha's faith momentarily falters. This lapse of faith, however brief, results from Agatha's inability to understand why St. Peter has offered to heal her. Here, the saint's ability to read is not impeccable, for Agatha is unable to discern the spiritual significance of St. Peter's visit. As she obliquely expresses her fear of being raped, she betrays her failure to read St. Peter's motivation beyond a literal level. In her literalness, Agatha sexualizes St. Peter's offer—in this respect, the Latin text reveals the saint's ignorance in a way that, narratively speaking, puts her on the same level as Quintianus.

By including the source text's opening exchange between Agatha and St. Peter, then, Ælfric would have introduced an unwelcome narrative distraction in an account that is otherwise carefully shaped to emphasize Agatha's faultless (that is, spiritual) understanding and the uncompromised faith that results from such understanding. The absence of Agatha's fear, exceeding modesty, and her ambivalence surrounding the physician's offer of a cure indeed frees Ælfric to probe with enhanced richness and depth the meaning of the virgin's breast beyond its literal signification as an object of Quintianus's uncontrolled desire. This narrative strategy underscores the gravity of Quintianus's misreading of Agatha's breast. It diametrically opposes Quintianus's wanton literalness and Agatha's virginal devotion to Christ, along with the saint's concomitant ability to understand beyond a sexualized (that is, literal) level.

The Old English text does retain a trace of Agatha's fear; this trace, however, is not likely to have been evident to any readers or listeners unfamiliar with the Latin
Ælfric demonstrates this by juxtaposing the verbs \[ge\]lacnian and \[ge\]hælan: each of these verbs means "to heal," but carries distinctive connotations relevant to the literal / spiritual dichotomy underlying the *passio*. *Gelacnian* means "to heal, cure," analogous to Latin *sanare, mederi*. The verb does not, however, carry the spiritual connotations of \[ge\]hælan, which means "to heal, make whole, cure, make safe, save," analogous to Latin *sanare and salvare*. While Ælfric's use of \[ge\]lacnian and \[ge\]hælan parallels that of the verbs *curare and saluum facere* used in the exchange between Agatha and St. Peter in his source, the Latin text does not set up as clean a contrast between the latter pair of verbs as does Ælfric between the vernacular terms.

Quintianus incarcerates the maimed Agatha on the order "hæt nan læce hi lacnian ne

97. On the interaction of Ælfric's Latin and Old English texts from a linguistic point of view, see Ruth Waterhouse, "Ælfric's 'Usitatus' Use of Language," especially 33-44.

98. Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "gelacnian." Bosworth and Toller give a similar, although more restricted definition of "lacnian": "To heal, cure, tend, take care of, treat, dress (a wound)."

99. Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "hælan."

100. See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. *curo*, especially sense II.B.i. It is significant that Old English glosses consistently render *saluum facere* as *gehæl don* rather than \[ge\]lacnian, while they translate *curare* as \[ge\]lacnian, and less often \[ge\]hælan or \[ge\]gieman. For translations of *curare*, see *DOE Corpus*, <http://80-ets.umdl.umich.edu.lib-proxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Begins+with&type=simple&q1=curare&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=Gloss&size=First+100>. For translations of *saluum*, see <http://80-ets.umdl.umich.edu.lib-proxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Begins+with&type=simple&q1=salvum&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=Gloss&size=First+100>. Both accessed August 25, 2003. See also Bosworth and Toller, s.v. " gegeman" [(t)o heal, cure, amend, treat (as a patient)]; cf. "geman" [(t)o care for, regard, heed, cure] and "gyman" [(t)o care for, take care of, take heed to, heed, observe, regard, keep].
moste" [that no physician ("leech") might be permitted to cure her].\textsuperscript{101} Once again, Quintianus is shown to be completely unable to read Agatha's breast beyond a literal level. But when the ghostly old man arrives in Agatha's cell because he "wolde pa halgan gelacnian" [desired to heal the saint], he does not misread Agatha's need.\textsuperscript{102} He instead correctly perceives that the virgin's only need is for the physical restoration of her breast. Furthermore, as St. Peter evidently knows, he cannot \textit{gehælan} her—only the \textit{Hælend} ["Saviour"; i.e., Jesus] can.

Although St. Peter's ability to distinguish between \textit{[ge]lacnian} and \textit{[ge]hælan} is not made narratively explicit, Ælfric carefully crafts his text to reflect it semantically: he employs the Old English noun \textit{hælend} ["healer, Saviour, Jesus"; a term used exclusively to refer to Christ], the verb \textit{[ge]hælan}, and the adjective \textit{hal} ["(w)hole, hale, well, in good health, sound, safe, without fraud, honest"] in a way that ultimately connects all of these words to Jesus.\textsuperscript{103} These terms echo to a certain degree the use of \textit{saluatorem}, \textit{saluum facere}, and \textit{saluandam} in the Latin version. But given Ælfric's use of these Old English words in opposition to \textit{[ge]lacnian}, the vernacular text sharply emphasizes the rich spiritual significance of Agatha's \textit{breost} and its connection to her steadfast faith. Ælfric uses three terms with \textit{hæl} as their base when translating Agatha's refusal to have the old

\textsuperscript{101} Skeat 1: 202, 130.

\textsuperscript{102} Skeat 1: 202, 133.

man cure (*gelacnian*) her.Ælfric's choice of *gelacnian* to describe what the old man wishes to accomplish is therefore significant. Here, the translator emphasizes that only the *Hælend* [Savior], the spiritual physician, can *gehælan* [heal, save], while all other physicians can only effect physical cures: Agatha tells her ghostly visitor that "[n]e gymde [i]c nanes læce-cráftas næfre on minum life[:] ic hæbbe minne hælend þe gehælð mid his worde[:] he mæg gif he wyle mihtelice me gehælan" [I have never cared for the physician's craft in my life: I have my Savior who heals with his word. If he desires, he can mightily heal me]. The threefold repetition of cognates with *hæl* as their base—"hælend," "gehælð," and "gehælan"—in so short a narrative space emphasizes Agatha's firm conviction that Christ's intervention is the key not only to her physical healing, but also to the salvation of her soul, within which her spiritual *breost* resides.

In effect, Agatha's refusal of the physician's care reads simply as another clear example of her ardent and complete reliance on Christ's mercy.

Agatha's gaze upon her restored breast figures in Ælfric's translation as it does in the source: the Old English rewriting does not deny the breast's physicality, nor the edifying power of the gaze when it emanates from a virgin, pure of heart and body and on

104. Bosworth and Toller include distinct entries for the substantive and adjectival forms of *hæl*, as well as for the adjectival cognate *hal*: s.vv. *hæl* (n.) ["(h)earth, safety, salvation, happiness," analogous to Latin *salus*]; *hæl* (adj.) ["(h)ale, safe, whole, sound], and *hal* (adj.) ["(w)hole, hale, well, in good health, sound, safe, without fraud, honest"].


106. Moreover, by not only eliminating the initial dialogue between St. Peter and Agatha, but also by further abbreviating the Latin text and including only the lines cited above, Ælfric recasts Agatha's worry about the possibility of rape into an expression of sexual modesty—a sentiment far more appropriate for a saint than fear.
her way to martyrdom. Once Agatha has thanked Christ for sending the apostle to her, she "beseah to hyre breoste and wæs þæt corfene breost þurh crist ge-edstaðelod and eallehire wundra wurdon gehælede" [gazed upon her breast, and that breast which had been cut off was restored by Christ and all of her wounds were healed].\textsuperscript{107} Here, it is clear that Christ heals Agatha's breast. On the other hand, St. Peter brings Agatha only "frofor"—a word whose meanings include "comfort, solace, consolation, help, benefit"—but not bodily healing: "Þa cneowode Agathes and ðancode criste þæt he hi gemunde and his mæran apostol to hire asende mid swylcum frofre" [Then Agatha knelt and thanked Christ that he had remembered her and had sent his illustrious apostle to her with such comfort].\textsuperscript{108}

The Latin, in contrast, portrays the ghostly physician as both comforter and restorer of the virgin's flesh: "Tunc proiciens se in orationem, beata Agatha dixit: Gratias tibi ago, Domine Iesu Christe, quia memor factus es mei et misisti ad me apostolum tuum, qui me confortuit et recreauit uiscera mea" [Then the blessed Agatha, prostrating herself in prayer, said, "I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, that you have remembered me and have sent me your apostle, who comforted me and recreated my body].\textsuperscript{109} But Ælfric's text places emphasis on the restorative power of the word / Word with a subtle change to the Latin text in which the physician encourages Agatha to know that she is to be both physically cured and spiritually saved: "In nomine eius scias te esse saluandam"

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[107.] Skeat 1: 204, 144-46.
\item[108.] Skeat 1: 204, 141-43. See Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "frofor."
\item[109.] AB 326, 10-13.
\end{thebibliography}
[Know that you will be healed / saved in his (Christ's) name].¹¹⁰ Instead of including this assurance of an eventual cure and salvation, the Old English translation casts the old man's words as a statement confirming Agatha's immediate healing and deliverance. St. Peter confirms that while the virgin's physical breast has been severed, the faith within Agatha's spiritual breast has not failed in the course of her trials; as a result, Christ has already saved her. He tells her that "ðu efne nu bist hal on his naman," which means "Behold! Now you are whole in his name."¹¹¹ That Agatha is "hal" reflects her physical restoration as well as her proven faith; in fact, Ælfric rewrites the encounter between Agatha and St. Peter to emphasize the narrative function of that encounter as a test of Agatha's faith. Once this faith—upheld by the virgin's always already perfect, spiritual understanding—is found to be unassailable, Agatha's physical breast—the fleshly representative of her "inner" breast, which is the seat of that faith—is restored. This of course comes as no surprise, for by virtue of her status as a halga [saint], Agatha is hal by her very nature.¹¹²

Unlike Ælfric's account, the Latin text does not present Agatha as always already spiritually perfect. Instead, the cure of Agatha's physical breast signifies the fullness of faith and perfection of understanding to which the saint finally arrives through her tribulations. This notion is clearly absent in the Ælfrician text. No sense of Agatha's

¹¹⁰ AB 326, 8.

