NOT 'FOR MEDICINAL USE ONLY' HEALTHCARE NARRATIVES IN SAINTS' LIVES FROM TWELFTH-CENTURY ENGLAND.

BARBARA MARY HARGREAVES

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Abstract

In recent decades scholarly interest in hagiographical works has allowed for an increasingly multifaceted interpretation of these texts. This has led to their being recognised as valuable sources in contributing to a broader understanding of the medieval period and its expression of sanctity. This thesis looks specifically at health-related narratives from twelfth-century English saints' lives written by someone who knew the saint or obtained eye-witness testimony of them. Of the ten saints considered, three are hermits, one is lay and six are monastic. Of the hagiographers who can be identified, one is a secular cleric and the others are monks.

In this study, the aim is to consider the detail of relevant accounts and show how, and why, the subject of ill-health was managed in a saint's life. The topics that the hagiographers chose to write about are remarkably consistent across the century. Food, fever and death are constant subjects. The body of the saint is often a central feature, emaciated through fasting, suffering patiently, burning with fever or exalted to immutable white purity in death. Underlying tensions run through the narratives, shown as the writers sought to explicate seemingly incompatible features; the impact of sin, physical illness, debility and death when manifest within the person of a saint. While the focus of the accounts is unequivocally hagiographic, they also show evidence of the growth of medical science over the period, with an increasingly medicalised emphasis. The thesis argues that while the accounts may offer insight into medicine of the period, in order for any interpretation of the texts to be meaningful, they must be viewed first through the lens of hagiography, true to the purposes for which they were written, and not taken in isolation as pieces of medical history.

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BSG *Liber Sancti Gileberti*, in *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. R. Foreville and trans. G. Keir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

GPA William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom with the assistance of R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

LC *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. and trans. C. H. Talbot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)

LG Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de vita et miraculis S. Godrici, heremitae de Finchale, auctore Reginaldo monacho Dunelmensi*, ed. J. Stephenson, *Surtees Society* 20 (1847). English translation in Margaret Coombe, *Reginald of Durham's Latin Life of St Godric of Finchale* (forthcoming: OUP, 2022)

LSHA Gerald of Wales, *Vita Sancti Hugonis*, in *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, vol. VII, ed. J. F. Dimock (London: Longman & Co, 1877), pp. 81-147. English translation in Richard M. Loomis, *The Life of Saint Hugh of Avalon Bishop of Lincoln 1186-1200* (Merchantville NJ: Evolution Publishing, 2014)

LWal Jocelin of Furness, *Vita Waldevi*, in *Vita auctore vel Joscelino, monacho Furnesiensi*, in *Acta Sanctorum Augusti I*, ed. J. Carnandet (Paris, 1863-), 249D-278E. English translation by G. J. McFadden, 'The *Life* of St. Waldef, Abbot of Melrose, by Jocelin of Furness', in *An Edition and Translation of the Life of St.*

Waldef, Abbot of Melrose, by Jocelin of Furness (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1952), pp. 201-357

LWH John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, by John Abbot of Ford,* ed. Maurice Bell, *Somerset Record Society*, 47 (1933). English translation in Pauline Matarasso, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, Anchorite* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 2011)

MCL Lanfranc, *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc*, ed. and trans. David Knowles and Christopher N. L. Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

MLSH *The Metrical Life of Saint Hugh*, ed. and trans. Charles Garton (Lincoln Cathedral: Holywood Press, 1986)

MV Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, ed. D. Douie and D. H. Farmer, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961-62)

NW Ailred of Rievaulx, *De Sanctimoniali de Wattun*, *PL* 195, 789C-796D. English translation in John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 452-8

PL *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, 217 vols, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-64)

RC *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque*, ed. and trans. Thomas Symons (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953)

SMQS Turgot, *Vita Sanctae Margaretae Scotorum Reginae* in *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* 5325, ed. James Raine, in *Symeonis Dunelmensis opera et collectanea* 1, ed. J. Hodgson Hinde, *Surtees Society*, 51 (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1868), pp. 234-54. English translation in Catherine

Keene, *Saint Margaret, Queen of the Scots: A Life in Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 136-221

VA Eadmer, *Vita Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ed. and trans. R. W. Southern (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972)

VAil Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. and intro. F. M. Powicke (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1950)

VWulf William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani* in *William of Malmesbury Saints' Lives*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

All biblical quotes are drawn from the Douay-Rheims version, accessed at www.drbo.org

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Above all though, and more than I could possibly express, love and thanks goes to my family. Tom, Ruth and, most of all, Paul.

Introduction

Saints' lives from the medieval period survive in greater volume and variety than any other writing of the same years.[1] While lives have been studied for many reasons the particular aim here is to consider narratives pertaining to health and sickness in texts from England written in, or close to, the twelfth century. The intention is to ask what the hagiographers were choosing to write about in respect of health and sickness and having ascertained that, to question why these particular topics were included and what significance those receiving the lives may have drawn from them. The accounts are taken within the entirety of their milieu, as works of hagiography, so the question of what the narratives may be showing can be contextualised.

Context is key in this study. The endeavour to understand the narratives necessitates placing them within the aegis of the world that produced them, its contemporary monastic practice, expression of faith, models of sainthood and medical knowledge. The analysis this enables will show the areas the writers considered to be important, or perhaps troublesome, and indicate if there were commonalities in the ways in which these were addressed. It will also allow for the identification of changes that occurred across the century in respect of medicine, religious understanding and the expression of these within the life of a saint. It is to be expected that tensions will be seen in narratives that purportedly concern the health of the body when written by members of a community which focused principally on the health of the soul. Given this, a further question to be considered is how such tensions were expressed and addressed and what this shows about the faith world from which the accounts came.

[1] Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 13.

This scope of the study is accounts of saints written by someone who knew them, or who drew from close witness accounts (details in Table 1).

Table 1: Saints' lives, authors and dates of composition[2]

Saints	**Dates**	**Designation**	**Author**	**Date of *Life***
Margaret of Scotland	1045-1093	Queen	Turgot: Benedictine	1100-07
Wulfstan of Worcester	c.1008-1095	Bishop: Benedictine	William of Malmesbury: Benedictine	1126-
Anselm of Canterbury	1033-1109	Archbishop: Benedictine	Eadmer: Benedictine	1112-25
Wulfric of Haselbury	1080-1154	Anchorite	John of Forde: Cistercian	1180-1184
Christine of Markyate	c.1096/8-1155	Hermit	Unknown	1155-66
Waldef of Melrose	c. 1095-1159	Abbot: Augustinian then Cistercian	Jocelin of Furness: Cistercian	1207-1214
Ailred of Rievaulx	1109-1167	Abbot: Cistercian	Walter Daniel: Cistercian	1167-
Godric of Finchale	c. 1065-1170	Hermit	Reginald of Durham: Benedictine	1160/70s
Gilbert of Sempringham	1083/9-1189	Master of the Gilbertine Order	Unnamed[3]	1202-03
Hugh of Lincoln: *Magna Vita*	c. 1140-1200	Bishop: Carthusian	Adam of Eynsham: Benedictine	By 1212
Hugh of Lincoln: *Life*			Gerald of Wales: Archdeacon	c. 1213
Hugh of Lincoln: *Metrical Life*			Unknown	1220-35

At the time the selected works were being composed, oral testimony drawn from recent events and transmitted memories was considered a more than adequate source, one that could be seen

[2] Critical editions of the selected lives rather than unpublished primary sources are used, a choice that reflects the richness of the area.

[3] See section 1, ix, pp. 22-3 for the possible identification of Ralph de Insula as author.

by contemporary readers as superior to written sources.[4] The works listed were composed in or close to the twelfth century with England as their geographical focus. Two saints from Scotland, Margaret and Waldef, whose hagiographers were from an English monastic cultural context, are also included.[5] Given their Anglo-Norman associations, the *Life* of Margaret and that of Waldef can reasonably be included in this study. Between them, the selected lives represent a range of orders and designations, contain both male and female saints and stretch from the start to the end of the century. They also contain narratives of sufficient depth in the area of interest, namely the health and sickness of their subject.

Although the subject of a life is usually referred to here as a saint, this is done for ease of reference and with full awareness of the fact that they were not actually saints during their lifetime. While two of the later saints considered here, Gilbert of Sempringham and Hugh of Lincoln, were subjects of a successful process of papal canonisation in the years immediately following their death, several of the group are still not officially recognised as saints.[6] In the

[4] Helen Birkett, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelin of Furness* (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), pp. 115 and 137.

[5] Margaret, who was sister to Edgar the ætheling of England, was David's mother, and the second marriage of Waldef's mother, Matilda, was to David I. Details of these complex relationships can be found in Margaret's genealogy, *LMQS*, p. 167 and *LWal*, 14, pp. 93 and 218. Jocelin, Waldef's hagiographer, described Melrose as being in 'Anglia' *LWal*, 135, pp. 198 and 355. 'Let England rejoice that by divine gift she has now received her seventh saint of incorrupt body, to shine out over the whole kingdom like a seven-branched candelabrum [gaudeat nunc Anglia, se septimum sanctum corporaliter incorruptum divino munere adeptam, totum regnum septemplici candelabro irradiatum].' Both Margaret and Waldef had close links to David I of Scotland (c. 1084-1153), who had been brought up in the English court after the death of his father, Malcolm III, in 1093. Richard Oram, *David I: The King Who Made Scotland* (Stroud: The History Press, 2008), p. 41.

[6] For papal canonisation see: Eric W. Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); originally published as *La Sainteté en Occident aux Derniers Siècles du Moyen Age* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1981); Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Following the so called *Audivimus* ruling of 1171-2, papal authority over canonisation grew with a resultant increase in evidencing miracles as part of formalised canonisation process. Bartlett considers the *Book of St Gilbert* to be an early example of this: *Why Can the*

majority of cases, the health-related narratives considered are concerned with non-miraculous events and focus on accounts of the condition of the saint or, on occasion, someone associated with them. The aim here is to examine the expression of ill health distinct from the expression of the miraculous, and the testimonies of the writers concerning the sickness of their subjects offers ample material without widening the scope of enquiry to introduce a further, very complex, dynamic. Occasionally, however, and when it broadens understanding in a particular area, miraculous narratives are included.

The health-related narratives that comprise the focus of consideration are studied as works of hagiography; they are not taken as items of medical history nor will there be a particular attempt at retrospective diagnosis. Where it is deemed, though, that the application of modern medical science can sharpen the analysis and enhance understanding of the account, then that knowledge will be applied. Since the specific focus adopted here has not been studied in the lives under consideration, this thesis offers a fresh insight into how hagiographers utilised and understood the sickness and health of their subjects and, through this, contribute to the wider understanding of monastic life and expression in twelfth-century England.

1. The Textual Basis

i. Margaret of Scotland (1045-1093)

Turgot's *Life* of St Margaret of Scotland exists in three manuscript versions: the longest and earliest dates from the twelfth century while the third, which is fifteenth century, contains the

Dead, pp. 58-9. See *BSG*, pp. 199-263 and the letters, mainly from senior clergy, sent and received endorsing the saint's worthiness for beatification. Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 26-7, wrote that by 1170 it was widely believed that the pope should be consulted about canonisations and that from 1200 Innocent III issued a number of solemn declarations which confirm the papacy felt confident that it possessed the privilege of canonisation. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 formalised this position.

only known miracle collection attributable to Margaret.[7] Matilda, Margaret's daughter and queen of England upon her marriage to Henry I, commissioned Turgot to write a life of her mother. Turgot had served as prior at Durham and fulfilled his commission between 1100 and 1107, when he was appointed to the see of St Andrews.[8] He states in the prologue that Matilda trusted him to write a life because he knew Margaret well and was 'privy to the most part of her secrets by reason of my great familiarity with her'.[9] This provides a largely firsthand account in the *Life* although Turgot did use, and accredit, witnesses when he was not present.

ii. Wulfstan of Worcester (c.1008-1095)[10]

William of Malmesbury's *Life* of Wulfstan is thought to have been translated by William into Latin from a now-lost Old English account written by the Worcester monk, Colman (d. 1113), who had been the bishop's chaplain.[11] In this it claimed to be derived from first-hand testimony.

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[7] The twelfth-century manuscript is British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius Diii, fols 179v-186r. It is in a collection of saints' lives thought to have been transcribed in the last quarter of the twelfth century with Margaret's *Life* containing a reference to the first translation of her relics in 1180. It is the longest of the extant works. See, Turgot, *Vita sanctae Margaretae Scotorum reginae* in *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* 5325, ed. James Raine, in *Symeonis Dunelmensis opera et collectanea* 1, ed. J. Hodgson Hinde, *Surtees Society* 51 (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1868), pp. 234-54. All quotes from Latin and English translations used here are taken from Keene, *SMQS*, pp. 136-221. The fifteen-century copy of the *Life* is Madrid, Biblioteca Del Palacio Real, II. 2097, 26r-41v. The collection also contains a *Life* of Waldef of Melrose. Bartlett considers the original manuscript was compiled before 1250 by a monk at Dunfermline: see *The Miracles of St Aebbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2003), p xxxi.

[8] Matilda married Henry in 1100 making this the earliest date at which Turgot could have composed the work. *SMQS*, pp. 5-6.

[9] *SMQS*, p. 136. 'Scilicet mihi precipue in hoc credentum dicebatis, quem gratia magne apud illam familiaratis, magna ex parte secretorum illius conscium esse audieratis.'

[10] *VWulf*, pp. 8-155.

[11] William himself stated he was making some changes to Colman's original work; however, Winterbottom and Thomson consider it was William's only written source. *VWulf*, pp. xv-xvi.

It survives in a single copy and was commenced after 1126.[12] William also wrote of Wulfstan in his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, which was completed by 1125 and offers a valuable point of contrast here in differentiating between the subject matter William chose to use in writing a hagiography compared to that he chose to include in a historical account.[13]

iii. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

Eadmer, Anselm's hagiographer, was closely familiar with his subject, having lived in community and travelled abroad with him from the time Anselm was appointed to the see of Canterbury in 1093.[14] Eadmer commenced a record of Anselm's life while the latter was still living but, on its discovery by the archbishop, was compelled to destroy it.[15] He did so by obeying the letter though not the spirit of Anselm's instruction, destroying the original having first made a copy. It is this that became his *Life* of Anselm, the final version of which dates to about 1125.[16] Despite their altercation over Eadmer's recording details of Anselm's life, Eadmer was with the archbishop at the time of his death and burial and gave an eye witness

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[12] *VWulf*, pp. xiv, xxv and 1-6. British Library, MS Cotton Claudius A. V, fols 160v-99v is late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Several abridged versions survive too, including one in a thirteenth-century collection of saints lives in Durham Cathedral Library, MS B. IV, 39B.

[13] *GPA*, with William's account of Wulfstan found in book 4, chapters 136-149, pp. 423-39.

[14] R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 404-6. Southern posits that Eadmer was born about 1060, that he came to Canterbury as a boy and first met Anselm there when the latter visited in 1079.

[15] *VA*, II, lxxii, p. 150. Anselm's relationship with Eadmer changed after this incident which occurred around 1100, as did the exposure Eadmer had to Anselm. The *Life* reflects this reduction in contact between the two men which lasted to Anselm's death. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait*, p. 413.

[16] *VA*, pp. viii-xxv. Southern describes two groups of the work: the first group originates from Eadmer's writing in the years 1112-1114 and was routed via Bec, possibly St. Bertin in France, and Rochester in England. The second group comes from a longer version Eadmer produced by adding to and editing his original work during the years around 1114-1125. This version has been found in English houses including Christ Church, Canterbury; the hospital foundation of St Mark, Bristol; Hinton, Somerset; and Holm Cultram, Cumbria. The earliest of these manuscripts, that from Holm Cultram, dates from the late twelfth century. *VA*, p. viii and pp. xxi-xxiv. Southern uses the longer version as the basis for his critical edition of the *Life*. *VA*, p. xxv.

account of Anselm's passing.[17] About fifty years later John of Salisbury wrote a *Life* of Anselm. It was written to support the documentation for Anselm's canonisation, stresses his political actions in defense of the church and is, in the main, an abridged version of Eadmer's.[18]

Another Canterbury work of relevance to this study is Lanfranc's *Monastic Constitutions.* Written by Lanfranc for his Canterbury community about 1077-1079, this is an important text as in it the archbishop expanded on the tenets of Benedict's *Rule* to give detailed instructions about how all elements of the monastic day should be managed.[19] Seven manuscripts and a fragment of the *Constitutions* dating from between the late eleventh century and the early thirteenth century are known to exist [20] The *Constitutions* circulated within England during Lanfranc's last years and the period soon after his death, with Durham's copy in the library there by the time of the two Durham hagiographers, Turgot and Reginald.[21] Although it is not

[17] *VA*, II, lxvi*,* p. 143.

[18] John of Salisbury, *The Life of Saint Anselm*, trans. Ronald E. Pepin in *Anselm and Becket* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), pp. 5-7 with the sole manuscript version dating from the fifteenth century. London, Lambeth Palace, MS 159, Johanis Sarisberia, *Vitam Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis,* fols 160v-176r, transcribed in *PL* 199, 1010A-1040C.

[19] For the *Rule's* influence on twelfth-century monastic life see, among others: Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1, 3, 63, 159; James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 5, 16 and 46-7; David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 1-2; See too Janet Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 4-5 on the extension by the reformed congregations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to Benedict and further back to the desert fathers in their search for the ideal monastic life. See also the *Carta Caritatis Prior* and its requirement that Benedict's *Rule* is followed in everything in *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Citeaux*, ed., Chrysogonus Waddell (Nuits-Saint-Georges: Abbaye de Cîteaux, 1999), ii, p. 444.

[20] *MCL*, pp. xliii-xlviii and p. xlv for full details of surviving manuscripts. Brooke concurs with Knowles' decision to base his translation of the *Constitutions* largely on the Durham text, which is one of the two earliest, the other being found at Hereford. *MCL,* pp. xxviii-xxxv. H. E. J. Cowdrey places it before 1080 too. *Lanfranc: Scholar, Monk and Archbishop* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 155.

[21] Regarding the circulation of the *Constitutions*, Janet Burton in *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 24, names Rochester, St Alban's, Battle and Durham as recipients. Brooke conjectures that Gilbert Crispin took a copy to

mentioned explicitly in the sections of the lives under consideration here, its requirements are reflected in them. The question of whether the *Constitutions* informed standard monastic practice, or whether standard monastic practice informed Lanfranc's writing is not considered here; for the purposes of this thesis it is enough that they concur.

iv. Wulfric of Haselbury (1080-1154)

The Cistercian, John of Forde, wrote his *Life* of the anchorite Wulfric of Haselbury around 1180-4, and the four surviving texts date to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[22] The prefatory letter is addressed to Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter, stating that the *Life* was composed at his request.[23] Although it is not a direct account, John cited various witnesses, the majority of whom he spoke with and some of whom gave firsthand testimony, including the monks of Forde who had known Wulfric. Matarasso described the community at Forde as 'an ever-flowing source of information on Wulfric's life and doings' but considers that Walter of Glastonbury was John's chief witness.[24]

v. Christina of Markyate (c.1096/8-1155)[25]

The *Life* of Christina of Markyate survives in a single copy dating from the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The manuscript is fire damaged and the end is missing. Written in the

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Westminster with him and that it became widely influential there. *MCL*, pp. xxxi-xxxii. Richard W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 109-110, argued that indications from tradition and inference show it was used at St Albans, Rochester, St Augustine's Canterbury, Worcester, Evesham, Westminster and perhaps Eynsham too within a short period of its composition.

[22] *WH*, with Eton MS 109 as Bell's source for his transcription. The date range can be established from two prefatory letters in the *Life* which give the background to John's writing. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, pp. 10-19.

[23] Matarasso, *Wulfric*, pp. 81-4 and 92-4.

[24] Ibid., pp. 22-4.

[25] Entitled *De S. Theodora, Virgine, quae et Christina digitur,* the manuscript is the final work in the second volume of Cotton Tiberius MS E. I, and forms part of John of Tynemouth's *Sanctilogium Angliae. LC*, p.1.

period 1155-1166, the author of the text is not known but internal evidence suggests he came from St Alban's monastery since he describes it as 'our' monastery.[26] Talbot argued that the writer's close relationship to Christina shows he was composing the *Life* during Christina's own lifetime, noting that the author commented that he had not *usque presens* [until this time, so far] been able to discover from Christina how she knew about a particular event.[27] This view is supported by others.[28] There are stylistic and narrative similarities between Christina's *Life* and that of St Alexis found in the twelfth-century St Albans psalter, a pertinent point here given the connection between the psalter, St Albans Abbey and Christina herself.[29]

vi. Waldef of Melrose (1095-1159)[30]

Jocelin of Furness composed the *Life* of Waldef, Augustinian then Cistercian monk and abbot of Melrose, about fifty years after Waldef's death, completing it between 1207 and 1214.[31] It was commissioned by the Melrose community following the second discovery of the saint's incorrupt body in 1206.[32] Jocelin wrote that he drew the material for his work from 'the

[26] Ibid., 50, p. 127, 'Illa vero preelegit nostrum monasterium'. For dating see *LC*, p. 10. Christina was still living in 1155 and her *Life* was written at the instigation of Robert Gorham who governed St Albans until 1166.

[27] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[28] Douglas Gray, 'Christina of Markyate: The Literary Background' in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Holy Woman*, ed. S. Fanous and H. Leyser (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 17 concurs, while Rachel Koopmans in 'Dining at Markyate with Lady Christina' also in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Holy Woman*, pp. 143- 159, goes further, asserting that it is clear from the *Life* that the author dined with Christina at Markyate, questioned her at length, knew many of her quirks, spoke with her mother and siblings, and did not wait until her death to begin writing an account of her life. The *Life* has been described as an 'autohagiography' suggesting that Christina was the driving force behind the composition of her own *Life.* Sarah Salih, V*ersions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. Brewer, 2001), p. 175.

[29] Gray, 'Christina of Markyate: The Literary Background', pp. 19-21.

[30] *LWal*, pp. 201-357. For his translation, McFadden used the version published in *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Carnandet et al. (Paris, 1863-), pp. 249D-278E. This was derived from two now lost manuscripts held in an Augustinian house in Germany.

[31] *LWal*, p. 3, and Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 13.

[32] Ibid., p. 201.

trustworthy elders of the house of Melrose, who had it from their predecessors'.[33] As such it lacks the immediacy of an eye-witness account, but offers an interesting dimension here through being an account received from oral tradition which developed close to the source. In this respect it is similar to Wulfric of Haselbury's *Life*, which was also drawn from tradition and memory that had been preserved in a Cistercian context.

vii. Ailred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)[34]

The *Life* of Ailred was written around the time of the abbot's death by Walter Daniel who was, like Ailred, a monk at Rievaulx Abbey.[35] The *Life*, with two associated pieces, Walter's *Letter to Maurice* and his *Lament for Ailred*, survives in a single late fourteenth-century manuscript housed at Jesus College, Cambridge.[36] Walter, by his own account, lived at Rievaulx for the last seventeen years of Ailred's abbacy.[37] The *Life* claims Walter's familiarity with Ailred, referring to his being with the abbot often and acting as his scribe.[38] He also identified himself as the Walter who appears in Ailred's own work on spiritual friendship.[39] Both the textual source and the tone make it clear that Walter knew Ailred and was probably close to him.

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[33] *LWal*, ch. 5, pp. 95 and 206. 'Nullaque in eis veritati opposita, sed quod a viris veridicis senioribus domus Melrosensis, omni exceptione majoribus accepti me scriptisse fideliter agnoscant.'

[34] *VAil*, pp. 1-64.

[35] Ibid., p. xxix.

[36] Jesus College, Cambridge, MS Q.B. 7, fols 63v-74r. The *Life* is preceded by Walter Daniel's *Letter to Maurice*, and has Walter's *Lament for Ailred* on the folios following. Powicke notes that the three are written by the same scribe and suggests that the work may have originated from Durham. *VAil*, p. xxix.

[37] *VAil*, xxxi, p. 40. 'I lived seventeen years under his rule [Decem et septum annis vixi sub magisterio eius].'

[38] Ibid., xviii, p. 27. 'His writings, preserved for posterity by the labour of my own hand, show quite well enough how he was wont to express himself [Siquidem scripta illius ostendunt sufficienter qualiter sit locutus, que manu mea et labore memorie posterorum reservate sunt].'

[39] Ibid., xxxii, p. 41.

Ailred himself wrote one of the texts studied here, a letter to an unnamed recipient describing the pregnancy and miraculous delivery of a nun of Watton. The letter survives in one known manuscript thought to date to the late twelfth century.[40] The Cistercian Henry Murdac, who became archbishop of York in 1147, had given the nun as a child to the Gilbertine monastery of Watton. The episode described by Ailred took place after Murdac's death in 1153 and since Ailred in died in 1167 the letter must have been written between those years.

viii. Godric of Finchale (c. 1065-1170)[41]

Three *Lives* of the hermit Godric were written, of which that composed by Reginald of Durham is used here.[42] Reginald was a regular visitor to Finchale and according to his own account spent much time there with Godric, including caring for the hermit towards the end of his life.[43] The *Life's* prefatory letter is addressed to Hugh de Puiset, bishop of Durham between 1153 and 1195, from 'Reginaldus filius suus'.[44] Reginald was probably collecting material for the *Life* prior to Godric's death and composing it thereafter, meaning a completion date within the

[40] *NW* from Corpus Christi, Cambridge, MS 139, fols 149r-51v. It is in a collection of historical texts, described in the Parker library catalogue as important texts relevant to the history of Durham, northern England and Scotland. Ailred's letter about the nun of Watton is found between a copy of his *Battle of the Standard* and Stephen of Whitby's *History of the Abbey of St Mary, York.* See M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), vol. 1, pp. 317-23, for dating and the suggestion that the manuscript is from Hexham.

[41] *LG*, transcribed from Bodleian, MS Laud Misc. 413, which is dated to the late twelfth century and listed as of Durham origin.

[42] Germanus, prior of Durham (1163-89), wrote a now lost account of the hermit, and Geoffrey of Durham subsequently abridged Reginald's *Life* and drew on that of Germanus' as well to present his own *Life* which was completed by 1196. *LG*, pp. vii- ix.

[43] *LG*, p. xiii and ch.175 [294], p. 313, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'I sat back down near him, weeping, and sad and crying softly, soothed him with whatever gentle words I could [flens igitur coram illo resedi, mœstumque ac tenerius plorantem quibus potui verbis dulcioribus delinivi].'

[44] *LG*, p. 1.

1170s is likely.[45] It can confidently be considered a first-hand account and was almost certainly part of the endeavour by Durham to claim, or retain, the memory of the hermit and the Finchale site itself within its community and defend itself from Cistercian incursions into the county.[46]

ix. Gilbert of Sempringham (1083/89-1189)[47]

The *Liber Sancti Gileberti* survives in two manuscripts of the thirteenth century.[48] The earliest is British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra B i, fols 32-167. It is written in single hand of the very early thirteenth century. The other, British Library, MS Harleian 468, is mid or late thirteenth century.[49] The translation of the saint on 13 October 1202 is recorded in the book and it was possibly finished in time for the first celebration of the feast of the new St Gilbert on 2 February 1203. It likely that the book was presented to Archbishop Hubert Walter before the first solemn feast of the saint because the author did not include in it the proper responses and antiphons for

[45] Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society 950-1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 20, dates the *Life* to the 1160/70s.

[46] Cistercian expansion was occurring across the north and Godric's friendship with the Cistercians Ailred of Rievaulx and Robert of Newminster had caused concern that he might leave his hermitage to their order. In order to mark its ownership on Finchale and to maintain the county as their own, Durham used various means to claim both Godric and his hermitage. Tom Licence in 'The Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Acquisition of a Hermitage in Twelfth-century Durham', *Journal of Medieval History*, 29 (2003) 315-29, pp. 320 and 325, notes that one of the ways in which a community could assert ownership of a hermit, their memory and possessions, was by providing a hagiographer and this Durham did through appointing Reginald to write his *Life*, elements of which served to claim Godric and his holdings as Durham's own. See chapter 5:2.iv for how this is made apparent through Godric's death narrative. In *Hermits, Hagiography and Popular Culture: A Comparative Study of Durham Cathedral Priory's Hermits in the Twelfth Century* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2000), pp. 19-20, Dominic Alexander describes Durham's concern to control the memory of Godric after his death and their endeavours to secure the Finchale site and considers Reginald's *Life of Godric*, and Geoffrey's that followed it, as part of this endeavour.

[47] *BSG*, pp. 2-335.

[48] Ibid., pp. lxiii-lxiv.

[49] Ibid. Foreville considers that the later manuscript is a copy of the earlier and draws her translation from the latter.

the service in his work, but indicated that he intended to do so subsequently.[50] This being the case, the *Life* was written about thirteen years after Gilbert's death. It is thought that the work is based upon an earlier and now lost life of Gilbert, written by the same author who does not give his name in the text, but did write of his service at Sempringham. 'For as time went by, while I was serving in the church of Sempringham, where the saint lies, I saw many remarkable things and heard of even more, which, to make proper use of my talent, I have added to what I wrote before.'[51] Foreville considers the writer was Ralph, sacrist at Sempringham in 1189 when one of the first miracles was performed near the tomb of Gilbert, and that he is probably the same person as Ralph de Insula who was part of the 1201 canonisation mission to Rome.[52]

x. Hugh of Lincoln (c. 1140-1200)[53]

Hugh's *Life*, the *Magna Vita*, was written by the Benedictine monk, Adam of Eynsham, who served as the bishop's chaplain and was his constant companion for the last three years of his, Hugh's, life.[54] Adam was requested by the monks of Witham, the English Carthusian house of which Hugh had been prior, to write a life of their saint.[55] The date at which Adam started the work is not known although the last chapter of the second book was written after 1206 and the

[50] Ibid., p. lxxiii and pp. 8-10.

[51] Ibid., *Prologue*, p. 8. 'Sane processu temporis, cum in ecclesia Sempringhamensi ubi sanctus requiescit ministrarem, multa ibi insignia vidi, plura audivi, que pro mei negotiatione talenti antescriptis adieci, vestreque devotioni quam erga ipsum sanctum satis intensam probaverum.'

[52] Ibid., pp. lxxiv-lxxv. This speculative view is supported by Brian Golding in *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c. 1130 -1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 7-9.

[53] *MV*, vol. I and II.

[54] *MV*, vol. I, book 2, prologue, p. 45. 'A quo tempore, per annos tres et dies quinque … die semper et nocte adherens ipsi et ministrans ei.'

[55] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, prologue, p. 1. 'You [Prior Robert and the community at Witham] ordered me, I say, and would take no refusal to ensure their survival I should report certain particulars concerning that most saintly man Hugh, bishop of Lincoln.'

Magna Vita was completed some six years later.[56] The oldest surviving manuscript dates to the second half of the thirteenth century and was probably written within thirty years of Adam's death.[57] It is considered to be the manuscript that best preserves Adam's work and may be a direct copy of the original.[58]

Two further *Lives* of Hugh are referred to here: Gerald of Wales' *Life of Saint Hugh of Avalon* and the *Metrical Life of St Hugh*, which was probably drawn from both Adam's *Magna Vita* and Gerald's *Life*.[59] Gerald wrote Hugh's *Life* around the first decade of the thirteenth century.[60] It can be assumed that Gerald knew Hugh, to some extent at least, as he had spent time in Lincoln during Hugh's episcopate, writing his *Vita Sancti Remegii* there, although there is no suggestion he was an eye-witness to the episodes of sickness and death he describes in his account of Hugh.[61] While the author of the *Metrical Life* is not known, it is thought to have been written between 1220 and 1235, perhaps to celebrate Hugh's canonisation in 1220, and used Gerald's *Life* particularly as a source.[62] The author could be Henry of Avranches who, among other works, wrote a *Life* of St Francis that shows similar interest in the technicalities of contemporary medicine.[63] A fourteenth-century Peterborough Abbey library catalogue listing the *Metrical Life* describes it by Mag. H. de Hariench, which may be a variant spelling

[56] *MV*, vol. I, p. xii.

[57] Bodleian, MS Digby 165.

[58] *MV*, vol. I, p. xlix and pp. liii-liv. Douie gives precedence to this manuscript in her translation.

[59] *MLSH*, p. 5.

[60] *LSHA*, pp. xxxviii.

[61] Bartlett dates Gerald's *Life* of Remigius to the 1190s and thinks it was written in Lincoln. *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 217-8, fn. 58.

[62] *MLSH*, pp. 4-5.

[63] John Victor Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan: the Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 77, names Henry as the author of the *Metrical Life*, along with *Lives* of SS Francis, Edmund and Birinus.

of Avranches.[64] Although his writing is not contemporary to Hugh, it is nevertheless close in time to the saint, and because of the insights it provides into medicine it is of both interest and relevance here. Although the latter two *Lives* are not used in the main analysis they are mentioned on occasion as they provide helpful supplementary material.

2. Hagiography[65]

The lives are works of hagiography, intended to promote their subject as a saint, to inspire and endorse the readers, and to act as a political tool making whatever points the hagiographer, the commissioner and the community of a life wished to emphasise. Most of the lives here were produced for a particular monastic house or order, 'house hagiographies', intended to serve as a mirror into which the readers could look and receive both endorsement and enlightenment.[66] For their contemporary readers, works of hagiography represented a particular truth, one that may not withstand the expectations of twenty-first-century empirical standards but was

[64] *MLSH*, pp. 4-5.

[65] There is a large bibliography on the subject of hagiography. Two works that have perhaps proved to be seminal in the field are Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80-101 and Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*. Among the many others where medieval hagiography and its contemporary interpretation are considered see: Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, also 'Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales'; Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 1-2; Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Leslie A. Donovan, *Women Saints' Lives in Old English Prose* (D. S. Brewer: Cambridge, 1999); Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1994); Keene, *SQMS*, pp. 3-4; Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans., A. Goldhammer, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); originally published as: *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 320-26; Ferdinand Lot, *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne (VIe-XIe siécle)* (Paris, 1907); Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints: The Diocese of Orleans, 800-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mary-Ann Stouck, *Medieval Saints: A Reader* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999); André Vauchez, *Sainthood*; *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. Stephen Wilson (Cambridge, 1983); Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982).

[66] Stouck, *Medieval Saints*, p. 250.

nevertheless, and absolutely, an expression of the truth as understood by the writer.[67] Because of this, it is essential to approach the accounts with cognisance of the implications, complexities and challenges of the genre and an awareness of the context within which they were written.

Contextualisation is necessary now and, as is seen in the case of Walter Daniel and his *Life of Ailred*, was also required at the time at which the account was written. Criticism of the content of Ailred's *Life*, particularly the description of the abbot's dead body, was voiced by 'two prelates [duos prelatos]' to whom the *Life* had been read by Maurice.[68] There is no indication that criticism was coming from within the community, indeed, Walter's subsequent naming of community members as witnesses suggests it was not.[69] Walter wrote to defend his account. 'It is very right that you, my father [Maurice], you I say, for it is to you that I am speaking, believe me to have written only those things which I have seen and heard of my father [Ailred].'[70] He then named witnesses and explained his narrative sources. He also tackled those who doubted him, calling them simple-minded folk, *simplices,* and unbelievers, *infideles*, and addressed the prelates directly. 'Those friends of mine, therefore, have unjustly abused me. Then they say, "In your book you describe the body of the dead Ailred glowing like a carbuncle

[67] See Keene, *SQMS*, p. 4.

[68] *VAil*, *Letter to Maurice*, p. 66. Walter recorded this. 'When you read these miracles to them were unwilling to believe them [qui vobis legentibus ipsa miracula credere noluerunt].'

[69] Ibid., pp. 66-9.

[70] Ibid., pp. 70-1. 'Rectissime tu ergo, pater mi, tibi enim loquor, tu inquam crede me scripsisse ea tantum que vidi et audivi de patre meo.' Heffernan, in *Sacred Biography*, p. 11, attributes this feature of Walter's writing as being derivative of a view received from Gregory of Tours, that in the sphere of sacred writing, narrative can reflect both actual circumstances and metaphysical truth. The identity of the two prelates is not known, nor is it certain who Maurice was, although he may have been either Ailred's predecessor at Rievaulx or Maurice, prior of Kirkham. Powicke notes that Maurice of Rievaulx, if still alive at the time of Walter's writing, would have been extremely old. *VAil*, p. xxx.

and smelling like incense. You have not expressed yourself with sufficient caution".'[71] Walter's defence continued:

> On the contrary, I was quite in order, though a peasant or an ignorant man might think otherwise with some justification. Even a mole, though it has no eyes, shrinks in fear from the rays of the sun. My blind friends do not blush to offend against the light. Hyperbole, indeed, is a form of speech which exceeds the truth with the object of making something greater or less. By this and other colours mother wisdom employs her skill on the picture of eloquence.[72]

Walter's hyperbolic 'picture of eloquence' can be as troubling to understand now as it seems to have been for his unnamed twelfth-century critics. Hagiographic accounts can seem to express a dissonance, a lack of congruence, when approached with an expectation of historical verisimilitude and without comprehension of the underlying narratives and tropes that a saint's life can contain. Lives are multi-layered narratives that often express more than a single message meaning there is frequently a subtext, or subtexts, running below the words of the account. This is the tension, the apparent contradiction, that lies at the heart of hagiography and that made it, until fairly recently, a genre that was disregarded and frankly disparaged by historians.[73] Over recent decades attitudes towards hagiography have changed and an

[71] *VAil*, *Letter to Maurice*, pp. 76-7. 'Male ergo vituperaverunt me amici mei isti. Et hoc, inquiunt, quod in libello tuo corpus Alredi defuncti luxisse ut carbunculum et ut thus redoluisse professus es, non satis caute posuisti.'

[72] Ibid., p. 77. 'Immo regulariter, at rusticis et idiotis aliter non immerito oportuit videri. Talpa nempe licet oculos non habeat solis tamen radios reformidat. Et amici mei ceci offendere in lumine non erubescunt. Etenim superlacio est oracio superans veritatem alicuius augendi minuendive causa. Hoc colore mater sapiencia in pictura eloquencie cum ceteris artificiose operatur.'

[73] See, for example, Ferdinand Lot, who considered hagiographies to be 'entirely devoid of historical value'. *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne*, p. 97. Similarly, Hippolyte Delehaye wrote that hagiographers typically used

understanding of the complexity and value of the genre has emerged.[74] It is now accepted that a saint's life can be strongly representative of the historical background against it was produced and express the aspirations and anxieties of the commissioning patrons, writers and the society from which it came.[75]

As a starting point in the endeavour to understand hagiography, to come as close as is possible to reading a life as it was written to be understood, it is essential not to approach the lives as if they are windows into the life of a saint.[76] Expectations that hagiography is, or should be understood as, biography have flawed and clouded opinion on the value of the former. Having said this, though, is important to note that the genres are not necessarily incompatible.[77] Lives are not homogenous; they embody a very wide range of different styles, sources and purposes. Some are wholly fictional, borrow stories from others, are crafted around traditional tropes, are predicated upon the understanding that both writer and reader knew what it meant to be holy.[78] Others are pieced together from existing accounts, oral or written, of the saint and created to

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pious plagiarism, belief in the incredible, inattention to detail and reliance on simplified tropes. See chapter two of *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962); originally published as *Les legends hagiographiques*, Subsidia Hagiographica 18a (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandists, 1906), pp. 12-39. Thomas Heffernan stated that 'it is now virtually impossible to read hagiography except as an epithet signifying a pious fiction or an exercise in panegyric' and that 'hagiography' used as an adjective had become a synonym for unreliable. *Sacred Biography*, pp. 15 and 55.