¹¹¹ Skeat 1: 204, 139-40. For the semantic range of hal, see p. 214, n. 104 above. Of course, the verb "bist" [are] can be translated in the future tense, but the inclusion of "nu" [now] makes clear the phrase's present tense.

¹¹² Ælfric does indeed seem to indulge in wordplay here, noting as he does at St. Peter's entrance into the prison his wish "þa halgan gelacnian " [to heal the saint]: LS 1: 202, 133.
development is seen there—nor is it needed—since Ælfric presents the saint in a static state of spiritual perfection from the outset. The virgin's complete physical healing (for indeed, Christ heals all her wounds, not just the missing breast) thus reflects the spiritual perfection that she has always had; her mutilation at Quintianus's behest narratively serves as the means by which her perfect faith is tested and proven invincible.113 In contrast, Ælfric's Latin source posits Agatha's disfiguration as the means through which the saint at last attains spiritual perfection: her restored physical wholeness reflects this painfully achieved state. The description of Agatha's wounds as "maculae" [stains or injuries, but also with connotations of moral taint] rather than the more neutral term "vulnera" [wounds] certainly suggests the idea that Agatha's spiritual wholeness is acquired rather than innate.114

Once Agatha's physical breast is restored, the virgin taunts Quintianus about his misunderstanding of her breast's signification: both the Latin and Old English texts reveal that, despite Agatha's earlier protestation that her breast(s) is / are located in her soul and nourish(es) her understanding, Quintianus remains blind to the breast's non-physical

113. "wæs þæt corfene breost þurh crist ge-edstaðelod and ealle hire wunda wurdon gehælede" [the breast that had been cut off was restored by Christ, and all of her wounds were healed]: Skeat 1: 204, 145-46.

114. "Cumque complesset orationem suam, respiciens ad omnes maculas corporis sui, uidit quod saluata essent omnia membra eius et recuperata mamilla eius" [When she had finished her prayer, looking upon all of her body's injuries, she saw that all of her limbs were healed and that her breast was restored]: AB 326, 13-15. According to the DOE Corpus, Old English glosses overwhelmingly render Latin macula as the Old English noun wamm, whose signification ranges from a physical mark to moral defilement and sin. See <http://80-ets.umdl.umich.edu.lib-proxy.nd.edu/cgi/o/oec/oec-idx?index=Beginswith&...size=First+100>. Accessed October 5, 2003. See also Bosworth and Toller, s.v. "wamm," as well as Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, s.v. "macula"; cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. "vulnus."
meaning. Having refused to escape from prison when a bright light frightens away the prison guards lest she lose the crown of martyrdom, the saint becomes subject once more to Quintianus's persecutions. She refuses to sacrifice to his heathen gods and, in the Latin text, mercilessly rebukes her tormentor for his inanity: "Agatha respondit: Omnia uerba tua fatua et uana sunt. Impia atque iniqua precepta tua aerem etiam ipsum maculant. Vnde miser es et sine sensu et sine intellectu, qui me suades ligna et lapides adorare, et inuocare simulacra surda et muta" [Agatha answered, "All of your words are foolish and empty; indeed, your wicked and hostile precepts taint the air itself. Because of this you are wretched, without sense and without understanding, you who exhort me to worship wood and rocks, and to call upon deaf and mute images"].\textsuperscript{115} Ælfric abbreviates this passage, minimizing the Latin's emphasis on Quintianus's misunderstanding: in contrast with the source, Agatha's always perfect understanding does not require the underscoring of Quintianus's ignorance to contrast with her finally acquired perfection. Ælfric thus shortens Agatha's diatribe, instead emphasizing Christ's healing of the virgin's breast and her other bodily wounds: "Pa cwæð Agathes þu earma andgitleasa hwa wyle clypian to stane and na to þam soðan gode ðe me fram eallum þam witum þe ðu wælþreowlice on minum lice gefæstnodest for his naman gehælde and min breost ge-edstaðelode þe ðu arleasa forcufe" [Then Agatha said, "You wretched, stupid (man)! Who wishes to call upon stone and not the true God who has healed me, for his name's sake, from all the tortures that you cruelly inflicted upon my body, and restored the breast that you cut off, 

\textsuperscript{115} AB 326, 27-327, 3. Agatha's use of "maculant" [taint] with regard to Quintianus further emphasizes the moral implications of the noun \textit{maculae} used to describe her own wounds.
wicked one?"]. She tells Quintianus that God has restored her breast, but this is only partly true. Quintianus may have amputated Agatha's physical breast, but her spiritual breast, residing in her soul, remained unharmed and did not require God's healing. In contrast, the Latin version posits the perfection of Agatha's faith in conjunction with her body's healing.\footnote{116}

Agatha's physical cure mocks (and nullifies) Quintianus's power to afflict the saint either physically or spiritually. In both accounts, during the final verbal exchange between Agatha and Quintianus, the persecutor asks the saint who had healed her. Agatha responds that Christ had done so, using the verb "gehælan" in the Old English text with its double sense of both physical healing and spiritual salvation. Quintianus's subsequent threat, "nu ic sceal geseon gif crist \(>\) gehæl\(>\) [now I shall see if Christ will heal you] is thus in effect an ironic rendering of the Latin verb "curare," which does not carry the same spiritual signification as \textit{saluum facere}.\footnote{118} Ælfric once again plays upon the dual spiritual and physical signification of \textit{hælan}. The import of this narrative manoeuver is evident in Ælfric's rendering of Agatha's final prayer, where he adds the

\footnote{116} Skeat 1: 204, 157-61.

\footnote{117} Refusing to sacrifice to the heathen gods, Agatha explains to Quintianus "Ego enim inuoco Dominum meum uerum, qui me dignatus est ab omni plaga, quam in me exercuisti, ita curare, ut etiam mamilla mea integerrima sanitate meo corpori restituta sit" [For I call upon my true Lord, who so deigned to cure me of every wound that you inflicted upon me, that my breast was restored with complete health to my body]: \textit{AB} 327, 3-6.

\footnote{118} Skeat 1: 204, 167-68. Cf. "Nunc uidebo si Christus tuus curabit te" [Now I will see if your Christ will cure you]: \textit{AB} 327, 10. On the connotations of \textit{curare} and \textit{saluum facere} vis-à-vis Old English glosses, see p. 212, n. 100 above.
detail, not included in the Latin text, that the saint "inwerdlice clypode" [called out inwardly; i.e., from her spiritual breast] with outstretched hands as she prayed.  

Ælfric also modifies Agatha's prayer itself, omitting the Latin text's references to Agatha's "manliness" in her youth:

Eala ðu min drihten þe me to menn gesceope and æfre fram cyldhade me gescyldest ofþis [sic] þu þe woruldlice lufe awendest fram me þu þe dydest þæt ic ofer-com þæs cwelleres tintregu scearp isen and fyr and þa slitendan clawa þu ðe me on þam witum gehylde forgæafe ðe ic bidde drihten þæt ðu minne gast nu to þe genime forðan þe nu is tima þæt ic þas woruld forlæte and to þinre liðan miltheortnyssse becuman mote min leofa drihten.

[O my Lord, who created me as a human being and, from childhood, ever shielded me until now, you who turned worldly love away from me, you who caused me to overcome the murderer's torments—sharp iron and fire and the slitting claws—you who granted me patience in those tortures: I ask you, Lord, that you now receive my spirit, since it is now time that I leave this world and might come into your gracious loving kindness, my beloved Lord.]  

119. Skeat 1: 206, 183; cf. "Beatissima uero Agatha, ingressa iterum in carcerem, expandit manus suas ad Deum" [Truly the most blessed Agatha, having entered prison again, stretched out her hands to God]: AB 327, 26-27.

120. Skeat 1: 206, 185-94. Cf. the following lines from Ælfric's source:

Domine, Deus meus, qui me creasti et custodisti ab infantia mea et fecisti me in iuuentute uiriliter agere; qui tulisti a me amorem seculi huius; qui corpus meum a pollutione separasti; qui fecisti me uincere tormenta carnificis, ferrum, ignem et uincula; qui michi in tormentis uirtutem patientie tribuisti; te deprecor, ut accipias spiritum meum modo, quia iam tempus est ut me iubeas istud seculum derelinquere et ad tuam gloriam peruenire.

[Lord, my God, you who have created me and protected me from my infancy, and caused me to act manfully in my youth; who took the love of this world away from me; who separated my body from defilement; who caused me to conquer the tortures of the murderer—iron, fire and chains—who granted me the virtue (with "manly" connotations of strength, vigor) of patience in tortures: I pray that you
Agatha may certainly act *viriliter* [manfully] with *virtus* [strength, virtue, manliness] when faced with Quintianus's persecutions, in that her perfect faith remains steadfast through various tortures. Yet there is no good reason for Ælfric to include these attributes as he recounts the end of Agatha's life. Incorporating these cross-gendered qualities into the virgin's final prayer would have disrupted the narrative unity of Ælfric's abbreviated *passio*, since his text, following the Latin, contains no other mention of the saint's "manliness." Moreover, such cross-gendering is rooted in a theology that is much more complex than mere surface attributions of "manliness" in a female saint would suggest. Agatha's *breost* is the guarantor of the martyr's female gender, as well as of her unwavering faith—the two concepts are inseparable. Ælfric's use of the term *breost* leaves no textual room for any destabilization of this important fact.

4.5 Reading the Transvestite *Breost* in Ælfric's *passio* of Eugenia

Although Ælfric's Agatha does not act manfully in any narratively meaningful way, another of Ælfric's virgin martyrs in the *Lives of Saints* does so in quite literal fashion. Unlike Agatha, Eugenia is a saint whose conversion to Christianity and her subsequent practice of sanctity involve cross-dressing. Gopa Roy notes that Ælfric's

now receive my spirit, because now it is time that you order me to forsake this world and come into your glory]: *AB* 327, 27-34, my emphasis.

121. For a study of female-to-male transvestism in the context of late antique monasticism, see John Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator* 5 (1974): 1-32. He discusses Eugenia (based on the account found in PL 73, cols. 605-24) in detail at 20ff. Anson's central argument is that "In a male society dedicated to celibacy as the highest virtue and so not surprisingly given to excesses of antifeminism, the fantasy of a holy woman disguised among their number represented . . . a psychological opportunity to neutralize the threat of female temptation," at 5. See also Elizabeth Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity,"
Old English adaptation of the legend of Eugenia does not take up the wordplay on *viriliter* found in his source. In their respective eliminations of vocabulary relating to manliness and wordplay on that concept, Ælfric's accounts of Agatha and Eugenia in the *Lives of Saints* share a conceptual similarity: the accentuation of their womanhood. In keeping with this, the two translated legends share an interest in the *breost* [breast] and its implication in the practice and proof of female sanctity. Furthermore, both Eugenia's and Agatha's bodies are "misread"; the *breost* plays an important role in these misreadings. Agatha's persecutor Quintianus lustfully misreads the import of the saint's breast: he can read only carnally—literally, not spiritually—in terms of his own corrupt desire, and


123. Although breasts do warrant mention in, for example, Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, 75-80 (regarding Eugenia), and Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 131 (regarding Agatha—but oddly, not in their chapter entitled "Pressing Hard on the 'Breasts' of Scripture: Metaphor and the Symbolic"), the significance of the *breost* in Ælfric's accounts of the two saints has not been adequately examined in relation to the Latin sources.
therefore fails to understand that the virgin's *breost* is the seat of her faith. Similarly, the
cross-dressed Eugenia is subject to misreading as a male, first by the monks in the
monastery she enters, then by the lustful widow Melantia and by her father Philip, the
prefect who prosecutes a rape case brought against her by Melantia. Her breast is crucial
not only to her self-identification as a female —specifically, as Philip's daughter—but
also to her exoneration from the false charges of sexual misconduct.

Eugenia, daughter of the heathen Alexandrian prefect Philip, receives an
impeccable education in Greek, Latin, and philosophy along with her two servants, the
eunuchs Protus and Jacinctus.\(^\text{124}\) In Ælfric's text, Eugenia takes Protus and Jacinctus
aside and speaks to them upon hearing a group of Christians in Alexandria singing

"Omnes dii gentium demonia dominus autem cælos fecit" [All the gods of the Gentiles

124. As discussed by Patrick Zettel, the discovery of the Cotton-Corpus legendary
as the principal source for Ælfric's hagiographic texts reveals a source text that more
closely resembles Ælfric's exemplar than either the text designated BHL 2666, as found
in the *Vitae patrum* as identified by Ott, and printed under the titles "Vita Sanctae
Eugeniae virginis ac martyris auctore incerto," in *Tyrannii Rufini Aquileiensis presbyteri
opera omnia*, PL 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, n.d.), cols. 1105-22, and "Vita Sanctae
Eugeniae, virginis ac martyr, auctore incerto," in *Vitae patrum sive historiae eremiticae
libri decem*, PL 73 (Turnhout: Brepols, n.d.), cols. 605-20, or the text designated BHL
2667, found in Boninus Mombritius, ed., *Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum* (Paris: Albert
Sources," 33, 62-64, and 110-21. A tenth-century version of this text, listed as BHL
2666m, is printed in Fábrega Grau, pp. 83-98, hereafter cited by chapter number. This
printed text will be used as the basis of the following study. I heed Zettel's caution,
however, that the version printed in the *Pasionario Hispánico* is farther from Ælfric's
version of Eugenia than the version represented in Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS
P.7.6 (MS H, dating to the middle of the twelfth century), 205v-213r. On MS H in
relation to the other extant manuscripts of the Cotton-Corpus legendary, see "Ælfric's
Hagiographic Sources," 35-39; on some divergences between MS H and the Eugenia
legend as printed in Fábrega Grau, see 249-51. J. E. Cross demonstrates the textual
nature of some of the manuscript mixtures of the Eugenia legend in relation to the *Old
English Martyrology*'s account of the saint, in "Passio S. Eugeniae et comitum and the
are devils, for the Lord made the heavens].\textsuperscript{125} She calls the eunuchs "gebroðra" [brothers] and requests that they "hyre fæx forcurfon on wæpmonna wysan and mid wædum gehiwodon swylce heo cniht wære" [cut her hair in the style of men and that they feign with clothing as though she were a boy].\textsuperscript{126} The context in which Eugenia refers to her servants as brothers is lost in this translation, however: in the Latin, it is made clear that erudition overcomes class and levels the status of the three students. Eugenia tells Protus and Jacinctus that "Dominam me . . . vobis usurpata potestas attribuit, sed sororem sapientia fecit. Simus ergo fratres, sicut divina providentia ordinat, non sicut se iactat humana temeritas" [The exercise of power has made me your mistress, but wisdom has made me your sister. Thus we are brothers, just as divine providence ordains, not as human audacity dictates].\textsuperscript{127} Eugenia accomplishes this rapid transformation from her servants' mistress, to their sister, and finally to their brother through a verbal sleight-of-hand. Such a transformation in class status and gender (with a family relationship also added) is made possible through the doctrine of the apostle Paul: the text notes that "pervenit ad manus eius beatissimi Pauli apostoli doctrina" [the teaching of the most blessed apostle Paul arrived in her hand] in the paragraph preceding Eugenia's verbal transformation to manhood.\textsuperscript{128} At this point in the narrative, however, the link between Pauline teaching and Eugenia's transformation—specifically, the crucial importance of

\textsuperscript{125} Skeat 1: 26, 38. The scriptural reference is to Ps. 95:5: "omnes enim dii populorum sculptilia Dominus autem caelos fecit" [For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils: but the Lord made the heavens].

\textsuperscript{126} Skeat 1: 28, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{127} Fábrega Grau, chap. 4.

\textsuperscript{128} Fábrega Grau, chap. 3.
Galatians 3:28 to her metamorphosis—is not made explicit.Ælfric's text follows the spirit of the Latin source, noting only that "becom hyre on hand þæs halgan apostoles lar paules þæs mæran ealles mann cynnes lareowes" [the teaching of the holy apostle Paul, the illustrious teacher of all mankind, came into her hand] without identifying the key passage in question.

Eugenia's request to have her hair shorn as a man's and to be dressed as a boy in Ælfric's version of the passio significantly departs from the Latin text, where Eugenia informs her servants that "crinibus meis tonsuram adhibeam" [I will clip my hair]. Given Eugenia's ensuing entry into the monastery overseen by the bishop Helenus, "tonsuram" here connotes not just any haircut, but a tonsure in the style of a monk. In contrast, Ælfric does not suggest Eugenia's monasticism through the description of her hair: she receives a tonsure in the generic style of "wæpmonna" [men]. Ælfric explains that Eugenia requests to have her hair cut and to be disguised as a "cniht" [boy] because she "wolde ›am cristenan genealecan on værlícum hiwe þæt heo ne wurde ameldod" [desired to approach the Christians in manly form so that she might not be made

129. Gal. 3:28 reads "non est Iudaeus neque Graecus non est servus neque liber non est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu" [There is neither Jew, nor Greek: there is neither bond, nor free: there is neither male, nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus].

130. Skeat 1: 26, 24-25.

131. Fábrega Grau, chap. 4.

132. Skeat 1: 28, 50. While Ælfric may have used "wæpmonna" instead of a genitive plural form of "munuc" [monk] for alliterative purposes, this does not explain his use of "cniht" [boy, young man] in the next line.
This explanation emphasizes that Eugenia intends her cross-dressing to function as a disguise: in effect, Ælfric uses the negative form of *ameldian* (to make known, reveal) to explain why Eugenia feigns masculinity. The Latin *passio*, however, offers a different explanation for Eugenia's cross-dressing. Rather than being principally a means of allowing her to join the Christians undetected by her family, the cutting of Eugenia's hair, the saint tells her servants, is to be done "ne aliquo casu ab alterutro separemur" [so that we might not be separated from each other for any reason]. Being shorn as a man—unlike Ælfric, the Latin text makes no mention of Eugenia's appropriating masculine dress—does, however, allow Eugenia access to Helenus's monastery where, she acknowledges, "nulla patitur venire feminarum" [no woman is allowed to come]. In effect, the cutting of Eugenia's hair permits a "man" to appear. The saint's apparent "manliness," made visible by means of her tonsure, is the key that provides her with access to an environment which otherwise excludes women. Yet while Eugenia's haircut offers her entrance into a milieu from which women are barred, it

133. Skeat 1: 28, 51 and 52-53.

134. Ælfric reports that on Eugenia's orders, the eunuchs "mid wædum gehiwodon swylce heo cniht wære" [pretended with clothing as though she were a boy]: Skeat 1: 28, 51.