[74] For changing approaches to hagiographical studies see Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, *Writing Faith: Text, Sign & History in the Miracles of Sainte Foy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 1-21 and Wolfert S. van Egmond, *Conversing with the Saints: Communication in Pre-Carolingian Hagiography from Auxerre* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 6-11.

[75] Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 2 and Donovan, *Women Saints*, p. 5.

[76] Patrick Geary, 'Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal', in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, ed. Sandro Sticca (NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 1-22, pp. 1-22, p. 10.

[77] Walter Berschin, 'Biography' in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 607-17, p. 607, considers that the overlap shared between biography and hagiography was greater than is commonly assumed.

[78] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 520-1.

present the view desired by, or required of, the writer. A further type of life was written by someone who knew the subject well, often over many years, and may well contain biographical details.[79] Many lives contain some or all of these features. While no argument is made in this thesis as to the factual veracity or otherwise of the lives considered here, it being accepted as a first principle that they tell the story that they tell, it is important to note that they represent mainly first-hand witness testimony couched within the language and intent of a hagiography.

Irrespective of the particular group a saint's life is in, as a genre lives have their own rules, styles and traditions. They are characterised by formulaic narrative approaches, associated with each other through literary motifs, presentation of speeches, descriptions of tortures and miracles, biblical allusion and other religious authority.[80] Hagiography can be considered an explicitly didactic genre, presenting models of saintly behaviour for its audience to imitate.[81] In order to construct meaning they rely on a common vocabulary, on each other and on the wider Christian cultural history.[82] Rooted in centuries of Christian literary tradition, a life reinforced the saint's claim to sanctity by placing him or her within a recognised setting of holy imitation.[83] Although the framework of hagiographical texts represented a genre firmly rooted in centuries-old tradition, the accounts inserted within these structures differ in focus or cultural meaning and were adaptable, being responsive to contemporary needs.[84] The large numbers of surviving lives show how popular they were, but reading them today requires an understanding of the genre, its *topoi* and conventions, and the application of a specialised critical apparatus.[85]

[79] Ibid., p. 522.

[80] Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', p. 11.

[81] Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 2.

[82] Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', p. 11.

[83] Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 2.

[84] Ibid.; Donovan, *Women Saints*, p. 6.

[85] Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', p. 11; Bartlett, 'Rewriting Saints' Lives', p. 598.

Stylistically, a life reached back to established models of sanctity from the early church; accounts of the martyrs, the Desert Fathers, bishops, confessors and heroic saints and the borrowing of details from one life to use in another was a commonplace.[86] Written in the period after the end of the era of persecution in which a new concept of sainthood was emerging, early lives assimilated asceticism to martyrdom, and sanctity was ascribed to those who spread the gospel or governed the church with piety.[87] The dependence of a life upon traditional models of sanctity was not seen as plagiarism but as skilful and subtle use of relevant sources which provided amplification and authentication of the story being told.[88] In the monastic saints' lives, most markedly those of Ailred and Hugh, this is seen in references to the *Life* of the fourth-century saint, Martin of Tours (316-397), a work that, among others, came to have great influence on later medieval hagiographers.[89]

The conceptual incorporation of martyrdom to asceticism which is seen in the earlier saints' lives, provided an attractive and useful model for later medieval hagiographers. In Hugh's *Magna Vita*, Adam of Eynsham included a chapter in which he described Martin and Hugh and marked the similarities in their respective demises, evoking a sense of post-persecution period

[86] Vauchez, *Saints*, pp. 14-18.

[87] *Saints and their Cults*, ed. Wilson, p. 3 and Stouck, *Medieval Saints*, pp. 137 and 167. Validatory use of seminal lives occurred from early on in the Christian era with Gregory the Great's *Life* of Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547) evoking accounts of Anthony and, especially, Martin.

[88] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 114-18.

[89] Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, ed. Philip Burton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Heffernan's assessment of Ailred's *Life* shows thirty associations with that of Martin. *Sacred Biography*, p. 118. For Martin of Tours as a model for twelfth-century monastic sainthood see Ward, *Miracles*, p. 168. Bartlett in *Why Can the Dead*, p. 21, cites Athanasius's *Life of Antony* and Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit* as other fourth-century lives that became foundational models and inspiration for future hagiographies.

martyrdom.[90] Walter did likewise, and as mentioned above, used the model of Martin in Ailred's *Life* and the description of the abbot's dead body, which was markedly similar to that of Martin, 'clearer than glass, whiter than snow'.[91] Unlike Adam, though, Walter did not make the reference explicit and his detractors missed the allusion, earning the censure of Walter who then quoted the reference for them. 'Or again in the *Life* of Martin, "purer than glass, whiter than milk." Oh, you dullards!'[92] This shows that even without explicit signposting, readers were expected to pick up references to earlier saints and understand this as a mechanism that justified their own elevation of the subject of the life to the status of saint. The intended readers must have been aware of this device or its use would have been meaningless.[93]

Biblical references were used similarly in lives and provided the validating influence of scripture. As is the case with the embedding of foundational saint's lives into hagiographical texts, this was a well-established convention within the genre, a device recognised and accepted by those receiving the accounts.[94] Sometimes it is seen explicitly, used in a quote, but more commonly it is implicit in the text, relying on reader recognition, providing familiarity and the scriptural endorsement of a hagiographer's words.[95] This insertion of defining and justificatory quotes and allusions into the text is one of the reasons why care is required when reading and

[90] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, pp. 199- 208. The chapter is headed: 'The numerous coincidences preceding and following the deaths of the blessed bishops Martin of Tours and Hugh of Lincoln [Quod multa consimiliter precesserunt et subsecuta sunt beatorum episcoporum Martini Turonensis et Hugonis Lincolniensis transitum].'

[91] *VAil*, lviii, p. 62. 'Cuius caro vitro purior, nive candidior.'

[92] Ibid., *Letter to Maurice*, p. 77. 'Illudque in vita beati Martini: vitro purior lacte candidior. O hebetes!'

[93] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 112 and 114.

[94] Ibid., p. 114.

[95] *VA*, II, xx, p. 92. Anselm, for example, quoted Acts 5: 29, and Peter saying, 'We ought to obey God rather than man' when he travelled to Rome against the king's wishes. Wulfric's death was intimated by reference to a biblical quote after he tried to put back on the hauberk he had worn previously and which had miraculously fallen off his body: see Revelation 14: 13, 'From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.' *LWH*, 99, p. 124, trans. Matarasso, 3. 42, p. 208. 'Therefore the flesh, already told by the Spirit that it might rest from its labours, showed itself justly indignant at having its burden reimposed.'

endeavouring to understand a saint's life. References that would almost certainly have been instantly recognisable to a contemporary readership may escape a modern reader unless they have made themselves familiar with the context within which, and for which, a life was written. With reference to the ill-health narratives considered here, it might be expected that descriptions of suffering would occasion an increase in justificatory methods, these being used in an endeavour to explain experiences that could be construed negatively and that represented some tension in the mind of the writer. Pain, suffering and death are aspects of the human condition that could compromise faith, and this is an area of potential conflict that will be explored throughout the thesis.

A saint's life typically followed a standard formula which began with their birth and ended with their death. However, as it derived its coherence not from its structure but from its purpose, it did not necessarily follow a linear chronology between the two. Since its function was to set out the reasons why its subject was a saint, rather than to offer biographical detail, a life had no need for a chronological narrative but could be thematic and read as a collection of anecdotes.[96] This is seen in some, but not all, of the lives here. For example, Adam interrupted the flow of his account of Hugh's dying at the climactic moment of the bishop's death to include his chapter concerning Martin of Tours. This shows it was an important point for Adam and demonstrates how the lives could be structured to emphasise particular features that were critical to the writer or reader. Margaret of Scotland's *Life*, for example, has a very lengthy genealogy that links her back to Adam and reflects the interests of Turgot's commissioning patron, Margaret's daughter Matilda queen of England, but does not offer much in the way of other detail about people or places.[97] In the lives of female saints it was usual to include themes

[96] Bartlett *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 518.

[97] *SMQS*, pp. 141-68 and Stouck, *Medieval Saints*, p. 273.

of sexual enticement, this being the saint's sole or central area of temptation.[98] But such tropes were not compulsory for the hagiographer, who was free to include or omit them as best met his needs. Of the two female saints considered here, sexual themes are seen in the case of the religious and celibate Christina of Markyate but not in the married queen, Margaret of Scotland.

The hagiographic tradition served to emphasise dramatised action, a feature that allowed writers to synthesise complex ideologies into the narrative, something that was particularly significant to a society that was shaped by its religious beliefs.[99] This attribute is more apparent in the received death accounts used here than it is in the first-hand eye-witness narratives. These accounts show development in the received memory of the saint, growth through the agency of the oral tradition, and a shaping by the community of the areas of the account they felt best suited their particular identity and the version of themselves they wished to present. The lives can also be understood as eschatological texts, spanning time, linking the current saint back to previous ones and conversely, particularly in the death narratives, onwards to the future. In Waldef's *Life*, which was written shortly after his body was found to be incorrupt for a second time, great emphasis is placed on him as treasure, a relic, present both on earth and in heaven.[100] Incorruption was a significant miracle and according to Jocelin it was only the seventh time it was seen.[101] It is no surprise that he wished to make much of it, for it redounded to the credit not just of Waldef, but of his house and order too. The emphases engaged by the hagiographers suggest the particular points each writer wanted to highlight in their narrative, and wished their

[98] Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), p. 40.

[99] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 5-6.

[100] This is discussed in chapter 1.3.ii.

[101] *LWal*, 133, p. 355. The other six saints Jocelin named were Edward the Confessor and Cuthbert, the martyrs Elphege and Edmund, and the female saints Ethelrida and Wiburga.

readers to understand, while posthumous miracles retained the saint within the sacred heart of their community, continuing to intervene in lives of successive generations.

One of the features of a life was that it commonly positioned its subject as existing between the two spheres of heaven and earth. While the hagiographer sometimes began collecting material and writing while the saint was still alive, circulation and sharing of the work started after their death when the person could be reckoned to be in heaven. Of the saints considered here, the recording of material for the *Life* of Ailred, and those of Christina and Godric, probably commenced while they were alive. Anselm's *Life* was undoubtedly started in his lifetime since the archbishop commanded Eadmer to destroy his work.[102] As described in their lives, saints were, whether living or dead, in a sense 'super' human, someone whose special virtues and faith made them suitable and powerful mediators between the two spheres, linking the human with the divine, the sacred to the profane and the mystical to the practical.[103] This harks back to the early church and Gregory of Tours, (c. 538-594), who considered that saints were uniquely able to live in two realms simultaneously, that they were active agents in securing their own sanctity and that their desire to cling to the sacred transformed their earthly lives.[104] This representation and sense of spanning spheres is seen in the saints considered here as they suffered; in the dying Ailred speaking with angels and Waldef, returning from the edges of death, speaking of wonders.[105] The challenge for the hagiographer was to make his subject appear fully human and subject to mankind's suffering, while ensuring that what they wrote equally confirmed and celebrated his or her otherness.[106] In their humanity, and through the

[102] *VA*, II, lxxii, pp. 150-1.

[103] *Saints and their Cults*, ed. Wilson, p. 2; Donovan, *Women Saints*, pp. 5 and 10-11.

[104] Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, p. 4 and Gregory the Great, *Libri Moralium sive Expositio in Librum Job, PL* 75, 1004.

[105] *VAil*, liv, p. 60 and *LWal*, 89, pp. 160 and 309, both of which are discussed in chapter 5.7.

[106] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 30.

God-given quality that marked them as special, uniquely endowed to withstand great suffering in obedience and faith, they were depicted as being in a sense imitations of Christ. The lives contain accounts which defy probability and understanding of 'the natural world' and the narrative is the medium for the symbolic representation of the divine that is the object of the work.[107] It is to be expected that this feature will be particularly apparent in the ill-health and death narratives, an assumption that is tested in this thesis.

3. Medicine in Twelfth-Century England

Although not directly concerned with the history of medicine, this research does touch upon the subject, making a brief background to the topic necessary. The transformation of medical knowledge, practice and teaching in Latin Europe from the late eleventh century has been the focus of a significant body of research over the last thirty years including the reception of new learning, the growing distinction between *practica* and *theorica* and the role of the doctor.[108] Seminal to the changes in medical scholarship and practice that were emerging over the twelfth century was the work of Constantine the African. Constantine was of north African origin and settled in Monte Cassino, Italy, where he died as a monk sometime between 1085 and 1098.

[107] Ibid., p. 11.

[108] From the wealth of research in the area, the following authors and works are particularly relevant here as they consider the translation, transmission and development of texts and their content, collation and collection. *Constantine the African and 'Alī Ibn al-'Abbās al-Magūsī: The Pantegni and Related Texts*, ed. Charles Burnett and Danielle Jacquart (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994); Charles Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: the Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (Farnham: Ashgate 2010); Monica Green, *Women's Healthcare in the Medieval West* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2000); Monica Green,'Salerno on the Thames: The Genesis of Anglo-Norman Literature' in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c. 1100 - c. 1500*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 220-237; Brian Lawn, *The Salernitan Questions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); Frederick Paxton, 'Signa mortifera: Death and Prognostication in Early Medieval Monastic Medicine', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 67 (1993), 631-50, pp. 634-37; Faith Wallis, 'Signs and Senses: Diagnosis and Prognosis in Early Medieval Pulse and Urine Texts', in *The Social History of Medicine*, 13 (2000), 265-278; Faith Wallis, *Medieval Medicine: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2010).

He contributed to the growth of medicine significantly through his translations from Arabic into Latin of scientific works, which were either lost or unknown in western Europe. This included works from the Islamicate world and practitioners such as Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya' al-Razi and Abu 'Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina and others from older, Greek masters especially those written by, or attributed to, Hippocrates and Galen.[109] Over the twelfth century Constantine's translations spread from Monte Cassino, probably first to the medical schools in nearby Salerno, then onwards across western Europe.

Some of Constantine's translations were to prove both influential and enduring. The *Isagoge*, or as it came to be listed in some collections including Rievaulx's, the *Ysagoge Iohannicii*, is a short handbook introducing students of medicine to the basic principles of medical theory and is thought to be the first work Constantine translated at Monte Cassino.[110] The *Pantegni* included a version of the Hippocratic work *Prognosis* which is of particular relevance here as it included signs of pending death.[111] The *Aphorisms,* which had been translated from Greek to Latin in the fifth or sixth century, was translated afresh, probably from Arabic, in the eleventh century, as the appetite for Latin translations of classical texts grew in the west.[112] Variance emerged in texts as they were copied and circulated. Parts of *Prognosis* for example made their way into derivative works attributed to Hippocrates, and joined with other medical works to

[109] Wallis, *Medieval Medicine*, pp. 135-6.

[110] Francis Newton, 'Constantine the African and Monte Cassino: New Elements and the Text of the Isagoge' in *Constantine the African*, p. 38. For the Rievaulx library catalogue see M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Jesus College Cambridge* (London, Clay and Sons, 1895), pp. 50-2. Besides *Ysagoge Iohannicii*, a medical text entitled *Liber medicinalis qui fuit hugonis de Beverlaco* and another called *Liber medicinalis qui appellatur antidotarum* are listed.

[111] Wallis, *Medieval Medicine*, pp. 135-6.

[112] Faith Wallis, 'Why was the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates Retranslated in the Eleventh Century?' in *Vehicles of Transmission, Translation and Transformation*, ed. R. Wisnovsky, F. Wallis, J. Fumo and C. Fraenkel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 173-194, p. 189.

form manuscript collections known to have been circulating in monasteries from the ninth century.[113] English monasteries showed a particular enthusiasm for collecting these medical works in their libraries and obtained a significant proportion of texts, showing there to have been an appreciable, and early, interest in the subject matter.[114] The twelfth-century library catalogue from Durham, for example, shows that a number of medical texts were in the collection there.[115]

Monastic interest in medicine is evident from the late eleventh century. Writing from Bec to Christ Church, Canterbury, sometime between 1070 and 1077, Anselm asked his friend Maurice to obtain for him from the library there a copy of Hippocrates' work, the *Aphorisms.* That this was one of the new Greek-style translations is apparent from Anselm's request in two of his letters that Maurice should not leave out any terms that are unfamiliar to him or in Greek.[116] Medical works contained information on both theory and practice. Treatment of the body could, depending on the practitioner, be based on any of several different methodologies and included areas such as astrology and divination as well as traditional medicine. Humoral theory was a key component of the latter.[117] At the core of humoral medicine is the concept of

[113] Paxton, 'Signa mortifera', pp. 634-37, cites two ninth-century texts from the Abbey of Echternach which appear derivative from *Prognosis*, and contain some (though not all) of the same prognostic details, as well as adding more of their own.

[114] Green 'Salerno', pp. 220-237, demonstrates the spread of medical texts across Europe.

[115] See Durham Cathedral Library MS. C.IV.4 and Hunter 100. The library catalogue also lists the collections of two men named as doctors, Gervase and Herebertus. Their manuscripts included many medical texts including the *Pantegni*, the *Viaticum,* a text listed as *Liber Prognosticorum Ypocratis,* as well as a herbal, a lapidary, works on fever and urine and an *Antidotarium Alexandri*. *Catalogues of the Library of Durham Cathedral* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1838), pp. 142-6.

[116] Giles E. M. Gasper and Faith Wallis, 'Anselm and the Articella', *Traditio*, 59 (2004), 129-174, pp. 129-30.

[117] For humoral medicine see among other works: *The Body in Balance,* ed. Peregrine Horden (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013); Vivian Nutton, 'Medicine in Medieval Western Europe, 100-1500' in *The Western Medical Tradition*, ed. L. I. Conrad, M. Neve, V. Nutton, R. Porter, A. Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 139-213. French, *Medicine Before Science*; Green, *Women's Healthcare*.

balance and imbalance. This, with its resultant impact on health, was manifest through evidence derived from the presence, condition, flow and amount of four bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.[118] Illness was caused by anything that hindered proper humoral flow and was predicated upon a range of variables which included, but was by no means limited to, the sex and age of the patient, their diet, the time of year. The composition of a woman was considered to be naturally wet and cold, phlegmatic, while that of a man was hot and dry. An example of this can be found in the in the second of the three works in the *Trotula* collection, the *Liber de Sinthomatibus Mulierum*.

> He [God] wished by the opposing frigidity and humidity of the woman to rein him in from too much excess, so that the stronger qualities, that is the heat and dryness, should rule the man, who is the stronger and more worthy person, while the weaker ones, that is to say the coldness and humidity, should rule the weaker, that is the woman.[119]

In health the proper humoral equilibrium of a woman was kept in balance by the opposing hot and dry male humours, and vice versa. Poor health and humoral imbalance went hand-in-hand and practitioners applied the tenets of humoral science in their endeavour to diagnose and treat their patients. Diagnostic features included excessive or inadequate heat, patient colour and the condition and amount of bodily fluids. Remedies sought to address the causes of humoral imbalance and, by restoring proper equilibrium, cure the patient. As will be shown

[118] Humours were linked to the four elements of fire, water, air and earth. Green, *The Trotula*, p. 19.

[119] 'Opposita frigiditate et humiditate mulieris ab excessu nimio uoluit cohercere ut qualitates fortiores, scilicet caliditas et siccitas, uiro tamquam fortiori et digniori persone, debiliores, scilicet frigiditas et humiditas, utpote debiliori, scilicet mulieri, dominarentur.' Green, *The Trotula*, pp. 70-1. Green considers that the origins of the three texts probably date to twelfth-century Salerno.

subsequently, humours appear increasingly in the lives considered here, particularly in conditions typified by excess fluid.

4. Retrospective Diagnosis

Just as the current discussion is not primarily about medical history, so too is it not about retrospective diagnosis, that is, the attempt to identify, to diagnose, diseases and illnesses that affected people who are now dead. However, because at times this research will look at the textual sources through the lens of contemporary medical practice it is helpful to outline briefly the hazards and opportunities of retrospective diagnosis. Retrospective diagnosis has proved to be a controversial subject amongst some academics working in the field of medical humanities, criticised as projecting back from present-day experience rather than being something that can tell an historian anything about the past and, further, leading on occasion to *mis*diagnosis.[120] An example of misdiagnosis is seen in the case of an image from the fourteenth-century work, *Omne Bonum,* authored by James le Palmer. (See Image 1, below.) If the whole page of the manuscript is considered and the text read, the image is of a group of clerics with leprosy receiving instruction from their bishop. A cropped copy of the folio, containing just the image itself and not the surrounding text, was misdiagnosed as a depiction of plague, and widely circulated with this incorrect ascription.[121] An example of direct relevance here is seen in the suggestion that Ailred of Rievaulx may have had shingles, although no specific evidence for

[120] Andrew Cunningham, 'Identifying Disease in the Past: Cutting the Gordian Knot', *Asclepio*, 54 (2002), 13–34, p.13.

[121] The case is written up fully by Lori Jones and Richard Nevell in 'Plagued by Doubt and Viral Misinformation: The Need for Evidence-based Use of Historical Disease Images', *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 16 (October 2016), e235–e240.

this is offered, beyond the comment that it was 'according to details Walter gives'.[122] This renders the possible diagnosis too speculative to be of value.

Image 1: 'Bishop Teaching Clerics with Leprosy' from James le Palmer, *Omne Bonum,* fourteenth century[123]

[122] Marsha Dutton, *Walter Daniel: The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx & the Letter to Maurice*, trans. F. M. Powicke (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1994), p. 36.

[123] British Library, MS Royal 6 E VI, vol 2, fol. 301r, accessed online 26 November 2020 http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_6_e_vi!2_f301r

However, historically sound retrospective diagnosis brings benefits. It allows for a fuller consideration of the subject of interest and, in a potential benefit to modern science, offers the possibility of mapping disease pathways over time. It is the first of these benefits that is of particular relevance here.

Sources that offer the possibility of retrospective diagnosis fall into two broad groups.[124] The first group, which is pertinent in this study, consists of materials created in the past such as texts or images. The second group can be classified as archaeological and includes, for example, skeletal remains.[125] Although interesting, this group is not relevant here other than in terms of historical method, for researchers from this second category have established a rigorous framework in ensuring they contextualise their subject of study prior to venturing a diagnosis. Their approach enables a robust analysis and, in theory at least, a more accurate outcome. It takes into account influences such as different expressions of illness in societies both geographically and over time and changing medical practices, recognising that diseases are not merely biological phenomena but are events that occur within a society which will interpret and articulate them as seems proper to them at that time.[126] Monica Green writes that modern disease categories are incompatible with disease understanding in the period prior to the acquisition of microbiological knowledge and so cannot be used alone with confidence in

[124] Piers D. Mitchell, 'Retrospective Diagnosis and the use of Historical Texts for Investigating Disease', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 1 (2011), 81-88, p. 81.

[125] Both leprosy and syphilis for example leave clear skeletal evidence of their presence, and obstetric deaths can be seen in interments which contain both maternal and fetal remains. Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), p. 60.

[126] See for example, Piers D. Mitchell, 'Improving the use of historical written sources in paleopathology', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 19 (2016), 88-95; Jane E. Buikstra, Della C. Cook, Katelyn L. Bolhofner, 'Introduction: Scientific Rigor in Paleopathology', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 19 (2017), 80-7.

retrospective diagnosis.[127] Certainly the language of disease has changed and modern understanding of conditions described in the twelfth century may not concur with the understanding of the author. For example, the condition lientery, which is found in three of the lives considered here, is not described in modern medicine. This demonstrates how disease and illness may be considered as human constructs resulting from specific socio-cultural contexts and are thus understandable only within the parameters of their genesis.[128]

An interdisciplinary approach with expertise drawn from fields including biomedical science, archaeology, humanities and social science is necessary in endeavouring large scale retrospective diagnosis.[129] Such an approach when successful, as has been the case in recent research on diseases such as plague and leprosy, brings significant advantages and enables the advancement of both scientific and historical knowledge.[130] While asking what illnesses affected the subjects of lives is retrospective diagnosis on a very small-scale, its attempt nevertheless requires a robust methodological approach and a layering of context. However, with this operational caveat in place, retrospective diagnosis offers the possibility of enhanced understanding of the lived experience of the people in the lives, and a chance to see how the hagiographers utilised this as they wove it into their work.

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[127] Monica Green, 'The Globalisations of Disease' in *Human Dispersal and Species Movement: From Prehistory to the Present*, ed. Nicole Boivin, Rémy Crassard, and Michael D. Petraglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 494-520, p. 497.

[128] Jon Arrizabalaga, 'Problematising Retrospective Diagnosis in the History of Disease' *Asclepio*, 54 (2002), 51-70, p. 53.

[129] Jane E. Buikstra, Della C. Cook, Katelyn L. Bolhofner, 'Introduction: Scientific Rigor in Paleopathology', *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 19 (2017), 1-8, p.1.

[130] See for example, Nükhit Varlik, 'New Science, Old Sources', in *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, ed. Monica Green (Kalamazoo: Arc Medieval Press, 2015), pp. 93-227 and Monica Green, 'The Globalisations of Disease', in *Human Dispersal and Species Movement: From Prehistory to the Present*, ed. Nicole Boivin, Rémy Crassard, and Michael D. Petraglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 494-520.

What follows is organised into five chapters. Like a saint's life it commences with birth and ends with death. Chapter 1 considers new bodies, initially those of the pregnant nun of Watton and the impact and symbolism of her gestating fetus, followed by a radically different type of new body; the resurrection body received by a recently dead saint. The term 'resurrection body' is used here to refer to the glorified bodies described by the hagiographers when writing of the recently dead saint.[131] Moving forward through life, chapter 2 is concerned with food, not just as a human necessity but recognised as essential for healthy physical and spiritual functioning.[132] The tensions this represented to the monastic ideal, with its focus on the reduction of the calls and temptations of the material world are discussed. The enhanced expression of asceticism required for sanctity juxtaposed with the need to maintain health and monastic obedience, required deft handling by the hagiographers. Chapter 3 moves to look at illnesses and ageing, asking what conditions were commonly described, why this might be, and what this shows about contemporary medicine within the aegis of the monasticism. Chapter 4 investigates the role of doctors in the lives, both as medical practitioners and as religious figures responsible for the health of souls. Finally, chapter 5 is concerned with dying and death. It analyses the ways in which the hagiographers approached the subject, what this shows about their own faith world, and the warnings and hopes that dying represented to the monastic mind. Taken collectively, the chapters will reveal the way in which narratives concerning ill health contained in twelfth-century saints' lives of England, may be interpreted and understood.

[131] Caroline Walker Bynum describes the resurrection body as being the actual body of the saint which 'would rise in all its individuality because it had begun to be a relic while still alive.' *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 201.

[132] This was based on the tenets of Benedict's *Rule. BR*, RB 39, 1-11, pp. 321-2 which describes Benedict's requirements for his own house, covers both welfare and wellbeing as well as abstemiousness, and was the dietary regime adopted by later monasticism.

Chapter One: New Bodies

The theme of new bodies in this chapter encompasses both birth and death. Ranging from the pregnant body of the nun of Watton to the dead bodies of the monastic saints the aim is to explore how the hagiographers used the material body of their subject to articulate the theological points they wished to make. Described to display sin, suffering and salvation, and predicated on contemporary belief, the changing, transformed, body was one of the mediums through which the writers told their story.

1.1 The Pregnancy and Delivery of the Nun of Watton

Sometime around 1150, Henry Murdac, archbishop of York, gave a four-year-old girl to the Gilbertine community of nuns at Watton, and there she grew up. The girl's name is unknown but her story has survived in a letter written by Ailred, abbot of Rievaulx.[133] It is not clear to whom Ailred was writing, but his stated aim was to share with the recipient of his letter miraculous events concerning the young nun, events which he himself had witnessed in part.[134]

There is a further, unmentioned, purpose in Ailred's writing. The miracle he was to describe was realised through the agency of the late Henry Murdac, archbishop of York, who was, like Ailred, a Cistercian monk. Murdac's election to the see of York in 1147 had been extremely controversial, not least because it removed William of York, nephew of the king and future

[133] *NW*, and Boswell, *Kindness*, pp. 452-8.

[134] Ibid., p. 452. 'Miracula Domini et manifesta divinae pietatis indicia scire et tegere, portio sacrilegi est.' The date of the letter can be narrowed down to between 1153 when Murdac died and Ailred's death in 1167. The girl must have been at Watton prior to Murdac's death and reached maturity and taken the veil, if not vows, before the episode Ailred describes. Giles Constable thinks a date in the 1160s to be the most likely. 'Ailred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton: an Episode in the Early History of the Gilbertine Order' in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 205-26, p. 210. The nun's age at the time of the incident is not known but Raymonde Foreville estimates her to have been no older than fifteen years of age. *BSG*, p. liv, fn. 1.

saint, from the office.[135] The contentious election of Henry Murdac remained an issue until his death in 1153. Ailred had supported the election and it is possible that his attributing the miracle to Murdac's divine intervention may have been an attempt to redeem or enhance the late archbishop's reputation, as well as justifying his own role in the election.[136] A close reading of the contents of the letter, when set against this background, leads to the reasonable supposition that Ailred's letter had a hagiographical intent in addition to his stated purpose of sharing the miracle. Another factor suggests that Ailred was concerned with hagiography, or at least with the raising of Henry Murdac's reputation. That is the fact that Ailred placed a man, Murdac himself, in the birthing chamber. As will be discussed subsequently, this was an extremely unusual thing to do in several respects: unusual by the practices of the day, unusual in terms of the church's view of parturition, and unusual in the tradition of contemporary accounts of miraculous births. Such an action by Ailred strongly supports the supposition that he was writing the letter as a piece of hagiography with Murdac as its subject.

1.1.i Antenatal

The nature of the miracle of the nun of Watton was twofold. The first element concerned the pregnancy the nun had contracted as a result of a liaison with a brother of the house. The second involved the miraculous removal of chains and fetters with which the nun had been constrained following the discovery of her pregnancy. While thematically these events are united in concerning physical and spiritual liberation, it is just the first of them, the pregnancy and birth, that is considered here.

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[135] In 1142, at the behest of William, abbot of Rievaulx, Ailred had accompanied Walter of London to Rome. He was part of the delegation opposing William of York's election to York and supporting the promotion of Henry Murdac in his place. Christopher Norton, *St William of York* (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), p. 82.

[136] Constable, 'Ailred of Rievaulx' in *Medieval Women*, ed. Baker, p. 211.

Despite her years in the community the nun was ill-suited for the life of a religious sister. Ailred wrote that as the girl grew she showed 'no love for the religious life, no concern for the rule, no inclination to honour God. Her glance was flirtatious, her speech indecorous, and her walk suggestive'.[137] Like most Gilbertine communities, Watton was a twinned house and accommodated both men and women in conditions, in theory at least, of strict segregation.[138] However, when some maintenance work was required on the women's part of the enclave, a group of brothers of the order came into the precinct. The nun and a young brother noticed each other and started to communicate. 'At first it was simply a matter of nods, but signs followed the nods, and finally they broke the silence and exchanged words about the sweetness of love.'[139]

Their liaison continued on its illicit pathway and the pair agreed to meet at night. Ailred described their different intentions. 'Although he was thinking about sex, she later said that she thought only of love.'[140] When the young man alerted her by throwing a stone at the wall of

[137] *NW*, col. 791; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 453. 'Nullus ei circa religionem amor, nulla circa ordinem sollicitudo, circa Dei timorem nullus affectus. Petulans illi oculus, sermo indecens, lascivus incessus.' Salih, in *Virginity*, p. 153, notes that the physician Gilbertus Anglicus wrote that a 'non-virgin' could be identified through the tripartite signs of her walk, glance and demeanour. However, as Gilbertus was born in 1180, well after the date of Ailred's letter, Ailred could not be using Gilbertus' work directly. He may, however, be alluding to notions that were current during his time and were later recorded by Gilbertus, that a woman's virginity, or lack of, could be recognised and known through the manner of her speech, walk and demeanour.

[138] Watton was founded in 1150 and Ailred's letter written prior to 1167 meaning that there may well have been ongoing development of the site and building works in progress at the time of the incident.

[139] *NW*, col. 791; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 453. 'Res primum nutibus agitur, sed nutus signa sequuntur. Tandem rupto silentio conserunt de amoris suavitate sermonem.'

[140] Ibid. 'Et ille stuprum meditabatur, illa cogitabat amore.' Ailred used the word *stuprum* for sex. Corinne Saunders, in *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 78, 82 and 88, notes that Gratian used *stuprum* to describe a form of illicit intercourse in which a virgin is deflowered**.** 'Therefore when she is corrupted through illicit intercourse, and when she is abducted, that is, led from her father's home, insofar as no act of marriage with her has previously been performed, it cannot be denied that she must be called ravished. But not every type of illicit coitus nor illicit defloration of any woman

her dormitory, the nun slipped out.[141] 'She is thrown down,' Ailred wrote, 'her mouth covered so she cannot call out, and she is corrupted in the flesh as she has already been in the spirit. Wickedness required repetition of the new pleasure.'[142] Whatever the intentions and expectations of the nun regarding the meeting and the possibility of sexual encounter, as a nun her body was not her own to bestow. On taking the veil she had given it elsewhere and it was no longer under her ownership.[143] The lovers continued to meet until the nun became pregnant and her condition was discovered by her sisters in the community.[144] Ailred wrote that the nuns

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is termed *raptus*. For fornication is one thing, *stuprum* another, adultery another, incest another, *raptus* another [Cum ergo hec illicito coitu sit corrupta, cumque ita sit abducta, id est a domo patris ducta, quod de eius nuptiis nichil actum ante fuerit, raptam appellandam negari non potest. Sed non omnis illicitus coitus, nec cuiuslibet illicita defloratio raptus appellatur. Aliud enim est fornicatio, aliud stuprum, aliud adulterium, aliud incestus, aliud raptus].' Gratian, *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Æmilius Friedberg, 2 vols (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879 and 1885), vol. I, part II, XXXVI.i. 2, 1288.

[141] *NW*, col. 792; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 453. 'Dat signum praedae impiissimus praedo, ut ad sonitum lapidis quem vel in parietem vel tectum in qua pausare consuevit, infelix se iactaturum promisit, de eus adventu certissime egrederetur ad eum.' Ailred employed the language of predator and prey here, reinforcing the naivety and helplessness of the nun, to which he had alluded previously through his observation that she was thinking only of love, *amore,* while the brother had sex, *stuprum*, on his mind. Ailred presented her as being misguided in her innocence but not wholly culpable. Despite her choices he positioned her as a victim.

[142] Ibid., p. 454. 'Prosternitur, os ne clamaret obstruitur, et prius mente corrupta carne corrumpitur. Experta voluptas nefas compulit iterare.'

[143] The *Life* of Gilbert, written after this event but no doubt reflecting the intentions of the founder of the order, stresses the lengths Gilbert went to in order to ensure the chastity of nuns in his foundations and to acknowledge the theological value of virginity and the risks that may threaten it. 'If what is clear in Dinah's case applies to all women everywhere, tender virginity is frequently and easily tempted by the serpent's cunning; therefore he shut them away from the world's clamour and the sight of men so that having entered the king's chamber they might be free in solitude for the embrace of the bridegroom alone [Virginitas tenera facile solet temptari ab astutia serpentis si passim pateat in omnibus quod patet in Dina, seclusit eas a strepitu mundi et ab aspect hominum ut regis ingresse cubiculum solius sponsi solitarie vacarent amplexibus].' *BSG*, pp. 32-3. Dinah is a biblical figure who was abducted and raped. Genesis 30, 34 and 46. The author also commented in *BSG*, pp. 31-2, that 'the fruit of virgins is one hundredfold'. This is reflective of the notion of the Ladder of Perfection in which tiers of the saved had virgins and the celibate being nearer the top than people who had been sexually active. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 249.

[144] Boswell, *Kindness,* p. 454.

became suspicious that something was amiss in the convent because they were repeatedly woken by noises at night.[145] There is more than a hint of disapprobation in Ailred's account here, and a sense that the nuns had been dilatory in spotting the activities of the nun and her lover.[146]

When the nun's pregnancy was revealed the young brother fled. The nuns responded to the news of her sexual activity, and consequent pregnancy, with horror and violence.[147] She was stripped, beaten repeatedly and mercilessly, and held chained in a small cell. It is possible that outrage of the nuns can be attributed, in part at least, to a collective response in which the loss of virtue of one of them was tantamount to a loss of virtue of all of them, the one representing the whole. Ailred noted that the beating was so severe that it was only the intervention of the comparatively moderate older nuns that tempered the violence and prevented harm from coming to the fetus.[148] It is not clear whether or not the younger nuns were trying to induce an abortion through their actions although, given the level of violence meted upon the nun, this is

[145] It is interesting that Ailred cited nocturnal noise rather than physical evidence of pregnancy, abdominal growth or amenorrhoea, as the first indication of untoward activity. It seems possible in a community where women lived in common and in close contact, that an individual ceasing to have periods, with the resultant absence of sanitary cloths and the care they necessitated, would have been noticed. The fact that there is no mention of it gives rise to several speculative suggestions: that the liaison was discovered after only a few weeks; that the nun was too young to be having regular periods or that her cycle was irregular, perhaps because of diet. Or, as seems likely even if any of these points pertained, Ailred simply chose not to mention it.

[146] Disciple in a monastic foundation was, or should have been, tightly regulated. Lanfranc described an official called a roundsman, or *circa*, who was required to patrol the monastery checking, among other things, that the monks were in their beds when they should be and not outside the monastic buildings when they should not have been. *MCL*, 85, p. 117.

[147] The nuns behaved throughout as a collective, in what Salih describes as 'a seething mass of outraged nunhood'. *Virginity*, p. 158. Ailred in his letter distanced himself from this initial, and subsequent, acts of violence but appeared to comprehend them. 'I praise not the deed but the zeal; I do not approve of the shedding of blood, but I commend the great outrage of the holy virgins against immorality'. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 455.

[148] Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 454.

a possibility. Certainly their actions showed a recklessness in their lack of concern for fetal wellbeing. The possibility that they may have been trying to induce an abortion is supported by the fact that shortly afterwards, when the nuns debated what to do with their pregnant sister, they discounted expulsion from the convent as an option. The reason given for this was that they considered it probable that if expelled the nun would become destitute and both she and her infant would die, and significantly, die unshriven.[149] Should this happen it would pose considerable danger to the souls of the nuns who had allowed it to occur. It seems likely then that the older nuns were not intervening in the beating so much to protect the fetus for its own sake, but to protect themselves from the consequences should an ensouled fetus abort and its soul be lost.[150] So despite the initial beating and the subsequent starvation, imprisonment and threats of burning, the nun remained safe, albeit incarcerated and ill-treated, in the convent until her delivery.

This element of the nun's story is evocative of that of Perpetua and Felicitas, women who were martyred in the arena in Carthage in the early third-century.[151] Although accounts varied in detail in the main all versions told the same story. Perpetua and Felicitas were martyred shortly after having given birth and were imprisoned and chained prior to their ordeal. Perpetua was breastfeeding an infant son and Felicitas, who was eight months pregnant when incarcerated, prayed she might give birth early so that she could enter the arena with her companions. Her

[149] Ibid., p. 455.

[150] There was no definitive theory as to when in the gestation period ensoulment occurred. Debate on the subject was known from the time of the early church, with differing opinions, including at conception, or at quickening or birth. David Albert Jones in *The Soul of the Embryo* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 119, noted that the reception of Aristotle's work in western Europe during the twelfth century was an important event in shaping the debate further although still no definitive thought emerged.

[151] *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* is found in one Greek and nine Latin and manuscripts, the earliest of which is early tenth century. See Thomas Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 60 for versions, dating and history.

prayer was granted. She gave birth in prison and her infant daughter was taken to be brought up by her sister. The women were stripped for the arena with, in some accounts, the crowd moved to pity by the sight of their naked bodies which bore the signs of recent childbirth and lactation. Both women died, having been first attacked by a wild cow and then impaled on a gladiator's sword. Their story remained in circulation from the time of the early church and it is reasonable to suppose that Ailred knew it and extrapolated the themes of imprisonment, violence, pregnancy and birth as a redemptive act.[152]

Several features of the Perpetua and Felicitas account resonate with Ailred's nun of Watton letter. Felicitas had to give birth before she would be allowed to meet her death and achieve salvation and glory with her martyr's crown. Likewise, albeit to a lesser degree and without the martyr's crown, the nun. All three women had to sever ties with their worldly family, notably their husband, in order to remain within their Christian fellowship and adhere to their faith. All were, in a manner, penetrated and all gave their child to be brought up by someone else. Ailred recounted the nun enduring, like Felicitas, a journey through violence and imprisonment until she found her own form of salvation beyond the act of parturition.

There was no redemptive outcome for the brother who fathered the infant. Rather, he was subjected to an appalling act of retributive violence. Having been tricked into returning to the convent, he was captured, beaten by the brothers then at the nuns' request given over to them.

[152] Barbara K. Gold, *Perpetua: Athlete of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 13, notes the enduring quality of the story saying it was mentioned by Tertullian in *De anima* 55.4; then Augustine in *De natura et origine animae* and sermons 280-282 and 159A; Bede in his *Martyrology* and Goscelin of St Bertin *Liber Confortatorius* among others. Of these, only Augustine's sermons are listed in the twelfth-century Rievaulx library catalogue but it is not unreasonable to think that Ailred would perhaps have heard the story and have had access to texts containing it while travelling away from Rievaulx. See, James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Jesus College*, p. 45.

> Once in their hands, he was thrown down and held. The cause of all the evils was brought in as if to a show: they placed in her [the nun's] hands an instrument, and she was forced, unwilling, to unman him with her own hands. Then one of those standing by, grabbing the parts of which he had been relieved, foul and bloody and just as they were, stuck them into the mouth of the sinner.[153]

The man was handed back to his brothers and is not mentioned again. From this point onwards he was immaterial to Ailred's narrative. This silence makes it impossible to know whether or not the brother survived the castration, although Abelard (d. 1142) did.[154] It is interesting to note that Ailred used the same verb, *prosternere*, to describe both the throwing down of the nun by the brother during their first sexual encounter, and the throwing down of the man himself before his castration.[155] This word with its association with rape, links the violations

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[153] *NW*, col. 793; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 455. 'Susceptus ab eis, prosternitur ac tenetur. Adducitur quasi ad spectaculum, illa malorum omnium causa: datur ei in manibus instrumentum, ac propris manibus virum abscidere invita compellitur. Tunc una de astantibus, arreptis quibus ille fuerat relevatus, sicut erant foeda sanguine in ora peccatricis projecit.'

[154] It has been suggested that the text implies that the brother's testicles but not his penis were removed, so it would have been possible for him survive, it being extremely unlikely for him to have lived much longer had the castration been complete. Constable, 'Ailred of Rievaulx', ed. Baker, p. 208, fn. 9 and Salih, *Virginity*, p. 157. In 'Amours, castration et miracle au couvent de Watton: évaluation émotionnelle d'un crime d'honneur monastique (v. 1165)', *Médiévales*, 61 (2011), 77-96, Damien Boquet suggests that the lover being returned to brothers indicates he survived.

[155] The use of *prosternitur* and the castration itself suggests that the nuns considered the sexual engagement between their sister and the young brother to be an act of rape. The phrase 'thrown to the ground' was an enduring one in English legislation from the late ninth century when the fine for throwing a woman to the ground in an act of sexual violence was ten shillings. The Anglo-Norman collection of laws, 'Leis Willelme', had the same fine for the same offence, while the penalty for an actual act of rape in this same legislation was castration. William of Malmesbury, writing about Henry I's continuation of his father's law on rape recorded that: 'He followed his father's example, and put a stop by proclamation to the ravages, the rape and rapine of his courtiers, ordaining that convicted offenders should lose their eyes and testicles [Genitoris emulus, rapinas curialium, furta, stupra edicto compescuit, deprehensis oculos cum testibus euelli precipiens].' *GRA*, v. 339, pp.

of the body which followed upon each act of throwing the person to the ground; the first being the initial sexual encounter and the second the castration. Through this linguistic connection Ailred appraised his reader that as the brother had despoiled the nun, so too was he ruined.

After being forced to castrate her lover the nun was returned to her cell, which Ailred describes as being a 'chamber within a chamber'.[156] This notion of an enclosed and secret room is rich in literary and biblical tropes and references. For instance Matthew 6: 6. 'But when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.' Anselm in his *Proslogion* used the notion of *cubiculum* in the context of withdrawing into one's soul to pray. 'Enter the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything except God and that which can help you in seeking him, and when you have shut the door, seek him.'[157] There is resonance too with the previously quoted passage from Gilbert's *Life* about protecting the chastity of the sisters in which admission to the convent is described as entering the king's [God's] chamber [*cubiculum*].[158] Gestational imagery is intertwined with biblical reference too if associated with, for example, Psalm 138: 13-15. 'Thou hast possessed my reins: thou has protected me in my mother's womb … my bone is not hidden from thee, which thou hast made in secret.' The emphasis is on containment, enclosure and growth with the inference that God would be with the nun when, if, she prayed

724-5. See Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, pp. 48-9 for 'Leis Willelme' and pp. 39 and 46 for the separate issue of sexual assault on a nun and enhanced penalties.

[156] *NW*, col. 796; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 457. 'Cubiculum illud intra cubiculum.'

[157] 'Intra in cubiculum mentis tuae, exclude omnia deum et quae te iuvent ad quaerendum eum, et clauso ostio quaere eum.' Anselm of Canterbury, *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, vols i-vi, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1949-1961), 'Proslogion' vol. 1, ch. 1, pg. 97, line 7, translation Benedicta Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm* (Harmsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 239. The phrase is evocative of the Desert Fathers. 'Go and sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.' Benedicta Ward, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 10.

[158] *BSG*, p. 33.

in her cell. Further, there is a striking association between the layers of enclosure in a chamber within a chamber and the image and actuality of gestation. Like a Russian doll, the fetus was at the centre, contained as it grew within the womb of the nun who was herself held in a cell, within another chamber, found inside the convent. This both juxtaposes and corresponds the notion of imprisonment with that of growth and protection. The fetters and chains with which the nun was shackled in her cell evoke in the reader an image of the umbilical cord which links mother and baby in the womb and provides nourishment to the developing infant; it is literally a lifeline. So too for the nun. Her confinement within the womb of her mother convent became transformative and led to her spiritual rebirth.

While the notion of the gestating nun being gestated herself is one of positive growth, Ailred presented no beauty in his description of the gravid body of the nun. Her physical condition and fecundity are used to mirror her spiritual condition, both at its worst, and later on in the letter, at its best. Ailred's portrayal of her pregnancy, the visible manifestation of her sin, is graphic and gross and is the page upon which Ailred chose to describe her iniquity.

> Already the infant moved in the womb, the milk flowed from the full breasts; her belly was so large it looked as if she would bear twins. A leaden colour surrounded her eyes, her face went white, and as soon as her breasts were emptied, they refilled with liquid. Her cell barely accommodated her now …[159]

[159] *NW*, col. 794; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 456. 'Iam infans in ventre vivebat, lac ex uteribus ubertim fluebat; adeo etiam uterus intumescere videbatur ut putaret geminos parituram. Plumbeus color oculos circumfundit, faciem pallor invadit, et nunc vacuatis humore mamillis, post modicum solito liquore replebantur. Iam eam vix capiebat ergastulum …' I am grateful to members of the online forum medmed-l@ASU.EDU for their most helpful responses to a May 2020 post entitled 'Plumbeus color oculos circumfundit', and suggestions that while the notion of a leaden colour as a sign of illness was seen in contemporary medical literature, this was not in the context of pregnancy. Examples include: *De Urinis secundum Matthaeum*, the *Regulae Urinarum* of Mauris,

Ailred's description reflects the theoretical premise of the four humours, and the belief that a woman's natural composition was cold and wet, phlegmatic. It is entirely reasonable to suppose that he was using humoral theory in an informed and deliberate manner in his letter. The late twelfth-century Rievaulx library catalogue lists several medical works and while it is not possible to know whether they were there in Ailred's time it is certainly conceivable.[160] In the case of the nun, Ailred was describing a marked imbalance of the humours; the proper moist quality of the female body had broken beyond the bounds of equilibrium and she had become sodden and suppurating. She was profoundly unhealthy, her phlegmatic excess apparent in her pasty complexion, leaden-coloured eyes, flabbiness and abnormal lactation. Her breasts were full, lactation had started, even though the nun could only have been about halfway through her pregnancy.[161] Such a profusion of milk is unusual, indeed almost unknown, during pregnancy and it seems probable that Ailred described it in order to emphasise the lack of humoral balance in the nun. A link between complexion and healthy lactation is seen in the *Trotula* in a section on choosing a wet nurse. 'She should have a clear colour, a woman who has redness mixed with white … who is not blemished, nor that has breasts that are flabby or too large.'[162] In contrast to this picture of lactating health, of a body in balance, the nun was a

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and the *Practica* of Bartholomew of Salerno. The *Liber Pantegni*, I. 24, has it as a sign of an unhealthy complexion. 'Quod si diligentissime medicus inspexerit poterit cognoscere primum a colore, quod si sit citrinus color corporis ex abundantia cholere rubee designatur, si lividus vel plumbeus, mala complexio significatur, aut de epatis frigiditate, aut de abuntia cholere nigre, aut ex splenis defectione.' Later works mention it as a sign of *cacexia*, cancer. However no contemporary source to suggest this association has been found in this research. It is worth noting, though, that Ailred does appear to be describing the nun's gravidity in medicalised language and playing on the notion of the pregnancy as a malign and abnormal presence growing in her body.

[160] James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Jesus College*, pp. 50-2.

[161] This can be inferred from Ailred's observation that 'already the infant was moving in her womb'. Fetal movements are usually felt first between eighteen and twenty weeks of gestation in primigravidae pregnancies. Betty R. Sweet, *Mayes' Midwifery* (London: Ballière Tindall, 1988), p. 130.

[162] Green, *Trotula*, 'Liber de Sinthomatibus Mulierum', 126, pp. 110-1. 'Nutricem oportet esse iuuenem, clarum colorem habentem, que cum albedine ruborem habeat admixtum … nec maculosa, neque infirmas mamillas habeat, neque nimis grossas, pectus grossum et amplum, pinguis mediocriter sit.'

seeping mass of corrupted flesh, her leaden colour signifying her spiritual death, her bodily imbalance reflective of both her physical and spiritual malaise.

In the passage describing the nun's lactation, Ailred wrote first of milk, *lac*, following this in the next sentence by describing it as fluid or liquid, *liquore*. While Ailred's choice of words may of course have been due to the writer's desire to avoid repeating the same word in close succession, it is notable that in so doing he reduced the milk of a mother, that most essential nutrient for the survival of a newborn infant, to the status of a mere liquid. There is nothing nourishing here, the lactation is excessive and repugnant, emblematic of the sinful choices and the sexual incontinence that reduced the nun to her current condition. There is tension between Ailred's apparent antipathy to the pregnant, lactating body of the nun as he described it, and contemporary and complex Cistercian writings, Ailred's included, that utilised images of breasts and suckling to illustrate the nurturing, loving relationship of the believer with Jesus and the church, and the responsibilities incumbent upon an abbot to nurture his community members. Ailred described the crucified Jesus as a nursing mother 'his outspread arms will invite you to embrace him, his naked breasts will feed you with the milk of sweetness to console you'.[163] The theme of lactation is seen in the Bible to describe the development of a Christian from spiritual infancy to maturity.[164] Although its use in religious imagery describes lactation

[163] Ailred of Rievaulx, 'De Institutione Inclusarum', in A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, ed., *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia,* I, in *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* (1951), pp. 636-82, p. 658, trans. Mary Paul Mcpherson in Basil Pennington, ed., *The Works of Aelred of Rievaulx* 1: *Treatises and Pastoral Prayer* (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Fathers, 1971), p. 73. Caroline Walker Bynum explores this in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 117-19 and p. 123, describing Bernard of Clairvaux's use of maternal imagery particularly with reference to nurturing through suckling. This is seen particularly in his sermons on Song of Songs in which he used references to breasts in the context of explaining the obligations of prelates to mother the souls in their charge.

[164] From a range of biblical sources that could be used, 1 Peter 2: 2. 'As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation.' Also Hebrews 5: 12. 'You have need to be taught

as a thing of nourishment and comfort, a wholly positive process, in the body of the nun of Watton it was quite the opposite. The passage suggests that Ailred was trying to reconcile the tensions which emerged when he drew from, and attempted to fuse, elements of humoral theory with his own spirituality and the physicality of the nun's body as a locus of sin.

1.1.ii Natal

Ailred's description of the oozing and gross body of the pregnant nun served to introduce the first part of the miracle. His account tells how the nun fell asleep and experienced a vision in which Henry Murdac appeared to her in her cell. Murdac instructed the nun to confess as soon as she could, and to say particular psalms every day.[165] She committed the psalms to memory, recited them dutifully and the following night as she seemed to be on the point of giving birth, the archbishop appeared to her again, 'laid her head on his knees and wrapped her face in the pallium he carried'.[166] This is an extraordinary natal image, modelling the act of a woman giving birth. In the same way that the fetus, its head surrounded by the vagina of its mother, emerges onto her thighs, so too, the nun with her head enclosed by Murdac's pallium, resting on his lap, was reborn. In the account, Murdac is not just the mediator of the miracle, he is mother and midwife too, rebirthing the nun himself. By contrast, the birth of the nun's own baby is not mentioned at all. The narrative moves directly from the rebirth of the nun to the moment when she stood and saw two women described as being 'of beautiful visage' who had

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again what are the first elements of the words of God: and you are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat.'

[165] *NW*, col. 795; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 456. 'You are more readily blamed for sins which you have not yet disclosed to your spiritual father as you should. See that you confess as soon as you can [Tibi hoc potius imputato quae peccata tua necdum ut oportet party spirituali propalasti. Sed vide ut quam cities poteris confitearis].'

[166] Ibid. 'Accessit ad miseram praesul, et super genua sua capite eius supinato, pallio quo amiciebatur vultum operuit.'

accompanied the archbishop, carrying away her baby wrapped in white linen. This is the last time the baby is mentioned in the letter. Murdac spoke to her. 'If you had purified yourself in confession, you would see clearly what is happening. Now you will perceive the benefit but will not be able to understand the mode or nature of what is done.'[167] Then she awoke.

> Waking she felt no weight in her belly. She ran her hand over her body and found it completely restored. The next morning when her guards beheld her, they saw that her belly had shrunk to normal, that her face has acquired a girlish if not virginal look, that her eyes were bright and had lost their leaden colour.[168]

The description of the postpartum nun is like a negative imprint of her antenatal appearance. It affects a subtle balance between the miraculous restoration of the nun to her previous unsullied state and the fact that the sin had occurred and, while it could be forgiven, it could not be

[167] Ibid. 'Si fuisses vera confessione purgata, cerneres manifeste ea quae aguntur. Nunc quidem senties beneficium, sed modum et qualitatem facti scire non poteris.' This is the second explicit reference to confession suggesting that Ailred wished to stress the requirement for formal confession to a priest over and above personal repentance. Confession to both God and abbot was a requirement of Benedict's *Rule*, listed as the fifth step of humility. *BR*, RB 6, 44 and 46, pp. 131 and 134. 'Quintus humilitatis gradus est si omnes cogitationes malas cordi suo advenientes vel mala a se absconse commissa per humilem confessionem abbatem non celaverit suum.' Alexander Murray, *Conscience and Authority in the Medieval Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 38-9, states that while formal acts of confession were not mandated until 1215 when Pope Innocent III's Fourth Lateran Council decree *Omnis utriusque senex* enjoined annual confession on all adults, there is evidence from contemporary works, including Peter the Venerable's *De miraculis*, of confession being undertaken, particularly in monastic communities and on the approach of death. This is supported by the words of Murdac to the nun during the first vision she had. Her sin and the broken vows had rendered her spiritually dead and her impending labour carried with it the risk of physical death, a time at which confession was practiced in a religious community.

[168] *NW*, col. 794; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 456. 'Expergefacta nihil ponderis sensit in ventre. Attrectat manu corpus, et totum vacuum reperitur. Mane autem facto, adsunt custodes, respicientes in illam, vident detumuisse uterum, vultum puellarem, ne dicam virginalem, induisse decorum, oculos perspicaces, plumbeum deposuisse colorem.'

undone. The signs of both physical and spiritual rehabilitation were apparent in her empty uterus and flat abdomen, in the light in her eyes and colour of her face, in the lack of excess fluid. Her humoral balance had been fully corrected. On questioning the nun was able to describe the vision but could not explain what had happened and why she was no longer pregnant.

1.1.iii Postnatal

The sisters who found the nun after her miraculous delivery were likewise unable to understand or explain what had happened and subjected her to a thorough, and it appears a vigorous, perhaps violent, examination.

> They felt her belly: such slenderness had replaced the swelling that you would have thought her back was stuck to her front. They squeezed her breasts but elicited no liquid from them. Not sparing her, they pressed harder, but expressed nothing. They ran their fingers over every joint, exploring everything, but found no sign of childbirth, no indication even of pregnancy. They called the others, and they all found the same thing: everything restored, everything proper, everything beautiful.[169]

The earlier physical signs of her pregnancy had completely disappeared. Her abdomen which had previously been so enlarged that it almost filled the cell and looked as though she might be bearing twins, was now replaced by one so slim as to be concave. There was no evidence at all

[169] Ibid., p. 457. 'Palpant uterum, et ecce tumori successarat tanta gracilitas, ut dorso ventrem adhaerere putares. Tenant ubera, sed nihil humoris eliciunt ex eis. Nec tamen parcentes, fortius premunt, sed exprimunt nihil. Per singulos artus currunt digiti, explorant omnia; sed nullum signum partus, nullum conceptus indicium repererunt. Vocantur aliae, et post illas aliae, et unum inveniunt omnes. Sana onmia, munda omnia, pulchra omnia.'

of a palpable postpartum uterus. And in a reversal of the normal physiology of lactation, the nun's breasts, which had earlier filled as soon as they emptied, were now dry. Ailred emphasised this, recounting how the nuns having failed to express milk once tried again with greater vigour. They did not spare her in this part of their examination Ailred wrote, showing not just the thoroughness with which it was conducted, but also the continuing anger of the nuns towards their sister. An examination of such a robust nature would have caused the nun discomfort at the least and, more likely, pain. There is not at this stage any indication from the behaviour of the sisters that they considered that a miracle might have occurred. Indeed, quite the opposite pertained; their instinctive reaction on finding the nun no longer pregnant was to assume that she had compounded her sins by birthing then murdering her infant and hiding its corpse.[170]

> "What is this?" they said. "Have you now added to all your other crimes the murder of your baby?" Immediately the tiny cell in which she sat chained was

[170] Ibid. Boswell considered that while the miracle could be taken at face value, it could also be understood as camouflage for the means of disposing of the baby. *Kindness*, p.310. Salih, *Virginity,* p. 155, notes that to follow an illicit pregnancy with an act of infanticide would have harmed the reputation of the convent incrementally far more than would the fact of the pregnancy alone. Child murder had a contemporary frisson. Thomas of Monmouth wrote of the 1144 murder of the child, William of Norwich. Thomas of Monmouth, 'Vita et Passio Willelmi Norwicensis' in *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth*, ed. and trans, Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896). Additional English translation in Miri Rubin, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* (Penguin Classics, 2014). Although the account of William's murder was anti-Semitic, of which there is no hint in Ailred's account, nonetheless, the image of a murdered child and hidden corpse was seen as the epitome of an unchristian act. It has been suggested that the oldest known copy of William's *Life,* which dates to about 1200, is of Cistercian origin with the account having previously been absorbed into the Cistercian repertoire. Rubin, *William of Norwich*, pp. xxxi-ii and liv. Ailred's description of the baby being wrapped in white and carried away by angelic figures suggests that although the infant could be regarded as a visible manifestation of sin, Ailred was concerned to show that it had a possible, and positive, future and was not damned as an unbaptised child would be.

turned inside out. But the narrow cell, her threadbare clothes, the meagre straw bedding could hide nothing.[171]

There is only one physical way in which it can be determined for sure that a woman has had a baby and that is by vaginal examination. The external cervical os which feels circular to digital examination in a woman who has never had a baby becomes linear in shape after the birth of her first child.[172] Ailred described a most thorough physical examination of the nun stating that the sisters were 'exploring everything'. It cannot be known, as Ailred makes no explicit reference to it, whether or not this included a vaginal examination. Such examination was known in the twelfth century being undertaken when the need arose by midwives assisting women in labour.[173] In the *Trotula* texts there are several references to occasions when vaginal examination could be undertaken. A section on a difficult birth recommends that 'the vagina be anointed with oil of violets or rose oil'.[174] In the case of an obstructed delivery a midwife should 'assist with a small and smooth hand moistened in a decoction of linseed and fenugreek, and let her replace the child in its place and let her put it in its correct position'.[175] However while this demonstrates that vaginal examination did take place, it does not offer any evidence

[171] *NW*, col. 795; trans. Boswell, *Kindness,* p. 456-7. 'Quid est hoc, inquiunt? An tot sceleribus this et hoc addidisti, ut tuum interficeres infantem? Statimque angustum ergastulum illud in quo catenata sidebar evertunt. Nihil ibi latere pateretur angustia carceris, supellectilis vilitas, tenuitas stramentorum.'

[172] Jayne E. Marshall and Maureen D. Raynor, *Myles' Textbook for Midwives* (London: Churchill Livingstone, 2014), p. 73. The tubular-shaped muscular cervix, or neck of the womb, has an opening, an os, at each end. The external os leads into the vagina and is closed except in labour when it will, if all is progressing normally, dilate to ten centimeters allowing the fetal head to pass through. This action produces a small tear which heals leaving the os feeling linear rather than circular on digital examination.

[173] Nutton, 'Medicine in Medieval Western Europe', p. 168.

[174] Green, *Trotula*, 'Liber de Sinthomatibus Mulierum', 91, pp. 100-1. 'Inungantur latera, uenter, coxe et uulua cum oleo uiolaceo uel rosaceo, fricetur.'

[175] Ibid. 'Si puer non egrediatur eo ordine quo debet, ut si prius tybie uel brachia exeant, assit obstetrix cum parua et suaui manu et humectata in decoctione seminis lini fenugreci, et reponat puerum in locum suum et ponat in ordine suo recto modo.'

that the parity of a woman was known to be determinable through such examination. Nor is there any indication in Ailred's letter that the nuns had the necessary midwifery knowledge or skills to ascertain the shape of the external os. Of course, if the nun's body had been miraculously restored in every detail, her cervix, like the rest of her body, would presumably have been as it was before her pregnancy. It is notable that the nuns' examination of their sister included running their fingers over her every joint looking for signs of pregnancy or childbirth. It is not clear what they might have been expecting to find through this. In late pregnancy joints and ligaments do soften but this is not palpable on digital examination.[176] It is probable then that Ailred was mentioning it only to show how comprehensive the scrutiny of the nuns was, and so how assured his reader could be that the miracle did indeed happen.

Ailred's letter closes with a description of how the nun was miraculously freed from her fetters and endorses her new freedom through the use of conjoined biblical quotes. 'What God has made clean, do not you call common; and whom he has loosed, you shall not bind.'[177] The nun's fetters, the umbilical cord which had held her contained in her uterine cell, had been cut.[178] She was cleansed and redeemed, restored to freedom in body and spirit, reborn. Nothing more is known of her. The nun, like her baby and its father, had served her narrative purposes and was gone.

[176] Sweet, *Midwifery*, p. 110.

[177] *NW*, col. 796; trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 458. 'Quod Deus mundavit tu ne commune dixeris; et quam ipse absolvit, tu ne ligaveris.' Acts 11: 9 'What God hath made clean, do not thou call common' and Matthew 16: 19, 'Whatsoever thou shall bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven'.

[178] Constable, 'Ailred of Rievaulx', pp. 212-13, suggests that the second part of the miracle, the loosing of the chains, would have been considered to be more impressive at the time than would the freeing from pregnancy. It has several biblical precedents. In Acts 12: 7 and 16: 26, Peter and Paul respectively were miraculously freed from chains and prison. For freeing from sin, Matthew 16: 19, where Peter is given authority to lose and bind.

1.1.iv A Multiple Birth Account?

Two other accounts of a nun, an abbess in fact, becoming pregnant and having a miraculous delivery are known from twelfth-century England.[179] The first is found in a collection of Mary miracles gathered by Dominic of Evesham in the 1120s, and the second, which is thought to be derivative, is in William of Malmesbury's *De laudibus et miraculis sanctae Mariae*.[180] Both predate Ailred's account and there are similarities in the details of the narratives. Dominic's account is brief and relates no particulars of the pregnancy itself. Like the nun of Watton, though, whose miraculous delivery happened in a dream, the abbess was delivered while in a deep sleep, *altus sopor,* by Mary 'standing by just like a midwife'.[181]

While Marian miracles show the Virgin to be concerned with illicit pregnancies the nun of Watton letter is most unusual as it has a male presence at the birth. When a man was present, as in the account of the miracle of the infant Peril whose birth was protected by St Michael, the

[179] It has been suggested that the accounts arose from the needs of women in religious institutions and provided the double benefit of disposing of the baby in an acceptable way while providing reconciliation for the community. Constable, 'Ailred of Rievaulx', p. 214.

[180] Dominic of Evesham's account can be found in Hilding Kjellman, *La deuxieme collection anglo-normande des miracles de la Sainte Vierge et son original latin avec les miracles correspondants des mss. Fr. 375 et 818 de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: É. Champion, 1922), p. 61, and William of Malmesbury's in, *El Libro 'De Laudibus et Miraculis Sanctae Mariae' de Guillermo de Malmesbury*, ed. José M. Canal (Rome: Alma Roma Libreria Editrice, 1968). William died in 1143 so his miracle predates Ailred's letter by about two decades. Constable, in 'Ailred of Rievaulx', pp. 212-4 notes William's emphasis on the novelty of the event in his [William's] comment 'Who ever heard of such a miracle? It is unheard of for a woman to give birth in her sleep'. He considers that the 'substantial differences' between the two accounts make it unlikely that Ailred was familiar with either Dominic's version or William of Malmesbury's derivative account. However, although neither William's nor Dominic's collection of Marian miracles is listed in the Rievaulx catalogue, given the Cistercian interest in the subject of Mary and the fact that Ailred travelled away from his monastery and would have had access to other libraries, it does seem possible that Ailred was cogniscent of the abbess miracle and that it could have influenced his thinking in his Nun of Watton letter.

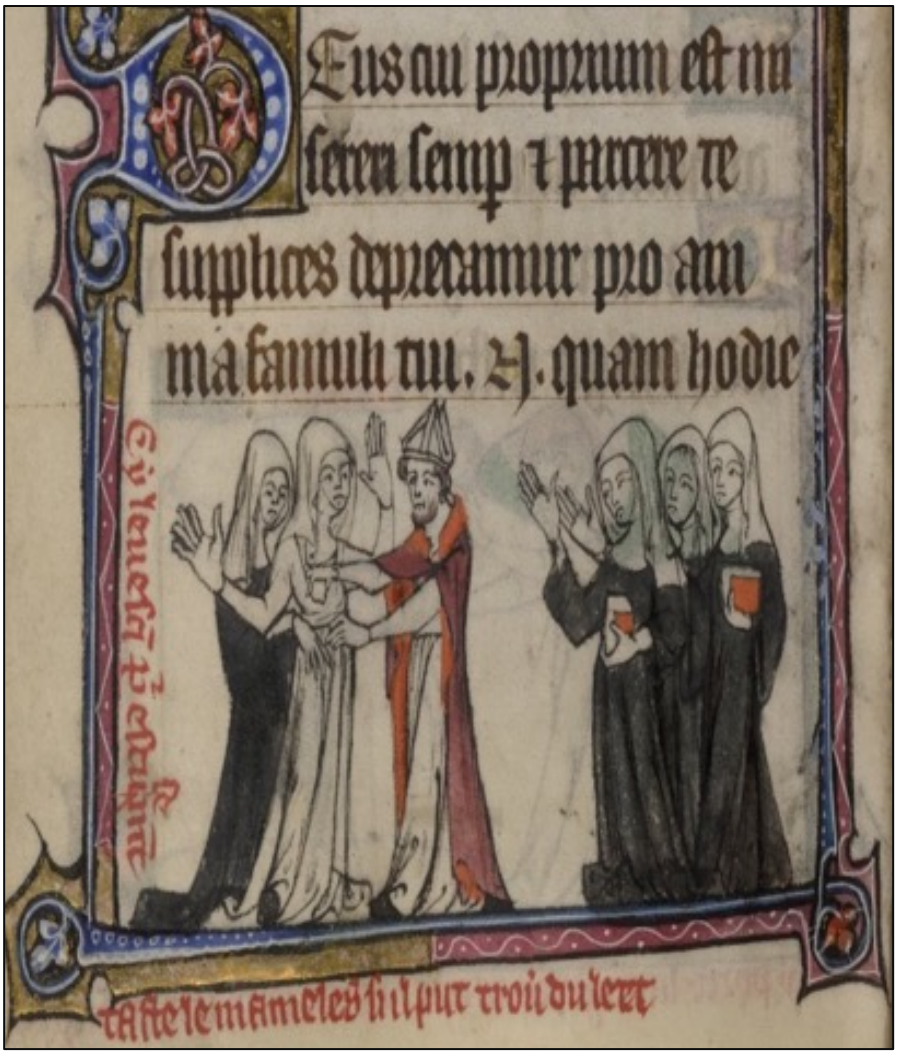
[181] Dominic of Evesham, 'des Miracles de la Sainte Vierge', p. 61, trans. Boswell, *Kindness*, p. 460. 'Cumque abbatissa in ipso sompno, ut sibi visum est & verum fuit, infantem pareret, tali ac tanta quasi obstetrice astante.'

male saint held himself very much at a distance.[182] In scripting his Watton account Ailred had to assume some degree of delicacy in using the image of Murdac as midwife and mother to the nun. The unusual notion had to be corresponded with the fact that it would have been thought indecorous and counter to custom for a man, especially a churchman, even a dead one who was funneling a miraculous intervention, to be present at a birth. Ailred handled this tension by having the narrative move directly from the scene of the nun's own rebirth, her sanitised emergence from the folds of the pallium, to the two beautiful women carrying her wrapped baby away. This is no account of grinding labour , no liquor or blood, no messy squalling infant. The kernel of the narrative is the nun's rebirth; her own experience of giving birth is extraneous and omitted while Murdac's presence in the birthing chamber is explained and understood through his agency as midwife, mother and mediator of the miraculous.

A marked point of similarity between the accounts of the abbess and the nun of Watton is the postnatal examination to which both women were subjected. The disgraced abbess was brought to be judged after the delivery and the bishop ordered representatives to examine her uterus which, as in the nun of Watton, was found to show no signs of pregnancy. There is no suggestion of the thorough and violent examination that the nun of Watton endured although a later illustration of the miracle shows the bishop examining the abbess's breasts. (Image 2, below).

[182] The earliest four extant versions of the Peril story are from monastic sources in northern France or England between 1060 and 1150. The miracle which originally had the birth protected by St Michael came to be retold with Mary in the role of protector. Katherine Allen Smith, 'Mary or Michael? Saint-Switching, Gender, and Sanctity in a Medieval Miracle of Childbirth', *Church History*, 74 (2005), 758-83, pp. 774-5 and 763.

Image 2: 'The Abbess Delivered' from *The Taymouth Hours*, fourteenth century, England[183]



In Dominic's account of the abbess, after the initial examination further people described as being 'of rank and sex different to her accusers' were sent to reassess her and confirm that she was indeed not pregnant.[184] There is nothing in the text to show what qualification or

[183] British Library, MS Yates Thompson 13, fol. 157v. Accessed online 27 November 2020 https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=29245

[184] Dominic of Evesham, 'des Miracles de la Sainte Vierge', p. 61, trans. Boswell, *Kindness,* p. 460. 'Destinantur alii et alii diversi ordinis et sexus eciam ex accusantibus, qui idem mirati reportant.' The abbess's accusers were her fellow nuns and the archdeacon to whom the pregnancy had been reported.

knowledge the examiners possessed in order to make a competent judgement as to whether or not the abbess was, or had recently been, pregnant. The abbess's baby, unlike that of the nun of Watton, had an ongoing story. The infant was given by Mary to angels to take to a local hermit who brought him up for seven years before the child went to be educated at the bishop's own court and eventually became a bishop himself. An illustrious outcome for the infant of a fallen and shamed mother.

Although accounts of nuns becoming pregnant and having miraculous deliveries were uncommon in England when Ailred wrote about the nun of Watton, to have a man playing a role in the miraculous birth was extremely unusual. This supports the contention that Ailred was writing his letter as hagiography with the intention of elevating Henry Murdac. Ailred's account is rich, fecund even, with imagery; the themes of sin and rebirth permeate his account as do the tenets of humoral medicine. This latter reflects the growing interest in, and knowledge of, the newly translated medical works coming into England from Europe. While the account is, on the face of it, a straightforward miracle story, deeper investigation shows tensions running beneath its surface. These are seen in Ailred's expression of sin and redemption, told through the principles of emerging medical science, encompassed within the aegis of his own theology and perhaps too, his particular sense of compassion.

1.2 The Birth of a Saint

The traditional hagiographic framework of a saint's life usually included the use of long-acknowledged tropes, one of which was an account of the saint's birth and parentage.[185] These were not medical accounts. Their purpose in the lives was to meet the hagiographic convention

[185] See, among others, Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 2 and 280; Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 12; Bartlett in *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 510 and 518.

of establishing the sanctity of the subject from the start of the narrative. Generally speaking they followed a set pattern in which the parents' details were given, to show the worthiness of the future saint by recognising that of their parents, along with any portents that signaled the significance of the child. Eadmer's *Life* of Anselm shows this. 'I shall say something briefly about the place of Anselm's birth and the character of his parents, so that the reader may know from what root came the qualities that later shone forth in the child'.[186] In the case of Waldef and Margaret, the two saints considered here who lived in Scotland, their lineage and ties to the Scottish royal family were mentioned too.[187] The accounts also reflected the future pathway of the saint in terms of the community for which the life was written. For example, Hugh of Lincoln was admitted to the religious life with his father at the age of eight, signaling his near lifelong experience of monastic living while Wulfstan's parents were united by 'marital affection rather than sexual lust', showing his pending role as a champion of chastity.[188]

Of the two female saints considered here, Margaret's birth is not mentioned in her *Life* and nor is there any mention of her own pregnancies even though she bore eight children who survived to adulthood. Christina of Markyate's *Life* is a little more informative about her advent. It tells that when Christina's mother Beatrix was expecting her, a dove flew from a nearby monastery and nestled in her lap for seven days between the feasts of the Virgin.[189] This phenomenon was interpreted by the writer as being a sign that the Holy Spirit would reside with Christina. There is also a brief account of the birth to say that Beatrix attended mass on the day the baby was born and that she bore her labour pains gladly, with the birth occurring between six and nine

[186] *VA*, p. 3. 'Quaedam brevi dicam de ortu et moribus parentum eius, ut hinc lector advertat de qua radice prodierit, quod in studiis nascituræ prolis postmodum fulsit.'

[187] Margaret's *Life* has a genealogy and Waldef's shows his relationship to the royal family. *SMQS*, pp. 141-68 and *LWal*, 1, pp. 201-4.

[188] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. i, p. 5 and *VWulf*, i, I. 1, p. 15.

[189] *LC*, 1, pp. 36-7.

o'clock. A relatively speedy labour. Christina's is the only *Life* among those considered here that gives any obstetric-type details.

One of the lives, however, begins with a different sort of birth; a death in fact. Walter Daniel's ringing lament 'Our father is dead!' prefaces his *Life* of Ailred as the writer mourns the passing of his monastic father and friend.[190] Walter did not commence with Ailred's parentage or his place of birth but started the *Life* with an end which was also a beginning; the passing of the abbot from this life to the next, a second birth, a new existence and, as will be shown, a resurrection body.

Death as a natural process and a subject related to health is considered in the final chapter of this thesis. Here consideration is given to the descriptions in the lives of the new bodies, the resurrection bodies, of the dead or, in a sense, reborn saints. Of necessity the transformation from mortal to resurrection body took place when the dead person was still visible. Although the tomb was metaphorically a womb, it was the moment of dying itself, the egress of human life, that ushered in the new state of existence that was signified to those present by the appearance of the new body. Postmortem body changes, shining jewelled resurrection bodies, are a consistent feature of the saints considered here. Table 2 (below) below shows that most of the hagiographers wrote of them, with the exceptions being Eadmer, Gerald of Wales and the author of the *Metrical Life*. The final sections of Christina of Markyate's *Life* have been lost so there is no way of knowing how, or indeed if, her hagiographer described her dead body.

[190] *VAil*, i, p. 1. 'Pater noster obiit!'

Table 2: References to postmortem body changes

Life	Date written	Jewel imagery	Martin of Tours imagery	Signs of life[191]	Sweet smell	Other bodily changes	Incorrupt
Margaret of Scotland	1100-07			✓			
Anselm	1112-25						
Wulfstan of Worcester	1126-	✓	✓			✓	
Christine of Markyate	1155-66						
Ailred of Rievaulx	1167-	✓	✓		✓		
Godric of Finchale	116070s		✓	✓			
Wulfric of Haselbury	1180-1184	✓					
Waldef of Melrose	1207-1214	✓			✓		✓
Gilbert of Sempringham	1202-03			✓	✓		
Hugh of Lincoln: *Magna Vita*	By 1212	✓	✓	✓			
Hugh of Lincoln: *Life*	c. 1213						
Hugh of Lincoln: *Metrical Life*	1220-35						
TOTAL		**5**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**1**

1.3 Resurrection Bodies

The concept of a new body permeates the death narratives and expresses the opportunities and anxieties that dying presented. The notion of a new body is found in the Bible. 'To put off the old man who is corrupted according to the desire of error, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.'[192] This expression of putting off the old man and assuming the new is inferred through the descriptions of the mortal remains of the dead saint and a body transformed into its heavenly

[191] For example, fresh bleeding or a rosy colour to the skin.

[192] Ephesians 4: 22-4. The notion of putting on the new man is seen Colossians 3: 10 too.

form, its physical presentation on earth representative of its condition in heaven. The theming evokes notions of redemption through a return to mankind's pre-fall state and also reflects the growing debate about the condition of the resurrection body.[193] Although most of the lives describe miraculous changes in the body of the saint, the use of embalming in some of the same bodies suggests that the changes were meant to be understood as transient or symbolic rather than permanent, and it was recognised that although the matter of the body decayed in the grave, the person in their new form would be present in their new state of heavenly existence. They had, in short, put on the new man. This subtle ambiguity of corrupt/incorrupt duality pervades the death narratives.[194]

1.3.i Preserved Bodies

The death narratives describe two different types of preservation. The first is seen in the glorified resurrection body and will be discussed shortly. The second is the human endeavour to preserve a body through embalming methods such as the application of balsam and is seen in the *Life* of Anselm, in Ailred's and in Hugh's *Magna Vita*.[195] In the accounts of both Anselm and Ailred attendants of the lately-dead saint experienced a miraculous increase of the unguent when more was needed to conserve the body.[196] Eadmer wrote that the small amount they had

[193] The debates on the resurrection of the body were complex and sit outside the remit of this thesis. However, as will be touched upon, the subject is on occasion reflected in the lives showing that writers were instilling contemporary theological debates into their accounts.