135. Fábrega Grau, chap. 4. Both texts make it clear that Eugenia leaves Alexandria—from which city her pagan father has driven away the Christians—with Philip's permission. Neither text, however, suggests that she explains to Philip her reason for wanting to leave. At the same time, however, it is quite possible that Philip—who later converts to Christianity himself, and even becomes a bishop—understands the intent behind Eugenia's request and permits her departure. Such permission thus might betray some degree of sympathy toward the Christians on Philip's part.

136. Fábrega Grau, chap. 5. Knowing this, Eugenia informs Protus and Jacinctus that "tonderi me extimo" [I consider that I am shorn]: Fábrega Grau, chap. 5.
nevertheless provides her with but a weak approximation of "manhood," for Eugenia notes that she, along with her castrated servants, are three individuals who merely appear in "virili habitu" [manly form].

While *habitus* can mean "dress" or "attire," this is not the sense of the term that the text conveys here. Instead, the text emphasizes the simulation of masculinity—the "manly form"—that Eugenia assumes with her masculine haircut. It also stresses that while Protus and Jacinctus may superficially appear to be men, these eunuchs, like Eugenia, lack the essential physical ingredient to qualify as "real" men.

The Latin text foregrounds this simulation in its use of the term *simulacrum*, along with verbal and adjectival forms of *imitatio* and *simulatio*. In an episode to which Ælfric's Old English version makes only passing reference, the bishop Helenus has a dream in which he is led "ad simulacrum femine" [to the likeness of a woman] so that he might sacrifice to her. Ælfric merely reports that "him wearō geswutelod on swæfne be þy-sum and eall þæs mædenes mod him wearō ameldod" [it was revealed to him in a dream concerning this matter (i.e., Eugenia's coming to the monastery) and all of the maiden's intent was made known to him].

The repetition of "ameldod" [made known] here parallels its use in line 53, which notes the intention behind Eugenia's cross-dressing: "þæt heo ne wurde ameldod" [that she might not be made known]. With such repetition, Ælfric establishes a parallel between Eugenia's attempt to hide her female sex and Helenus's God-given ability to see through her disguise.

137. Fábrega Grau, chap. 5.

138. The dream is recounted in Fábrega Grau, chap. 10.

139. Skeat 1: 28, 64-65.
Rather than emphasizing that Eugenia hides her female sex to enter the monastery, however, Ælfric's Latin source foregrounds the notion that Eugenia puts on the appearance of manhood in order to become a monk. In Helenus's dream, once the bishop is allowed to speak with the female idol, he tells her that she is a creature of God, orders her to descend, and states that he will not permit her to be worshipped. The idol then speaks, telling Helenus that she will not abandon him since he has restored her to her Creator. While Helenus ponders this dream, the monk Eutropius approaches the bishop to inform him that three young brothers have arrived, desiring to relinquish "culturam simulacrorum" [the worship of idols] and to serve Christ. The text later reveals the meaning of Helenus's dream in a passage that describes Eugenia's father Philip ordering a golden "simulacrum" [statue] of his missing daughter to be made and worshipped. The text thus clearly associates Eugenia with likeness, with simulation that only approximates but is not the real, more desirable element in the binaries man-woman and daughter-idol. The *passio* also emphasizes the distinction between literal and spiritual reading, in that Helenus, through his dream, is the only person in the text who is able to see beyond the surface of Eugenia's body. In fact, other than Eugenia herself, Helenus alone has the evident ability to read and understand spiritually. By seeing through Eugenia's tonsure, the bishop recognizes that while the virgin might perform "manliness" via her haircut and exemplary piety, such attributions of "manliness" can never, in the end, make up for her lack of the male organ.

140. Fábrega Grau, chap. 10.

141. Fábrega Grau, chap. 12.
The simulacrum associated with Eugenia (whether or not it appears in a dream) is gendered female; the text does not otherwise associate simulacrum with women. Moreover, all connotations of simulacrum, as the word is used in this passio, are clearly negative in the context of the Christian system of belief that the text upholds.\textsuperscript{142} The various linguistic forms of imitatio and simulatio that appear with reference to Eugenia thus link the saint to her masculine disguise and demonstrate an ambivalence toward it. Citing Eugenia's exemplary way of life in the monastery she has successfully entered, the text rhetorically asks: "Quis enim eam deprehenderet quod esset femina, quum [sic] ita virtus Christi et virginitas inmaculata protegebat, ut imitabilis esset etiam viris?" [Who might have perceived that she might be a woman, whom the excellence (with play on "manliness") of Christ and immaculate virginity protected so that she might be inclined to imitate a man?].\textsuperscript{143} Here, Eugenia's spiritual perfection is cast as a masculine attribute.

The "virtus Christi" [excellence / manliness of Christ] and the saint's impeccable chastity preserve her from detection as well as from evil; as a result, they compel Eugenia to cut her hair in a masculine style so that she can enter the monastery with Protus and Jacinctus. In their turn, the eunuchs—who, like their mistress, are not real men—emulate Eugenia's imitation of manhood, for the text notes that "[c]omites autem eius Protus et

\textsuperscript{142} The word reappears in Fábrega Grau, chap. 37 when Pompeius, the suitor of Eugenia's virgin companion Basilla, warns the emperor Gallienus and the Roman senators that the Christians scorn the gods as "vana simulacra" [false images]; in chap. 39 when the "simulacrum" of Jove falls to the ground and shatters once Protus and Jacinctus have prayed; and in chap. 40 when, after refusing to sacrifice to Diana, Eugenia prays that those who take pride "in simulacris suis" [in their idols] be left bewildered.

\textsuperscript{143} Fábrega Grau, chap. 13. Fábrega Grau observes that a correction in the manuscript changes "quum" to "quam": see his edition at p. 87, note c.
Iachintus imitabantur eam, et erant in omnibus obtemperantes ei" [Her companions Protus and Jacinctus imitated her, and were obedient to her in all things].

Eugenia's particular simulation of manhood is so successful that the lustful widow Melantia, "in nullo deprehendens quod esset femina" [in no way perceiving that (Eugenia) might be a woman] but believing that the saint is a beautiful young man, plans to trick her into committing adultery. Melantia hatches her plot "sui similem extimans [sic]" [thinking that (the disguised Eugenia) is similar to her] in concupiscence, and then "egritudinem simulat" [feigns illness] so that Eugenia, famed for her healing ability, might come to visit her. Since the text associates Melantia with evil (dis)simulation, later references to simulatio and the verb simulare can be expected to have similarly negative connotations.

Indeed, this negativity permeates Eugenia's key speech, where she explains her "transition" to manhood. The saint, having been unanimously chosen as the monastery's abbot, arrives at Melantia's house intending to heal the widow of the illness she feigns. After Melantia fails to seduce Eugenia, she falsely accuses the saint of sexual assault. Eugenia then appears before a judge—the prefect Philip, her own father—to face the

144. Fábrega Grau, chap. 13. That the now-Christian eunuchs are still in a relation of subservience to Eugenia is in fact consistent with Eugenia's earlier pronouncement that she and they are "fratres" [brothers]. Because this egalitarianism is only of a spiritual nature, the mistress-servant relationship remains in place even once they have entered the monastery.

145. Fábrega Grau, chap. 17. This phrase echoes the rhetorical question "Quis enim eam deprehenderet quod esset femina" [Who might have perceived that she might be a woman?] asked in chap. 13 with regard to the success of Eugenia's disguise among the monks.

146. Fábrega Grau, chap. 17; Fábrega Grau, chap. 18.
charges brought against her. When Philip asks Eugenia how she might refute the
testimony of those in Melantia's household, Eugenia fills her response with revelations
that climactically close the trial sequence:

Tanta enim virtus est nominis eius [i.e., Christi], ut etiam femine, in
timore eius posite virilem obtineant dignitatem. Neque enim diversitas
sexus inveniri potest in fide, quum beatus Paulus, magister omnium
christianorum, dicat quod apud Deum non sit discretio masculi et femine:
omenes enim in Christo unum sumus. Huius ergo [normam] animo
ferventiori suscipiens[, per] confidentiam . . . quam in Christo habui, nolui
esse feminam. Consideravi enim non esse inimicam honestatis
simulationem per quam femina virum simulat, sed magis hoc iure puniri,
si pro affectu vitiorum vir feminam fingat. Et hoc iure laudandum, si pro
amore virtutum sexus infirmior virilem gloriam imitetur. Idcirco nunc
ego, amore divino religionis accensa, virilem habitum sumsi, et virum
gessi perfectum, virginitatem Christo fortiter conservando.

Et hec dicens, scidit a capite tunica[m] qua erat induta, et apparuit
femina. Statimque tegens, licet scissis vestibus, membra ait ad prefectum:
Tu quidem mi ci secundum carnem pater, Claudia mater est; fratres hii
duo, qui tecum sedent, Avitus et Sergius. Ego autem sum Eugenia tua
filia, que pro amore Christi mundum omne cum deliciis suis respui
tamquam stercus; et ecce Protus et Iachintus eunuchi mei cum quibus
scholam Christi ingressa sum.

[His (i.e., Christ's) name is so excellent that even women, placed in fear of him,
may obtain manly dignity. For difference of sex cannot be found in faith, because
the blessed Paul, the teacher of all Christians, says that before God there is no
difference between masculine and feminine, for we are all one in Christ.
Receiving his precept with a very fervent spirit, (through) the trust which I had in
Christ, I did not want to be a woman. For I considered that the simulation through
which a woman assumes the appearance of a man not to be hurtful to honor. But
it is rather rightly to be punished if, out of desire for vices, a man fashions (i.e.,
feigns to be) a woman. And it is rightly to be praised, if out of love of virtues the
weaker sex imitates manly glory. Therefore, inflamed with the divine love of the
religious life, I assumed masculine dress and put on the perfect man by valiantly
preserving (my) virginity for Christ.

And once (Eugenia) had said these things, (she tore) open from the top
(the tunic) in which she was dressed, and appeared as a woman. Immediately
covering her limbs although the clothing had been torn, she said to the prefect,
"You indeed are father to me according to the flesh, and Claudia is my mother;
these two who are sitting with you, Avitus and Sergius, (are my) brothers. For I
am Eugenia your daughter, who for the sake of Christ's love spurned as dung the
whole world with its pleasures; and behold, (here are) my eunuchs Protus and Jacinctus with whom I entered the school of Christ.\textsuperscript{147}

The first revelation is of the cryptic reference to "beatissimi Pauli apostoli doctrina" [the teaching of the most blessed apostle Paul], made in chapter 3: Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:28 that there is no male or female, since all are one in Christ. The second (and quite literal) revelation is that of Eugenia's female body. With the revelation of her female body, Eugenia exonerates herself from Melantia's false accusations. When Eugenia suddenly "apparuit femina" [appeared as a woman], Melantia's erroneous evaluation of the virgin's sex was made evident. This in turn proved that the charges Melantia had brought against the accused, whom she calls a "[i]uvenum \textit{sic} perfidum" [treacherous young man], were groundless.\textsuperscript{148} To Philip and the others present at the trial, it therefore becomes clear that Melantia has been lying. Furthermore, the uncovering of Eugenia's female body reincorporates the saint into her carnal family: indeed, her own father and brothers (not to mention the monks who had elected her as abbot) had, like Melantia, also misread her sex. In the aftermath of this clarification, Eugenia's entire family, as well as most of the pagan population, is baptized. The apparently unrepentant Melantia, however, fares less well: a celestial fire descends and incinerates her house as a divine punishment for her sins.\textsuperscript{149}

The display of Eugenia's bare body provides the saint's best evidence in her own defense. But this spectacle also makes clear that Eugenia's "sex-change" is but a

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\textsuperscript{147} Fábrega Grau, chaps. 25-26.

\textsuperscript{148} Fábrega Grau, chap. 20.

\textsuperscript{149} Fábrega Grau, chap. 27.
performance: it merely simulates the "perfect" manhood of Ephesians 4:13 that she literally "puts on" (virum gerere perfectum). Eugenia does not simply "become" male, since her semblance of physical manhood is just that—a semblance, not the real thing. Moreover, only bishop Helenus, who has the ability to read spiritually, can see through this surface appearance. Helenus's proficiency at seeing beyond surfaces thus provides him with a privileged understanding of Eugenia, a unique access to knowledge that is unavailable to anyone else.

The negative resonance of simulatio that pervades the text is reflected Eugenia's use of certain key terms in her revelation speech: "simulationem" [simulation] and "simulat" [assumes the appearance of; simulates] that refer to a woman's taking on masculine guise; the negative connotations of these words are reinforced by the verbs "fingat" [feigns to be; fashions] and "imitetur" [imitates]. Eugenia's explanation that she does not consider the putting on of manhood aberrant (while she does consider that a man's assumption of feminine guise is worthy of punishment) betrays the notion that the saint sees her decision to assume a cross-gendered disguise as a transgressive act: indeed, she is compelled to defend that disguise. Although it has some basis in Scripture, Eugenia knows that simulating manhood is a fundamentally fraudulent deed, masking her true sex. Eugenia lives Ephesians 4:13 very literally. In doing so, Eugenia demonstrates

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150. Ephesians 4:13 explains that Christ bestows various ministries among the faithful "donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei et agnitionis Filii Dei in virum perfectum in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi" [Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ].

151. The eunuchs Protus and Jacinctus also know that Eugenia is really a woman. But they know this because Eugenia had told them that she would cut her hair: they therefore have literal, not spiritual, knowledge of Eugenia's transformation.
the inevitable failure of a woman to attain the fulness of Christian manhood that this 
scriptural passage promises—at least in this life.\footnote{Gopa Roy discusses Ephesians 4:13, along with Jerome's and Ambrose's teachings on this passage, in "A Virgin Acts Manfully," 5 and 12-13.} Eugenia's imitation highlights not 
only the impossibility of her ever fully attaining "manhood"—like her eunuchs, she is 
forever barred from this fulness since she lacks the requisite physical attributes—but also 
the intent to deceive that characterizes the saint's "masculinity."

The Latin text thus appropriately refers to Eugenia with feminine nouns and 
pronouns, underscoring the ruse behind her disguise. There are, however, two important 
exceptions to this rule. The first occurs when Eugenia meets the bishop Helenus for the 
first time, claiming that "ego Eugenius nuncupor" [I am called Eugenius].\footnote{Fábrega Grau, chap. 11.} Helenus 
repeats the masculine form of Eugenia's name only to tell the saint that he sees through 
her disguise, thanks to the vision he had received earlier: "Recte . . . vocaris Eugenius, 
quia viriliter agendo, virum perfectum in agone dominico te obtulisti. Scias tamen te 
mici [sic] a Deo Eugeniam demonstratam, et unde veneris, et cuius sis filia, et quid isti tui 
sint famuli non me passus est Dominus preterire" [You are rightly called Eugenius, 
because you have shown yourself (to be) acting in a manly way, (to be) a perfect man in 
the Lord's contest. But know that God has demonstrated to me that you are Eugenia: 
from where you have come, and whose daughter you are, and what these servants of 
yours are, the Lord did not permit to escape my notice].\footnote{Fábrega Grau , chap. 11.} Nevertheless, Helenus, "nullo 
allo teste nisi Deo, loquitus est medio, et iussit eam sic in virili habitu permanere" [with
no other witness except God, spoke in the presence of them all (i.e., Eugenia, Protus and
Jacinctus), and ordered her to remain thus in manly form]. In contrast to the many
false witnesses testifying against Eugenia at her trial, God alone testifies to the veracity
of Helenus's dream and of its realization with Eugenia's arrival at the monastery. But
more importantly, God's witness confirms Helenus's own testimony that Eugenia is really
not a man.\footnote{156}

Indeed, this is precisely the point that Ælfric makes in his Old English version of
Eugenia's passio: he reports that Helenus bluntly tells Eugenia that "heo man ne wæs"
[she was not a man].\footnote{157} Even while the saint is in masculine guise, Ælfric's version, like
the Latin text, uses feminine nouns and pronouns to refer to Eugenia.\footnote{158} Ælfric also

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{155. Fábrega Grau, chap. 11 Evidently, the eunuchs appear masculine enough to
pass as young monks without any disguise.}
\footnote{156. My argument here modifies Alison Gulley's reading of Eugenia's
transvestism in "Heo man ne wæs." Specifically, I refine Gulley's claim, based on the
"apparuit femina" passage, that Eugenia "changes from male to female along with her
costume" in the Latin passio's revelation passage (p. 121).}
\footnote{157. Skeat 1: 28, 78.}
\footnote{158. Interestingly, Skeat notes some variant readings from the fragmentary MS
London, BL, Cotton Otho B. x that refer to Eugenia as "se abbold" and "he" both when
Melantia embraces Eugenia and during the trial scene, reinforcing the misperceptions of
Melantia, Philip, and all others present at the trial: see the footnotes to Skeat 1: 34, 169-
70, and Skeat 1: 36, 191-38, 222. This explanation appears at least as plausible as that of
"scribal confusion," which Shari Horner suggests is behind the variant genderings of
Eugenia in Julius E. vii and Otho B. x. Horner argues that this confusion "results from
the cumulative layering of gender identities . . . onto Eugenia's body "; both the "layers of
gender" and the resulting confusion are "literally stripped away" as Eugenia exposes her
breast; see The Discourse of Enclosure, 160 and 161; cf. Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women
Saints: Eugenia," 150, and 157, n. 15. In the non-Ælfrician vita of the transvestite saint
Euphrosyne, Andrew P. Scheil observes that the Old English text refers to Euphrosyne
with feminine pronouns when she is not cross-dressed, but with masculine pronouns
when she is in disguise as the eunuch Smaragdus. See "Somatic Ambiguity and
Masculine Desire in the Old English Life of Euphrosyne," Exemplaria 11 (1999): 345-61,
}

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places emphasis on the success of Eugenia's disguise: indeed, as in the Latin version, the bishop is the only person besides Eugenia and her two servants who knows that the saint is a woman. Ælfric's text makes it clear that Eugenia's disguise is so effective that she is elected abbot: the monks choose her to lead them since they "nyston ðæt heo wæs wimman swa ðæh" [did not know that she was nevertheless a woman].159 Similarly, Ælfric justifies Melantia's lust for Eugenia in that the widow "wende ðæt heo [i.e., Eugenia] cniht wære" [thought she (i.e., Eugenia) was a young man].160

Ælfric's text significantly departs from the Latin text, however, in his translation of the revelation scene during Eugenia's trial. Eugenia claims that she is able to clear herself of the charges brought against her, and asks Philip not to punish Melantia for perjury.161 As in the Latin version, once those serving in Melantia's household have confirmed their mistress's allegations, Philip demands that Eugenia explain how she could possibly clear herself of any wrongdoing. But Ælfric significantly abridges the passage that follows. His translation at this point only lightly reflects the emphasis that

at 348-49. See also Paul E. Szarmach's study of this account in "St. Euphrosyne: Holy Transvestite," in *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 353-65.