[194] The *Magna Vita*, for example, told how the saint's hands, fingers, arms and joints were as flexible, supple and easy to manipulate as when he was alive though only his face and right hand had been besmeared with balsam. 'Manus eius et digiti, brachia quoque et lacerti, non aliter quam pridem in vivo, tunc in defuncto placabiles, molles et tractabiles erant.' *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, pp. 228-9.

[195] In addition to its function in preservation, anointing also had a symbolic function, marking a transitional event, a progression to a new state, such as is seen in the rites of priestly ordination or the coronation of a monarch, or, as is the case here, during the rituals of death.

[196] There is a biblical precedent to the miraculous increase account in III Kings 17: 16 and the story of Elias who caused an increase of oil for a poor widow who offered him food.

for Anselm was used 'in the hope and desire that thereby the face or a little more should be saved from corruption'.[197] However, miraculously, there was enough to cover the whole body. 'We anointed not only the head and hands, but also the arms and the breast, and even his feet and whole body in every part not just once but several times over.'[198] It is interesting to note that balsam was still used for Ailred and Hugh even though their bodies were described as white and shining resurrection bodies. While human methods of preservation could delay or mask the inevitable for a while, it was apparently wonderous body changes that symbolised the reception of the saint into heaven.

Although in a monastery burial usually took place on the day following death sometimes, especially in the case of an important figure, there was a delay. Hugh of Lincoln's body had to be transported from London to Lincoln and Gilbert of Sempringham's body was available for viewing and touching for four days after his death.[199] Although there is no suggestion of preservation techniques being employed for Gilbert it seems likely since his hagiographer commented that the people attending the funeral 'vied to embrace his dear and holy body to impress a kiss upon whichever part each person could reach'.[200] While the account made no explicit claim to bodily preservation, either miraculous or manmade, an absence of decay is

[197] *VA*, I, lxvii, p. 143. '… quatinus facies patris defuncti balsam quod admodum parum in parvulo vase sibi majori eius parte amissa remanserat. Inungueretur, sperans atque præoptans eo modo illam vel modice amplius servatum iri ne corrumperetur.'

[198] Ibid., p. 144. 'Non solum caput et manus, sed brachia et pectus, pedes quoque et totum corpus eius non una sed sepius repetita vice omni ex parte inungueremus.' From the accounts it is apparent that the parts of the body deemed most important were treated. Walter wanted to use balsam on the thumb, first and middle fingers as these were the ones that Ailred has used to write about God. Others suggested the tongue or the face. In the end, due to the miraculous increase of balsam, abbot Roger of Byland anointed Ailred's head, hands and much of his arms and more balsam remained. *VAil*, lix, p. 63.

[199] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xix, p. 219 and *BSG*, 55, p. 130.

[200] *BSG*, 55, p. 131. 'Nec tamen lapis fovee superponitur donec omnes qui affureant, tamquam ultimum vale dicentes, sanctum et dilectum corpus qua qui sue poterat parte contingere amplexati certatim oscula infigerent.'

suggested through the fact that four days after death the corpse was still pleasant enough for people, young children included, to embrace without abhorrence.

Some of the lives associate chastity with incorruption. In the *Life* of Waldef this is done through the medium of balsam, used figuratively to show the preservation of his sexual purity. Jocelin described the abbot's incorrupt corpse as 'steeped in the balsam of virginity'.[201] Gilbert's hagiographer took a different approach to the same subject in his description of the translation of the newly beatified saint. The tomb was found to contain Gilbert's intact burial garments and a rosy-coloured dust. 'For when the stone was removed from the tomb there was discovered a rosy dust of dissolved flesh, of the sort said to belong to those who die chaste, … also, a wonderfully sweet smell filled the nostrils of all who were present.'[202] The resurrection body itself may not have been present, but its existence was indicated through the empty burial garments and the rosy dust while incorruption was suggested through the sweet smells from the tomb. Like the risen Christ, Gilbert had escaped his tomb, that place of decay, and his ascended body, his resurrection body, was present in heaven.

1.3.ii Jewelled Bodies

The hagiographers considered here often portrayed the dead body of the saint using the language of jewels or precious metal. This reflects contemporary interest in jewels and their

[201] Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 268 and *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Carnandet (Paris, 1863-), 134, p. 277D. 'Virginitatis balsam delibutum.'

[202] *BSG*, p. 189. 'Amoto enim lapide a monumento inventus est rubicundus pulvis carnis liquefacte, quails esse dicitur virginem defunctorum … mira etiam odoris fragantia implevit nares omnium qui aderant.' Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 249, 289 and 534 notes that dust from a saint's tomb was one of the earliest types of contact relic being seen in Gregory of Tours account of St Martin of Tours' tomb and that the 'the odour of sanctity' was a commonplace feature of accounts of translations. While the olfactory presentation of the dead body is not investigated here it is worth observing that the scent of balsam would have served to mask the stink of putrefaction, that most nauseating and assailing sign of decay and the ultimate indication of human corruption.

properties.[203] When washed after his death Wulfstan of Worcester's body 'shone bright like a gem' while John of Forde described how Osbern, the priest who had care of the grave of Wulfric, was 'fearful that thieves might dig up his treasure and steal it, [so] came secretly and moved it into the church, burying it on the north side of the altar'.[204] Walter Daniel described Ailred in similar terms. 'Perfect in every part of his body, the dead father shone like a carbuncle, was fragrant as incense, pure and immaculate in the radiance of his flesh as a child.'[205] The shining quality described by Walter is part of the jewel imagery with the light generated by the reflective properties of a gem being representative of virtue.[206] Most remarkable of all the jewelled bodies though is that of Waldef of Melrose. Although Jocelin wrote the *Life* as it might have been experienced by someone present at the time, he was in fact writing some fifty years

[203] Lapidaries were often included in monastic library collections. The library at Rievaulx, for example, had a text catalogued as *Marbodus de generibus lapidum*. James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Jesus College*, p. 49. Marbode of Rennes died in 1123 and his work *de lapidibus* described the medicinal uses of stones. The medieval use of gems has been categorised into three general areas: scientific, magical and religious. John Riddle, 'Lithotherapy in the Middle Ages: Lapidaries Considered as Medical Texts', *Pharmacy in History*, 12 (1970), 39-50, pp. 39-40. In the health narratives considered here only their use in religious imagery is seen.

[204] *VWulf*, iii, 22. 1, pp. 142-3, '… ita perspicuo nitore gemmeum.' *WH*, 102, p.129, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 43, p. 212. 'Osbernus presbyter, timens sibi pro thesauro suo ne forte fures effodiant et furentur eum, secreto accessit et in ecclesia translatum ad aquilonarem partem altaris defodit …'

[205] *VAil*, lviii, p. 62. 'Integerrimis partibus corporis extistentibus, lucebat pater defunctus ut carbunculus, ut thus redolebat, apparebat in candour carnis ut puerulus purus et immaculatus.' The carbuncle has been identified as a red garnet the colour of which has an association with the death of martyrs and the blood of Christ. Francesca Dell'Acqua, 'The Carbunculus (Red Garnet) and the Double Nature of Christ in the Early Medieval West', *Journal of Art History*, 86 (2017) 158-172, pp. 158-9. This is a most apposite image in Walter's portrayal of Ailred as having suffered agonies consistent with martyrdom, especially when partnered with his placing the final words of the crucified Jesus into the dying abbot's mouth. *VAil*, lvii, p. 61 and Luke 23: 46. 'In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.'

[206] Walter wrote in his letter to Maurice that 'virtue is a form of light, discernable even to sleeping eyes by its own quality [virtus utique velut similitude lucis ex sui qualitate sese conspicabilem prebeat eciam dormantibus oculis].' *VAil*, p, 69. The descriptions of the shining body show there was a particular interest in lustre. C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 151 and 157.

or so after the abbot's death, shortly after the saint's body was found, for a second time, to be incorrupt. It is in terms of incorruption and immutability that Jocelin described the saint.

> Because gold is not liable to corruption, rightly is the saint called a vessel of purest gold, because his body still remains incorrupt with its members and vestments entire; rightly also that vessel is said to be adorned with every rare stone, that is by his acquisition of the holy virtues and by his gaining of souls, by his viewing of heavenly revelations, and by the working of miracles through him.[207]

Jocelin opened the passage from which the excerpt above is taken with a series of biblical references which cite Waldef as being the perfect man referred to in the Bible, found 'in the Lord's treasure chamber … a vessel of pure gold set with whatever stones are rarest'.[208] Jocelin expanded on the gems, naming them and their signification. 'The carbuncle for charity; for unstained virginity, the pearl, for true humility the amethyst', and more.[209] Jasper, sapphire, topaz, emerald, beryl, calcedony, chrysolite, sardius, chrysophase, jacinth, lodestone and

[207] *LWal*, 93, pp. 164 and 314. 'Et quoniam aurum corruptioni non est obnoxium, recte dicitur Sanctus iste vas auri solidum, quia corpus adhuc permanet incorruptum cum integritata membrorum eius et vestimentorum; recte et dicitur vas istud ornatum omni lapide pretioso, et sanctarum virtutum acceptione ac animarum acquisitione, caelestium revelationum et mirculorum exhibitione …' The passage evokes the image of the golden son of man in Revelation 1: 12-15, with 'feet like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace'.

[208] *LWal*, 92, pp. 164 and 313, with biblical references from Acts 9: 15, Deuteronomy 32: 34 and Ecclesiastes 50: 10. 'E mundo translatus in thesauris Domini manet, vas honoris et gloriae. Vere beatus Waltevus, sicut in libro Sapentiae de perfecto viro scriptum est, quasi vas auri solidum ornatum omni lapide pretioso.'

[209] Ibid., pp. 164 and 314. 'Carbunculus caritatis, margarita candidae virginitatis, amethystus verae humilitatis …' This passage mirrors the description of the walls of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21: 18-21. Both passages are formed of a list of gems with the first two jewels mentioned in both being in the same order; jasper and sapphire. Most of the other jewels listed by Jocelin are common to both with the gates of the New Jerusalem being made of pearl. It is significant here that Jocelin noted the pearl represented virginity, as in doing this he was describing virginity, chastity, as the way to enter heaven.

diamond were listed too. It was neither 'strange nor unbecoming' Jocelin remarked, that Waldef should be decorated with such jewels. Jocelin's description appears to be referring at one and the same time to the incorrupt resurrection body of the saint, the container within which it was held and the concept of the body as its own reliquary.[210] Waldef in his sainted state, through his earthly remains and heavenly presence, was the precious vessel in the Lord's treasury, his resurrection body being understood as both relic and reliquary.

While jewel-like terminology was engaged to show the immutability of the late saint's corpse it equally served to describe its wonderous nature. Through the sanctity made manifest in his person, shining within his body, the saint had triumphed over decay, figuratively at least. Describing the body as an unchanging jewel, a precious relic, akin to the New Jerusalem, was a manifestation of heaven on earth. Harmonising this with the degeneration that almost invariably follows death was not to hold a position of mutual incompatibility. The saint's body was at one and the same time, through the grace of God, both human and immutable; relic and its own jewelled reliquary.

1.3.iii White and Red Bodies

Sulpicius Severus' *Life* of Martin of Tours was a model for hagiographers and Adam devoted a chapter of his *Magna Vita* to describing how Hugh conformed to it.[211] Commonality is seen particularly in Adam's description of the body of Hugh.

[210] There was a hierarchy of jewels used in the creation of a reliquary. Gold and gems with their biblical associations with heaven were at the top with ivory and crystal associated with the body and purity in close proximity. Cynthia Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?' *Numen*, 57 (2010) 284-316, pp. 309-10. Waldef was buried in the chapter house in a marble-lidded tomb; no jewels are mentioned. *LWal*, 133, p. 353.

[211] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, pp. 199-208.

> The whiteness and brilliance of Martin's dead body, which showed him even in death, to be the pearl of priests, was reflected with much enhanced splendour by Hugh's. Like Martin's it was clearer than glass, whiter than milk, and – a thing we are not told of Martin's – redder than the rose.[212]

Descriptions of the white body of the newly-dead saint also reflect teaching on the types of martyrdom; red for those who died for their faith and white for those who lived in and suffered for it.[213] The use of white also indicated divine favour and salvation.[214] Through their use of such traditional tropes, the hagiographers' depiction of the white and shining body can be

[212] Ibid., p. 206, 'Ad puritatem vero et decorem funeris Martini, quibus et in morte ostensus est gemma sacerdotum, id Hugoni ad funeris gloriam peculiariter auctum est, ut vitro sicut Martinus purior et lacte candidior, rosis quod Martino tacetur vernantior …' Looking specifically at medieval Christian sculpture, Kaja Kollandsrud considers there is deliberate visual imagery embedded in the expression of colour and that it must be considered within its own context in order to understand the intention of the creator. She notes the significance of light too, saying that lustre elevated the mundane to the divine in medieval illustration. 'A Search for Meaning in Polychrome Medieval Art', in *Medieval Murals in the Church Attics of Östergötland: Technical Art History, Reception History, Value*, ed. Charlotta Hanner Norstrand, Thomas Warscheid, Anna Henningsson (Sweden: ICOMOS, 2015) pp. 34-46. The same is true of the use of colour and light in written sources. C. M. Woolgar, *Senses*, p. 170, wrote that when colour is used in medieval sources the reader should always be alert to the possibility of further significance and a possible plurality of meanings.

[213] The eleventh-century bishop Bonizo of Sutra wrote that a white-robed army of martyrs, 'martirum candidatus exercitus', succeeded the apostles and like them suffered torments, died, and won eternal life. Bonizo Sutrinus, 'Liber ad amicum', ed. E. Dümmler, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Libelli de lite*, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000) pp. 571-620, p. 572, line 39. See too H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'Martyrdom and the First Crusade', in *Crusade and Settlement*, ed. P. W. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), pp. 46-56 for types of martyrdom. Nicholas Hoel in 'Hues of Martyrdom: Monastic and Lay Asceticism in Two Homilies of Gregory the Great on the Gospels', *The Downside Review*, 138 (2020), 3-18, p.11, notes that many early Christian writers including Jerome, Cyprian and Augustine held the notion of red and white martyrdom. The hagiographers considered here used imagery of this type to position their saints as martyrs of the white kind.

[214] For biblical reference see, for example, Revelation 3: 4-5. 'But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white because they are worthy. He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments and I will not blot his name out of the book of life and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.'

understood as both a forward-facing eschatological image and one that served to position the saint as a martyr and the ideal monk.

While several of the saints described here showed changes in skin colour and translucency, Hugh was unique in being the only saint able to demonstrate a bodily change of colour that was not just skin deep but permeated his entire corpse. This offered Adam an almost certainly unexpected hagiographic opportunity presented by the embalming processes that some of Hugh's household had spoken out against.[215] 'His body resembled Martin's in that the outer skin was whiter than milk, and both it and the internal organs shone like glass, so that in this respect he can rightly be called, "the pearl of priests".'[216] The image of the shining white resurrection body remained constant across the century. William of Malmesbury writing in the earlier part of the twelfth century described Wulfstan in such terms. 'So, they washed the corpse. It inspired amazement and reverence in those who saw it, gleaming as it already was in the hope of eternal resurrection; for it shone bright like a gem and was white with a remarkable purity.'[217] Walter wrote of the white quality of Ailred's body too, seen as a sign of the glory to come and revealed when they came to wash their abbot. 'His flesh was clearer than glass, whiter

[215] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, p. 218.

[216] Ibid., p. 219, '… hoc dicere veraciter licet: quia exterius quidem lacte candidior, intus vero et extra vitro purior, corpore quoque monstratus est suo similis Martino, ut merito et ipse dici debeat in hac etiam parte "gemma sacerdotum".' The 'pearl of priests' quote is from the litany of St Martin of Tours. The tenth-century Matins responsory for St Martin is 'Vivit in Christo gemma sacerdotum'. Ibid., p. 206, fn. 1. It is worth restating that a pearl 'for unstained virginity' was one of the gems mentioned by Jocelin in his description of Waldef's resurrection body and that the gates of the New Jerusalem, the entrance to heaven, were made of it.

[217] *VWulf*, iii, 22. 1, pp. 142-3, 'Laverunt ergo corpus, quod iam spe resurrectionis perpetuae prefulgidum stupor et venerationi visentibus fuit: ita perspicuo nitore gemmeum, ita miranda puritatem lacteum erat.'

than snow, as though his members were those of a boy five years old, without a trace of stain, but altogether sweet, and composed and pleasant.[218]

Perhaps the most remarkable resurrection body, however, was Godric's, for unlike the other saints discussed here, who obtained their new body only after they died, the hermit received his while still living. Reginald described Godric becoming ill and his body breaking out in festering sores which opened leaving gaping and raw wounds.[219] Exacerbating his suffering, Godric called his servant, told him to cover the open sores with salt and rub them with thick, twisted woolen threads, time and time again. If the servant tired or through pity rubbed more gently Godric continued the work himself causing severe and prolonged pain. This episode was followed by a long period of illness and suffering from which Godric finally recovered. It is at this point that Godric's new resurrection body is revealed to the reader.

> After that, he was restored to health and we saw the softness of very white flesh shine out under his skin, so much delicacy as we saw most clearly in any infant. No traces of scars or any hardness to the touch appeared in his skin at all, but it joyfully shone out with all softness, purer than glass, more delicate than the gentleness of milk. You would not believe that his body had ever been covered by a hauberk or hair shirt if, having lifted the covering over it, you were able to

[218] *VAil*, lviii, p. 62. 'Cum autem corpus eius ad lavandum delatum fuisset et nudatum coram nobis, vidimus quodamodo futuram gloriam revelatum in patre, cuius caro vitro purior, nive candidior, quasi quinquennis pueri membra induerat, que ne parve quidem macule nevus fuscabat, set erant omnia plena dulcedinis decoris et delectacionis.'

[219] *LG*, ch. 82 [174], p. 183, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Pustulis obortis, tota corporis superficies aspera et sanienti foeteret scabredine …'

finger, touch or even see it. Its delicate softness shrank from any touch and the sight of it nourished joy.[220]

In contrast to the jewel-like new bodies of the recently dead saints where the imagery suggests hardness, Godric's new, living, in-the-flesh resurrection body was soft, likened to the skin of a newborn infant, smooth and sweet. Godric's period of physical debridement and subsequent illness had been transformative and his new, pure, body shrank from contact with profane human flesh. Although he remained physically in this world, Godric's body had transmuted to its resurrection condition and was traversing the boundaries between the worlds, Reginald's liminal account placing him simultaneously as on earth and received in heaven.[221]

Bodily colour changes were not limited to the corpse becoming white. Some of the saints also flushed in death. This can be interpreted as a sign of divine favour as well as suggesting new life and alluding to martyrdom.[222] Turgot related such of Margaret of Scotland. 'And what is marvelous is that her face, which had paled in the manner of death, after death was suffused

[220] Ibid., [175], p. 184, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Postea autem sanitate reddita, tantam sub cute eius candidissimam carnis renitere mollitiem vidimus, quanta in aliquo infantulo teneriorem præminere perspeximus; nec aliqui ullatenus in ea cicatricum obductio seu alicuius duritiei obpalpatio in ea comparuit, sed vitro purior, lactea suavitate tenerior, omni mollitie jocundior tota reluxit. Neque unquam tectum lorica vel cilicio ipsius corpus fuisse crederes, si id experimento erecto, palpare, contingere seu etiam videre potuisses. Tactus quidem mollities tenera refugiebat, et visus jocunditatem illius contuitus enutriebat.'

[221] The image of whiteness as a mark of transition is seen in Anselm, albeit in a different context. As a young man Anselm left his home and journeyed away from his father and domestic strife, in order to follow his religious calling. While crossing Mount Cenis Anselm had to resort to eating snow before his servant found some bread of exceptional whiteness, *nitidissimum*, with which Anselm was able to restore himself. *VA*, I, iv, p. 7. This links back to an earlier episode where Anselm as a boy had a vision of being given 'the whitest, *nitidissimum*, bread' by God. Ibid., ii, p. 5.

[222] Song of Songs, 5: 10. 'My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.' In 1215 Pope Innocent III regulated the use of colours in liturgical garments with red being used to celebrate the feast of an apostle or martyr.

with red and white mingled, so that we were able to believe she was not dead but slept.'[223] Likewise Wulfstan, who was seen in a vision experienced by Robert, bishop of Hereford, received at the moment at which Wulfstan died. Robert described Wulfstan as looking very different to the man he had seen in previous years, 'so brilliantly did he shine with starry light, so rosy-hued and fresh of face was he'.[224] The phenomenon was traditional, one recounted in both historical saints lives as well as those whose life was written by an eye-witness. Ailred himself, in his *Life* of Edward the Confessor who had died in 1066, wrote how the snowy white body of the late king became suffused with a rose colour, this a demonstrable sign of the late king's sanctity.[225]

One reason for the change in facial colour can be explained through consideration of Adam of Eynsham's account of Hugh's dead body. Adam wrote that Hugh, whose body had already been described as white and shining, was taken to Lincoln and displayed in the cathedral prior to his interment. There it was observed that the hue of his skin changed. 'His cheeks are as red as roses, and he has the fresh appearance of one who has fallen asleep after a bath and not that of a dead man'.[226] This lifelike colouration remained until Hugh was buried, with Adam

[223] *SQMS,* p. 221, 'Et quod mirum est faciem eius que more moriencium tota in morte palluerat, ita post mortem rubor cum candour permixtus perfuderat, ut non mortuam sed sopitam credere possemus.' Keene describes the animated colouring of a saintly corpse as a hagiographical commonplace and suggests that Turgot may have been intending it to convey Margaret's saintly passing rather than the fact of her appearance. *SQMS*, p. 4,

[224] *VWulf*, iii, 23. 1, pp. 144-5. 'Ita stellanti luce perspicuous, viridanti vultu roseas erat.'

[225] Ailred of Rievaulx, *Vita S. Edwardi regis et confessoris*, in *Beati Aelredi abbatis Rievallensis opera omnia*, *PL* 195, 737C-790B. English translation in *The Historical Works*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), p. 211. Eadmer also used the motif in his *Life* of Oda, although it is not seen in his accounts of Anselm, Dunstan or Oswald. Eadmer. *The Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan and Oswald*, ed. and trans. B. J. Muir and A. J. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 33.

[226] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, p. 229. 'Vidistisne et attendistis quanto decore vernare iam cepit facies episcopi, ut rosis rubentibus genas similes pretendat, ut dormientis, non defuncti, nuperque de balneis egressi hylaritatem preferat.'

wondering if it endured beyond interment.[227] Chronology is important here. It was only after he had been dead for a week or so and was about to enter the tomb that Hugh's face became rosy. The account links to an earlier passage in Adam's *Magna Vita* concerning Hugh's joy on visiting his home monastery at Witham after he has been consecrated bishop.[228] Adam told how 'as soon as he approached the neighbourhood a delicate rosy flush used to mantle his cheeks and even his whole countenance'.[229] The association between the living Hugh's delight upon approaching Witham, his earthly heaven, and the dead Hugh's joy as he approached his tomb, the physical gateway through which his body would pass on its journey from this world to the next, is signaled through his change of facial colour. In both instances, Hugh had seen the joy which awaited him. His rosy flush demonstrated a liminal change and showed his gladness at the pending transition.

It seems then that the infusion of red colour into the face of the holy corpse was used to signal divine favour and the change in existential status that occurred as the saint negotiated from one world to the next. The descriptions of the flushing saint and their rosy countenance suggested that the dead saint was alive, and more alive in death than they were before they died.[230] They had been endowed with their new body and embarked upon their new life. This was a clear message of hope and promise to those left behind, as well as an example of the interaction that

[227] Ibid., p. 230. 'Utrum vero in sepulti corpore decor ille permanserit necne, non est modo nostrum scire; scietur autem postea.'

[228] Ibid., book 4, ch. x, p. 49.

[229] Ibid., 'Mox ut a remotis finitimam eius ingrediebatur regionem, nitor quidam insolitus, colore decenter rubicundo superfusus, genas ei cum facie simul tota vestire consuevit.'

[230] Godric's dead body exhibited a different sign of life. A cut on his foot caused by attendants trimming the nails on his exposed feet, started to bleed, and continued to show fresh blood on the following day. *LG*, ch. 170 [310], p. 328, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

the living could suppose was possible from the dead, particularly at the time of death when the interface between the worlds of heaven and earth was softened.

1.3.iv New and Improved Bodies

For Wulfstan, postmortem body transformations caused not only colour changes, but two alterations to the matter of his body. Both of these were seen when he was washed prior to being dressed for vigil and burial. The first change concerned Wulfstan's nose and was apparently an improvement. 'His nose, excessively prominent while he lived, retreated and paled so beautifully in death that those who saw it marvelled.'[231] The bishop's new resurrection body had, it seems, corrected the perceived imperfections of his former body. Although in some of the other lives reference is made to the resurrection body lacking the scars and other acquired physical attributes seen on its owner's previous body, this is the only account in which a natural feature is altered.[232]

Wulfstan's other postmortem change concerned his consecration ring, which had previously tended to slip off his emaciated fingers without him noticing. 'For many years before his death the flesh on his fingers had become so wasted that skin seemed scarcely to cling to bone.'[233] Despite his losing the ring at times, he had sworn he would take to the grave with him. Then, when Wulfstan's body was being washed after his death, some monks tried to remove the ring from his finger. 'Though they kept twisting one way and the other, they failed, and gave up

[231] *VWulf*, iii, 22. 1, pp. 142-3. 'Laverunt ergo corpus, quod iam spe resurrectionis perpetuae prefulgidum stupor et venerationi visentibus fuit: ita perspicuo nitore gemmeum, ita miranda puritatem lacteum erat. Denique nasus, qui viventi citra modum protuberabat, ita pulchra defuncto subsedit et incanduit ut mirum visentibus esset'.

[232] For scars vanishing see, Godric, *LG*, ch. 82 [175], pp. 183-4, and Ailred, *VAil*, lviii, p. 62.

[233] *VWulf*, pp. iii, 22. 1, pp. 142-3. 'Multis enim ante obitum annis ita caro digitorum exinanita fuerat ut vix pellicular herere videratur ossibus, adeo vel longevitas vel quod magis affirmaverim abstinentia corpus attenuaverat.'

their attempt; all their arts were foiled by the knotted joints and the firmness of skin and sinew.'[234] While it could be supposed that this change was occasioned by rigor mortis, it is unlikely that it is this that William was describing.[235] In theory, and probably in practice, all monks attended a death, so it can be expected that the monastic hagiographers were accustomed to the sight, smell and feel of death. A passage from Hugh's *Magna Vita* shows that Adam was familiar with the look of a recently dead body. Adam wrote that Hugh's body showed 'no traces of discolouration, pallor, shrinking or darkening, but rather milk-whiteness or lily-whiteness'.[236] Adam specifically mentioned the shrinking of flesh that is seen after death. The physical diminution of the postmortem body described by Adam is opposite to the plumped up and enfleshed fingers William described in Wulfstan's case. There is no reason to suppose that William, or the monks who attended Wulfstan's body, were any less familiar with a corpse than was Adam, so it should be concluded in the account of the bishop's ring that William was recording what he received from the witnessing monks as a miracle rather than a natural effect occasioned by postmortem body changes.

The latest of the works under consideration, *The Metrical Life of Saint Hugh,* makes no claim to be an eyewitness account nor does it mention the condition of the dead bishop's body, other than to say it was embalmed. However, it does offer an interesting insight into theories about

[234] Ibid., 2, pp. 144-5. 'Verum multis conatibus ultro citroque iritis cepto destiterunt, sic nodositas articulorum, sic pellis et nervorum integritas omne deludebat ingenium.'

[235] Timing is key in this supposition. All the monastic death narratives, including this one of Wulfstan's, suggest that the body of the late monk was washed soon after death. If this timing was adhered to in Wulfstan's case, it would have been too early for rigor mortis to set in as it generally commences two to six hours following death. See Southern Heath NHS Trust's procedure for care of a patient after their death. Version 3.1, reviewed 2020, p. 9. https://www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/_resources/assets/inline/full/0/80679.pdf

[236] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, pp. 228-9. 'Nichil in ea lividum, pallidum aut submarcidum, nichil fuscum, nil non lacteum aut potius liliosum renitebat.'

the resurrection of the body which were being debated at the time.[237] In one passage the writer wrote that the entombed body of Hugh was not without glory, rather 'the flesh which now decays shall rise again glorified, and the seed sown with the flesh shall be harvested with the flesh'.[238] The image of the seed sown in the ground then growing to new life is biblical, seen in John 12: 24-6. 'Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit'. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 15: 35-8, where Paul used the image of the seed to discuss the nature of the resurrection of man. The seed passage from *The Metrical Life* is followed by another in which the writer considered what Hugh's resurrection body would be like at the last judgement. 'Flesh shall rise again, immortal and impassible, resuming its original humours and original elements, and not the least hair shall be lacking from the whole body.'[239] It is interesting to note that the author considered that humoral features and elements would be present after death in their original state, but impassible, unable to experience pain.

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[237] *The Metrical Life* was written between 1220-35, probably in the 1220s and perhaps to celebrate Hugh's canonisation. *MLSH*, p. 4. While debates concerning the nature of the body on its eventual resurrection were complex and the subject sits outside the remit of this thesis, a brief overview can be found in Bynum, *Resurrection*, pp. 117-55. She notes that the debates were 'mostly pieced together' from Augustine's writings, especially the *Enchiridion,* and continued by, amongst others, the twelfth-century scholar Peter Lombard in his *Four Books of Sentences*, vol. 2 in which he discusses whether bits of matter will return to the body where they once belonged. Bynum considered that the Pauline image of the seed as a metaphor for resurrection which was seen particularly in the eleventh century, endured into the twelfth with writers like Hugh of St Victor, (d. 1141), using it, but that by the end of that century and into the thirteenth philosophers and theologians were moving away from organic imagery. See, pp. 131-4. However, in the preface to this version updated from her original 1995 publication, Bynum notes that the focus on images was a little 'mechanistic and simplistic' and that the chapter requires some reworking, p. xix, fn. 8. Irrespective of this, *The Metrical Life* reference quoted here shows seed imagery was still in use in the early thirteen century.

[238] *MLSH*, pp. 76-7. 'Quae nunc putrescit caro, glorificata reserget; et semen, cum carne satum, cum carne metetur.'

[239] Ibid., pp.78-9. '… tunc immortalis, impassibilisque resurgens, humores primos, elementaque prima resumet, et levis ex toto non deerit corpore crinis.'

The observation about hair echoes one Walter made about the dead Ailred. 'There was no loss of hair to make him bald, his long illness had caused no distortion, fasting no pallor, tears had not bleared his eyes.'[240] While Walter gave no indication as to Ailred's previous hirsuteness, his comment suggests that Ailred had experienced some hair loss by the time he died. If hair lost to baldness in the living body was restored in the corpse, Walter appears to be inferring that bodily restoration could be seen immediately in the resurrection body of a saint. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the re-assumption of flesh seen in Wulfstan's newly sinewy fingers and vigorous, youthful appearance. Irrespective of the allusions that are seen in the lives concerning contemporary debates about the nature of a resurrection body, for the purposes of their saint's life, the hagiographers were describing for their readers a body that was unequivocally, unquestionably, already new. Shining white and jewel-like, youthful and rosy, sweet-smelling and incorrupt, the bodies of the dead saints were transmuted through the act of dying into resurrection bodies, unchangeable and perfect, indubitably received into heaven.

The use of the human body as a narrative vehicle in the hagiographic sources considered here stretched from womb to tomb. It was seen in both the extraordinarily changeable, fluid and essentially unstable body of the pregnant nun of Watton and the hardened, immutable bodies of the saints. Used to express sin, corruption, redemption and salvation, the narrative body shows remarkable consistency across the century. This can be expected of a genre of literature rooted in tradition and biblical reference, but its stability over so many years shows not just the enduring nature of the model but also speaks of the importance of these accounts to the changing audiences who received them over the decades. Like the bodies of the saints, and in complete contrast to that of the nun of Watton, the accounts themselves exhibit a sense of permanence.

[240] *VAil*, lviii, p. 62. 'Neque defeccio capillorum caluum fecerat eum.'

Chapter Two: Food

Food, or nutrition more generally, is an essential element in effective healthcare, impacting upon and influencing the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of a person. The necessity of diet in maintaining and recovering health was known in the twelfth century and the relationship between food and fitness has been linked to the rise of theoretical medicine during the period.[241] This is seen in the example of Robert de Beaumont, Count of Meulan who, according to William of Malmesbury, introduced into England the habit of dining once a day for the sake of his health.[242] In a religious context it has been noted that the two most important Christian food practices, communion and fasting, were both in different ways related to sustenance, with the transubstantiated bread and wine of the eucharist considered by some as being the most efficacious medicine for the medieval Christian.[243]

As an explicit topic, as well as thematically and figuratively, the subject of food pervades the hagiographies considered here showing the enduring importance of the subject in a saint's life throughout the century. The ways in which food was used by the writers differs from author to author as well as, to a certain extent, across the century. Variation can be noted from order to order too, with a suggestion that a greater degree of tension is expressed in food narratives found in the lives of saints who were members of the monastic communities which promoted additional austerity. Such tensions are exposed in a life through the hagiographer's attempt to balance the articulation of necessary saintly asceticism with nutritional requirements for health,

[241] Giles E. M. Gasper and Faith Wallis, 'Salsamentium pictavensia: Gastronomy and Medicine in Twelfth-Century England', *The English Historical Review*, 131 (2016), 1353-1385, p. 1355.

[242] *GRA*, pp. 737-8.

[243] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 31 and Roberta Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage: Monastic Archaeology, Identities, Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 73.

alongside obedience in dietary matters. This endeavour required subtle textual navigation from the writers and, by extension, their readers**.**

The management of sustenance through mandating food and drink intake was a core part of the monastic life and the *Rules* and customaries in use in England during the twelfth century contain comprehensive instructions regarding eating and drinking. This included fasting. The instructions found in Benedict of Nursia's sixth-century *Rule* are outlined below as are excerpts from twelfth-century monastic customaries and writings from the Benedictine, Carthusian and Cistercian orders.[244] These include detailed descriptions of what could and should not be eaten and drunk, when and by whom, to protocols and practices for mealtimes. They form the theoretical framework within which the monastic writers lived, and against which they set the accounts of the saint they were describing. These rules represented, in theory at least, the daily lived experience of the religious communities for whom the lives were usually intended and so would have been familiar in both practice and nuance to those receiving the narratives.

Although there was a possible, even probable, theory and practice gap in some monastic food practices of the period, this does not need to be of particular concern here.[245] The sources of

[244] Benedict's *Rule* is included here because it had a strong and enduring impact on twelfth-century monastic practice. For this see among others: Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 1, 3, 63, 159; Clark, *The Benedictines*, pp. 5, 16 and 46-7; Knowles, *The Monastic Order*, pp. 1-2; *MCL*, pp. xix- xxi and pp. 208-9 where it is seen in the penance for coming late to church. 'And this is the normal observance on feasts and ferias, since this is in the *Rule* [of Benedict] and therefore devoutly to be observed [Et hoc festis et feriis generaliter onservandum est quoniam hoc est de Regula et ideo devotius tenendum].' See too Burton and Kerr, *The Cistercians*, pp. 4-5 on the extension back by the reformed congregations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to Benedict and further to the desert fathers in their search for the ideal monastic life. Also the *Carta Caritatis Prior* and its requirement that Benedict's *Rule* is followed in everything in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, ii, p. 444.

[245] An example of ecclesiastic excess from the period is seen in Samson of Worcester who died in 1112 and was described by William of Malmesbury as a man of massive appetite who would order himself a dish of a quarter

primary focus, saints' lives, were describing an ideal monk and an exemplar of monastic practice who, as such, would have been following the *Rule* and would not have been eating excessively. While archaeological research and the excavation and analysis of bones and food remains from monastic sites show that in monasteries more fish was eaten than was the case in non-religious communities, it also shows that contrary to standard monastic requirements, beef, mutton and pork were consumed too.[246] However, it is not known in any given case if these were foods that the monks ate or were those served to visitors and guests at the abbot's table.

2.1 Food Rules

The subject of food and drink was covered comprehensively by Benedict in his *Rule* and likewise by the later customaries considered below. Benedict is explicit about what a monk's daily allowance of food and drink should be. Besides detailing food his account also conveys notions of welfare and wellbeing.

> We believe that two cooked dishes are enough for the daily meal, whether at noon or mid-afternoon, at all times of the year. This is done because of the weakness of various persons, for the one who cannot eat one dish may be able to eat the other. Therefore, two cooked dishes should be enough for all the brothers, and if fruit or fresh vegetables are available, a third may be added. A generous pound weight of bread should be enough for the day, whether it be a single meal or for dinner and supper. If they are to eat supper that day, a third part of the pound weight should be set aside by the cellarer for the evening meal. If it should happen that the work has

of a sow and twenty-four large chickens. *GPA*, vol. 1, 150, 2, pp. 440-1. 'Apponebatur ei patina quadrantis scrofae et viginti quattor pullorum capax.'

[246] Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage*, p. 81.

> become especially heavy, the abbot may judge that that something should be added. He has the power to do so if it seems useful, provided above all that gluttony be avoided and that the monk never be surprised by indigestion. For there is nothing as out of place in a Christian life as gluttony. As Our Lord says: 'See that your hearts not be loaded down with drunkenness'. The same amount of food, however, should not be served to young children, but less than to adults. Frugality should be maintained in all cases. With the exception of those weak from illness, all members must refrain from eating the flesh of four-footed animals.[247]

Of particular significance here is Benedict's emphasis, which he supported by biblical reference, that although gluttony must be avoided at all costs, food amounts could be varied to accommodate changing circumstances if deemed necessary and that meat was permitted to the sick.[248] Benedict plainly felt a degree of discomfort in legislating for the intake of others and expressed this in his section concerning drink. This was prefixed with another biblical quote.

[247] *BR*, RB 39, 1-11, pp. 321-2. 'Sufficere credimus ad refectionem cotidianam tam sextae quam nonae, omnibus mensis, cocta duo pulmentaria, propter diversorum infirmitatibus, ut forte qui ex illo non potuerit edere ex alio reficiatur. Ergo duo pulmentaria cocta fratribus omnibus sufficiant et, si fuerit unde poma aut nascentia leguminum, additur et tertium. Panis libra una propensa sufficiat in die, sive una sit refection sive prandii et cenae: quod si cenaturi sunt, de eadem libra tertia pars a cellarario servetur reddenda cenandis. Quod si labor forte factus fuerit maior in arbitrio et potestate abbatis erit, si expediat, aliquid augere, remota prae omnibus crapula et ut numquam surripiat monacho indigeries, quia nihil sic contrarium est omni christiano quomodo crapula, sicut ait Dominus noster: "Videte ne graventur corda vestra crapula". Pueris vero minori aetate non eadem servetur quantitas, sed minor quam maioribus, servata in omnibus parcitate. Carnium vero quadrupedum omnimodo ab omnibus abstineatur comestio, praeter omnino debiles aegrotos.'

[248] The biblical reference is Luke 21: 34, taken from a passage about the second coming. 'And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly.'

> "Each person is endowed by God with a special gift, some this, some that." Therefore, it is with some uneasiness that we lay down rules for the consumption of others. Nonetheless, keeping in view the weakness of the sick, we believe that a hemina of wine a day is sufficient for each one. But those to whom God gives strength to abstain from wine should know that they will have their own particular reward.[249]

Benedict continued, as he had in the section on eating, by warning against excess consumption and drunkenness, but again allowed for flexibility if needed in the case of a hot summer or a heavy workload.[250] The amount of wine given in the daily allowance, a *hemina*, is small, probably about half a pint and there is no mention of water or other fluid intake.[251] This cannot, presumably, have constituted the full daily fluid intake, but apparently referred to the daily allocation of wine alone. It has been suggested that a *mina*, about two pints was a more likely daily amount of overall fluid intake with a proportion of this being made up of wine.[252]

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[249] *BR*, RB 40, 1-4, p. 327. ' "Unusquisque proprium habet donum ex Deo, alius sic, alius vero sic." Et ideo cum aliqua scrupulositate a nobis mensura victus aliorum constituitur. Tamen infirmorum contuentes imbecillitatem, credimus heminam vini per singulos sufficere per diem. Quibus autem donat Deus tolerantiam abstinentiae, propriam se habituros mercedem sciant.' The quote is biblical, I Corinthians 7: 7, a passage in which Paul considered the gift of celibacy. Benedict seems to be using the same message, that of the gift of restraint, and applying it to eating and drinking. Kardong considers Benedict's apparent unease shows his understanding of the futility of complex rules when situations and individual needs will inevitably necessitate exceptions. *BR*, note 2, p. 328.

[250] Ibid. 'Quod so aut loci necessitas vel labor aut ardor aestatis amplius poposcerit, in arbitrio prioris consistat, considerans in omnibus ne surrepat satietas aut ebrietas.' Benedict was writing for the weather of his southern Italian community rather than for the more temperate climate of England.

[251] *BR*, note 3, pp. 328-9.

[252] Ibid. Current NHS guidelines state that a person in the UK climate should drink between six and eight glasses of fluid a day, about 1.2 litres minimum, or just over two pints. https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/water-drinks-nutrition/ This nearly concurs with Kardong's suggestion of a mina, or two pints daily. The *Rule* of Chartreuse explicitly states that wine was always watered, pure wine was never given. Rosalind Green, '*Perfectissimus*: the Carthusians in England c. 1178 – c. 1200' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2016), p. 29. In

Interestingly, given the amount of attention paid to food matters in Benedict's *Rule*, Lanfranc in his *Monastic Constitutions* is mainly quiet on the matter, at least in terms of the content and amount of daily meals. This suggests that he felt no need to cover it, probably because he considered it to be familiar to his monks. He does, however, write of two food-related matters not seen in Benedict; both items are concerned with welfare and wellness. Lanfranc allowed the community to have lard, or fat [adeps], on Sundays and some feast days.[253] Lard is mentioned in the tenth-century *Regularis Concordia* too suggesting it was known practice in England.[254] It would have been a useful calorific addition to the monastic diet, particularly in colder weather, and is thought to be the first product from four-footed animals that Benedictine monks were allowed to consume.[255] The Cistercian *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, which dates from about 1147-79, banned the eating of both meat and lard within the monastery, except for the seriously ill and hired craftsmen.[256]

Lanfranc's *Constitutions* mentions a foodstuff called *mixtum* which appears to have been a multipurpose dish. Knowles thought it derived from the *biberes et panem* mentioned by Benedict as being permissible for cooks and servers prior to the community meal, and it is in

England beer, cider and perhaps mead were available. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 166. William of Malmesbury noted that in Wulfstan's hall the English custom of drinking after meals was followed and the guests drained 'foaming tankards [spumantes pateras]'. Presumably these were tankards of beer. *GPA*, vol. 1, 139, 5, pp. 426-7. Bruno Laurioux, *Une Histoire Culinaire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), pp. 242-3 and p. 452, has shown that in the later medieval period more beer was drunk in England than was the case elsewhere, although wine was commonly consumed as well.

[253] *MCL*, 5 and 18, pp. 15 and 27.

[254] *RC*, ii, 30, p. 27. Here it is called *pingueno* rather than Lanfranc's *adep*s.

[255] C. M. Woolgar, *The Culture of Food and Drink in England 1200-1500* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 75.

[256] *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, xxiv, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, p. 466. 'Intra monasterium nullus vescatur carne aut sagimine, nisi omnino infirmi et artifices conducti.' For dating see p. 453.

this context that it is first mentioned by Lanfranc.[257] *Mixtum* was permitted in other circumstances as well, notably when a brother was sick or following bleeding.[258]

> In the winter, when the children and those who have been bled, and the sick receive the *mixtum* after chapter, those in charge of the refectory shall shave each other first, and then shall make things ready in the refectory with all speed, so that the brethren who are to receive the *mixtum* may find all ready.[259]

It is not clear what *mixtum* consisted of but it has been suggested that it may have been a porridge, or soup, and included milk and cheese and perhaps eggs.[260] Whatever its composition,

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[257] *MCL,* p. 8, fn. 24 and Kardong, *BR,* RB 35, 12, p. 289. *Mixtum* is, like lard, found in both the *Instituta Generalis Capituli* and the *Regularis Concordia. Instituta Generalis Capituli*, lii, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, p. 478, where it is allowed, with permission, to younger brothers on fast days and *RC*, i, 24, p. 20 and i. 25, p. 21 where monks whose meal will be delayed due to either religious or service responsibilities are permitted to take it. It is not mentioned in the chapter concerning care of the sick.

[258] Bleeding is mentioned in some of the lives, usually within the context of a miracle or as an adjunct to an account unrelated to health. Lanfranc does not mention how often bleeding occurred, although the Carthusian *Rule* stated it was undertaken five times a year. Green, *Perfectissimus*, p. 32. Burton, in *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 167 considers that although Lanfranc assumed it would be an infrequent occurrence sought only by those who were sick, by the late twelfth century it had come to be a regular, albeit occasional, event. Lanfranc devoted a chapter to the subject. *MCL*, 95, pp. 139-41. In fn. 339, Christopher Brooke comments that practice varied, with bloodletting occurring at intervals of six to seven weeks in some monasteries to five times a year in others. Barbara Harvey in *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 96, writes that bleeding was done through by venesection, cupping or scarification, in order to address humoral imbalance, and that at Westminster in the thirteenth century each monk's turn came around about six or seven times a year. She quotes Peter the Venerable, (c. 1092-1156), who reported that he was bled six times a year. There is no record of how much blood was let and presumably this would have varied according to the method used with venesection resulting in the greatest loss of blood. Lanfranc mentions delaying corporal punishment if a vein in the arm had been opened recently. *MCL*, 95, p. 141.

[259] *MCL*, 94, p. 139. 'Hiemali tempore, quando pueri, et sanguine minuti, atque infirmi, post capitulum accipiunt mixtum, refectorarii primi se radant, et post psalmos tam cito apparatum refectorii faciant, ut fratres accepturi mixtum omnia parata inveniunt.'

[260] Ibid., p. 8, fn. 24.

it appears to have been nourishing, affording an enhanced diet for those who needed such. It was given in addition to the regular diet and the protein components of milk, cheese or eggs would have provided dietary augmentation. None of the lives considered here make specific mention of it.

Lanfranc's *mixtum* did not include meat. Meat was allowed by the archbishop only in cases of more severe illness, specifically where the monk required admission to the infirmary. 'There he shall be given, as circumstances allow, both of ordinary fare and of flesh meat, so that he suffer the lack of nothing, if this be possible.'[261] This is entirely in line with Benedict's allowed relaxing of restrictions concerning the eating of meat.[262] Despite the occasional judicious easing of the no-meat rule in cases of marked illness, the eating of it was still fraught with concerns. Lanfranc required any monk who had eaten meat, even with permission when ill, to make amends for this fall from the monastic ideal. The monk was to walk leaning on a staff from then on and wear his hood up; a virtual and symbolic separation of himself from the other monks.[263] On his recovery, before his return to the community, he was required to lie prostrate in chapter and beg forgiveness. 'My Lord, I have been long in the infirmary borne down by sickness; I have offended in matters of food and drink and much else, and I have acted against our

[261] Ibid., 111, p. 177. '… in qua domo serviatur ei secundum possibilitatem loci, tam de communibus cibis, quam de esu carnis, ut nullus rei, si fieri possit, indigentiam patiatur.'

[262] Kardong, *BR*, RB 39, 11, p. 322.

[263] Similar is seen in the *Constitutions* when Lanfranc describes punishments. Here the offender was to undergo varying degrees of separation from his community, commencing with keeping his hood up, to eating separately, to being physically held apart from his brothers. It is interesting to note, however, that food itself did not form part of the punishment, Lanfranc saying the monk should have a reasonable allowance of food and drink 'lest he be overcome by excessive hardship and fall into melancholy'. *MCL*, 99- 100, pp. 147- 53. The Cistercians linked punishment and food with the offender eating later and having a smaller portion, more so if a serious fault was committed. Significantly though, the abbot was required to pay heed to the condition of the penitent's health. *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, lxvi and lxvii, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, pp. 484.-6.

established discipline, and for this I beg of your absolution'.[264] Having received this he could return to his brothers and continue to take *mixtum* for as long as his condition required.

It appears then that *mixtum* was used for the ill monk requiring dietary enhancement, for those who had been bled and as a supplement for healthy, but working, servers whose own meal would be delayed.[265] Despite the protein-rich additions it offered to the standard diet it was not seen to contravene the monastic rule. The eating of meat however, even when deemed necessary for the health of the patient, still constituted an offence which separated the monk from his brothers and for which absolution had to be sought. This attitude to eating meat, especially that of the four-footed animals mentioned by Benedict, is seen in some of the lives. There it presented the hagiographers with a potential problem in attributing sanctity to their subjects; a problem that, as will be discussed, they endeavoured to overcome in differing ways.

Benedict's food and drink rules are closely reflected by Walter Daniel when, at the beginning of Ailred's *Life*, he recounts how Ailred first heard about the Cistercians from a friend who told him of a new order, known as the white monks, that had arrived in England two years previously. The friend detailed their eating habits, remarking that they took only as much as was needed to sustain life, to maintain the needs of the body and to enable their fervour in worshipping God.

> For them, everything is fixed by weight, measure and number. A pound of bread, a pint [hemina] of drink, two dishes of cabbage and beans. If they sup, the remnants

[264] *MCL*, 111, p. 177. 'Domine, infirmitate mea gravatus in domo infirmorum diu fui; in cibo et potu et aliis multis offendi, et contra ordinem nostrum feci, et inde peto absolutionem vestram.'

[265] There is no indication from Lanfranc as to whether the composition of *mixtum* was the same for the sick, for those who had been bled and for refectory staff whose meal was delayed.

> of their former meal are dished up again except that, instead of the two cooked dishes, fresh vegetables, if they are to be had, are served.[266]

This is remarkably similar to Benedict's rules, saving only that Walter gave details of the two cooked dishes, namely beans and cabbage. Depending on the size of the cooked dishes this diet is nutritionally sound by current standards.[267] Ailred himself followed Benedict when writing his *Rule of Life for a Recluse.* He allowed the pound of bread and *hemina* of wine but with some constraints, suggesting that it would be better for a young and robust recluse to avoid strong drink and white bread.[268] He continued by saying that the recluse may have one portion of either green vegetables or beans or porridge with the addition of a little oil, butter or milk to stop it becoming monotonous. For the second meal a single, small, portion of fish or a milk

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[266] *VAil*, v. p.11. 'Omnia illis constant pondere, mensura et numero. Panem libra, potum hemina, olus et faba conficiunt pulmenta duo. Si cenauerint partes prelibatorum iterum in publicum veniant, except quod pro coccionibus binis quedam si affuerint succedunt nascencia leguminum.' The biblical reference to weight and measure is drawn from Wisdom 11: 21. 'Thou [God] has ordered all things in measure, and in number and weight.' The chapter is apocalyptic in nature, speaking of God's justice, punishment and forgiveness as well as provision for God's children. Walter appears to be using it to speak through biblical allusion of the Cistercian endeavour to live a life of purity, turning from the world and fulfilling Benedict's monastic ideal. The language is of battle, and spurning the desire for food is described by Walter as a weapon of asceticism. *VAil*, v. p.11. 'Trampling the flowers of the world with the foot of forgetfulness, counting riches and honours as dung, beating with the fist of conscience on the faces of mutable things, spurning fleshly desires and vain glory in food, drink, act, affection, alike in the abundance and scarcity of goods [Flores mundi pede calcantes oblivionis, divicias et honores arbitrantes ut stercora, rerum facies mutabilium pugno verberantes consciencie, omnique abrenunciantes carnalitati et vane glorie in cibo potu in actu in affectu in rerum habundancia et earum minorancia equaliter].'

[267] This is the professional opinion and personal testimony of Karen Servadei, BSc Nutrition and Dietetics, head dietitian (retired). The following quote is adapted from an online correspondence of 29 June 2019. 'The bread would have provided a source of energy with B vitamins and fibre. Beans are a good source of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals and the protein in these would complement the protein in the bread. The additional vegetables and fruit are a further source of fibre, vitamins and minerals and antioxidants with the occasional addition of fish, cheese or eggs providing a protein boost. It is a low-fat healthy diet. Beer is also a good source of energy and carbohydrate.'

[268] Ailred of Rievaulx, *Treatises*, pp. 59-60.

dish was allowed with fresh fruit or vegetables if available. 'The recluse should take counsel with necessity: satisfying her hunger without gratifying her appetite'.[269] Ailred was expanding upon the basic food rules articulated by Benedict and repeated by Walter to include, through his injunction against gratifying the appetite, what he considered to be the proper, religious, approach to food. Dietary intake should be enough to meet the needs of the body while not being as much as would constitute more. Like Benedict, Ailred was condemning gluttony and urging restraint.

It should be noted that religious orders were known to apply food rules differently, and that practices could vary from house to house as well as fluctuating over the period.[270] Additionally, foods available varied with season and geography. The Benedictines and Cluniacs were, in some cases, the target of criticism for their eating habits, while the twelfth-century Cistercians were seen as wishing to restore a more rigorous diet which included prohibiting animal fats and meat to all except the seriously ill and eating Lenten fare on most days in Advent.[271] This injunction was later expanded to ban the consumption of eggs and cheese, even in the guest quarters, during Advent. Monks were allowed a coarse brown bread made with bran or rye and white bread only if they had been bled or were ill.[272] They added to Benedict's instructions a fast of bread and water on Fridays in Lent and the Carthusians, who fasted three times a week on bread, water and, with permission, salt, came to define their perpetual abstinence from meat, even for the sick who were though allowed fish, as so crucial a characteristic of the order that

[269] Ibid., p. 60.

[270] Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, p. 103.

[271] *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, xxv, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, p. 466 and Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 111 and 166-7.

[272] *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, xiv, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, ed. Waddell, p. 462.

violation of this rule meant expulsion.[273] Waldef of Melrose, who joined the Cistercians from the Augustinian Canons, is recorded as finding his new lifestyle, including the diet, so hard to bear that he considered leaving.[274] It can be supposed that Walter and Ailred's writing on food reflects the diet they experienced as Cistercians during the 1160s when they were respectively writing the *Life* and the *Rule of Life for a Recluse*.[275]

Sometimes the hagiographers extended their generalised accounts of saintly asceticism in eating to give details about the diet of their subject. Wulfstan fasted totally for three days a week. On the other three weekdays he 'supported life on leek or cabbage, cooked or boiled, together with coarse bread. On Sundays, to mark the festival, he would relax his frugal diet so far as to take fish and wine, rather to keep body and soul together than to pander to his appetites.'[276] This account suggests that Wulfstan's eating practices were more austere than those mandated by his Benedictine affiliation. They are in fact remarkably similar to those of the Carthusian order which was, during the earlier twelfth century when William was writing, becoming established in France although not yet present in England. Gilbert of Sempringham

[273] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 42. For the instruction allowing the buying of fish only for the sick see Green, *Perfectissimus*, p. 31.

[274] *VAil*, p. lxxii and *LWal*, 34, pp. 82, 116 and 240. 'It seemed to him that the food and drink were tasteless … and the tenor of the whole order too austere. He debated leaving the Cistercian order and turning back to the canons.' The Cistercian order recognised that the strictures of their order may be too severe for those newly joined and did allow some flexing of the rules for newcomers, including being served a more plentiful diet. Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, p. 110.

[275] Ailred wrote the *Rule of Life for a Recluse* around 1160-2 while Walter Daniel commenced Ailred's *Life* close to the abbot's death in January 1167, completing it shortly afterwards. Ailred of Rievaulx, *Treatises,* p. xi and *VAil*, p. xxix.

[276] *VWulf*, i, I0. 4, p. 45. 'Tribus in ebdomada diebus omnis cibi abstemius, noctem perinde ac lucem continuabat ieiunio; ipsis etiam diebus, ne ullo saltem laberetur verbo, perpetuo linguam cohibebat silentio. Tribus reliquis porros caulesue coctos vel elixos panis cibaria aditiens victum transigebat. Dominicis porro propter festi reverentiam pisce vinoque frugalitatis parsimoniam solvebat, magis ut contineret naturam quam deliniret gulam.'

is recorded as 'avoiding meat and any food made with meat except when afflicted with serious illness, and he also avoided eating fish throughout the whole of Lent and Advent, though he would very often eat freely of vegetables, pulses and other cheap things'.[277] Gilbert's companions were concerned by the paucity of his intake. His hagiographer described attendants acting without their father's knowledge or consent in preparing Gilbert's food a little more richly to prevent him fainting through excessive weakness.[278] A similar account is seen in Anselm's *Life* when those around him concerned for his health would, when he was distracted by a lengthy argument at the table, secretly ply him with extra bread.[279]

A final point concerning the rules on food is pertinent here, and that is connected with monastic obedience. Benedict's *Rule*, in speaking of Lenten observance says that each monk should deny himself something additional during this period. Benedict suggested this could be food or drink, sleep, chatter or joking, but that the abbot must be advised of, and approve, the additional denial. 'For whatever is done without the permission of the spiritual father will be counted as presumption and vainglory.'[280] Although the context here is specifically Lenten, the issue of obedience regarding food intake, both in terms of eating too much and too little, is seen in the lives. The mandated monastic diet was intended to allow a monk enough food and drink for health and effective functioning in his spiritual and physical responsibilities, while being little enough, and simple enough, to ensure his focus remained on spiritual rather than carnal matters. To deviate from this in taking either more or less than the proper amount of food and drink was

[277] *BSG*, 10, p. 63. 'A carnibus et carnium nutrimentis omni tempore nisi in maximo languore abstinens, ab esu etiam piscium per totum Quadragesime et dominici tempus Adventus temperavit, olera et legumina et huiusmodi vilia frequentius et libentius sumens.'

[278] Ibid.

[279] *VA*, II, xi, p. 78.

[280] *BR*, RB 49, 9, p. 402. 'Quia quod sine permissione patris spiritualis fit, praesumptioni deputabitur et vanae gloriae, non mercadi.'

not acceptable without due cause and permission. Setting nutritional necessities against asceticism was a delicate balancing act and close examination of the lives shows how in both illness and health communities and individuals approached and expressed this.

2.2 A Balanced Diet

A saint's life needed to describe a degree of ascetic practice beyond that which could be expected or achieved by the average monk so, in food matters, the hagiographers had to juggle several awkwardly contrary factors. These included the human requirement to eat, obedience to both superiors and *Rule* and avoidance of accusations of spiritual pride or wilful self-neglect. The association between food and sin that was present during this period may well have enhanced the tensions felt.[281] The Benedictine, then Cistercian, abbot William of St Thierry (1085-1148) wrote that if a monk deliberately deprived his body of the things that were necessary for his health to an extent that his ability to fulfil his spiritual functions was hampered, then he was guilty of sacrilege and responsible to God for the damage.[282] The hagiographers were obliged to position their food related narratives in such a way as to avoid this accusation and show their subjects operating, at one and the same time, in various modes regarding food and nutrition. The saint had to be wishing to eat while being unable to do so, fasting to control their body and observe monastic practice while remaining healthy and functioning properly, and fitting the model of sanctity which required, as a necessary feature from a saint, an above normal level of dietary asceticism. The sources say, with some consistency, that the saint ate just enough to maintain life, but no more. Sometimes eating even this amount was a source of

[281] Woolgar, *Food and Drink*, p. 148.

[282] William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle of Abbot William of St Thierry*, trans. Walter Shewring, ed. Justin McCann (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930). English translations used here are taken from William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, trans. Theodore Berkeley (Collegeville, Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 1971). See, 126, p. 53.

distress for them, but they nonetheless recognised and acted on the necessity of doing so. Gilbert, for example, cried at the table 'that human nature compelled him to satisfy his human needs'.[283]

There was a perceived difference between choosing not to eat and what is sometimes referred to as *fastidium*, the inability to eat, which included with it the possibility of a person being repelled by or caused pain through eating. It has been noted that some writers considered only *fastidium* a mark of sanctity.[284] In the passages concerning the saints' lack of food intake the writers may have been anxious to avoid any suggestion that decline and death were self-inflicted. To the medieval mind suicide was 'not only bad but very bad indeed: *gravissimum*.'[285] The intimation that ill-health, death, perhaps even suicide, had occurred through excessive and deliberate lack of nutrition could not be allowed to taint the memory of a person being promoted as a saint and *fastidium* was a helpful tool in preventing this.

Of the saints considered here, it is Anselm's *Life* which refers most frequently to man's basic requirement for food. It is seen throughout, from its earliest pages up until the death account, with Eadmer threading the theme of food and eating through his narrative.[286] Anselm's bodily condition is first mentioned in a passage concerning his discipline, fasting and subsequent emaciation while prior at Bec. 'Of course he ate like other men, knowing that his body could

[283] *BSG*, 22, pp. 62-3.'Vidimus cum ad mensam accederet vel sederet lacrimas eum fudisse inter epulas, quod pro humana conditione urgeretur satisfacere cotidiane necessitati.'

[284] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 196.

[285] Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages: The Curse on Self-Murder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 189. Murray notes this attitude was long held and shows the influence on twelfth-century thought of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) particularly *City of God* and in his writing on free will.

[286] Eadmer introduced food related imagery in the second chapter of the *Life*. *VA*, I, ii, pp. 4-5. As a boy Anselm had an image of walking through fields being harvested of corn to a mountaintop heaven. On his arrival at the royal court he was welcomed and given white bread to eat by God.

not be supported without food, but he ate most sparingly'.[287] With the preceding reference being to Anselm's emaciation, it is plain that Eadmer was not saying that Anselm ate the same amount of food as other men, but rather, like other men, he ate. He emphasised the reason for Anselm's eating as it being essential for the support of his body. Eadmer retained in his writing the requirement for moderation while stating clearly to his readers that Anselm both acknowledged and acted upon the need to eat. Already, from the earliest passages, Eadmer was articulating the delicate balance that the monastics had to achieve in their food practices; certainly not too much, but not too little either.

John of Salisbury in his later *Life* of Anselm, also recounted Anselm's eating practices when he was prior at Bec.[288] He wrote that Anselm's fasting was done to ensure he could repress the attraction of food, and that this endeavour was successful since Anselm 'did not hunger from fasting, for he had already lost the pleasure of eating'.[289] His approach here is rather less pragmatic than Eadmer's assertion that Anselm ate knowing it was necessary to preserve his life. John positioned Anselm's fasting entirely within the aegis of religious practice and sanctity, omitting the human necessity to eat that is seen in Eadmer's earlier account. In their respective accounts of food, it appears that Eadmer was relating, and retaining, Anselm's humanity through describing a man who became a saint, while John was focusing solely on the

[287] *VA*, I, viii, p. 14. 'Comedebat tamen ut alii homines, sed omnino parce, sciens corpus suum sine cibo non posse subsistere.'

[288] John was writing some fifty years after Anselm's death, drawing from Eadmer's *Life* of the archbishop and composing a work intended for inclusion in the dossier to be presented to Pope Alexander III petitioning for Anselm's canonisation. For John's sources in his *Life* of Anselm see, Pepin, *Anselm and Becket*, p. 7. Pepin states that John of Salisbury used his lives of both Anselm and Becket as vehicles for his views concerning ecclesiastical liberty and the risk presented to this by the infringement of royal authority on the prerogatives and privileges of the church. See, pp. vii and 5-7.

[289] 'Sed non famem patiebatur a jejunio, qui iam comedendi amiserat voluptatem.' John of Salisbury, *Vita Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, *PL* 199, col. 1012, trans. Pepin, *Anselm and Becket*, p. 23.

elements of the account needed to maintain the decades-dead archbishop within the desired model of sanctity. In the years between Eadmer writing Anselm's *Life* and John writing his, the Cistercian order had become established in England.[290] John's treatment of Anselm's eating practices, as compared to Eadmer's, may reflect an expectation from the receivers of the later life that a more austere model of monasticism should be presented in a saint, and hint at a shifting model of sanctity over the period. It may also signal Eadmer's emotional attachment to Anselm. John did not have this relationship and so his description of the human elements of the saint are more distant, less intimate. Hence the slight, but significant, differences in their respective treatment of the same subject.

Further on in his account, Eadmer described a period of sickness that confined Anselm to bed at Jumièges and subsequently struck him down while he was at Bec waiting to return to England.[291] He was apparently gravely ill at this time since Eadmer recorded that bishops and abbots travelled to Bec in anticipation of Anselm's funeral. The community despaired of his recovery and was greatly concerned because Anselm was not eating. 'With anxious care we besought him to take some food, but he, drawing his breath with difficulty, said that he had no stomach for anything.'[292] Eventually, and in order to cease burdening his attendants by his continued refusal to eat, Anselm said he thought he could eat partridge. This is an interesting choice. As meat, fowl was not an authorised part of Lanfranc's monastic diet but was allowable in sickness. However, it did not fall into the explicitly proscribed category of four-footed animal. Through his choice of partridge Eadmer positioned Anselm at the better end, or the less

[290] Eadmer's *Life of Anselm* was completed by about 1125 and John's by 1163. *VA*, p. xxii and Pepin, *Anselm and Becket*, p. vii. The years 1133 to 1153 are those which saw the greatest expansion of the Cistercian order in England. Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, p. 39.

[291] *VA*, II, lvii, pp. 134-5.

[292] Ibid. 'Haec inter ut in cibum aliquid sumeret diligenti cura petebatur, sed ille nichil sibi animo esse quomodo poterat anhelo spiritu fatebatur.'

bad end, of the banned food continuum. The account shows Anselm to be both responsible and obedient, allowably infringing the no-meat rule, but doing so in a way that could be regarded as the least meaty option. Further justification was obtained through the fact that the partridge was attained through miraculous means and Anselm's health improved after eating it.[293]

Anselm's eating practices appear to have troubled Eadmer, suggesting criticism had been levied at the archbishop for both what he ate, and how much, or little, he took. Eadmer endeavoured to express through Anselm's *Life* how the saint affected balance in his eating. The account of the partridge is followed by one of a detractor who criticised Anselm for his lack of eating, a feature that shows ascetic practice could be considered a sign of pridefulness. 'On the way one of his men began to belittle Anselm, saying that he deserved no sympathy in his illness, "especially" as he scurrilously put it "since he could easily have recovered his health with food and drink if he had wanted to and if he had swallowed his pride".'[294] Divine retribution was meted out when the detractor was thrown from his horse and dragged down the road, this showing the wrongfulness of his accusation.

In the months before Anselm's death Eadmer related the archbishop continuing to eat only to keep his strength up, knowing he could not live without food. 'Truly I think I might recover if I could eat something, for I feel no pain in any part of my body, except that I am altogether enfeebled by the weakness of my stomach which refuses food'.[295] Eadmer was again defending Anselm's lack of intake as well as demonstrating his pragmatic attitude in the matter of diet. In

[293] Ibid., p. 136. A marten caught and delivered a partridge when none could be found by those hunting one.

[294] Ibid. 'Unus igitur ex hominibus ejus per viam coepit Anselmo detrahere, et quod merito nullus infirmitati ejus compati deberet, "praesertim" inquiens "cum ipse cibo et potu saluti suae si remota jactantia vellet facile succurrere posset".'

[295] Ibid., lxvi, p. 142. 'Ego quippe si comedere possem spero convalescerem. Nam nichil doloris in aliqua corporis parte sentio, nisi quod lassescente stomacho ob cibum quem capere nequit totus deficio.'

this instance though it was not apparently Anselm himself who was refusing food, but his stomach. In framing Anselm's lack of nutritional intake in such terms Eadmer was, in a sense, setting the saint apart from the corporeal man. This is a significant point. In several accounts of illness Eadmer described Anselm as suffering from *fastidium* rather than simply refusing to eat.[296] This placed the saint where Eadmer wanted him, within the realm of sanctity and beyond criticism concerning his eating practices. John of Salisbury, as mentioned above, did likewise. The use of *fastidium* is seen in Waldef's *Life* too where Jocelin of Furness used the term to describe the abbot's inability to eat prior to his death. 'All food, even what was most nourishing to the system, was tasteless to him and a source of pain.'[297] The notion or language of *fastidium* is used consistently in the lives to express pragmatic acknowledgement of the necessity for food and the saints' inability to eat it, while showing them obedient to their responsibility for ensuring their own efficient functioning in the monastic life through adherence to the mandated rules concerning food.

Adam of Eynsham, like Eadmer, adopted a practical approach in his descriptions of Hugh's food practices. An example of this is seen in his account of Hugh, as a newly consecrated bishop, altering his diet from his previous Carthusian austerity so he could manage his duties.[298] 'Finding by experience that his episcopal duties were very heavy and could not be properly discharged without a strong physique, he [Hugh] gave to his body, as to a baggage animal, the

[296] Ibid., lxv, p. 141 for example. 'All forms of food with which human beings are strengthened and nourished, became distasteful to him [omnes cibi quibus humana natura vegetatur et alitur in fastidium ei versi sunt].'

[297] *LWal*, 25, pp. 111 and 307-8. 'Omnis etiam cibus humanae naturae nutrivitus illi non sapuit, sed fastidio fuit.'

[298] William of Thierry mentions the Carthusians in *The Golden Epistle*, noting with approval that their *Rule* allowed for interpretation and variation depending on circumstances. He specifically mentioned that things may be required in 'the bleak and unending cold' of Alpine districts which are not necessary to those living in other regions. William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, VII, 23, p. 17.

food required to perform its necessary task adequately.'[299] Adam used this as an example of how Hugh, despite his stated reluctance to become a bishop and abandon the lifestyle of a Carthusian monk, nevertheless did all that was needful in order to ensure he could discharge his new responsibilities fully. To do this was to serve God properly and necessitated, in this instance, an increase in dietary intake.[300] Adam noted that Hugh was unconcerned that increasing his diet might present the risk of gluttony. 'He did this more readily and with less scruple because he knew that through his long mortification it [his body] was so much under control that there was no cause to fear that it might rebel against its master.'[301] Like Anselm and his stomach mentioned above, there is here a sense of disassociation, disconnect even, between the person of the saint and his mortal flesh.

Austerity for its own sake, and without obedience to the relevant rules, was not condoned and it was prohibited for monks to regard their individual food practices as a matter of pride. Hugh warned against such when rebuking an abbot he considered was being unnecessarily stringent with himself and his monks and refusing them meat even though such abstinence was not a part of their rule.[302] This, Hugh considered, posed a risk to the physical and mental wellbeing of the monks and therefore to the effective functioning of the monastery. He explained this by stating that if someone rose from the table with hunger unsatisfied 'first sleeplessness, then torpor of spirit and finally bodily weakness will render him unfit for any of the exercises of the religious

[299] *MV*, vol. I, book 3, ch. xiii, p. 126. 'Sentiens autem, experientia docente, magni esse labores opus episcopalis officii nec sine viribus etiam corporeis id decenter posse impleri, ita iumento corporis alimenta prebebat ut necessariis usibus congrue subveniret.'

[300] This is in line with William of St Thierry's opinion that a person should 'take care of the flesh' in order to ensure their ability to function properly for God. William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, XXXII, 128, p. 53.

[301] *MV*, vol. I, book 3, ch. xiii, p. 126. 'Quod eo securius eoque sufficientius faciebat quo minus ne contra suum recalcitraret sessorem castigation diutissima iam satis edomitum metuendum erat.'

[302] Ibid., ch. xvi, p. 196.

life'.[303] Failing to ensure a proper diet is in this instance seen as a matter of welfare, one that, critically, threatened the proper execution of the monastic life. Since the endeavour to achieve salvation was a fundamental aim of monastic living this was a serious threat indeed.[304]

The notion of balance extended to nutrition of the spirit as well as the body and in these accounts food and drink are used as figurative themes. Adam's Hugh is described as an infant in his commencement of the monastic life. 'The more he tasted and imbibed the sweet draughts of heavenly doctrine, the more greedily he sucked at the breasts of his mother Church.'[305] Eadmer too used the language of the nursery in speaking of spiritual growth and quoted Anselm directly. 'Just as bread and all kinds of solid food are good and wholesome for those who can digest them, but feed a suckling infant on such food, take away its milk, and you will see him strangled rather than strengthened by his diet.'[306]

2.3 Fasting Practices and the Emaciated Body

Fasting is a consistent theme in the lives. This is of necessity to some extent since it was one of the features of the monastic life, a tool used to bring the body and its calls under control and allow a monk to focus on spiritual rather than worldly matters.[307] Hugh 'kept his body in

[303] Ibid. 'Quod dum sepius egerit, primo insompnietas, denuo mentis torpo, postremo totius corporis imbescillitas, iam ad omnia spiritualis vite exercitia invalidum possedibit.'

[304] Hugh is described as showing a pragmatic approach in his management of his own altar assistants and their nutritional welfare. During days when there were many church services he made them take some bread and wine so they could continue with their duties. There is no suggestion here that the reference is to communion; the intention appears to be ensure they would be fit to help him celebrate high mass. *MV*, vol. I, book 3, ch. xiii, p. 127. Although it is not called such, it seems to serve the same purpose in this case as did *mixtum*.

[305] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. ii, p. 8. 'Gustans vero magisque ac magis hauriens dulcedinem celestis doctrine, avidius inhiabat uberibus matris ecclesie.'

[306] *VA*, I, xxii, pp. 38-9. 'Et panis et quisque solidus cibus utilis et bonus est eo uti valenti. Verum subtracto lacte ciba inde lactentem infantantem, et vidibis eum ex hoc magis strangulari quam recreari.'

[307] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, pp. 2-3.

subjugation by watching, fasting and the discipline, and, as was the custom of his order, wore the hair shirt and lived sometimes on water and dried bread'.[308] Margaret and Christina were noted as fasting too, although in Christina's case it is not mentioned first as a religious observance but in the context of her hiding with the hermit Roger, confined in a tiny space and unable to eat for fear of discovery. The impact was the same though. 'O what trials she had to bear of cold and heat, hunger and thirst and daily fasting.'[309] Margaret, who had no such constraints, nevertheless proved committed to religious practices, including fasting. 'How much she would devote herself to compunction, to prayer, to fasts and to works of mercy.'[310]

Wulfric of Haselbury was recorded by John of Ford as commencing his eremitic life with a superfluity of fasting. 'He started by mortifying what was earthly in him with strict fasting, straining and striving to wring out all natural comeliness and restore to himself the beauty of holiness through extremes of abstinence and watching.'[311] His diet was described as oatmeal bread and porridge, which he barely tasted. For drink, he refused beer and wine other than to celebrate a feast day, and then only if it was offered. John mentions Wulfric taking a drink he called *bersisa*, the purpose of which was to 'allow his strength to ebb slowly and by degrees as though he were left hanging on a cross'.[312] This is a powerful image. Likening Wulfric's slow

[308] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. xii, p. 37. 'Domabat corporis menbra vigiliis, ieiuniis, flagellis, et iuxta morem ordinis usu cilicio et potu aque cum arido pane.'

[309] *LC*, 39, p. 103. 'O quantas sustinuit illic incommoditates frigoris et estus, famis et sitis, cotidiani ieiunii.'

[310] *SMQS*, p. 197. 'Quantum compunctioni et orationi ieiuniis quoque et misericordia operibus dedita fuerit.'

[311] *WH*, 3, p. 17, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 1. 3, p. 102. 'Et primum quidem multo jejunio mortificabat membra sua quae erant super terram et ad exprimendam carnis munditiam sibique reconciliandum sanctimoniae decus omni abstinentiae et vigiliarum labore sudabat.'

[312] *WH*, 3, p. 17, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 1. 3, p. 103. 'Porro ne natura in his deficeret, immo ut in longa defectione velut in quadam cruce diu penderet.' It has been suggested that *bersisa* was a sort of barley water. *WH*, 1.3, note b, p. 221. Plainly it was thought to have some nutritional value since it was taken for that purpose, and since Wulfric refused intoxicating drinks it was unlikely to have been fermented.

decline to death by crucifixion evokes in the reader a suggestion that Wulfric was fasting to extremes as a sacrifice, dying, as did Jesus, to reconcile mankind.[313] The chapter on Wulfric's abstinence is laden with biblical reference and imagery. It is also explicit in its description of the impact fasting had upon the body of the saint. John's portrayal of Wulfric's body is vivid.

> And indeed the bloom of youth and, speaking in human terms, good looks that passed the ordinary, were dried up in no time at all as the breath of the Lord, blowing on him, blew it all away, until, with the skin barely clinging to his bones, the wasted flesh bodied forth no longer the carnal man, but the spiritual.[314]

Of particular interest in this passage is the inference, assertion even, that God was endorsing Wulfric's fasting and had agency in his resultant emaciation. It appears that John was telling his readers that while Wulfric opened the way to life in the spirit through his ascetic practices, it was the breath, the spirit of the Lord that actually produced his skeletal frame. This would have required a level of fasting by Wulfric that was not officially permissible in a monastic community where, in the sources considered here, ascetic practices are described more in terms of balance, obedience and *fastidium*. In Wulfric's case, his fasting and its results validated the image of the suffering saint uniquely endowed by God to endure great torment, whose example was meant to inspire and amaze, but not necessarily to be followed.[315] John's account is in

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[313] For the role of hermits as intercessors and warriors for salvation, see Licence, *Hermits*, pp. 149-50.

[314] *WH*, 3, p. 17, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 1. 3, p. 102. 'Nam floridae aetatis honorem et non mediocrem, secundum hominem dico, carnis gloriam ita in brevi arefecit eo quod spiritu Domini sufflaret in eo et haec omnia exsufflaret, ut pellis vix ossibus haerens non jam carnalem carne nimirum absumpta, sed spiritualem etiam in ipso corpore virum exhiberet.' See Isaiah 40: 7. 'The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen, because the Lord hath blown upon it', and Psalms 101: 6. 'Through the voice of my groaning, my bone has cleaved to my flesh'.

[315] Licence, *Hermits*, in particular chapter six, for the eremitical methods of eradicating sin, and pp. 135-7 for the part food practices and abstinence played in this lifestyle.

keeping with the twelfth-century view of a hermit suffering, and surviving, superhuman levels of hardship. Saintly anchorites of the period often, like Wulfric, had their diet recorded in detail and are described as quenching their bodily appetites through fasting and abstinence, treating their own flesh as the enemy with which they had to do battle.[316] John chose to narrate Wulfric's fasting in the chapter in which he recorded the start of his life as a hermit. This served to position the saint from the outset in the model of the eremitic lifestyle and shows the significance of diet in the attribution of sanctity.[317]

Christina too subdued her body and its calls through fasting. Writing of her endeavours to resist her sexual desire for the unnamed cleric, her hagiographer wrote that she undertook 'long fastings, little food, and that only of raw herbs, a measure of water to drink, nights spent without sleep, harsh scourgings'.[318] The passage continued by referring to these as trials which 'tore and tamed her lascivious body'.[319] Unlike in Wulfric's *Life*, the impact of extreme fasting on Christina's body is not mentioned. Turgot likewise offered no description of the body of Margaret. In a narrative that, in Christina's case at least, might be considered prurient in parts the absence of any description of the physical impact of fasting on the body of a female saint may be significant. Perhaps both Margaret's and Christina's hagiographers considered it inappropriate to depict such a thing; to do so would show that they had either seen or, more likely, thought about, the body of a woman, and were, through the medium of a life, offering

[316] Ibid., p. 137.