159. Skeat 1: 32, 120.

160. Skeat 1: 32, 146.

161. "Ða cwæð eugenia ðæt heo eaðe mihte ðæs forlyres un-hlisan hi beladian and melantian onsage mid suoðe ofer-drifant gif philippus wolde gefæstnian mid æþe ðæt seo lease wrægistre ne wurde fordæmed. Ða swor philippus ðæt he frïðian wolde þa leasan wudewan ðeah þe heo gelignod wurðe" [Then Eugenia said that she could easily clear herself of the disgrace of adultery and overcome Melantia's accusation with the truth, if Philip was willing to confirm with an oath that the false female accuser would not be condemned. Then Philip swore that he would set the false widow free even though she were perjured]: Skeat 1: 36, 204-10.
the Latin text places on the performative nature of Eugenia's "sex-change": it makes no reference to Galatians 3:28, nor does it explain Eugenia's guise as anything more than a means by which she could preserve her virginity untainted. Instead, Ælfric portrays Eugenia telling Philip that "heo wolde hi sylfe be-diglian and criste anum hyre clænnysse healdan on mægðhade wuniende mannum uncuð and forðy underfænge æt fruman þa gyrlan wær-lices hades and wurde ge-efsod" [she desired to hide herself and to preserve her purity for Christ alone, living in virginity, unknown to mankind, and therefore at first took on the clothes of the masculine sex and had her hair cut (lit., "was shorn")].

Given that Ælfric composed the Lives of Saints with (apparently pious) lay patrons in mind, the cryptic reference to Galatians 3:28 made earlier in his translation—that "þæs halgan apostoles lar paules" [the teaching of the holy apostle Paul] was made available to Eugenia—may well have been evident to Æthelweard and Æthelmær given Eugenia's cross-dressing and the fact that she lived in the monastery "mid wærlicum mode þeah þe heo mæden wære" [with a manly mind although she was a maiden].

Yet Ælfric clearly chose not to draw more than a trace of narrative attention to the complex theological implications of Eugenia's masculine disguise: perhaps an example of how his textual abridgement functions, on a smaller scale, along the lines of his concern not to translate 

162. Skeat 1: 38, 228-32. In contrast to Eugenia, the repentant prostitute Pelagia cross-dresses and enters a monastery as a function of her penitence for previous sexual sin: see Chapter 3, pp. 155-67.

163. Skeat 1: 26, 24-25; 143. Skeat 1: 30, 93. The latter phrase closely translates the Latin, which states that as a monk Eugenia lived "virili habitu et animo" [in manly form and mind]: Fábrega Grau, chap. 13.
too many vitae and passiones "ne forte despectui habeantur margarite christi" [lest, perhaps, the pearls of Christ be held in disrespect].

Ælfric therefore portrays Eugenia's disguise as a very practical means by which the saint can hide herself not only from her pagan family, but, more importantly, from potential suitors. In other words, Eugenia's truncated Old English speech draws attention to her desire to preserve her virginity and devote herself fully to a life as sponsa Christi, rather than to the gendered implications of her disguise. Yet unlike other virgin martyr narratives which record in detail the persecutions of rejected suitors, that of Eugenia does not. Ælfric's Latin source text only briefly mentions Eugenia's verbal refusal to wed Aquilius, son of the proconsul Aquilinus, which does not apparently lead to any significant consequences for Eugenia. Furthermore, the text does not mention that Eugenia must subsequently hide herself away from Aquilius in order to preserve her virginity. Nevertheless, it can be surmised that Eugenia disguises herself to ward off Aquilius and any other would-be suitors. Although Ælfric does not allude to this (albeit very short) episode, his text increases the emphasis on the obvious reason for which Eugenia spurns marriage. Ælfric accomplishes this by highlighting the lengths to which the saint goes to guard her chastity for Christ rather than from mortal men. He draws attention to the efforts that Eugenia makes to remain sexually pure: that the saint went to...


166. Fábrega Grau, chap. 3.
the extent of cutting her hair, dressing as a man, and taking refuge in a monastery was evidently something that Ælfric admired. Ælfric must have believed that his portrayal of Eugenia—both as a woman and as a monk—provided an excellent example of chaste living.

This would have made the legend most appropriate, especially in its Old English adaptation, for Ælfric's lay patrons. It is quite plausible that female members of Æthelweard's and Æthelmaer's household comprised part of Ælfric's intended audience in addition to the dedicatees themselves. For them, the account might have made particularly satisfying reading or listening, given that Eugenia was a woman and made tremendous efforts to preserve her virginity because of her devotion to Christ. Moreover, Ælfric claims that he chose the accounts in the *Lives of Saints* from the *vitae* and *passiones* of those saints venerated by monks: once again, it is to be expected that the texts from among which he chose included those upholding the discourse of chastity among reformed monks. Even if Æthelweard and Æthelmaer were not necessarily well versed (if versed at all) in the controversy surrounding unreformed clerics and the libidinous conduct attributed to them by reformers like Ælfric, Eugenia's chaste monasticism would nonetheless have provided a singularly powerful example of how clerics ought to live. Eugenia's female gender is no obstacle to her status as exemplar in this regard, for, as already discussed, Ælfric includes but few accounts of explicitly chaste male saints in the *Lives of Saints*.167 Of these, only two narratives—those of Julian and Chrysanthus—give more than merely passing mention of the saints' chastity and, in addition, posit chastity as a crucial component of their sanctity. This leaves only

167. See above, pp. 194-95.
the *passio* of Eugenia to represent the discourse of monastic purity that was clearly of concern to Ælfric, as indicated in his pastoral letter for Bishop Wulsige and his letter to the layman Sigeferth. Ælfric chose to include Eugenia despite not only biblical prohibitions against transvestism, but also Ælfric's own condemnation of dressing in another's state, found in his pastoral letter for Wulfsige: "Ne ge ne sceolon beon rancce; mid hringgum geglengede. Ne eower reaf ne beo to ranclice gemacod, ne eft to waclice, ac werige gehwa swa his hade gebyrige, þæt se preost hæbbe þæt, þæt he to gehadod is. And he ne werige munuc-scrud ne læwedra manna, þe-man-þe se wer werað wimmanna gyrlan" [Nor shall you be proud, adorned with rings; nor shall your clothing be made too showily, nor again too meanly; but each is to be dressed as befits his order, so that the priest (might) have that to which he is consecrated. And he is not to wear a monk's garb or that of a layman any more than the man wears women's apparel].

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168. Fehr I, chaps. 114-15; trans. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 219. Although Ælfric does not prohibit female-to-male cross-dressing here, he does so in his first Old English letter for Archbishop Wulfstan (ca. 1006): "Ne mot nan mæsse-preost werian munuc-scrud on symbel, buton he þone had sylf habban wylle. Na he ne mot beon mid læwedum scrude gescryd. Ne wer mid wif-scrude, ne wif mid weres scrude. Gif hit hwa þonne deð, he bið amansumod" [No mass-priest may ever wear monks' clothing, unless he himself wishes to have that order. He may never be clothed with lay clothing; nor a man with women's clothing, nor a woman with men's clothing. If anyone then does it, he will be excommunicated]: see Fehr II, chap. 206; trans. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 300. J. E. Cross and Andrew Hamer discuss the contributions of Ælfric's Latin pastoral letters for Wulfstan (Fehr 2 and 3) and of his "private letter" to the same archbishop (Fehr 2a) to the canon law collection now associated with Wulfstan (formerly known as the *Excerptiones [Pseudo-]Ecgberhti*), in *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 17-22.
The lengths to which Eugenia goes to preserve her virginity may therefore explain in good part why Ælfric included her passio in the Lives of Saints, despite the fact that, unlike most of the other saints whose accounts are included there, Eugenia did not have even second-class status in Anglo-Saxon calendars. Furthermore, her feast day as listed by Ælfric—December 25—pales in the spotlight of Christ's nativity, for which Ælfric also included a homily in the collection. Given that reformed monasticism and chastity went rhetorically hand in hand in late Anglo-Saxon England, and given the potential range of saints that Ælfric could have chosen to include in the Lives of Saints (or to write about in any other homiletic context), Eugenia's importance to a reformer like Ælfric becomes quite clear.

169. The homily Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi appears just before the Eugenia legend in Skeat 1: 10, 1-24, 242. Michael Lapidge notes that Eugenia's feast day was set at either March 16 or May 16 (and sometimes both), or on December 23, according to extant Anglo-Saxon calendars. The December 25 date appears to come from the Cotton-Corpus legendary. See "Ælfric's Sanctorale," 123. It is interesting to note the instances where a feast day for Eugenia appears on a monastic calendar more than once in the liturgical year, however, notwithstanding Eugenia's minor saintly status. I am not aware of any possibility of confusion between Eugenia of Alexandria and any other saint of the same name; I therefore wonder of what significance this might be in the context of Ælfric's decision to include Eugenia in the LS. Among the calendars printed by Francis Wormald in English Kalendars before A. D. 1100, for example, Eugenia is listed more than once in Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS 150 (West Country, ca. 969-78; feasts listed as March 16, May 16, and December 23); London, BL, Cotton Nero A. ii (Wessex, eleventh century; feasts listed as March 16 and May 16); London, BL, Additional 37517 (the Bosworth Psalter, from St. Augustine's, Canterbury, 988-1012; feasts listed as March 16 and May 16); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391 (Worcester, St. Mary's Cathedral Priory, second half eleventh century; feasts listed as March 16 and May 16); and Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Reginensis Lat. 12 (Bury St. Edmunds, ca. 1050; feasts listed as March 16 and May 16).