[317] The staple diet of a hermit was 'purposefully meagre' and was one of the defining features of their calling. Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 66.

[318] *LC*, 39, p. 103. 'Protracta ieiunia, modicus cibus isque crudarum herbarum, potus aque ad mensuram, noctes insomnes, severa verbera.'

[319] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 2, has observed that biographers romanticised and sentimentalised female virtue far more than male, especially by describing it in heightened and erotic imagery.

such images for others to consider likewise.[320] There were no such qualms about descriptions of the emaciated body of a male saint in contemporary works. For the male religious the physical impact of their fasting, or inability to eat, is usually described in some detail.

Perhaps the most vivid and moving descriptions of an emaciated body are found in Walter Daniel's account of Ailred. Here is Walter's portrayal of his abbot during Ailred's last four years.

> He made his little body free of everything that is pleasant in this present life. He sacrificed himself on the altar of unfailing suffering: hardly any flesh clung to his bones; his lips alone remained, a frame to his teeth. The excessive emaciation of his body and the thinness of his face gave an angelic expression to his countenance. Eating scarcely anything and drinking less, by his unbelievable fasting he lost altogether, and no wonder, the desire for food.[321]

This can be compared with Walter's description of another wasted body, that of the sub-prior who suffered from sharp attacks of fever.

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[320] This is in contrast to the lives of some female martyrs from the early church, Perpetua and Felicitas for instance or St Agnes, where there was explicit mention of the female body. It seems possible that tradition and distance made female nakedness acceptable in a historic life in a way that was not suitable in a saint who had been known by the hagiographer.

[321] *VAil*, xli. p. 49. 'Et a se corpusculum absoluit ab omni vite presentis iocunditate, Sicque sese mactauit in ara passionum indeficiencium ut nulla pene carne adherente ossibus tandummodo labia derelinquerentur circa dentes eius, vultumque formaret angelicum ob nimiam corporis maciem et faciei extenuacionem. Nec mirum, siquidem parum comedens et minus bibens ciborum appetitum abstinencie inedia incredibilis extinxit omnino in seipso.'

> His frame was so wretchedly wasted that it looked like the hollowed woodwork of a lute; eyes, face, hands, arms, feet, shins, blotched and misshapen, proclaimed that the death agony was drawing nearer and nearer. Only his voice begging God for a longer lease of life prevailed over matter in the man. So the sick man lay upon his bed, his limbs scarcely holding together, for the contraction and loosening of his joints and nerves made them leap from the sockets of his bones, and only the thin layer of fragile skin kept his body together, though hardly able, as his weakness grows upon him, to prevent it from falling entirely to pieces.[322]

The images from both accounts are graphic and immediate; Ailred's lips framing his teeth, the sub-prior's joints prevented from leaping out of their sockets by only their covering of skin, the piteousness of Ailred's 'little body'. The difference between the two accounts lies not in the matter of the emaciation itself, but in the tone of these two narratives, and in their supplementary details. It is through these that Walter's intent in his account of Ailred can be posited. The account of the sub-prior's condition appears medicalised. Walter gives a doctor's analysis of the patient's body, describing his illness, fever; its signs and symptoms: extreme emaciation, blotching and limb contractures; a prognosis established from the patient's history and symptoms: death.[323] By contrast, Ailred's emaciated frame is described in terms that are

[322] Ibid., xxi. pp. 29-30. 'Ipsa precordiorum exterior fabrica miserabiliter arefacta concavum cithara lignum formare visebatur: oculi et facies manus et brachia pedes et tibie figura et colore deformes mortis acerbissimum dolorem iam iamque imminere nunciabant. Vox tamen substanciam in homine vincens vitam a Deo precabatur longiorem. Iacet interim infirmus in lecto, cuius membra vix coherent sibi quia compages et nervi contracti et soluti membrana corpus totum tenet in unum, set vix totum retinet languore ingerente artubus universis divorcium.'

[323] Although Walter says the man's death was near, and lists the parts of his body through which this could be known, he does not say exactly what it was about them that made pending death apparent to him. Wallis, *Medieval Medicine*, pp. 43-5, notes that prognostic signs from *The White Casket* mention pustules, (which could perhaps be equated with the blotching Walter mentions), and the Pseudo-Galenic *Signs of Impending Death*

redolent of heavenly promise and the route to salvation. Ailred is seen as sacrificing himself on 'the altar of unfailing suffering', an image that is suggestive of the paschal lamb, the communion celebration, and Jesus' sacrifice of himself for the salvation of mankind. The abbot's wasted face is compared to that of an angel, a heavenly being, awakening in the reader the possibility that during, even because of, his human suffering Ailred experienced heaven; that indeed he may already be existing in the two realms at one and the same time, body on earth, spirit increasingly heavenwards. His fasting is described as 'unbelievable', a source of amazement that Walter wished to convey to his reader. This is not, however, just an account of fasting and emaciation. It is possible to read into this narrative of Walter's the entire journey of the Christian life. Man is fallen, is redeemed by sacrifice and suffering, and can, like the angels, attain heaven. This piece of hagiography served both to promote Ailred as a suffering saint, blessed by God, present in both heaven and earth and, as well, to point the reader to the route of their own salvation.

Walter couched Ailred's fasting and resultant emaciation in careful terms. He was explicit that Ailred had no desire to eat, so was experiencing *fastidium,* that necessary precondition for fasting to be regarded as a sign of sanctity. However, confusingly, he commenced the chapter by saying that Ailred had increased his austerity. 'Throughout those four years before his death, our father experienced what I may call a second circumcision, not by the removal of superfluities, which even did not exist, but by depriving himself of necessities very helpful to him in his weakness.'[324] While there is a passive quality in Ailred's experiencing the 'second

speak of changes to the face and eyes, also mentioned by Walter. 'In the human body, the forehead protrudes and the eyebrows slant downwards. The left eye becomes smaller. The tip of the nose turns white. The chin falls.'

[324] *VAil*, xli. p. 49. 'Per illos igitur annos iiij qui obitum patris nostri precesserunt secunda, ut ita dixerim, circumcisione vitam suam incidit, non quidem superfluitates tollendo que nulle erant, set necessaria et valde succurrencia infirmitati sue amputando …'

circumcision', Walter is clear that he deprived himself of necessities, which suggests this was a deliberate choice on the part of the abbot. Walter tells of Ailred refusing the wine that he was permitted to take for pain relief and rejecting the curatives he was given. This position ran the risk of criticism like that which had been levied at Anselm or even the accusation of self-inflicted harm. It seems, however, that Walter was not concerned by this possibility, but intended instead to give precedence to other points that were more important to him. These were Ailred's prioritising the welfare of his soul above that of his body and, possibly, defending against critics who had called Ailred a glutton and wine-bibber.[325] Whatever Walter's exact intentions here, the passage sets Ailred firmly within the cast of the suffering saint, martyred on the altar of his own physical torment, and presented to the reader through an account of fasting and emaciation.

Bynum has expressed the view, drawn from twelfth-century saints' lives, of the emaciated body being regarded as an object of beauty.[326] In this interpretation, the emaciated body is a visible representation of the fulfilment of the monastic life, an instantiation of the ideal monk. This construal would present Ailred's body to the receivers of his *Life* as an object of not just pity and wonder, but also of attraction. For the body of the saint, their shrunken, wasted form was, in a way, becoming an incorruptible relic while they were still living. Given this it is no surprise, as was discussed in the first chapter, that the saints' bodies were often described as if they were jewels; their physical body in life and in death foreshadowing, and in a way actually becoming, the resurrection body that they would eventually possess. The emaciated bodies of the saints, as described for the reader, provided a counterpoint to the corrupt status of the ordinary mortal, subject to the lures, excesses and degeneration of their fallen condition. The transformation

[325] Ibid., xxvii. p. 34.

[326] Bynum, *Resurrection*, p. 221.

from decay and change to immutability and eternity was articulated in part through the eating and fasting practices of the saints with the resultant bodily emaciation predicated upon notions of balance and monastic obedience.

2.4 In Sickness and in Health

For some of the saints the extremity of their fasting practices impacted on their long-term health. This is seen alongside and despite the accounts which stress moderation. Frequently it occurs in descriptions of gastrointestinal disorders, something that was at the time an acknowledged effect of the monastic diet with Bernard of Clairvaux writing that monks took wine for the stomach complaints from which they all suffered.[327] Turgot's only reference to any infirmity of Margaret's concerned her fasting. 'What should I say about her fast except that through her excessive abstinence she would incur a very serious illness?'[328] He later explained that this fasting-induced illness affected Margaret's stomach. 'Whence, because of the very great rigour of her fast, she suffered a bitter sickness of the stomach up to her death.'[329] Christina too suffered from the effects of the unavoidable fasting she had to endure when hiding in Roger's cell. This caused her both immediate and long-term health problems. The hagiographer described her condition during her confinement. 'Through long fasting, her bowels became contracted and dried up. There was a time when her burning thirst caused little clots of blood

[327] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem Vallensis* in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, 8 vols, ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienes, 1957-1998), vol. 3, p. 98, para. 21 line 13. 'Omnes nimirum, ex quo monachi sumus, infirmos stomachos habemus, et tam necessarium Apostoli de utendo vino consilium merito non negligimus, modico tamen, quod ille praemisit, nescio cur praetermisso.'

[328] *SQMS,* p. 119. 'De ieiunio autem quid dicam, nisi quod per nimiam eius abstinienciam gravissime infirmitatis incurrerit molestiam?'

[329] Ibid., p. 207. 'Unde propter nimium ieiunii rigorem, acerrimum usque ad exitum corpore passa est stomachi dolorem.'

to bubble up from her nostrils.'[330] He observed later in the account that these dietary constraints, and many other discomforts that presented over a period of time, caused Christina a variety of ailments that grew worse and worse until they became incurable.[331]

For Hugh of Lincoln, the extreme fasting of his early years was accounted the cause of later digestive problems.[332] 'The doctors ascribed the numbness of his digestive organs, which caused him so much pain and discomfort in his later years, to this abstinence.' In a narrative pattern similar to that seen in Margaret and Christina, this point is expanded upon later in the *Magna Vita* when Adam explained that 'by continual use of a chilling diet he had so weakened the internal bodily organs that, the natural heat being lessened, he suffered discomfort from the coldness of the stomach and often also from distressing forms of colic'.[333] This observation was made upon Hugh's assumption of the role of bishop which happened when he was in his late forties or fifty years old, aging or aged by the precepts of the period.[334] As an old man, Hugh would, according to Hippocratic teaching, have been naturally cold, a feature which could exacerbate his gastric problems as he would be unable, naturally, to correct the effects of his previous chilling diet.[335] Medical works available at the time, particularly the *Aphorisms* and the *Regimen*, spoke at length about diet in illness and health and expanded upon the types of

[330] *LC*, 39, pp. 102-3. 'Longa inedia contracta sunt et aruerunt sibi intestina. Erat quando pre ardore sitis naribus ebullire(n)t frusta coagulati sanguinis.'

[331] Ibid., 40, p. 105.

[332] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. xii, p. 37. 'Abstinentie vero huic ascribebant medici in etate progressiori stomachi illius nimiam infrigidionem unde plures interdum perferebat dolores et iuges pene molestias.'

[333] Ibid., book 3, ch. xiii, p. 126. 'Nam et per continuum frigidioris diete usum eo usque internas iam corporis vires attriuerant, ut fatiscente naturali calore crebras infrigidati stomachi perferret molestias, yliacis insuper passionibus sepius amarissime torqueretur.'

[334] Ibid., p. vii. Hugh was born c. 1140 and consecrated as bishop in 1186. For ageing see chapter 3.5.

[335] Hippocrates, *Hippocrates Works*, 4 vols, trans. W. H. S. Jones (London: Heinemann and Sons, 1923), vol. 4, 'The Aphorisms' xiv, p. 105. 'Old men have little innate heat.'

food and drink that would be considered to be chilling and those that would be warming. Among the former are barley and fish, soft food and raw or cooked vegetables and water.[336] This is very much the sort of diet Hugh would have been eating as a Carthusian monk and, in his early days as such, Hugh was taking only very small amounts of it. This added inadequacy in volume to probable inadequacy in nutritional content. As will be discussed in chapter four, Adam shows some familiarity and confidence in medical matters which suggests that he may have come from a medical family.[337] If this is the case, it is likely that he made his observations on the impact of a chilling diet from a medically informed standpoint.

It is interesting that in the instances where the hagiographers cite extreme fasting as being a cause of subsequent illness, the future medical problem is sited in the gastrointestinal system. While it is the case that fasting and emaciation can have a long-term impact on gastric health, they can also produce other medical problems.[338] These, however, are not mentioned in relation to fasting practices, suggesting either that they were not known or not observed, or that the hagiographers chose to co-locate both the cause and the effect of the illness. As is noted elsewhere, the writers did on occasion describe the site of the sin, or in this context the site of the sacrifice of fasting, as being manifest in the organ or system that subsequently became the site of the malady.[339]

[336] Ibid., 'Regimen in Health' i, p. 45; 'Regimen II', xl, p. 307; xlviii, p. 321 and lii, p. 325.

[337] See chapter 4.2.i

[338] Non-gastric medical conditions of malnutrition affect most, if not all, of the body's systems. Conditions include dermatitis, recurrent infections, anaemia and its associated problems, reduced muscle bulk, osteomalacia with resultant bone deformity, blood clotting deficiencies, neuropathy and oedema. J. C. Houston, C. L. Joiner, J. R. Trounce, A *Short Textbook of Medicine*, 8th ed. (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), pp. 713-14 and Mike Toohey, *Toohey's Medicine for Nurses*, ed. Arnold Bloom, 11th ed. (Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh, 1975), p. 243-4. Many of these conditions lead to further health problems.

[339] See for example the account of the young man of 'roving appetites' in chapter 3:2.

In the case of Margaret, there is an physiological incompatibility between Turgot's description of her fasting practices and her evident fertility as queen. While Margaret's exact date of birth is unknown, she was married in 1069 or 1070, probably aged about twenty-four, and gave birth to eight infants who survived to adulthood. Her youngest child, David, was born c. 1084 when the queen was about thirty-eight years of age.[340] This means she had eight pregnancies resulting in live births within a fourteen-year period. Possibly there were other pregnancies which did not lead to a live birth and are not recorded. Ignoring such supposition still means that Margaret gave birth less than every two years and that she must have become pregnant on average within six months of bearing her previous child. Ovulation is usually suppressed during lactation, which lessens the likelihood of conception occurring in a woman who is breastfeeding and suggests that either Margaret did not breastfeed her babies or that she did so for only a short period of time.[341] Even in non-lactating women, some delay in a return to fertility occurs following a birth. Further, and a seminal point here, ovulation is dependent on adequate diet and maternal weight.[342] This being the case, it is likely that in his descriptions of Margaret's fasting Turgot was either writing of Margaret's post childbearing dietary practices, or that he exaggerated her asceticism in her earlier years. This was a challenging correspondence for Turgot to achieve in his writing of a dynastic hagiography. He was obliged to show Margaret as fulfilling her duties as queen through bearing children, which biologically necessitated her taking an adequate diet, while at the same time living the ascetic lifestyle required of a saint, which required extreme levels of fasting. Margaret's duty as a child-bearer was a matter of responsibility in the same way that Hugh was required to fulfil his duties as bishop. While

[340] *SQMS*, p. 47.

[341] Regarding the relationship between breastfeeding and fertility, prolactin, the hormone responsible for stimulating lactation, also acts to reduce the effects of other hormones, such as follicle stimulating hormone, which is needed to trigger ovulation. Sweet, *Midwifery*, p. 242. This usually, although by no means invariably, means that breastfeeding women are less likely to ovulate and therefore conceive.

[342] Ibid.

Adam wrote of, and justified, Hugh's increasing his diet, Turgot is completely silent on the matter and despite the obstetrical anomaly in his account chose to describe Margaret principally in terms of her ascetic practice alluding to her dynastic function chiefly through setting out her own heritage at length and by very occasional reference to her own children.[343]

As well as being a cause of illness, diet was seen as a means of cure. As mentioned previously, Anselm started to recover from serious sickness after eating partridge and is, along with Hugh and Gilbert, one of the saints recorded as eating meat for health reasons when sick.[344] If any of the other saints had meat when they were ill their hagiographers chose not to mention it. Adam's treatment of the episode in which Hugh ate meat offers an insight as to why other writers might have chosen not to record their subject doing likewise. Adam's narrative is lengthy and frank and commenced with his saying that it would be remiss of him not to mention that Hugh, who himself disliked hypocrisy and scrupulosity, did not refuse to eat meat in his last illness. 'On the advice of the doctors his friends suggested that when winter was over, he would recover more easily if he would allow his body, now chilled by quartan agues after the bouts of his fever, to be cosseted by more nourishing and sustaining foods.'[345] Adam introduced the account with a justification; plainly he knew it would be a matter of controversy. With Hugh steadfast in his refusal to eat meat, Adam brought into the narrative Hugh's ultimate superior in the English church, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the archbishop ordered Hugh to follow the advice of his doctors. Despite this show of ecclesiastical authority, and notwithstanding his vow of obedience, Hugh still resisted, saying that eating meat, even in sickness, was banned by the

[343] *SQMS*, pp. 141-66.

[344] For Gilbert see, *BSG*, 22, p. 63 and for Hugh, *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 195.

[345] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 195. 'Suggerentibus namque amicis et medicis asserentibus quia, hyme transacta, facilius curaretur si esculentioribus cibis effectum iam corpus, et quartanis algoribus post alias febres congelascens, foueri permisisset.'

Carthusian rule. Those with Hugh then sought sanction from Witham, and the procurator and monks wrote from there, exhorting Hugh to obey the order of the archbishop. In the face of combined pressure, and entreaty, from others in his order, the authority of the church and from his friends, attendants and doctors, Hugh agreed to eat meat. It seems as if, other than invoking a miraculous event to induce Hugh to eat, Adam used every available source of authority in justifying Hugh's decision.

In light of the fact that the meat of four-footed animals was generally banned, Hugh's choice of meat stuff is particularly interesting. For Hugh chose to eat not just the meat of such an animal but its actual foot. 'If you recommend it' he is recorded as saying, 'pigs' feet since I have read that the holy fathers formerly allowed the sick to eat them.'[346] They were brought and Hugh, who was noted as not having eaten meat since childhood, managed just one mouthful before ordering the dish taken away. The same happened when small birds were brought for him to eat. The possible reception that Hugh's eating meat might have had from the readers of his respective *Lives* is demonstrated by the fact that neither Gerald nor the author of the *Metrical Life* mentioned this incident in their accounts of the bishop. Both in fact refuted Adam's account outright, writing that despite the advice of doctors, Hugh refused meat, choosing to 'observe until death the austere regimen of the Carthusian order'.[347] While Adam's account can reliably be considered as first-hand testimony, neither Gerald nor the author of the *Metrical Life* were present during Hugh's period of dying. Adam was writing the *Magna Vita* for the community at Witham, who had apparently urged Hugh to take meat. Witham monks, the intended recipients of his account, would have known that it was indeed the case that they had asked

[346] Ibid., p. 196. 'Pedibus, si vobis videatur, suillis, quos infirmantibus a sanctis quondam partibus legimus fuisse concessos.'

[347] *LSHA*, part I, xi, p. 43 and *MLSH*, p. 71.

Hugh to eat meat and Adam chose to relate the episode accordingly. Gerald and the author of the *Metrical Life*, however, deemed the act of refusing to eat meat to be more important in describing sanctity than was the expression of monastic obedience and concern for his community members shown in Adam's account. This indicates that although the nutritive qualities and advantages of diet as an aid to wellbeing and cure were recognised and indeed practised, for the purposes of a hagiography, perhaps particularly a largely derivative one, as were Gerald's and the *Metrical Life*, the unexpurgated monastic ideal was generally presented to the receivers of a life.

Healing mediated through the efficacy of food or drink occurs with some regularity in the miracle accounts. Often these accounts involved bread and wine, which is unsurprising given its association with communion and the body of Christ. Anselm's *Life* has several accounts of food which had been in contact with the saint providing miraculous cures for others, narratives which continue Eadmer's use of food as a thematic and metaphorical strand.[348] Similar stories are seen in Gilbert's *Life* when bread given to a woman by the saint provided cures for many years.[349] Wulfric was described as healing through four types of medicine: holy water, bread which he had blessed, the laying on of a hand and the sign of the cross.[350] According to John the bread and water were particularly efficacious and he wrote that 'bread and water blessed by him [Wulfric] were potent in driving out sicknesses of every kind, and when sent to the absent frequently cured whole families of their diseases'.[351]

[348] For one example from several, see *VA*, II, xl, p. 117, where people obtained the leavings from Anselm's table which were, according to Eadmer, efficacious in providing cure for illness and remedy against dangers.

[349] *BSG*, 49*,* p. 117.

[350] *WH*, 37, p. 54, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 2. 7, p. 141. 'In aqua videlicet benedicta, in pane itidem benedicto, in imposition manus, in signo crucis.'

[351] Ibid. 'Nam panem et aquam benedicens morbos quoscumque potenter abegit et absentibus mittens totas plerumque familias sanavit a languoribus suis.'

The use of bread and wine as a healing medium extended to the notion of the sacred bread and wine of communion. That the host was regarded as sanctified even prior to its consecration is seen through Lanfranc's lengthy and careful instructions in *Constitutions* about how it was to be prepared. In a chapter concerning the duties of the sacrist, Lanfranc required that the wheat to be used should be picked out grain by grain, placed in a clean sack made of good cloth and carried to the mill by a servant of good character.[352] Even before the flour was ground, the processes required showed that it was a revered item. Cleanliness continued in the instructions, with everything that would come into contact with the host washed and clean. The eucharist itself had a strengthening, and in some respects a healing effect, even for those on their deathbeds. In the case of the saints, such healing brought comfort to the spirit and mind, if not the body. The dying Waldef 'fortified himself by partaking of the body and blood of the Lord'.[353] Margaret too was recorded as taking communion on her deathbed and gaining temporary respite from her suffering. 'Having been refreshed by a health-bearing morsel, [she] was soon prostrated on her bed, aggravated by former pains.'[354] Since Margaret's physical pain returned shortly after its initial abatement, the health-bearing qualities of the morsel, the eucharist, were presumably intended to describe spiritual rather than physical relief.

The risk of food and drink as a source of temptation, an avenue to spiritual sickness, is seen in the lives, sometimes in situations where the wellbeing of the subject was threatened. Christina's parents were reported as feasting and getting drunk when Ralph was trying to seduce Christina, rendered inattentive to their daughter's peril through the befuddlement of alcohol.[355] They used

[352] *MCL*, 87, p. 125. 'In primus, si fieri potest, frumentum cum magno studio granatim eligatur, electum in sacculo mundo, et de bono panno facto, et ad hoc opus tantum parato, ponatur, et a famulo boni studii ad molendinum deferatur.'

[353] *LWal*, 89, pp. 16 and 310. 'Ac dominici corporis et sanguinis participatione se mundivit.'

[354] *SQMS*, pp. 214-5. 'Quorum salutifero gustu refecta, prioribus mox aggravate doloribus lecto proscernitur …'

[355] *LC*, 5, p. 43.

alcohol themselves in their endeavours to get Christina to consummate her unwanted marriage to Burthred, hoping that 'the accumulation of little sips of wine would break her resolution and prepare her body for the act of corruption'.[356] Excess is seen as opening the doors to hell. In Wulfstan's *Life*, a knight called Nicholas who had drunk too much wine after the bishop had ordered him to stop fell asleep and was assailed by a demon.[357]

Consumption is seen with the analogy of decay. In Wulfric's *Life*, servants who were given food to take as a gift to the hermit were so tempted by it that they hid some for themselves then, on their return, found it crawling with maggots. Horrified, they took it to the hermit who blessed it, thus restoring it to edibility and showing his ability to defeat corruption.[358] In Hugh's *Magna Vita* lepers cured at the shrine of St Anthony are recorded as having been healed from 'the devastating fire, which had already half eaten them away and consumed their flesh and bones …'[359] Misuse of food, and poor attitude towards it, provided a source for political comment and criticism as well. Adam noted the shortcomings of King John, predicating his criticisms with an observation that the king was fonder of meat for his belly than he was of the meat of sound doctrine, and cared not at all for the emptiness of his mind.[360] In an excoriating account of Samson, Wulfstan's successor to the see of Worcester, William of Malmesbury described the bishop's extreme greed.[361] Called 'The Great Maw' by his contemporaries,

[356] Ibid., 9, p. 49.

[357] *VWulf*, iii, 16. 2, pp. 130-4. 'Ceteris nutui iubentis servientibus solus Nicholas, quod eum antistes maiori dignaretur gratia, penum ingressus temeravit preceptum. Inde dormitum se recipiens horrificisque insomniis impulsus, stridores diros emmitebat.'

[358] *WH*, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3.26, p. 195.

[359] *MV*, vol. II, book 4, ch. xiii, p. 159. 'Salvatos ab igne sacro, semiustis carnibus consumptisque ossibus …'

[360] Ibid., book V, ch. xi, p. 143. Adam described the meat of sound doctrine as that delivered through a sermon and noted that John refused both spiritual foods, the word and the sacrament.

[361] *GPA*, vol. 1, 150, 1, pp. 440-1. 'Nimia dapsilitate urgens stomachum, adeo ut isto aevo dicatur unicus gurges escarum.'

Samson's demise was described as befitting his lifestyle. 'He died, it is believed, of obesity, when his mountainous frame had to take up the burden of an old man's years. It was not a pretty death, and ill became a bishop, for he had not even received the last rites.'[362] His greed rendered both physical and spiritual death. The cautionary story of Samson also provided a marked contrast between his grossness and the abstemiousness of his predecessor, the sainted Wulfstan, who had been noted particularly for his extreme restraint in dietary intake. Food then was a cause of illness as well as a means of cure with both its lack and excess impacting on the health and well-being of body and spirit.

2.5 The Lord's Table

The lives are fat with the themes of hospitality and feast, both earthly and heavenly. One of the most common charities enjoined on religious orders was to feed the poor and ill and to offer shelter and succour to pilgrims and travellers.[363] This included individual acts of charity. Sharing one's own food with a stranger was seen, in both hagiography and folktale, to be a standard indication of heroic or saintly generosity. Turgot described Margaret, for whose daughter Matilda, queen of England, he wrote the *Life*, engaged in an explicitly maternal act of charity, seating orphaned infants on her knees and feeding them soft food with her own spoon.[364] In a monastery the abbot was responsible, according to the *Rule* of Benedict, for entertaining guests, for mixing with the powerful and politically influential, and the abbot's table was expected to provide food and drink adequate for the status and expectations of the guests.[365] The same applied to prelates. This being the case, the sainted abbot or bishop had to

[362] Ibid. 'Obiit pinguedine, ut creditor, interceptus, cum et moli corporis seniles anni accederent, non adeo pulchra ut episcopum deceret, qui nec inunctus fuerit.'

[363] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 2.

[364] *SMQS*, p. 205. Matilda was also known as Edith.

[365] Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 169.

be described in his life as fulfilling this duty of responsibility while, for hagiographic purposes, doing so while his ascetic practices were visibly maintained.[366]

Once again, the hagiographers were required to affect something of a balance in their writing. The saints are often described as generous hosts, invoking others to enjoy their meal while exercising self-restraint themselves, able to fast even in the face of temptation, resisting the lures of the table. Anselm is recorded as taking pleasure in seeing others enjoying their food, blessing them and saying, 'May it do you good.'[367] He himself though was described by Eadmer as paying little attention to his food, often distracted by discourse and argument. Godric too showed generosity in feeding others, even when he was too ill to eat himself. Ordering tasty food to be brought he would 'make the monks eager to eat happily and would make them more cheerful in spirit.'[368] Sometimes the saint's self-restraint at the table was performed secretly. Wulfstan was recorded as drinking only water when the others at his table were drinking beer or mead, with only his servant aware of this.[369] William described this similarly in his account of the bishops of England, saying that Wulfstan provoked hilarity through pretending to drink when his turn came, holding the smallest possible glass.[370] It is perhaps indicative of the difference in purpose and audience between works that in the *Life* Wulfstan's fasting was secret, while in the *Gesta* it was acknowledged publicly. Secret fasting avoided the accusation of vainglory but also ran counter to monastic obedience. In a conscious piece of food imagery

[366] *BR*, RB 56, 1, p. 455. Benedict's rule said that the abbot should always sit at table with guests and pilgrims. 'Mensa abbatis cum hospitibus et peregrinis sit semper.'

[367] *VA*, II, xi, p. 78.

[368] *LG*, ch. 169 [306], p. 323, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

[369] *VWulf*, iii, 3. 2, p. 111, 'Ipse acquam bibebat, solo ministro conscio …'

[370] *GPA*, 139, 5, pp. 426-7. 'Ipse vasculum minutissimum tenens eos ad hilaritatem invitabat …'

from the same passage, William noted that while others around him were feasting, Wulfstan would instead be chewing over, ruminating upon, the psalms.[371]

Margaret was described as showing charity in food alms, humbly serving refreshment to twenty four poor people.[372] The account is set within the context of her personal self-restraint. 'After she had ministered to the hungering Christ in the refreshment of these people, she was accustomed also to nourish her own little body … For she ate so that she might preserve life, not so that she might yield to delight.'[373] Turgot used the notion of fast and feast here, continuing the passage by saying that her meagre refreshment incited rather than quenched her appetite and she seemed to taste, rather than to consume, her food.[374] The juxtaposition between feast and restraint is clear and is presented as a direct question for his reader to ponder. 'Hence I ask, hence one must consider, how great and what sort was her continence while fasting, when she exercised such abstinence while feasting?'[375]

[371] Ibid. 'Cum quibus ipse assidens psalmos ruminabat.'

[372] *SQMS*, p. 206.

[373] Ibid. 'In quorum refectione postquam Christo in illis esurienti ministraverat, suum quoque corpusculum reficere consuevit … Comedebat enim ut tantum vitam servaret, non ut delectacionis adquiesceret.' This refers to Matthew's gospel, chapter 25: 35 and 40. 'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat … as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.' In the light of Margaret's pregnancies, is possible to speculate that Turgot's reference to preserving life could be an allusion to fetal welfare.

[374] It has been observed that tasting rather than eating food was regarded as a feature of holiness. Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 2. The mysterious pilgrim, inferred to be Christ, in Christina of Markyate's *Life* did the same thing. When offered bread he was seen to taste rather than eat it and when presented with fish to eat, replied that, 'there was no need to take more than would keep body and soul together [Cumque moneretur ut de apposito pisce vel modicum gustaret non esse opus respondit misero corpori, nisi de quo tantum sustentetur]'. *LC*, 80, pp. 182-5.

[375] *SQMS*, p. 207. 'Hinc rogo hinc perpendatur quanta et qualis eius continencia fuerit ieiunando, cuius tanta exciterat abscinencia convivando.'

For the purposes of the lives the writers considered it necessary to show that the saints were abstaining in public and not gorging in private. Several accounts state explicitly that they refused to dine in their own rooms. The aged Gilbert was asked by his brothers to make allowance for his infirmities and not to go to the refectory for meals, it being situated at some distance from his room and up a number of steps. He replied with spirit. '"Gilbert will not provide his successors with the example of eating delicacies in his own room." And so he came to the table, supported on both sides by brethren's hands and with great effort.'[376] Once in the refectory he fasted, though ensured provision was made for the poor and the monks. Wulfstan always dined either with his monks or publicly in his palace, declaring it 'improper and mean to gorge in private'.[377]

Spiritual nourishment at mealtimes is seen with some regularity in the lives. The saints were often described as engaging in it to the neglect, deliberate or careless, of their bodies. For the monks, meals were, in principle at least, silent times, and such is reported by William of Malmesbury who wrote that improving books were read at Wulfstan's table providing an adjunct to physical nourishment: 'heavenly sustenance for those to whom he had given food for their bodies', the digestion of spiritual matter set alongside, although in a position of superiority to the digestion of physical matter. [378] At mealtimes Hugh 'had the scriptures read to him with such assiduity that at matins and dinner he managed to cover practically all the old and new

[376] *BSG*, 28, p. 91. '"Non erit Gilbertus exemplum successoribus suis comedendi delicias in camera", et sic utroque latere manibus fratrum portatus, magno cum labore accessit ad mensam.'

[377] *VWulf*, iii, 2. 1, p. 109. 'Indecens enim illiberale testabatur esse si clam obsonaretur.'

[378] Ibid., 3. 2, p. 111. 'Legebantur ad mensam eius libri edificationi accommodi, cunctis interim summum prementibus silentium. Iam vero quite data epulis, exponebat lectionem patria lingua, ut caelestem impertiret alimoniam quibus corporalem ministrauerat.' William notes that the passages read were delivered in Wulfstan's native tongue, acknowledgement perhaps of his success in managing the transition from the pre-conquest era to a Norman England.

testaments with the exception of the four gospels.'[379] Gilbert, in the context of a passage about his fasting, is seen as taking spiritual rather than physical food at mealtimes. 'He refreshed his spirit with the divine word rather than his belly with bodily food.'[380] Attitude and faith could substitute for provender if necessary. Anselm was described as making up for any shortfalls at the table through his good-will and cheerful countenance and invoked his officers to trust in God if shortages threatened, saying that God would provide all that was needed.[381] These passages are entirely to do with wellbeing and health, but the focus of them is on soul rather than body. The saints are shown as having achieved the proper balance in nutritional practices, feeding the spiritual rather than the carnal man at the dinner table. The writers were balancing the body-soul tension as regards intake and wellness, showing the health of soul and the subjugation of the body running together. Spiritual and physical sustenance are juxtaposed, with the saints growing stronger in the spirit even as their physical frame reduced.

The hagiographers sometimes affected a segue between dining in this world and the promise of a heavenly table in the next, with the act of communion being used as a bridge between the two. Eadmer managed this particularly smoothly. The chapters in which he described Anselm's dying are laden with food imagery, this providing a vehicle upon which the narrative is moved forwards.[382] Eadmer commenced by telling how Anselm was unable to eat any food 'by which human beings are strengthened and nourished', before stating that the archbishop insisted on being carried to the church for the consecration of the Lord's body. Eadmer's point here appears to be that Anselm, who was unable to eat earthly food, could partake of the bread of heaven, itself an agent of healing. Eadmer then returned to the subject of earthly food,

[379] *MV*, vol. I, book 3, ch. xii, p. 126.

[380] *BSG*, 22, p. 65. 'Refectionem magis mentis ex verbo divino quam ventris ex corporali cibario.'

[381] *VA*, I, xxviii, p. 47.

[382] Ibid., II, lxv and lxvi, pp. 141-3.

reiterating his point that Anselm was unable to eat, before moving to the death itself and quoting the gospel that was being read as Anselm reached the point of decease. The passage is from Luke 22: 28-30. 'And you are they who have continued with me in my temptations: and I dispose to you, as my father hath disposed to me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom.'

Eadmer's narrative works through the agency and imagery of food to describe the transition of Anselm from man to saint. It is a liminal and sequential account. The first stage is Anselm's *fastidium*, the inability to eat, which Eadmer used to emphasise the necessity of food to life, showing that through his *inedia* Anselm was moving onward from this mortal world. The celebration of communion was the next stage on Anselm's journey; he partook of heavenly food, his soul able to accept spiritual sustenance. Finally, Anselm was seen at the moment of his transition between this world and the next, heading towards the Lord's table and his promised place there, ready to assume his seat at the divine feast he had, through his sainted lifestyle, merited. There is no intermediate stage here in Eadmer's narrative, no purgation or delay. Anselm goes directly to the Lord's table in heaven. In his construction of this narrative Eadmer is juxtaposing, in almost direct correlation, Anselm's growing physical malaise with his increase in spiritual wellbeing, the account being predicated upon and expressed through the notions of earthly and heavenly food. Further, and in narrative theming of meticulous circularity Eadmer was returning to the image with which he commenced the *Life*, that of Anselm eating with God in heaven.[383]

[383] *VA*, I, ii, pp. 4-5.

Summary

The topic of food is constant in the lives, a subject that frequently occurs at the beginning of the work and is threaded through until its end. In this it describes and shadows the human journey through life, ever present, a source of temptation, a tool for salvation. The writers worked to ensure they were presenting balance to the receivers of the life: balance in accounts of intake and crucially in terms of ascetic practice. It is in this though that the hagiographer's dilemma lay, for to engage asceticism to extremes showed spiritual hubris and risked a carelessness with the health of the body that was required to perform monastic functions. This dilemma was managed through the notion of *fastidium*, which was acceptable and conveniently for the writers is often a feature of sickness. The saint was intended to be an exemplar, representing the ideal of a religious figure, acting in obedience to the *Rule* however, conversely, they were also described as people who, through their extraordinary sanctity could achieve feats of asceticism that it was simply impossible for an ordinary person to emulate. It was in this juxtaposition that their sanctity resided.

It was clear that the ordinary monk was expected, in obedience, to follow the rules regarding food and fast, so as to be able to function properly. But theirs was not the path of the saint whose emaciated frames foreshadowed the immutability their heavenly body would assume as they became living relics. Food is used by the writers as a medium to illustrate the different dimensions in which they were positioning their accounts: man as both spiritual and corporeal being, immutable and decaying; the relationship and interaction between heaven and earth; humanity in motion, simultaneously demonstrating fall and redemption, and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, represented through the sacrament of communion, the practice of which was so central to Christian belief.

Chapter Three: Illness, Debility and Age

3.1 Humoral Medicine

References and allusions to humoral concepts are found across the lives considered here, particularly those written towards the end of the twelfth-century and into the thirteenth.[384] While the aim of the hagiographers in their choice of language cannot be assumed, the words they chose to use suggest that they intended to weave the threads of humoral medicine into the fabric of their accounts and set this out for their audience to see. Sometimes humours are identified explicitly but often the narrative simply seems to suggest humoral concepts with the resulting complexity in language allowing the reader of the life to interpret the text variously. References to balance, blockage, fluid and heat flow through the illness narratives. This is seen in the following miracle from Waldef's *Life*.

> Another Melrose monk of the same name was oppressed with intolerable head-pains and dizziness and feared too he was about to go out of his mind. Also, a bad flow of humours blocked his ears and completely deprived him of hearing, so that he could not even detect the clanging of a large bell. Troubled in body and soul, but trusting to the merits of St Waldef, secretly and at night while the convent slept, he went up to the tomb, poured out his prayers and wetted it with his tears, fell asleep and in his exhaustion rested his head upon the sepulchre of the saint. After a short sleep he awoke and found the outside of the tomb soiled by a flow of fresh, bloody fluid from his ears. From that hour, as he told me himself, he has not experienced

[384] The *Lives* of Ailred, Godric, Waldef and the *Metrical Life* of Hugh, which were composed between about 1170 and 1230, contain specific references to humours.

> the old head-pains, and he has enjoyed clear and perfect hearing, thanks to his doctor, St Waldef.[385]

Jocelin's story of the Melrose monk with deafness and headaches is told using the theory and language of humours.[386] The ailment was caused by blockage due to bad humours and the healing that followed resulted from the bloody flow of fresh fluid from the monk's ears with restoration of hearing and health ensuing. Jocelin's account is objective and medicalised in its description of the physical cause and cure of the monk's malaise. However, the healing was obtained not by the application of the tenets and practices of humoral medicine but through the agency of the monk's late abbot drawing out the harmful humours, a miraculous extraction of the excess liquid that was the cause of the monk's physical illness. Jocelin wrote the monk was troubled in soul as well as body. This observation links bodily and spiritual condition and suggests that both were unhealthy and causing pain. As will be shown, this association is often seen in accounts of illness and healing, particularly in those realised through miracle. The monk's pouring out of tears at the tomb, perhaps tears of sorrow and repentance, infers that

[385] *LWal*, ch. 129, pp. 193-4 and 348-9. 'Alius monachus eiusdem nominis in Melros intolerabili quodammodo dolore et vertigine capitis gravatus, etiam alienationem mentis sibi adventuram formidavit. Nimia nihilominus humorum exundantia aures eius obstruens auditum funditus ademit, qui etiam campanum clare sonatem audire penitus non potuit. Hic anxiatus corpore ac spiritu, sed confidens in meritis sancti Waltevi, nocte clanculo, soporato convent, ad eius monumentum accessit, precibus cum lachrymis libatis, dormivit, et prae lassitudine caput super sepulcrum sancti reclinavit. Hausto deinde modico soporis, exvigilavit, et superficiem tumbae madefactam ex profluxu vividi humoris et sanguinolenti ex auribus eius decurrentis invenit. Ab illa hora, sicut ipse mihi retulit, dolore capitis consueto caruit, et auditum amissum clare et integre percepit, medicumque suum, sanctum scilicet Waltevum, in Domino laudivit.' The subject of the abbot as a doctor is discussed in chapter 4.3.

[386] The account is congruent with modern medicine and an episode of deafness and headache caused by infection of the ears and sinuses. Such a condition is relieved when the eardrum perforates allowing the fluid trapped behind tympanic membrane to escape, relieving the patient's pain and deafness. D. F. Ellison Nash, *The Principles and Practice of Surgery for Nurses and Allied Professions* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1976), pp. 819-24.

this washed away the spiritual malady that afflicted him in the same way that the subsequent discharge of fluid from the ear released him from his physical ills. His humoral imbalance had been corrected, the excess fluid removed through the avenues of both tears and ears, and balance was restored.

Healing miracles, framed within the aegis of humoral theory and using the concept of humours, of flow, excess, heat and imbalance, are found elsewhere too. The following miracle, similar to that of the Melrose monk, is found in Gilbert's *Life.* The writer tells of a woman called Kenna who was weighed down by deafness, became confused from lack of sensation in her ears and was considered stupid by some people. Kenna went to Gilbert's tomb and prayed for some time, then the miracle occurred.

> A live worm emerged from her ear, as the sisters who were present witnessed, and made open and unobstructed the passage to her hearing which it had blocked; and after the worm there immediately followed a large quantity of watery fluid which unsealed passages in her brain and ear, opening them to the air, thus relieving her head of its hurt and her ears of the dead weight of pain.[387]

While there is no explicit mention of humours in the account, the healing was occasioned by the release of both a worm and a large amount of watery fluid from Kenna's ear. This allowed the passages in her ear and brain to clear and corrected the humoral imbalance that had, presumably, been the cause of the malady in the first place. There is no overt suggestion of

[387] *BSG*, *More Miracles*, 4, p. 309. 'Vermis vivus ab aure eius egressus, videntibus que aderant sororibus, pervium iter auditui quod obstruxerat patefecit; et post vermem non modicum aquosi humoris e vestigia subsecutum patulas aeris vias in cerebro et in aure reseravit, caputque a dolore et aurium foramina ab inerti dolore allevisvit.'

spiritual ills either, although the image of the worm is indicative in this respect.[388] It formed an unnatural blockage preventing the free and healthy flow of both bodily humours and spirit. Like the Melrose monk, Kenna was released from both with the miracle pointing towards humoral as well as spiritual rebalancing.

The joining of humoral theory with a creature causing illness is seen in Ailred's *Life* too. Walter Daniel, Ailred's hagiographer, wrote of a man who swallowed a frog and became grossly distended.[389] The man appealed to Ailred who inserted his fingers into the man's mouth causing the frog to leave his body. The extraction of the frog was followed by a flow of 'glutinous humours and pus horrible beyond measure'.[390] By the next day, the man was no longer in pain and all swelling had disappeared. It was both the exit of the frog and the resultant outflowing of abnormal humours that enabled healing, an example of spiritual and physical cure melded into a single narrative like that seen in the accounts of Kenna and the Melrose monk. Walter made a further mention of humours in Ailred's *Life* in an account of a monk who suffered extremely from a gastric complaint.

> Medical men testify that this is a most dangerous disease: it arises from the worst and most poisonous humours which gather together and solidify in the body and is accompanied by biting pains in the stomach; often, when it gets control in the stomach, it may result in sudden death. Well, as I have said, one of the monks was

[388] Evil spirits were described as having the ability to take myriad forms, including those of animals. C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 55. In Christina's *Life* her cell was invaded by demons in the form of toads with 'big and terrible eyes [terribili ac spaciosis orbibus oculorum]' which sat on her psalter to distract her from her prayers. *LC*, 37, p. 99.

[389] *VAil*, p. xxvii, fn. 1. 'Et licet mihi sim in officio medicus, non tamen sine acerbo dolere curo.'

[390] Ibid., xxxix, p. 47, 'Glutinosi humores et putredines horribiles supra modem.'

suffering from this disease. He lost his power of speech and remained dumb many days.[391]

Ailred was away from Rievaulx when the brother became ill. On his return some days later he went to the sufferer, put his finger in the monk's mouth and told him to speak. This the monk did. Both the dumbness and the gastric complaint had been miraculously healed. It is not clear from the text if Walter considered there to be an explicit link between the two conditions or whether he thought the loss of speech symptomatic of something else. There is no suggestion in the account of a humoral association between the two, although it is possible to imagine that the clumping of harmful humours was thought to block the power of speech. There is, though, a suggestion of spiritual malaise through association with the biblical trope of dumbness being caused through possession by an evil spirit.[392] So despite this being described as an out-and-out medical condition cured by miraculous means, undertones of spiritual disorder are present.

The *Metrical Life* of Hugh contains a lengthy and complex passage relating to humours. In it the bishop is critically ill and the writer delivers a wholly medical diagnosis and prognosis of his condition.

[391] Ibid., xxxiv, pp. 42-3. 'Est enim periculosa nimis hec passio, ut phisici testantur, que quidam, ex humoribus pessimis et venenosis cum mordicacione stomachi concreta et collecta circa precordia generator; sepe autem contingit ut ea dominante in stomacho aliqui mox de repente moriantur. Hac itaque, ut dixi, passione detentus quidam monachus usum loquendi amittens per dies quam plurimos perseuerauit mutus.' Reginald too referred to a stomach complaint caused by an obstruction of viscous humours. The sufferer was cured miraculously through contact with the blood of the recently dead Godric. Reginald called the condition 'anatrope, or projectile vomiting', explaining that 'ana' means 'high and 'trope' means 'vomit'. *LG*, ch. 170 [311], p. 329, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

[392] For example, Mark 9: 16-25 where a man brings his son who is possessed of a dumb spirit to Jesus for cure.

> By now one of his bodily humours was upsetting the temperament of the other three. His pulse and urine afforded two prognostics of death, the former lacking its usual beat, the latter its usual colour. The disease became more concentrated, the blood thinner, and nature lacked the very spirits with which to enter the critical struggle against the case in which the sickness was. All his facial colour deserted him, the elements of fire and water passed away wholly into fires – and when the natural heat has been drawn off, there is nothing to preserve a thing in being.[393]

Here, the author is describing prognostication techniques to show that Hugh was close to death. He explains how and why the bishop's urine and pulse show death was imminent and offers another sign of impending death in the pallor of Hugh's face. This was one of the Hippocratic signs that the patient was dying and was looked for by doctors and those attending the death-bed.[394] The writer of the *Metrical Life* also commented that Hugh's blood became thinner. He did not say how this was known and there is no suggestion in any of the accounts of Hugh being bled at this time. It is possible though that the writer considered that the thinning blood was indicated to the observers by the change in the colour of the bishop's urine. Galenic theory held that urine was a filtrate of the blood which had undergone a process of sanguinification with the excess fluid from this process being eliminated as urine.[395] The colour of the urine would, therefore, indicate the condition of the blood and through that the humoral status of the

[393] *MLSH*, pp. 70-1. 'Iam tres humores unus distemperabat humor: pulsus et urina duo sunt prognostica mortis; hic solito motu, solito caret illa colore. Morbus densatur, sanguis rarescit, et ipsis spiritibus natura caret, quibus aggrediatur certamen criticum contra synthomata morbi. Tota peregrinat complexion, totus in ignes ignis et humor abit; naturalique calore extracto, nihil est quod rem conservet in esse.' There is no direct source for this account in either Adam's *Magna Vita* or Gerald's *Life* of Hugh but it could have been expanded from Adam's reference to his taking the dying bishop's pulse. *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 192. 'Iam domine quiescetis, tactus nempe pulsus vestri finiri nunc innuit accessionem instam.'

[394] For further information on prognostication and the Hippocratic signs of death see chapter 5.3.

[395] Wallis, 'Signs and Senses', p. 268.

patient, showing whether they had excess heat or phlegm. In Hugh's case the reader is told that his urine lacked its usual colour but not whether it was too pale or too dark. The former would indicate too much heat in the liver and the latter an excess of phlegm.[396] As the bishop was in the end stage of life he is likely to have been dehydrated and his urine would be darker, the sign of excess cold, wet humours. This tallies with the observation in the account that the heat of the body had been drawn off and that death was inevitable.

Another explicit instance of humours is seen in the *Life* of Godric, when Reginald describes the saint's condition during a period of illness.

> There was very great internal pain in his innards and, under his skin, the bluish colour of humours, which had attacked him all over and felt like deadly worms. When we explained that these were not worms but that this was, rather, the course of the dire poison of morbid pain, he sometimes began with groans in his voice to give thanks to God who had, by means of such wretched punishments, seen fit to cleanse and purge from him the bodily contagion of sin.[397]

The term *intercutaneus livor humorum* is not easy to understand and offers itself to several interpretations. While it is translated here as 'the bluish colour of humours' allied suggestions have been proposed, including bruising, or slime or pus or the livid shade seen sometimes in a

[396] Ibid., p. 269.

[397] *LG*, ch. 163 [291], pp. 309-10, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Erat nimirum internus dolor viscerum ac intercutaneus livor humorum, qui eum undique ita invaserat, quos velut vermes mortiferos sentiebat. Exponentibus nobis non haec vermes esse, sed dolentis potius morbi ibi dira venena discurrere, quandoque coepit Deo gemebundis vocibus gratias agere, qui eum talis poena miseriae a corporeis peccatorum contagiis dignitus fuerat emundando piare.'

dead body.[398] Any, or all, of these would work in the context of this particular passage and it is possible that Reginald chose the term for exactly that reason. The passage comes immediately prior to the death account and Godric attributed his great suffering to divine punishment. He felt he was being eaten, while still alive, by the worms that would later consume his dead body. Reginald, who endowed Godric with a resurrection body while he was still living, used the image of decomposition and decay in the still living saint in order to show that he experienced fully the inevitable consequences of his human nature. This allowed the hermit to achieve heaven, fully purged, at the moment of death.[399] Reginald mediated this premise, and his message, through the language of medical theory.[400] The reader might reasonably infer that Reginald used the somewhat ambiguous term *intercutaneus livor humorum* exactly because it has a variety of purposes and allusions. Besides being a reference to humoral change associated with the progression of a person from life to death it can also be read to imply, in part at least, the whole unpleasant process of putrefaction with its moist and putrid processes, seeping liquid and seething worms. It is Reginald's reminder to his readers of what their own future held.

3.2 Saturated and Suppurating Sicknesses

Throughout the lives, especially in the miracle accounts, humoral imbalance is seen in illnesses which describe excess fluid retained in the patient's body. One of those conditions is dropsy, a

[398] I am most grateful to contributors to the MedMed forum (medmed-l@ASU.EDU), who made many useful suggestions in a post entitled 'intercutaneus livor humorum', September 2019.

[399] See chapter 1.3 for Godric and the resurrection body and chapter 5.4 for pre-purgation.

[400] Victoria Tudor considered it possible that Reginald may have been a doctor and possibly infirmarer at Durham. She based this view on his use of medicalised language, and technical terms and the greater amount of medical detail contained in his miracle accounts compared with those of close contemporaries. *Reginald of Durham and St Godric of Finchale: A Study of a Twelfth-century Hagiographer and his Major Subject* (PhD Thesis: Reading University, 1979), pp. 65-6.

condition that is no longer described in western medicine.[401] A miracle related by Gerald of Wales concerned a woman from Beverley.

> A woman from Beverley was seriously troubled with the disease of dropsy for three years. It had so filled her that not only her face and legs but also her stomach and her whole body, like a bladder, were transparent and pale yellow, enormously swollen and inflated.[402]

Her husband had spent a great deal on money of physicians to no avail and in desperation and shame the woman left her home and travelled to Lincoln where she made what money she could through spinning. All the while she prayed to Hugh of Lincoln, falling asleep one night at his tomb.

> She heard a voice at the tomb, saying, "Arise, woman, for you are cured." On hearing this, she got up, as surprised as she was happy, and at once the belt she was wearing, which was a very full one because her belly was so swollen and distended, dropped still fastened to her feet. She was found to be suddenly as slender as in her former health, though none of the enclosed fluid had flowed out.[403]

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[401] Some of the cases of dropsy from the lives would be recognised today as oedema, which is now regarded as a sign of an underlying condition such as, and depending on other symptoms, cancer, kidney or heart failure. Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 430.

[402] *LSHA*, part II, V, p. 63. 'Mulier quedam de Beverlaco ydropico per triennium morbo vexata graviter fuit occupata. Adeo ut non solem faciem et tibias, verum etiam ventrem et corpus totum in modum vesice perlucidum haberet et luridum, distendum enormiter et inflatum.' This miracle was not recorded by Adam or the author of the *Metrical Life* although the latter lists miracles that were recorded as occurring at Hugh's tomb including four cases of dropsy. *MLSH*, pp. 76-7.

[403] *LSHA*, part II, V, p. 63. 'Vocem hanc tamquam a tumba provenientem audivit, "Surge, mulier, quia curate es." Illa vero statim, hoc audito, tam stupefacta plurimum quam etiam gavisa surrexit, et incontinenti zona ipsius

The miraculous disappearance of the fluid had restored her proper humoral balance and the woman from Beverley was cured. The observation that the fluid vanished is the same as that seen in Eadmer's miracle of Humphrey who was also cured from dropsy.[404] Disappearing excess fluid was not always the case in dropsy miracles. Jocelin of Furness recounted a triple miracle that took place in the lay people's infirmary at Melrose. Three men there were on the point of death, one with a quartan fever and the other two with dropsy. At their request Waldef, himself sick, came and blessed them and all were miraculously cured. The restoration of one of the men with dropsy is described in some detail.

> From the body of one who suffered from dropsy the thick and foetid humour flowed out through the passage of the virile member and filled twice over a great basin which was brought; thus, emptied of liquid, the man was made all slender and healthy.[405]

The passage is overtly humoral in nature with balance, and therefore health, being restored when the excess liquid was removed from the sick man's body. The route of its passage and

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qua cincta fuerat, cuius ambitus ob ventrem turgidum nimis et tumidum amplus erat valde, circa pedes eius clausa deorsum subito corruit, et gracilis ilico, absque ulla inclusi liquoris infusione, iuxta pristinum sanitatis statum reperta fuit.'

[404] *VA*, *Miracles*, p. 158. Humphrey's case is discussed more fully in chapter 4.2.iii.

[405] *LWal*, 83, pp. 156-7 and 302-3. 'Ex unius hydropici corpore per virilis virgae meatum humor viscosus et foetidus effluens pelvim magnam adhibitam bis adimplevit, humorque exinanitus mox totum hominem gracilem et sanum effecit.' The miraculous healing of the other two patients, one dropsical, which follows immediately after this, makes no mention of excess fluid. One patient jumped up rejoicing and the other recovered from his fever and was restored to full health and cheerful spirits within a few days. 'Alter autem hydropicus, excussa repente tota infirmitate, gaudens surrexit, optata potitus sanitate; tertium illico reliquit febris, et infra paucos dies recessit totus sanus robustus et hilaris.'

the description of the fluid itself, thick and foetid, is interesting. Since the passing of the fluid was via 'his virile member' and the liquid filled two great basins, it could be assumed that the man passed a copious amount of urine, however, Jocelin does not state the nature of the fluid.[406] Another possibility is that the thick fluid passed was meant to be understood as semen, although that is unlikely to fill two large basins in one go. However, this is a miracle account. If Jocelin intended his readers to understand the fluid was indeed semen, his account would be strongly suggestive of sexual incontinence on the part of the dropsical patient, an excessive amount of semen symbolising an excessive amount of sin. This is similar in principle to the nun of Watton account where her sexual incontinence resulted in excess fluid and her miraculous restoration to physical and spiritual health was signalled by absence of this from her body.[407] Whatever the cause and cure of the man's disease it was described in terms of humoral medicine and attributed to miracle.

In the accounts of dropsy considered here, the presence, or absence, of the excess fluid is always mentioned. Balance was plainly important. This not only accords with humoral theory but also suggests a perceived need to account for every bit of bodily matter. In two of Hugh's lives, the hagiographers considered the miraculous restoration, or lack of restoration, of destroyed flesh. The *Metrical Life* and Gerald of Wales' *Life* recount the same miracle, absent from the *Magna Vita,* of the healing of the knight of Lindsey. In Gerald's version, the knight had been afflicted by an ulcer on his arm for three years and, unable to find a medical cure,

[406] The clinical picture is typical of retention of urine, the commonest cause of which is an enlarged prostate gland. As Jocelin did not mention the age of the man it is not possible to speculate further on this. Offensive urine, if urine it was that was passed, is something that is seen in urinary tract infections though not typically in cases of urinary retention. Untreated renal disease and failure can lead to the oedematous picture seen in the man with dropsy, and in the instance of a miracle, perhaps the great outflowing of urine too. Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 280 and Houston, *Medicine*, p. 469.

[407] See, 1.1.i, p. 54.

was advised to seek healing through attending the burial of Hugh.[408] The ulcer was plainly both deep and infected as bones were visible and the sores were running with pus. After the knight had been purified by confession and penance he was permitted to touch his diseased arm to the hand of the dead bishop. Healing followed and the wounds dried up. 'The wasted flesh and the cramped and weakened sinews little by little returned to their original vigour.'[409] Gerald does not say explicitly whether flesh was restored but it can be assumed it was, to some extent at least, since he stated that original vigour was regained.

The corresponding account in the *Metrical Life* has no such ambiguity about the healed flesh. Describing the ulcer as cancerous, *cancere*, the author wrote that after touching Hugh's dead body a miraculous restoration of the knight's arm occurred. 'Bone was clothed with flesh, and flesh with skin in a marvellous way. Nowhere did traces of the disease remain, nowhere signs of a scar telling the tale of the old affliction.'[410] The writer continued by considering this miraculous regeneration and wondering whether the new flesh was taken from existing flesh or was created out of nothing. He ruled out the former since it took time and the arm was re-formed in a second. If created, he reasoned, it would be incorruptible and it is this argument he seems to favour. 'It remains therefore that the flesh or the skin in question was not made from any source material. So it was simply created. It was not therefore made out of the elements or of abstract matter, and it will therefore not return into any such matter. It will therefore be incorruptible.'[411] The lack of scarring reinforces the notion of incorruption and suggests a

[408] *LSHA*, part II, ii, p. 53.

[409] Ibid. 'Caro corrosa nervique contracti et imbecilles effecti paulatim ad pristinum robuste valitudinis statum redierunt.'

[410] *MLSH*, pp. 74-5. 'Os carne, caro cute mire induatur; nusquam morbi vestigia, nusquam signa cicatrices, veterem perhibentia plagam.'

[411] Ibid. 'Relinquitur ergo, quod fuerit sine materia caro seu cutis illa; ergo create modo. Non ergo vel ex elementis facta, vel ex hyle: non ergo redibit in hylem, non ergo poterit corrumpi.'

resurrection body, or part of, in this instance.[412] Whether regrown or created, whatever the mechanics of its restoration, the knight's healed arm was an expression of the divine triumphing over decay. It was a visible illustration that a body could undergo the process of degeneration but still rise again glorious, immutable, eternal, and most importantly, complete.[413] The knight of Lindsey's healed arm was, in fact, a small piece of heaven manifest on earth and a promise of what was to come. There is a contrast here with an amazed observation from Adam that cured leprosy sufferers did not have their lost flesh restored but nevertheless regained health and vitality.[414] Where the author of the *Metrical Life* saw wonder in the creation of matter from nothing, Adam considered the opposite, the lack of new flesh with the retention of function, to be a wonder.

Narratives that contain accounts of sores, ulcers and infected exudate were sometimes linked explicitly to notions of sin, punishment and decay. The *Life* of Wulfric of Haselbury has a section concerning the hermit's battles with the devil in which the enemy, *hostis*, was given power over Wulfric's flesh. As a result the saint was 'struck in the upper arm with a loathsome sore that went right to the bone, where the putrefied flesh swarmed with maggots and matter

[412] This has been seen in Godric's case, for example, as discussed in chapter 1.3.iii. *LG*, ch. 82 [175], p. 184, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'No traces of scars or any hardness to the touch appeared in his skin at all, but it joyfully shone out with all softness, purer than glass, more delicate than the gentleness of milk. [Nec aliqui ullatenus in ea cicatricum obductio seu alicuius duritiei obpalpatio in ea comparuit, sed vitro purior, lactea suavitate tenerior, omni mollitie jocundior tota reluxit.]'

[413] The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the period around which the *Metrical Life* was written, included in the first of its constitutions, the Confession of Faith, a statement which confirmed that a human body at resurrection would be intact, that which the living person now wore. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), vol. 1.

[414] *MV*, vol. II, book 4, ch. xiii, p. 160. 'Est autem in ipsis miraculis hoc insignias miraculum. Igne namque restincto in membris patientiam, caro et cutis vel artus quisque quos morbus vorax sensim depascendo exederit, minime quidem restaurantur.'

came bubbling out'.[415] In linking the sore with a demonic attack, the passage reflects back to a previous one in which Wulfric was bitten on the thigh by a venomous snake then vomited up the poison, thus effecting a cure.[416] Although Wulfric was restored to health the scars remained. This was not the miraculous creation of perfect flesh as is seen in the knight of Lindsey. Wulfric, and through him the receivers of the *Life,* were being given a foretaste of the pain and decay that was considered to be the fate of man and symbolised the victory of the devil.[417] The hermit saw it as heavenly judgement and welcomed it with thanks, thus defeating the weapons of the adversary. Having first presented this hagiographic message, John observed that Wulfric also took steps to care for his bodily health and described how the hermit had candlewicks laid in the sinuses from which the infected matter was draining.[418]

This direct, and positive, expression of spiritual and practical medicine combined is unusual in the lives. Generally speaking the focus of the hagiographers is on heavenly medicine while earthly medicine, if mentioned at all, is included to be disparaged. John's message in this account of Wulfric and the sore is different though. Perhaps he was suggesting that a sufferer

[415] *WH*, 22, p. 41, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 1. 22, pp. 127-8. 'Qua ille illiberaliter satis usus percussit eum in brachiis ulcere pessimo, adeo ut caro humerotenus putrefacta scateret vermibus et sanie ebulliente flueret.'

[416] Ibid., 6, p. 105.

[417] The inevitability of corruption as punishment for sin, and the involvement of the devil in this is seen with some consistency in the Bible, stemming from the fall and God's judgement on Adam. Genesis 3: 19. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou was taken: for dust thou are and into dust thou shalt return.' Paul wrote of bodily decay and the route to salvation in his letter to the Romans 8: 21, where he discussed the inevitability of fleshly corruption and the opportunity for justification through living in the spirit. '[Man] shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.' Similarly in I Corinthians 15: 42-44. 'So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body.'

[418] Setting a wound drain in a sinus or incision is a technique still used with some such drains known as wicks. Nash, *Surgery*, p. 970.

should do as the hermit did and place his faith first in God, but that he should also take practical steps to care for his own wellbeing.

On occasion the bodily site of sin is the area that is subsequently afflicted. In the *Magna Vita* Adam wrote a lengthy account of a young man of Rochester whom 'the wiles of the enemy of the human race had ensnared to his destruction'.[419] The young man, full of remorse for the life he had led, approached Hugh and told him his story. Adam was not explicit about the nature of the sin, but it is described as being mortal, and repeated, and involved the young man being prey to 'roving appetites'.[420] The sinner told Hugh that after giving full rein to these roving appetites he heard a sermon in which the priest listed mortal sins including the one he had repeatedly committed. Listening to the sermon the man was so swept up in shame that he believed the earth would open there and then and he would fall, alive, into hell. Repenting, he experienced a vision in which he saw a man of dreadful appearance who told him that if he wished to recover divine favour, it could only be done 'by the destruction of your body, which has made you utterly hateful to them [God and His mother]. You are mistaken if you believe that with a vessel which you have contaminated with so much poison you can do anything acceptable to the divine goodness'.[421]

It is apparent that remorse alone was not enough. Despite the man's sincere repentance, punishment needed to be served in order for cleansing to be achieved. Spiritual guidance from Hugh freed the man wholly from his previous temptations and physical retribution was delivered when the sinner was struck with sores. 'Meanwhile a most remarkable thing befell

[419] *MV*, vol. II, book 4, ch. i, pp. 7-10. 'Quem perniciosius suis illaqueaverat dolis hostis humani generis.'

[420] Ibid., p. 7. 'Vagis ducerer affectuum motibus.'

[421] Ibid., p. 8. 'Ipsum necesse est corpus extinguas, quo eis totiens iniuriosus extiteras. Erras enim si credas quod in eodem vasculo quod tot contaminationibus polluisti, quicquam divine sinceritati acceptum operari queas.'

him. Suddenly the flesh around both his thigh bones and privy parts gangrened and two holes, or rather caverns of a terrible size and depth appeared and yet he felt no pain at all from these immense and gaping wounds.'[422] The site of the sores indicates that the unidentified mortal sin may have been sexual in nature. Although Adam considered the ulcers and their painlessness to be remarkable, medically speaking this is not extraordinary. Sores that extend below the superficial tissues have destroyed the nerve endings that report the damage, and those of the young man of roving appetites reached almost to his bowels. Setting medical speculation aside, it seems that Adam intended the sores to represent the decay of the flesh occasioned by sin which in the light of the young man's repentance, and by God's grace, were rendered painless. Indisputably though, for the receivers of the *Magna Vita* the young man's flesh was seen to pay its due.

The sores were cured, not by an outright miracle, but by the application of warm wax, a remedy suggested by Hugh who was thus responsible for both the spiritual and physical healing of the young man. The ulcers mended quickly and soon not even a scar remained.[423] This is similar to the account of the healing of the knight of Lindsey's arm in the *Metrical Life* where the author attributed the unscarred state of the healed arm to the creation of new, probably heavenly flesh. Adam made no reference to the nature of the young man's new flesh and there is no intimation of its being incorruptible or otherwise, but the lack of scarring confirms that spiritual

[422] Ibid., p. 10. 'Ceterum rem inauditam illi novimus interea accidisse. Subito namque secus utrumque femur et circa verenda eius caro illius ita computruit ut duo altrinsecus foramina, seu potius fosse bine, horrende amplitudinis et profunditatis apparent; cum ipse tamen ex tam immense vulnerum hiatus nichil penitus sentirent doloris.' The sores were indeed deep Adam saying that the rotting flesh had fallen away 'almost to the bowels [ad intima viscerum]'.

[423] Ibid. 'Ita repentina istius penitentis ulcera in cicatricem citius redacta sunt, quibus ne signum quidem obductionis repente superfuit.'

healing had occurred. This is reinforced by the fact that Adam closed the account relating that the young man, fully cured, went on pilgrimage to Rome and then became a Cistercian monk.

Godric too was afflicted by a suppurating condition. Reginald wrote that there were 'pockets around the urinary tract in his scrotum which swelled up to the size of lactating breasts from the accumulation of poison'.[424] These pus-filled pockets required milking by a servant, a process described as agonising, with Godric roaring at the top of his voice, howling and wailing, until he was rendered unconscious. The abscess ruptured and grew into an open ulcer which, resisting cure, constantly poured out poison. Reginald remarked on the terrible situation Godric found himself in; if the poison was left to accumulate it caused unbearable pain but draining it caused unbearable pain too. Since the latter brought short-term relief this was the option Godric chose to take.

There is no suggestion in Godric's case that the wound was inflicted because of any perceived sexual incontinence. It is, however, part of the picture of premortem purgation that is seen particularly in Godric's *Life.* Other reported end-of-life illnesses of Godric's included a tumour of his mouth that descended to his intestines causing him very great pain, and agonies of his limbs.[425] Sometimes these pains were accounted as being due to Godric's perception that lions or wolves were devouring him, or porcupines were sticking their spines into him, or flaming javelins were run through him. This is hellish imagery, entirely congruent with the notion of premortem purgation. It can be no coincidence that the sites of Godric's afflictions are those through which sinning was seen to occur and that were anointed as part of the final rites of

[424] *LG*, ch. 164 [293], p. 312, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Siquidem naturalis vesicae ipsius folliculi instar lactantium mamillarum ex grassante veneno intumuerant.'

[425] Ibid., ch. 163 [291], pp. 309-11.

purification: loins, hands, feet and head, specifically eyes and mouth.[426] There is no mention in Godric's death narrative of his receiving anointing as part of last rites which is an interesting omission since most other elements of the monastic death ritual are recorded carefully. Possibly Reginald did not think it necessary to mention anointing rites considering that the saint had been purified in the relevant areas of his body by the illnesses which caused him to experience the agonies of hell.

3.3 Women's Problems

With just two female saints considered here, of whom only one has a complete life, the limited source material is insufficient to identify any female specific themes in the health narratives of their hagiographies. Interestingly, fertility, as either a motif or an allusion, is not seen in the health accounts of Christina of Markyate, who fought hard to retain her virginity and had no children, or Margaret who had at least eight live births. Christina's hagiographer is certainly interested in her chastity and virginity, and several accounts concern her sexual desire, but the subjects of fertility and reproduction do not appear to play into this. As regards Margaret's *Life*, Turgot presented Margaret's heath and illness accounts in a style found in the monastic hagiographies considered here, with the main references being made to her level of fasting and, as will be shown, her attitude and practices at death.[427]

Christina's *Life*, by contrast, offers two robust accounts of illness. Although neither are similar to any other ill-health narratives from the saints considered here they do not appear to be

[426] Lanfranc's *Constitutions* does not mention the detail of anointing, which suggests that it was so familiar it needed no reference. The Cluny death ritual from the same period does though. See, Frederick Paxton with the collaboration of Isabelle Cochelin, *The Death Ritual at Cluny in the Central Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 57-81 for the detailed prayers that accompanied the anointing of different parts of the body. Monastic death ritual is discussed in chapter 5.2.

[427] See chapters 2.3 for Margaret's fasting and 5.2 for her death.

predicated upon health conditions specific to her sex.[428] The first passage is found when, having spent two years sheltering with the anchoress Alfwen, Christina had to leave her cell there and join Roger in his hermitage near Dunstable. The author told how Christina spent four years hiding by day in a tiny cell, so small that she could not move.[429] The privations she suffered during this period are described in detail and at length.

> O what trials she had to bear of cold and heat, hunger and thirst, daily fasting! The confined space would not allow her to wear even the necessary clothing when she was cold. The airless little enclosure became stifling when she was hot. Through long fasting, her bowels became contracted and dried up. There was a time when her burning thirst caused little clots of blood to bubble up from her nostrils. But what was more unbearable than all this was that she could not go out until the evening to satisfy the demands of nature. Even when she was in dire need, she could not open the door for herself, and Roger usually did not come till late. So, it was necessary for her to sit quite still in the place, to suffer torments, and to keep quiet.[430]

[428] The *Life* also has a brief reference to plans for Christina's marriage to Burthred being disrupted by Christina contracting a fever. *LC*, 12, p. 55.

[429] Ibid., 39, p. 103. 'Ubi tamen amplituto plus palmo semis inesset. In hoc ergo carcere Rogerus ovantem sociam posuit.'

[430] Ibid., pp. 102-5. 'O quantas sustinuit illic incommoditates frigoris et estus. famis et sitis. Cotidiani ieiunii. Loci angustia non admittebant necessarium tegumentum algenti. Integerrima clausula nullum indulgebat refrigerium estuanti. Longa inedia contracta sunt et aruerunt sibi intestina. Erat quando pre ardore sitis naribus ebullirent frusta coagulati sanguinis. Hiis omnibus illi erat intollerabilius. Quod exire foras non nisi sero licebat. ad alia quedam necessaria que natura postulabat. Nimirum instante necessitate nequibat ipsa sibi aperire et Rogerus de more tardabat. ad illam venire. Itaque necesse fuit immobiliter eam in loco sedere. Torqueri et tacere.'

The impact of this close confinement, with its resultant constraints, clearly had a profoundly detrimental, and permanent, effect on Christina's physical health. The hagiographer appears to be using this passage, which is purportedly about Christina's health, to emphasise the severe physical and social constraints that were both the cause of her pain and the necessary and inevitable consequences of her choice to defy the world and follow her vocation. The imagery of Christina's incarceration, her inability to move or even breath, evokes a sense of gestation, a period of development, a necessary stage in her transitional growth from one state of being to another. Paradoxically, it also suggests death, and is reminiscent of the entombment of the desert fathers which was also kind of death, a gestational process too.[431] This conflation of two apparently incompatible images is entirely coherent in a Christian context where the most paradigmatic death, that of Jesus on the cross, brought new life, both to him as the Christ and, through his sacrifice, to the Christian faithful. For Christina, irrespective of whether her cell represented womb or tomb, or both, it was a liminal period. Although the context is different the gestational theme, the notion of enclosure mediating growth and the juxtaposition of life and death, is markedly similar to that seen in the case of the nun of Watton.[432]

Christina's time in the cell ended when Burthred, the man to whom she had been unwillingly betrothed, released her from her marriage vows. The *Life* records this meeting as happening on 'the day on which the redeemer of the world rose from the dead'.[433] The date is significant. As Christ rose from the dead to new life, so too did Christina. Freed from the bondage of her marriage vows and released from her symbolic period of gestation, or death, she experienced a rebirth and was free to assume a new life of visibility within the anchoretic community. This

[431] Samuel Fanous, 'Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown' in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman*, ed. S. Fanous and H. Leyser (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 67.

[432] As discussed at, 1.1.i, pp. 52-3.

[433] *LC*, 39, p. 109. 'Qua die redemptor mundi resurrexit a mortuis'.

part of the narrative appears to hold at least two messages. One was concerned with her present and future suffering, a standard hagiographic trope seen in Anselm, Hugh and Margaret too where their extreme fasting led to subsequent health problems. The other was to position her as between states of being and realms: lay and religious; religious and eremitic; earth and heaven.[434] The notion of illness as a medium through which the saint can be understood as moving between worlds is seen in other lives too. For example, Ailred spoke with angels prior to his death and a fourteen-year-old Anselm prayed for, and received, illness in an endeavour to be admitted into a monastic community and receive the habit prior to the death he thought was coming.[435] Although the abbot declined to accept the young Anselm, the narrative forms part of Eadmer's account of Anselm's transitional journey from the lay world to the monastic.

The second passage concerning Christina's health recounts how as a result of her trials she developed further illnesses. These included a period of paralysis that proved intractable to human medicine and became so severe that it was though she would die.

> The malady, which they call paralysis, attacked one half of her body, spreading from her lower limbs to the top of her head. As a result of a recent illness the cheeks of the patient were already swollen and inflamed. Her eyelids were contracted, her eyeball bloodshot, and underneath the eye you could see the skin flickering without stopping, as if there were a little bird inside it striking it with wings. For this reason experienced physicians were sent to her and to the best of their power they practiced their craft with medicines, blood-letting and other kinds of treatment. But what they

[434] This transitional dimension of Christina's ministry and identity is expanded though the visionary qualities described in her *Life.* Licence, *Hermits*, pp. 161-2.

[435] *VAil*, liv, p. 60 and *VA*, I, iv, p. 6.

> thought would bring relief had quite a contrary effect … so violent was it [the illness] on the sixth day that at any moment she was expected to breathe her last.[436]

This is a medicalised account, relating signs and symptoms in some detail, casting Christina as a patient or sufferer, *pacientis*, listing treatment and finally giving a prognosis; death. The structure and content of the narrative suggests that the account may have drawn from the professional opinions and reported words of the attending doctors, while the inclusion of the medical details shows that despite their apparent failure to affect a cure the doctors were still held in some esteem.[437]

There is a conscious sense of Genesis in the account, suggestive of a period of creation. After six days of illness, it was on the seventh day that Christina awoke and found herself restored to health. 'Feeling a movement of her eyelids, sight in her eye which had been blind, the swelling gone from her cheeks, and relief in the other limbs of her body …'[438] The miraculous nature of the cure was authenticated through a vision experienced that same night by one of Christina's women who dreamed of 'a woman of great authority, with a shining countenance'

[436] *LC*, 48, pp. 122-3. 'Igitur passio quam paralysin vocant: illam invasit que ab imis partibus usque supremum capud repens tocius corporis alteram medietatem sibi vendicavit. Ex morbo adhuc recenti tumebant iam atque rubebant gene pacientis. Contrahebantur palpebre. turbabatur oculus. sub ipso oculo videres cutem ita sine intervallo moveri: ac si eam intus latens avicula iugi volatu percuteret. Quamobrem probati medici ei missi sunt et stadium suum antidotis, diminucione sanguinis, aliisque medicandi generibus in eam solerter exercuerunt … hunc tota die sexta sustinuit adeo validum: ut sub omni momento putaretur ultimum exalatura spiritum.' Fanous comments on the use of *passio* in this passage and suggests it is intended to engender in the reader a sense of Christina, through her own suffering, sharing in the passions of Christ. Fanous, 'Christina', p. 67.

[437] See *LC*, p. 123, for details of the treatment by the experienced doctors and chapter 4.2.ii, for further discussion on the role of doctors in the lives.

[438] Ibid., 48, pp. 124-5. 'Senciens facilitatem palpebrarum, acumen oculi qui caligaverat, dentumuisse genas, ceterorumque subiecti corporis alleviacionem.'

giving a lozenge, *lectuarium*, to Christina and so making her well.[439] The woman in the vision was identified by the hagiographer as Mary. Despite this divine healing Christina continued to suffer. Although no details of these ongoing illnesses are given, the hagiographer recorded that they were so severe that her life was expected to end at any time.[440] Accordingly, Christina sought and received permission from the bishop to take her vows. The hagiographer chose to predicate Christina's formal profession upon this account of her paralytic illness and near death. The seventh-day cure freed her from her torpidity and allowed her to enter the condition which brought her as close to righteousness as was possible while still alive, that of a professed nun.