170. That Eugenia led a life devoted, it would seem, to pastoral care in a religious community rather than a life of eremitic contemplation also made her a perfect candidate for Ælfric's collection: see Mary Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England," in Holy Men and Holy Women, 147-75.
The scene in which Eugenia reveals her true sex is key to this understanding of Eugenia's place in Ælfric's collection. The Latin source notes that "scidit a capite tunica[m] qua erat induta, et apparuit femina" [she tore open from the top the tunic in which she was dressed, and appeared as a woman]. That Eugenia appears as a woman from under her monkish tunic underscores the performative nature of the saint's "manhood." Literalizing the spirit of Galatians 3:28, Eugenia plays the part of a man, hiding evidence of her womanhood beneath her disguise. With the rather violent rending of her cloak, it is shown that the "manliness" connected with Eugenia's monkish disguise can be doffed as readily as it had been donned—it is indeed but a ruse designed to abet her full initiation into the Christian church. The virgin continues to live (and at last bravely die) for Christ in "manly" fashion; nevertheless, the earlier textual reminders that Eugenia's "manhood" is fundamentally a simulatio [simulation] taint the narrative with negative overtones concerning the saint's decision to cross-dress, notwithstanding her exemplary faith and heroic martyrdom.

In contrast, Ælfric's version of the revelation scene does not carry the burden of such overtones: like the rest of the Old English text, this narrative maintains a consistent focus on Eugenia's praiseworthiness. Such praiseworthiness now extends concretely to the virgin's body, since Ælfric makes a textually slight but semantically significant change as he translates his source. Ælfric rewrites the revelation of Eugenia's body in a way that imposes great narrative weight upon the saint's flesh at the same time that it creates an alliterating line of Old English prose: he relates that "heo to-tær hyre gewædu and æt-æwde hyre breost þæm breman philippe" [she tore apart her clothing and revealed

her breast to the noble Philip]. Eugenia's *breost*, a physical characteristic betraying her biological sex, defines and metonymically signifies the "femina" [woman]—which she has always already been—of the Latin version. Here, Ælfric makes clear something that the Latin text expresses only euphemistically: that evidence for Eugenia's womanhood consists of her female breast's display. The evidence provided by Eugenia's breast is, however, of ambivalent narrative value, a value that changes as the account progresses. On one hand, when reading back to the beginning of Ælfric's text, it can be understood that the virgin's breast is a handicap to the flowering of Eugenia's Christian life; hence her need to hide it with monkish clothing. On the other hand, the revelation of Eugenia's breast and the proof of femaleness that it entails are the keys to the saint's exoneration from Melantia's false charges. Indeed, the *breost* is the guarantor not just of Eugenia's female gender, but of her innocence from false charges: the two concepts are inextricably linked in Ælfric's text.

172. Skeat 1: 38, 233-34. Zettel notes that the version of the legend in Mombritius's *Sanctuarium* reads "et insignis facie paruit et pulchro pectore uirgo" [and a virgin with an extraordinary face and beautiful breast appeared], at 395: see "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources," 119. It is therefore quite possible that Ælfric drew upon a manuscript source that was closer to Mombritius's version at this point than Fábrega Grau's text; in other words, that he simply used *breost* to translate *pectus*. He certainly would have changed the word if he did not find it suitable.

173. With this use of euphemism, the Latin text betrays anxiety on its compiler's part with regard to Eugenia's nakedness. It recounts that Eugenia, "[s]tatimque tegens, licet scissis vestibus, membra" [(i)mmediately covering her limbs although the clothing had been torn], only then tells Philip that he is her father: see Fábrega Grau, chap. 26. In contrast, Ælfric's text leaves the saint uncovered at least until she is adorned with gold (cf. the "vestimenta auro texta" [clothing woven with gold] of Fábrega Grau, chap. 26) at Skeat 1: 40, 253.
For Eugenia, as well as for Agatha, no change in gender occurs with the amputation or concealment of the breast: Agatha never "becomes male" in any way when her breast is amputated, nor does Eugenia's cross-dressing cause her to "become male" in any uncomplicated manner. In both cases, the breast is a metonym for the female body, the ultimate material foundation upon which the saints' shared and unchanged gender is narratively mapped. In effect, the breast stands in for Eugenia's and Agatha's female-gendered sanctity—a sanctity predicated on an age-old discourse of chastity that Ælfric adopts for his own reform-minded purposes.

To make his point about clerical chastity in the Lives of Saints, Ælfric needed the textualized bodies of female virgins. The accounts of the chaste men whom Ælfric included in the collection provided him with material that either inadequately emphasized sexual purity as an exemplary quality, or that gave emphasis to sexual purity in the context of chaste marriage. These accounts must therefore have served other functions in the Lives of Saints. For female saints such as Agatha and Eugenia, holiness is not achieved through exemplary ecclesiastical leadership or the waging of war against pagans, as it is in the case of many of Ælfric's male saints, but primarily through the body. Agatha and Eugenia achieve sanctity not only through the guarding of their virginity until death, but also through the changes written upon their bodies before they are martyred. These changes come in the form of amputations: for Agatha, that of her breast, and for Eugenia, that of her hair, as part of her masculine disguise. Neither form

174. Here, I agree with Shari Horner in The Discourse of Enclosure, 148 (regarding Agatha) and 159-60 (regarding Eugenia). Cf. Frantzen's claims regarding Agatha's and Eugenia's re-genderings in "When Women Aren't Enough," 462-65, and in Before the Closet, 75-80 and 318. See also Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 147-48, with its references to Eugenia's apparently "inverted sexuality."
of mutilation threatens the fundamental integrity of the female gender of these virgin martyrs. With the reattachment of Agatha's breast, and, it must be presumed, the re-growth of Eugenia's hair (for Eugenia ends her life living visibly as a woman, leading a community of consecrated virgins), the unaltered nature of their gender—and of the gendered form of their sanctity—is clearly reasserted.
CONCLUSION

There is certainly no question that the bodies of saints do matter in written accounts of holy men and women. Saints' narratives from Anglo-Saxon England are indeed no exception to this rule. The bodies of the saints themselves—of the men and women whose Christian exemplarity their authors seek to highlight—are in fact a key locus for narrative explorations of sanctity. In general, Aldhelm, Bede, the Old English martyrrologist, and Ælfric represent these bodies in highly conventional ways, in keeping with the generic dictates of hagiographic writing. This is especially the case for female saints, such as Cecilia, Agatha, and Eugenia: the narrative depictions of their bodies emphasize that their holiness is inescapably connected to the state of their bodies.

For holy women, the bodily state associated with sanctity is that of sexual purity. In effect, chastity is virtually the *sine qua non* of feminine sanctity, with a woman's *virginitas* [virginity] providing a crucial basis for her saintliness. But female *virginitas*, as Aldhelm stresses in his composite *De virginitate*, is not as stable a concept as the presumed (and potentially verifiable) presence or absence of a hymen would suggest. Given the necessity that virgins display other "proofs" of their *virginitas*, such as humility and modest attire, *virginitas*, in Aldhelm's reckoning, emerges as a performative state where hymeneal intactness can ostensibly be "read" through such external signs as a woman's behavior and appearance. For the women of Barking monastery to whom Aldhelm dedicates his treatise, this is an important component of both the sanctity of the
virginal exemplars whom Aldhelm catalogues, as well as of the abbot's conception of 
_castitas_ [chastity] as the second state of purity. For the formerly married women among 
these sisters, however many there might have been, the potential for manipulating these 
external signifiers places their access to the sphere of _virginitas_ within the realm of 
possibility, given the semantic space that _virginitas_ and _castitas_ share in Aldhelm's 
treatise.

If these external signifiers of sexual purity are important to women whose sexual 
impurity derives from former conjugal relationships, they become especially important 
components of the sanctity of repentant prostitutes. Mary Magdalene and Pelagia are not 
physical virgins, nor do their hagiographers, such as the Old English martyrologist, make 
claims to _virginitas_ on their part. For women like them—who are apparently saintly and 
yet who are not virgins—the absence of any visible signifier of sexual debauchery 
narratively announces their entrance into the realm of the holy. The _Old English 
Martyrology_ suggests that the repentant Pelagia doffs her ornate and sweet-smelling 
adornments, and instead dons clothing that suggests masculinity and penitent asceticism 
as she retires to her hermitage. Mary Magdalene, however, does not appear to doff 
anything. While the Latin source text upon which the martyrologist draws implies that 
the eremitic Mary is naked, the martyrologist does not imply that Mary is ever without 
clothing. There is yet a small suggestion of the loss of a signifier in this case: the vial of 
ointment (Old English _glæsfaet_) which, in the biblical accounts concerning her, Mary uses 
to anoint Jesus, and which action Gregory the Great connects with the Magdalene's 
previously sinful life. This vial does not appear with Mary once she enters the
wilderness. Such a narrative absence in the *Old English Martyrology* underscores the newly chaste life that Mary lives once she has renounced sexual activity.

Narrative absence also plays a role in Ælfric's constructions of the sanctity of the virgin martyrs Agatha and Eugenia in the *Lives of Saints*. It is evident that Ælfric adopts this trope of absence from his Latin source *passiones*. The *breost* [breast] that Agatha loses, as well as the hair that Eugenia has cut during her transition to "manhood," function to point out the extent to which these women seek to safeguard their virginity and Christian faith in the face of actual persecution (in the case of Agatha) or potential persecution (in the case of Eugenia). The wound left in the wake of the amputation of Agatha's breast serves as a narrative reminder of the extent of Agatha's piety, and also recalls the notion that the saint's *breost* has substantial physical and spiritual significance. Furthermore, Agatha does not need St. Peter to heal this wound: in Ælfric's account, the saint's reliance on Christ is so perfect from the very beginning that her faith never falters, as it does momentarily in the Latin source text.

In a similar way, by eliminating the negative connotations associated with such terms as *simulacrum, imitatio* and *simulatio* (which are found in BHL 2666m) from his *passio* of Eugenia, Ælfric renders Eugenia even more saintly than his source text does. Just as he betrays no flaw in Agatha's faith, so too he depicts Eugenia's monastic piety, made possible through her haircutting and cross-dressing, as nothing but exemplary. As a result of these changes that Ælfric makes to his base accounts, it can be seen in what ways his penchant for *brevitas* can render his vernacular translations more narratively coherent than their sources: Ælfric achieves this coherence through the selective omission of narrative details that suggest ambivalence about the holiness of these two women.
Such omissions not only perfect but indeed sanitize these accounts, with the result that Ælfric's decision to include these texts in the *Lives of Saints* during the late tenth-century Benedictine reforms is quite understandable.

Apart from his selective omission of detail, some of Ælfric's references to the *breost* in his accounts of Agatha and Eugenia signal another departure from his sources. By giving such narrative attention to this part of the virgins' bodies, Ælfric reinforces the intimate connection that the hagiographic genre makes between embodiment and female sanctity. He does so in a double sense: not simply by citing and repeating this generic convention through vague references to female chastity, but also by securing the association between the *breost* and the female gender. At all times, Ælfric refers to each saint with feminine nouns and pronouns; never does he suggest or even vaguely imply that Agatha and Eugenia are anything but female. Ælfric creates no disjunction between the biological sex of these women and their gender, if in fact sex and gender can ever be so cleanly distinguished. The amputation of Agatha's *breost* does not "masculinize" her any more than the appearance of Eugenia's bare *breost* at her trial "returns" her to womanhood.

Like Ælfric, Bede places a powerful narrative focus on a particular part of King Oswald's body; in this case, on the monarch's hands. In fact, Bede's portrayal of Oswald in the *Ecclesiastical History* provides another example of the construction of a saint's holiness through explicit and oft-repeated reference to amputated flesh, very much akin to the account of Agatha in the *Lives of Saints*. Ælfric's account points out that the importance of Agatha's textualized *breost* to the virgin's sanctity derives from the breast's lack of use for the worldly functions for which it is "naturally" created; in other words,
Agatha's breast is never used for sexual pleasure nor, in a related purpose, for feeding a baby. In contrast, Oswald's hands contribute to the king's holiness by virtue of their use in acts of warfare, almsgiving, and intercessory prayer. In the context of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity, all of these tasks, as Bede sets them forth, are necessary to ensure the establishment of the faith. Unlike Agatha, Oswald's hands and arm are severed around the time of his death; moreover, these body parts are not restored while he is still alive. However, they are apparently preserved incorrupt, as Bede relates, in the shrine at Bamburgh, where they function as a display of Christianity's triumph over paganism. Like the cross, the spectacle of Oswald's severed hands is marked by a certain incongruity, for their display (as incorrupt as these body parts might be) is made possible only because the king has been slaughtered in battle by his pagan foes. To Bede's mind (as well as to the minds of many of the faithful, as Bede observes) such flesh nevertheless stands as a promise of Christianity's ultimate triumph rather than as a memorial of ignominious defeat.

To construct this first extant account attesting to Oswald's holiness, Bede draws upon biblical and hagiographic exemplars much more quietly than do Aldhelm, the Old English martyrologist, and Ælfric. But like these other Anglo-Saxon authors, Bede constructs Oswald's sanctity with significant narrative reference to the king's body. Narratively speaking, his attention to the king's hands and arms is quite striking; this emphasis is taken up by later authors who draw upon Bede for their own accounts concerning the holy monarch. It is clear, then, that although such an instance is admittedly rare in hagiographic writing, the body can be as important a locus for elaborations of masculine sanctity as for female holiness.
As this study has demonstrated, the meanings of saints' bodies accrue partly through the citation and repetition of hagiographic convention, no matter how explicitly or silently a hagiographer makes reference to prior *vitae* or *passiones*. Historical and intra-textual contexts inflect the narrative performativity demonstrated in the representations of saintly bodies. These contexts determine, to a significant extent, in what ways particular elaborations of sanctity are shaped. As a mutable discourse, sanctity takes on a variety of different forms, both from saint to saint, and, as this dissertation has shown, from narrative to narrative even of the same saint. Even the few Anglo-Saxon texts which this study examines demonstrate that for as many different ways to holiness that might exist, there are, potentially, as many permutations of saintly bodies that can be narratively deployed to uphold the notions of sanctity—and the contemporary issues informing those notions—that were of concern to Anglo-Saxon hagiographers.
APPENDIX

As suggested in Chapter 1, it is not clear to whom canon 2.12.6 of the Poenitentiale Theodori refers with regard to entering a monastery: "[m]ulieri non licet virum dimittere licet sit fornicator nisi forte pro monasterio. Basilius hoc iudicavit" [(a) woman may not dismiss her husband, even if he is a fornicator, unless, perhaps, for the purpose of entering a monastery. Basil decided this].¹ This lack of specificity is reflected in the implications for Anglo-Saxon women's autonomy that Stephanie Hollis draws on the basis of this passage, as well as in the translation of the passage by John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer. On one hand, Hollis's argument assumes that "pro monasterio" [for the purpose of entering a monastery] refers to a woman's ability to leave her husband if she decides to enter a religious house.² On the other hand, McNeill and Gamer's translation of "pro monasterio" as "for [the purpose of his entering] a monastery"


2. See above, pp. 31-32.
assumes something quite different: that this passage sets out the conditions under which a woman might give her husband permission to enter a monastery.\(^3\)

What neither Hollis nor McNeill and Gamer acknowledge, however, is that "pro monasterio" could conceivably refer to either the man or to the woman. Indeed, a subsequent canon of the *Poenitentiale Theodori* (2.12.8) makes it clear that either spouse might enter a monastery under certain conditions:

\[
\text{Potest tamen alter alteri licentiam dare accedere ad servitutem dei in monasterium et sibi nubere, si in primo connubio erit secundum Grecos et tamen non est canonicum sin autem in secundo non licet vivente viro vel uxore.}
\]

[But according to the Greeks, either (spouse) may give the other permission to enter a monastery in the service of God, and (in effect) marry it, if (he or she) was in a first marriage, and yet this is not canonical. But if (the spouses are in a) second (marriage, this) is not permitted while the husband or wife is alive.\(^4\)]

It is also instructive to read these early Anglo-Saxon canons in light of a later one, found in the canon law collection associated with Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York (d. 1023):

\[
\text{Item Canon Affricanensis}
\]

\[
\text{Legitimum igitur coniugium non licet separari sine consensu amborum; potest tamen alter alteri cum consilio episcopi licentiam dare ad seruitutem Dei accedere. Quidam etiam dicit: Si uir siue mulier ex consensu religionem ceperit, licet alterum accipere nouum coniugium, sed puellam uel puerum, si continens esse non poterit. Quod non laudo. Sed si quis uult coniugatus conuerti ad monasterium, non est recipiendus nisi prius a coniuge, castimonia profiteante, fuerit absolutus. Nam si illo uiuente, per incontinentiam alteri nupserit, proculdbio adultera erit, et qui eam dimisit particeps erit peccati illius.}
\]


[Also an African canon:]
Therefore a lawful marriage may not be separated without the consent of both parties; however, each is able, with the counsel of a bishop, to give the other freedom to enter into the service of God. A certain authority also says: If a husband or wife shall, with the agreement of the other, take up the religious life, the other, if a young woman or young man, is permitted to undertake a new marriage, if they are unable to be celibate. (I do not approve of this.) But if any married man wishes to convert to a monastery, he is not to be received, unless he has been previously released by his wife, and she makes a public declaration of celibacy. For if she marries another out of inability to remain celibate while he is living, she will beyond doubt be an adulteress, and he who divorced her will be a partner in her sin.]\(^5\)

It is therefore possible that canon 2.12.6 of the *Poenitentiale Theodori* provides both husbands and wives with church-sanctioned backing to end their marriages, should their spouses decide to enter monastic life. Given the fluidity of terms having to do with "monasticism" before the tenth-century Benedictine reforms (discussed in Chapter 4 of this study), and the tenuous foothold of the church in Theodore's time, it is conceivable that "pro monasterio" [for the purpose of entering a monastery] was a euphemism for marriage dissolution which was granted local ecclesiastical consent. In other words, this canon might have provided early Anglo-Saxon men and women alike with an approved formula for initiating the termination of their conjugal unions.

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