These two significant accounts of ill-health found in the surviving parts of Christina's *Life* are appreciably different in detail but are linked thematically. The imprisonment and paralysis accounts both describe a liminal period which was at one and the same time a gestation and a death. Christina was physically immobilised in both, a feature that enabled her spiritual development, this being shown by the fact that immediately after each episode she progressed onto the next stage of her religious life; living openly as a hermit after the first period of illness and taking vows after the second. These were essential stages on her journey to sainthood and were positioned upon, even propelled from, times of severe illness. Through these accounts the reader was instructed as to the ongoing nature of Christian commitment, the suffering it involves and, through the narration of Christina's imminently expected death, the uncertainty of their own life and the ever-present reality of death.

[439] Ibid., 49, pp. 124-5.

[440] Ibid., 50, pp. 124-7. 'Quibus cotidie minitantibus vitam tollere pacienti.'

3.4 The Chronically Ill Saint

Of the saints portrayed in the lives under scrutiny, Ailred was the only one who suffered from long-term, chronic sickness. Walter described Ailred as having kidney stones, with the passing of the calculi a source of agony.[441] He also wrote of arthritis, *artetica*.[442]

> Throughout the last ten years of his life this holy man frequently underwent intense suffering as the agonies of his arthritis were added to his old distresses. So dreadfully afflicted was he that I have seen him suspended in mid-air in a linen sheet, held by a man at each of its four corners, being carried to relieve himself or from one bed to another. A mere touch affected him like a piercing wound, and his cries revealed the measure of his pain.[443]

This description of the arthritic abbot being carried on a sheet suspended in mid-air, which Walter writes as *inter coelum et terra*, between heaven and earth, shows Ailred as physically in this world, suffering the agonies of hell, whilst spiritually reaching heavenwards. He was in a sense, like Christina, moving between spheres.

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[441] *VAil*, xxvii, p. 34. 'The agony was intense, for very often his urine contained fragments of stone as big as a bean [Quam passionen ita duram sustinuit ut sepissime in urina produceret fragmenta saxea ad grossitudinem fabe].'

[442] While there is no certainty that Walter's *artetica* matches the modern understanding of the condition arthritis, a reference elsewhere in the *Life* describes Ailred habitually needing to support himself with a stick for walking which, given he was only in his fifties when he died, does suggest musculoskeletal issues. *VAil*, xxxvi, p. 43.

[443] Ibid., p. 39. 'Hic igitur tam sanctus vir decem annos ante obitum suum artetica passione novos pristinis adiectos persensit sepissime cruciatus, quibus tam horribiliter detentus est ut viderim eum in lintheamine iniectum per quatuor eius inicia, quatuor manibus virorum apprehensa, inter celum et terram suspendi et sic ad necessitate nature deportari, vel ad lectorum alternacionem removeri; qui cuiuslibet attactu corpulencie velut diri vulneris mucrone percussus, clamando doloris magnitudinem indicabat.'

The severity of Ailred's illnesses meant that the Cistercian General Chapter allowed him certain privileges, a softening of the *Rule* that enabled him to carry out his duties.[444] He was permitted to conduct his business from the monastic infirmary when necessary and given license to take warm baths and drink undiluted wine to help when he experienced the pain of renal colic. Although he was increasingly infirm it appears that his was not a constant deterioration but presented in an episodic pattern. Walter wrote that Ailred could visit the granges when he wished, the inference in this being that he was well enough to go sometimes, but not at others.[445] The clinical picture here is one of rheumatoid arthritis rather than age-related osteoarthritis. The former is a disease of remissions and interestingly, is associated with a number of symptoms Walter separately describes Ailred as having. These include weight loss, anorexia, pyrexia and symptoms of anaemia, one of which is, in severe cases, breathlessness.[446]

In Ailred's *Life* there are more detailed passages concerning illness than are found in the other accounts considered here. This is no doubt down to a combination of two facts: the poor health of the abbot and the medical background of the author. Walter used the health narratives judiciously. Channeling his own obvious interest in medical matters, and using his keen eye to observe the signs of illness and pain, Walter was able to use the language of medicine to present Ailred in the model of a suffering saint, experiencing while still alive the torments of purgation. Ailred is described as 'sweating in anguish; the pallor of his face flushed, his eyes filled with tears, the ball of his nostrils twitching, his lips bitten by his teeth'.[447] There is no doubt that this

[444] Ibid.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Houston, *Medicine*, pp. 409-13.

[447] *VAil*, xlix, p. 56. 'Video patrem sudare pre angustia et faciem versam in pallorem subrufam et oculos lacrimantes et pirulam narium fluctuantem et labia constricta dentibus.'

is a portrayal of a man experiencing severe and prolonged pain. As well as showing Ailred as a suffering saint, the health narratives served as apologist tracts too allowing Walter to defend his abbot against detractors.[448]

3.5 Age and Infirmity

Most of the saints considered here lived into old age, or at least into what was described by the hagiographers as old age. Gilbert could have been as old as 105 years at death, Godric was probably in his nineties, Wulfstan his eighties and Anselm his seventies.[449] Hugh and Waldef were slightly younger, Margaret was in her late forties and Christina's age at death is unknown. Wulfric, whose age at death is estimated to have been about sixty-four, was described as being an old man, weak from debility and age by the time he took to his bed for the final time.[450] Ailred who was a mere fifty-seven years of age when he died was also called an old man in a passage in which he was called to the bed of a dying monk. 'You could see the old man, *senem*, stumbling along, seeking no aid of the staff which he always used'.[451] While it is possible that the use of *senex* in respect of Wulfric and Ailred was a biblical reference to their wisdom rather than to their age, this is unlikely; both passages include additional information concerning the

[448] Ibid., xxvii. p. 34. Ailred had been called a 'wine-bibber and a glutton [homo vorax, potator vini]' and criticised for taking warm baths.

[449] Although William said that Wulfstan was about eighty-six years old at death this is not certain. *VWulf*, iii, 21. 3, pp. 142-3, fn. 1. Francis Rice wrote that Godric was about one hundred and five years old when he died. *The Hermit of Finchale* (Edinburgh: The Pentland Press Limited, 1994), p. 279. Margaret Coombe estimates Godric was more likely to have been in his nineties when he died, basing this estimation on details from the *Life* and Godric's life prior to his becoming a hermit including his name appearing in foundation documents of Durham churches in 1112, and the year of his death which is known to be 1170. I am most grateful to Dr Coombe for her email conversations concerning Godric and for her generous sharing of information from her forthcoming translation of Reginald's *Life* of the hermit.

[450] Matarasso, *Wulfric*, p. 5 and 3. 42, p. 210. 'Post haec lectulo sese excepit et artus languore et senio fatiscentes reclinare consensit.'

[451] *VAil*, xxxvi, p. 43.

feeble physical condition of the saint suggesting that infirmity rather than wisdom was the hagiographer's primary consideration.[452] It is not clear how old Ailred was when he was called *senex* but the account is found in his *Life* some time before Walter's description of the abbot's final illness and death.

Views and models of age and aging held when Walter and John were writing were various and complex. They drew from older sources such as Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), Isidore of Seville (d. 636), and Bede (d. 735).[453] Sequential stages in a person's life were advocated with the number of these varying. Augustine and Isidore described six and Bede both four and six stages.[454] The ages of man were sometimes linked to seasons and humours as is shown by the following table developed by John Burrow from Bede's *De temporum ratione*.[455]

Table 3: The ages of man

Age	**Humour**	**Qualities**	**Season**
Childhood	Blood	Moist and hot	Spring
Youth	Red bile	Hot and dry	Summer
Maturity	Black bile	Dry and cold	Autumn
Old age	Phlegm	Cold and moist	Winter

[452] Wisdom 4: 8-9. 'For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years: but the understanding of a man is grey hairs. And a spotless life is old age.'

[453] Augustine wrote on the subject in *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* and *De genesi contra Manichaeos*, Isidore in *Etymologiae* and Bede considered four ages of man in *De temporum ratione.* See, John Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). These works were common in monastic libraries. Durham Cathedral Priory, for example, possessed all of them by the end of the twelfth century. *Catalogues of the Library of Durham*, pp. 59 and 366.

[454] In England, life stages were also found in works such as the eleventh-century manual by Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Ramsey Computus where the ages are identified as *pueritia, adolescentia, iuventus* and *senectus*. *Byrhtferth's Manual*, ed. S. J. Crawford (London: Early English Text Society, 1929), plate 10. The only known copy of the original is Bodleian, MS Ashmole 328, fol. 85 and British Library, MS Harley 3667. See too Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp. 18-9.

[455] Ibid., p. 12.

Life stage divisions were found in medical works available in England in the twelfth century. The *Isagoge* gives four.

> The ages are four, namely adolescence, maturity, old age, and decrepitude. Adolescence is of a hot and moist complexion, and in it the body grows and increases up to the twenty-fifth or thirtieth year. Maturity follows, which is hot and dry and preserves the body in perfection without any decrease in its powers; it ends after the thirty-fifth or fortieth year. After than follows old age, cold and dry, in which the body does indeed begin to lessen and diminish, but still without loss of power; it lasts until the fifty-fifth or sixtieth year. After that follows decrepitude, cold and moist through the gathering of the phlegmatic humour, during which a loss of power becomes evident; its years run to the end of life.[456]

It can be supposed that Walter was familiar with medical works such as the *Isagoge*, both as an *officio medicus* and because copies of the text were found in monastic libraries including Rievaulx.[457] This being the case it is possible, likely even, that he, and perhaps John of Forde too, were influenced by contemporary theories on aging in their respective descriptions of Ailred and Wulfric as *senes.* There is a palpable sense of waning and enfeeblement in the

[456] 'Quattor sunt etates, scilicet adolescentia, iuventus, senectus, et senium. Adolescentia complexionis videlicet calide et humide est, in qua crescit et augetur corpus usque ad 25 vel 30 perveniens annum. Hanc iuventus sequitur que calida est et sicca, perfectum sine diminutione virium corpus conservans, que 35 vel 40 anno finitur. Hinc succedit senectus, frigida et sicca, in qua quidem minui et decrescere corpus incipit, tamen virtus non deficit, quinquagesimo quinto anno vel sexagesimo persistens. Huic succedit senium, collectione phlegmatis humoris frigidum et humidum, in quo virtutis apperet defectus, quod suos annos vite termino metetur.' *Isagoge Joannitii ad Tegni Galieni*, from *Articella* (Venice, 1493) and Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp. 22-3.

[457] A text listed as *Ysagoge Iohannicii* is found in the late twelfth century library catalogue of Rievaulx. James, *Manuscripts in the Library of Jesus College*, pp. 50-2. The library at Durham also had a copy of the *Isagoge* where it is listed in the collection of the doctor, Gervase. *Catalogues of the Library of Durham*, p. 142.

accounts of the two youngest monastic saints considered here. This tallies with a model of life stages conceived as an arc describing a process of growth and decline, rise and fall, rather than the slightly more positive view of live stages as a circle described by Bede and Byrhtferth.[458] In the latter view, all life stages are presented equally, each with their own strengths. There is change rather than deterioration. However, it is physical deterioration that Walter and John and present to their readers with Ailred and Wulfric seen in senescent decline.

Godric and Gilbert, the two oldest saints considered here were, by any accounting, extremely elderly when they died. Both men were described as being infirm due to old age with Reginald commenting on the impact of Godric's years. 'So, having spent sixty years in the hermitage, the debility of his years propelled the man of God towards his passing.'[459] Gilbert's hagiographer considered his subject's old age and infirmity at length, focussing particularly on the blindness that affected the aged saint. The reasons for Gilbert's loss of sight are pondered, the writer musing on the possible causes, and purpose, of the saint being so afflicted.

> Apart from the natural weakness of his body which troublesome illnesses, grievous old age, and the toil which hastens on old age had inflicted on him, he went blind. I do not know whether to attribute this trial to man's deficient nature or to an accident or to the persecution of the devil. Perhaps his body was naturally so made that he could not preserve his keenness of vision any longer, especially at such a great age. But we do not know for certain whether this happened to him by accident or through some act of violence: we do know that he weakened those eyes of his

[458] Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p. 24.

[459] 'Transactis itaque in heremo lx. annis, aetis senium virum Dei compellebat ad transitum.' *LG*, ch. 163 [291], p. 309, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

> with floods of tears while he was preaching, and that he suffered much harm from winds, dust, vigils, and other discomforts. It is also uncertain whether this was a spiritual affliction.[460]

In this passage, the writer considered three possible reasons for Gilbert's blindness, which although parcelled with his old age, is not directly attributed to it. Human deficiency, accident and spiritual manifestation are the three causes considered.

Plainly, since he considered it at some length, the matter of Gilbert's blindness worried the writer. This is perhaps because he was concerned to quash any suggestion that Gilbert's blindness was reflective of spiritual malaise. Such criticism may well have been levied since Gilbert himself, and the order under his leadership, had been the subjects of controversy and censure.[461] It is in order to counter this that the apologetic nature of the passage and its apparent pre-emptive defence of Gilbert engages the notion of sickness as divine punishment and a manifestation of the condition of the soul. Gilbert's hagiographer was at pains to show that illness could also be regarded as a divine gift, and to demonstrate that in the case of his subject this was indeed so. He did this in several ways. He listed the things that weakened Gilbert's

[460] *BSG*, 26*,* p. 87. 'Quam temptationem utrum nature deficiente an casui sive inimico persequenti attribuam, ignoro. Talis etenim fortassis erat complexio corporis naturalis que visus aciem, maxime in tanta etate, diutius non poterat conservare. Sed si casu vel violentia hoc contigit illi nescimus; cum crebris lacrimarum inundationibus, dum mitteret semina sua, eosdem oculos novimus eum debilitasse, et multas ventorum, pulverum et vigiliarum aliorumque incommodorum pertulisse iniurias. Si autem spiritualis hec fuerit percussio incertum est.' There are of course biblical precedents for blindness as a spiritual affliction, for example Saul who became Paul, on the road to Damascus. Acts 9: 8-9. However there is no intimation from Gilbert's hagiographer that this is the case here.

[461] The chapter which includes the passages about Gilbert's blindness follows immediately on from the chapter concerning what the writer calls 'the false brethren [falsorum fratrum]' whose rebellion had caused strife within the order and loss of reputation more widely. *BSG*, 25*,* pp. 77-85.

eyes; tears while preaching and discomforts accrued during the exercise of his religious practice. Both show sanctity. The writer reinforced his point, and justified it through biblical precedent, noting that Isaac, Jacob and many other holy men had suffered similarly.[462] He considered both accident and the natural composition of Gilbert's body as causes. Neither reflected negatively on the saint and both could be considered inevitable in an aging man. The possible spiritual causes are given as demonic persecution or a blessing from God, both of which could work to enhance the sanctity of Gilbert: being persecuted by devils indicated a person was godly enough for the endeavour to be worth attempting and a blessing from God is self-evidently a blessing. In case those reading the account should miss his point, the writer then stated with certainty and confidence that it was a blessing. 'We do not blush for it [the blindness] … on the contrary we give thanks all the more fervently because we know that this was proof not of God's anger and indignation, but of his mercy.'[463]

The reason why Gilbert's blindness was a mercy is explained in the following chapter in which the writer considered what the saint was like in his old age. Here, the focus remained on the blindness which was shown to have increased Gilbert's spiritual and physical facilities. The reader is told that the sight Gilbert had lost was more than compensated for through the spiritual illumination he received in return, and that he retained acute hearing, an eloquent tongue, a steady hand and a firm foot.[464] The advantages of his blindness were further presented through the observation that being unable to see, Gilbert was released from having to attend to secular matters allowing him to focus entirely on 'things of heaven and pious activity'.[465]

[462] Ibid., 26, p. 86. 'Idem Ysaac et Iacob multisque aliis acciderit sanctis.'

[463] Ibid. 'Non inde erubiscimus … sed ex hoc amplius gratulamur quia non hoc iram et indignationem sed Dei scimis fuisse clementiam.'

[464] Ibid., 27, p. 87.

[465] Ibid., p. 89. 'Released and removed by his loss of sight from attending to secular preoccupations, he dwelt entirely among the things of heaven; and after carrying out the good deeds of pious activity , he earned the

Similar is seen in Anselm's *Life* where Eadmer commented on how secular business made Anselm's spirit droop and could even lead to the risk of serious illness. He was restored to health by the 'wholesome antidote, *salubri antidoto medicatum*' of biblical discussion.[466] In Gilbert's case, his hagiographer offered his readers a robust, thorough and tactical defence of the saint, by voicing the criticism his loss of sight might have occasioned head-on before moving to discuss and dismantle it. By doing this the writer turned Gilbert's blindness, which could have been considered a sign of sin, into the opposite, a sign of his sanctity.

Further on in Gilbert's *Life* its writer returned to the subject of old age. 'One worn out by illness and old age is bound to leave this world. Illness attached itself to Gilbert in the proper course of nature: for it always accompanies old age. But his old age lasted so long because of the gift of grace.'[467] The author then moved to say that the reason for this was so that the saint might be fully tested with many trials and receive the crown his labours merited in heaven.[468] Here the hagiographer appears to be expressing and interweaving thematic strands to juxtapose the inevitability of decline and death as part of the human lot and punishment for sin, with the gift

reward of being strengthened ceaselessly by the delights of sweet meditation [Nam rebus secularibus pro carentia visus exemptus et absens, totus in celestibus habitavit, et post iustos sancte actionis labores, dulcis contemplationis meruit deliciis indesinenter confoveri].'

[466] *VA*, II, xiii, p. 80.

[467] *BSG*, 51, pp. 118-9. 'Morbo nempe et senio confectus hinc compellitur migrare, et morbus quidem ex proprietate inhesit nature: nam solet semper senium comitari. Sed senectus ex dono duravit gratie.' H. E. J. Cowdrey has noted that there were two ways in which the faithful might be martyrs: through public sufferings and by secret heroic virtue to death. 'Martyrdom and the First Crusade', in *Crusade and Settlement*, ed. P. W. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), pp. 46-56, p. 46. It is this second mode of martyrdom that is inferred in this account of an aged monk, suffering and faithful throughout the course of their extremely long life.

[468] *BSG*, 51, pp. 118-9. 'Sed voluit Dominus multis eum excercere laboribus et complere labores illius, quatinus merces eius multa esset in celis.'

of suffering as a route to a heavenly crown. He had to ensure that the two did not present a mutual incompatibility to the receivers of the *Life*; a delicate balancing act to achieve.

Senescence brought other difficulties to the saints. Godric had an episode of what was possibly urinary incontinence, waking in damp and cold bedclothes and reporting a demonic attack upon him when he looked for dry bedding.[469] The subject of bladder and bowel function is mentioned only a few times in the sources considered here, so it is no surprise that there is just a single reported incident found of a condition which is known to affect the older population, particularly in illness.[470] Mobility, or rather, immobility was an issue too for some of the aging saints. Anselm was unable to walk to church during the last six months of his life and had to be carried there in a chair while Margaret was reported as being too unwell to sit on a horse for her final months and was rarely even able to rise from bed. She was in her late forties at this time, dying at the age of forty-eight, so it seems unlikely that her immobility was due to age-related illness.[471] Godric too needed assistance to move from one place to another. In a reflection on the saint's diminishing weight, Reginald recorded that towards the end of the hermit's life he could carry him alone whereas previously it had taken two people to lift him.[472]

Other than these examples and a few similar such, no particular mention is made of the general impact of aging on the body of the saint. The hagiographers' focus is not on old age itself but on illnesses experienced during it. Although aging with its accompanying decline was not, in and of itself, apparently a topic of interest to the hagiographers, it did present them with

[469] *LG*, ch. 165 [295-6], pp. 313-4, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. The text says Godric was wet with either sweat or urine. 'Vel sudore vel urina.'

[470] Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 279.

[471] *VA*, II, lxv, p. 141 and *SMQS*, p. 213.

[472] *LG*, ch. 165 [294], p. 313, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

opportunities. The few passages in the lives that refer directly to the physical impact of aging on the saint focus on their endurance, suggest their longevity was a blessing from God, or, in the case of Gilbert, are a deliberate rhetorical ploy.

3.6 Nursing Care

Given the relative frequency with which illness is mentioned in the lives, it is interesting to note that little attention is given to the practical personal care, nursing care, of the sick person. In the accounts that do contain nursing care it is generally always the saint themselves who is doing the nursing, rather than being the recipient of such attentions. Early in the *Magna Vita*, Adam described how the young Hugh was instructed by his prior to devote himself entirely to the service of his, Hugh's, own aging father, with whom he had entered the community of Austin canons at Villarbenoît.[473] It is clear from the account that Hugh was delivering personal care to his father because Adam described how the young man would 'lead and carry him [his father] about, dress him and undress him, wash him, dry him and make his bed, and, when he grew feebler and weaker, prepare his food and even feed him'.[474] Hugh did this gladly and his father received Hugh's care with joy, Adam reinforcing this through allusion to biblical quotes referencing the blessing that accrues to the son from the father.[475]

In writing this passage, Adam used direct speech to convey the instructions Hugh received from his prior concerning the latter's wish that the saint should deliver care to his father. 'None of the brethren is as devoted as yourself, or as ready to perform the most menial duties, nor is

[473] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. iii, pp. 12-14. Hugh's father is described as being weighed down with the infirmities of old age while Hugh is described as being 'just grown up' at the time of this episode.

[474] Ibid., p. 15. '… dicebat, portabat, vestibus et calciamentis tegebat, nudabat, lavabat, extergebat, lectum ei sternebat, cibos languenti parabat, paratis debilem ipse cibabat.'

[475] For example, Genesis 49: 26. 'The blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers: until the desire of the everlasting hills should come.'

there anyone to whom the task would be so acceptable.'[476] This sentence from the prior effectively expresses the crux of the matter regarding both the purpose, and the paucity, of accounts of nursing care found in the lives considered. It highlights the devotion of the saint and emphasises this by framing it within a narrative that draws on the biblical and monastic injunctions to care for the sick and, in the case of Hugh, shows him as an example of filial piety.[477] However, the prior referred to the duties that Hugh would be performing for his aged and infirm father as 'menial'. Adam's description of these duties show that Hugh washed, fed, dressed and moved his elderly father. It is clear that it is these types of tasks, which form the core of basic nursing care, are those that the prior described as menial. The dearth of nursing care accounts may be due to its perceived lowly nature and suggests that for the hagiographers there was an uncomfortable sense of status incompatibility inherent in the portrayal of the saint, often a socially as well as a divinely superior person, carrying out such basic tasks.

In Hugh's case, Adam managed to achieve a balance between the Hugh who was asked to perform menial duties and the Hugh whom he wished to describe as an ideal monk and future saint. Adam's account suggested to the reader that while Hugh showed proper humility in carrying out nursing responsibilities, he was not in any way debased by doing so. This was due to the fact that Hugh's father, the subject of Hugh's nursing attentions, was himself a person of superiority. He was described by the prior as being a 'distinguished man' and Adam stated that although Hugh was delegated the caring role, the whole community would have liked to

[476] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. iii, p. 14. 'Te vero inter fratres nullus devotior, set humilitate pronior, set officiositate nemo te promptior invenitur cui a nobis adeo grati cura negotii demandetur.'

[477] See *BR*, RB 4, 16, p. 80, where care of the sick is listed as one of the tools of good works, and Matthew 25: 35, 36 and 40. 'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink … naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me … as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.'

perform such services for the venerable man.[478] In this instance, the delivery of basic nursing care was considered an honour because the recipient was of high status.

This reference to status, and the somewhat defensive positioning of superiority with the performance of menial tasks, is seen later in the *Magna Vita* when Hugh, by then a Carthusian, was enjoined to care for an elderly monk, an invalid, too infirm to leave his cell and described as being of remarkable holiness.[479] 'Hugh chanted the offices with him and supplied his every need, attending to him devotedly and unceasingly just as a nurse cherishes her nurseling, or a mother her son. Indeed, he served him in everything as he would have served the Lord Jesus Christ himself.'[480] In this case elevated status resided in the godliness of the aged monk. This is an extension of the account of Hugh's father where it was a combination of his social status, religious devotion and position as Hugh's parent that raised Hugh's service to him above the menial. While the apparent purpose of the venerable monk account appears to be to relate a prophesy made by the monk that Hugh would become a bishop, it also provided the opportunity for Adam to emphasise Hugh's humility in service while maintaining his status and enhancing his saintly qualities. Unlike the earlier account which concerned just the physical needs of his father, this later account starts by saying that Hugh attended the monk in his cell to chant the offices with him and supplied his every need. It would have been important for the Carthusian community members for whom Adam was writing to know that Hugh had been officially required to care for the elderly monk and so was allowed to leave his own cell to visit his

[478] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. iii, p. 14, 'viro spectabili'.

[479] Ibid., ch. xi, p. 34.

[480] Ibid. 'Hugo in horis regularibus decantandis vel quibusque necessariis suppenditandis, servitor devotus et indefessus tamquam nutrix alumpnum aut mater filium iuvabat et mulcebat, nec aliter quam ipsi Domino Ihesu Christo in omnibus ei ministrabat.' The observation that Hugh served the monk as if he were Jesus himself is a direct reference to the *Rule* of Benedict. 'For the sick are to be cared for above all else, for it is really Christ who is served in them.' *BR*, RB 36, 1, p. 300.

patient in his.[481] The spiritual service Hugh delivered is mention first, giving it precedence over the physical service. The account portrays Hugh as the ideal monk, adhering to the requirements of both Bible and *Rule* in humility and obedience and, by allusion, being judged worthy to serve Christ.

Anselm too is recorded as nursing his fellow monks. This is seen in the account of Osbern, a young monk described as being of difficult character.[482] Anselm took great trouble with Osbern, acting to bring him gently to the obedience of monastic life. Then Osbern became ill. Eadmer recounted Anselm 'sitting by the sick-bed day and night, giving him food and drink, taking upon himself the burden of every form of service, in everything showing himself a true friend. Most diligently he [Anselm] looked after his [Osbern's] body, and his soul likewise'.[483] While Anselm's attentions to Osbern's body proved fruitless in the end since the monk died, his concern for the health of his soul was rewarded and confirmed by a vision Anselm had of the late Osbern, which showed the monk to have been saved.

Anselm showed similar practical attentions in his care of the aged monk, Herewald.[484] Herewald was described as having no control over any part of his body except for his tongue but, despite his illness, was apparently still living when Eadmer wrote him into the *Life.* Eadmer addressed him directly. 'You, oh Herewald, a broken-down old man, experienced this in your

[481] The Carthusian *Rule* was clear that monks should not leave their cells other than on authorised occasions such as attending church, or in emergencies, or in a few other sanctioned instances. See chapter 28 of the early twelfth-century *Rule* of Chartreuse in Green, '*Perfectissimus*'.

[482] *VA*, I, x, p. 16.

[483] Ibid., p. 17. 'Lecto jacentis die noctuque assidere, cibum et potum ministrare, omnium ministrorum super se ministeria suscipere, veri amici morem in omnibus gerere. Ipse corpus, ipse animam ejus studiosissime refovebat.'

[484] Ibid., xiii, p. 22.

own person.'[485] Anselm was described as feeding Herewald, and squeezing grapes from one hand to the other, giving the juice to the decrepit monk. It was through these attentions of Anselm's that Herewald was restored to his former health. Despite the fact that the Herewald's condition of almost complete paralysis suggests he was very ill indeed, Eadmer made no direct claim of miracle here. His intention appears to have been to show Anselm's character as one of love and compassion and to describe how the archbishop was, in return, loved by all.[486] He called Anselm a true friend to Osbern and both a father and a mother to the sick and to the sound alike.[487] Eadmer was positioning him as a person who could bring about cure through care and describing him in terms of Benedict's requirements for a monastic leader in his provision for the sick.[488] Anselm and Hugh are a little unusual in having this element of ideal monastic leadership expressed through their own hands-on delivery of nursing care. While other sainted abbots of the period also showed concern for the sick, it was done through visiting the infirmary and talking with the patients rather than in the direct delivery of care.[489]

In what is perhaps the most touching account of nursing care seen in the lives, Godric tended to the needs of his terminally ill companion, the hermit Aelric.

> He sat beside the sufferer day and night, and unremittingly offered him all the help which was humanly possible. He could not avoid crying when the old man cried;

[485] Ibid. 'Quod tu Herewalde decripite senex in teipso percepisti.'

[486] Ibid. 'From this time his conduct towards all men was such that all loved him as if he were a very dear father [talem se cunctis exhibuit, ut ab omnibus loco carissimi patris diligeretur].'

[487] Ibid., p. 23.

[488] Benedict stated that the abbot should be, 'like a wise physician' taking care of the souls of the sickly. *BR*, RB 27, 1, p. 240. 'Et ideo uti debet omni modo ut sapiens medicus …'

[489] Ailred is described as visiting the sick-beds one by one and at Melrose Waldef visited all the infirmaries there, those of the monks, lay-brothers and guests, asking each patient what they would like. See *VAil*, xxi, p. 30, and *LWal*, 51, p. 266.

> when he sighed Godric replied with a desolate wail; he lovingly put his arms under him when he tried to sit up; he was his foot when his footstep faltered; he put food into his mouth when he was hungry; he poured drink into his mouth when he was thirsty.[490]

Reginald's words echo the biblical obligation to care for the sick. This may, in part at least, be a facet of his positioning Godric in a monastic mould in order to claim ownership of the saint for Durham. Beyond that though, Reginald wrote in a way that showed Godric as meeting the requirements with an open heart and sharing the suffering of his fellow hermit. Godric demonstrated empathy with Aelric's distress; he cried when the hermit cried and responded to his patient's sigh with a wail. Godric being Aelric's foot when his mentor's footstep failed is an expression of tenderness. There is an emotional connection here which is manifest both in Godric's tears and his delivery of nursing care. In his identification with the suffering of Aelric, Godric was, in a sense, patient and carer both, the former through his empathic response, his walking with Aelric through his distress, the latter in his delivery of nursing care.

The nursing care accounts from these three saints, which are the only substantial such accounts to be found in the lives, differ in detail but all work to show the adherence of the saint to the requirement to care for the sick, to display him as an ideal monk and to demonstrate his sincerity and humility. The accounts are set across the century and each of them is found close to the start of the life. This suggests that the hagiographers were choosing to use an account of

[490] *LG*, ch. 12 [32], p. 48, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Aegrotanti nocte et die assidebat, et omne ei humanitatis obsequium sedulus impendebat. Lamentanti et ipse conlaerimari non desiit, suspiranti responsum eum desolabili congemitu reddidit, residere conanti amplexus devote subposuit, gressus innitenti et ille pes alius exstitit, esurienti cibos in ore composuit, sitientis in ora potus infudit.'

nursing care as part of the foundational structure of a life where it formed a strand in the writers' promotion of their subject in the model of sainthood they wished to advocate.

3.7 Sickness and Strength

The lives presented the ill-health episodes of their subjects as a time during which they grew in strength. As their bodily capacities diminished and their lives became pain-filled so, correspondingly, their spiritual potency increased. The dying Ailred, for example, 'continued very weak in flesh, yet very strong in spirit', while for Wulfric 'from day to day his outer man was decaying and wearing out like a garment … so day upon day the inner self was surely being renewed'.[491] Such accounts frequently, usually in fact, either allude to scriptural sources or quote directly from the Bible. II Corinthians 12: 10 was used often. 'For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful.'[492] Hugh's doctors, attending the bishop in his final illness, marvelled at his ability to endure and quoted it when expressing their admiration for his fortitude.[493] Other references are seen too, particularly to explain pain. For example, Hebrews 12: 6 'For whom the Lord loves he chastiseth; and He scourges every son whom he receiveth.'[494] The biblical image of winnowing, found in both old and new testaments, is utilised as well.[495] When describing Hugh's illness, Adam asked, 'What other interpretation

[491] *VAil*, xlix, p. 57. 'Siquidem deinde carne nimium fragilis, spiritu tamen fortissimus existens.' *WH*, 99, p. 125, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 41, p. 209. 'Exterior eius homo iam indies corrumperetur et sicut vestimentum veterascens festinaret morti reddere quod suum est: sed interior plane renovabatur.'

[492] See, for example, *LWal*, 81, pp. 155 and 301 and *VAil*, xxvii, pp. 34-5, both of which will be discussed subsequently.

[493] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 193.

[494] *SQMS*, p. 207.

[495] Isaiah 28: 27-8. 'For gith shall be beaten out with a rod and cumin with a staff. But bread corn shall be broken small: but the thrasher shall not thrash it for ever'. Matthew 3: 12. 'He will thoroughly cleanse his floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire'.

can there be for the straw but bodily suffering, for the sheaf the body and for the grain the soul of the righteous man in the harvest of the Lord?'[496] The imagery of winnowing is indeed an apposite one through which to present physical suffering as purification, with the repetitive, pounding of the threshing process reflecting pulsing waves of driving pain.

Those passages in which physical deterioration is linked to spiritual increase seem to draw disproportionately heavily on biblical reference. This can be attributed to the hagiographer using scriptural justification to explain the substantial distress that the saint experienced and to make sense of the subject's suffering for his reader. It is also linked to the notion of white martyrdom which was achieved through a long life of suffering patiently endured.[497] Gilbert's biographer was explicit about seeking to place Gilbert in the model of martyrdom, associating him with Thomas Becket and contrasting Gilbert's white martyrdom with Becket's red martyrdom achieved through his dying in defence of his faith.

> From the former [Becket] we learn how meritorious it is to give up one's life for one's flock; from the latter [Gilbert] we discover the great reward enjoyed by the man who wins the souls of those about him. From the one we become aware that no-one who lives a good life in this world can be abandoned by God; from this other we see how pleasing to God is the sacrifice made by any man who withdraws from the world. In the one we perceive the sure remedy of penitence and the reward

[496] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xv, p. 183. 'Quid vero necessitates corporee nisi palee, quid culmus nisi corpus, quidue granum nisi spiritus iusti in messe dominica intelligitur.'

[497] For more on red and white martyrdom see chapter 1.3.iii.

earned by a man's last acts; in the other we understand the recompense for being always just and persevering to the end.[498]

Waldef's *Life* has a dense passage concerning the saint being both purged and reshaped through suffering. It contains six biblical references including the previously quoted Hebrews 12: 6 and II Corinthians 12: 10.[499] In amongst these, Jocelin placed Wulfric's condition. 'Thus it was that He wore out his beloved Waldef with a multitude of infirmities, racked him with pain, weakened him with sickness.'[500] Turgot wrote likewise of Margaret. 'And since she knew the Scripture, "Whom the Lord loves he chastens. He scourges each son whom he receives," she freely embraced the sorrows of her flesh with patience and gratitude, as if they were her most merciful Father's whip.'[501] Gilbert was described as being tested like Job and purified like precious metal in fire, the latter a reference to Proverbs.[502] Here, pain was offered to the reader as purgation, explicated in the light of scriptural reference and martyrdom, a framework with which the monastic and religious receivers of lives would have been familiar. In these accounts the suffering of the saint was presented as divine blessing, which served a hagiographic purpose

[498] *BSG*, *Prologue,* pp. 2-5. 'In illo discimus quanti sit meriti animam propriam pro ouibus suis dare, in isto nouimus quanta sit merces animas proximorum lucrifacere. In illo perpendimus quod nemo in seculo recte conuersatus a Deo sit derelictus, in isto uidemus quam gratum sit Deo holocaustum quilibet a seculo exclusus. In eo tenemus certum penitentie remedium et debitam finalibus operibus remunerationem, in isto amplectimur perpetue iustitie et finalis persuerantie retributionem.'

[499] *LWal*, 81, pp. 155 and 301. The other references are Isaiah 11: 25; Apocalypse 3: 19; John 15: 2; II Chronicles 5: 1.

[500] *LWal*, 81, pp. 155 and 301. 'Hinc est quod dilectum suum Waltevum infirmitatis multitudine, crebris flagellis attriverat tensionibus attrectraverat, morbis debilitabat.'

[501] *SMQS*, p. 207. 'Et quia sciebat scriptum, quem diligit dominus corrupit, flagellat autem onmem filium quem recipit, carnis sue dolores quasi clementissimi patris flagellum, cam patencia et gratiarum actione libens amplectitur.'

[502] *BSG*, 26*,* p. 85 and Proverbs 17: 3. 'As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace: so the Lord trieth the hearts.'

in itself and, in double functionality, pre-empted the suggestion that the saint's suffering was due to any sin on their part.

Rooting suffering in the aegis of scriptural justification seems particularly apparent in the lives of the saints who had attracted some controversy during their lifetime and whose hagiographer adopted an apologist stance. The lengthy and defensive treatment of Gilbert's blindness is thrown into relief by comparison with a passing reference made to Hugh's deteriorating vision.[503] It seems that Adam, writing the *Magna Vita* for the partisan readership of Witham, did not have the concerns shown by Gilbert's hagiographer that the affliction might give rise to criticism and detract from claims of sanctity. Adam did though, in one respect, use the opportunity blindness presented similarly, in so far as he observed that as Hugh's sight deteriorated so the clarity of his inner vision became more brilliant.

Ailred had attracted disapproval as well, for taking warm baths and drinking wine which, although done in order to relieve his pain, had led to criticism. Walter's angry defensive riposte quoted I Timothy 5. 23. 'He would occasionally drink wine because of his old malady the stone, which grievously tormented him every month, in accordance with the advice of the apostle to Timothy, "use a little wine for your stomach's sake and frequent infirmities".'[504] The writers employed Bible verses frequently and judiciously in their accounts of illness, using them to justify suffering, to articulate the advantage that pain brought to the saint and, when they deemed it necessary, to defend them.

[503] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xv, p. 183. 'An obvious sign of the approaching harvest was his gradually failing sight.'

[504] *VAil*, xxvii, p. 34. 'Bibebat aliquando vinum propter veterem morbum calculi quo singulis mensibus gravissime cruciabatur, set secundum Apostoli consilium ad Thimotheum, "Modico vino utere propter stomachum tuum et frequentes tuas infirmitates".'

Given the hagiographers' clear focus on explicating pain through alluding to, or quoting from, particular verses from the Bible, it is perhaps not surprising that medical intervention, specifically analgesia, is rarely mentioned. This makes sense in the context considered here of suffering presented to the readers as purgation and as an example of the saints' God-given ability to endure extraordinary agonies. To reduce or relieve the pain experienced by the saint would invalidate these benefits. In the accounts there are incidents in which one is described as choosing not to accept treatment even though the inference is that to do so would improve their physical condition. Hugh refused to take any remedy for his declining vision and Ailred rejected the curatives which he had taken previously, removing them from his mouth and grinding them to powder with his foot.[505] Christina did accept medication when she was suffering from paralysis and as a result her condition worsened.[506] While the focus of this particular passage was about the efficacy of heavenly medicine compared to human, the fact is that for the hagiographers' purposes, suffering could be justified by biblical reference and used as a valuable tool in promoting sanctity, as long as nothing, such as analgesia, prevented the saint from suffering.

[505] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xv, p. 183 and *VAil*, xli, p. 49. 'Qui eciam ea que medicinalem curam antea insumere consueverat, tunc repudiavit et cum forte aliquid in ore admissum sapore faucibus persensit digitos iniciens et revocans illud ministris ad alia intendentibus in terram proiecit et pede ne a quoquam cerneretur compressit in pulvere.' As described elsewhere, Ailred was permitted warm baths and wine for pain relief but, as his illness progressed, chose not to use them.

[506] *LC*, 48, p. 123.

Chapter Four: Doctors' Orders

Sometime between the death of Gilbert of Sempringham in 1189 and his canonisation in 1202 a nun of Chicksands, Mabel of Stotsfield, sustained an intractable injury to her foot. Her story is known through the account of a healing miracle this accident occasioned.[507]

> Although the nuns tried all kinds of remedies, putting the foot in both traction and in plaster, they brought about no improvement, indeed they even increased Mabel's suffering. Thus her pain grew day by day for the whole of that year and the one that followed, up till the anniversary of Master Gilbert's death, the day before the feast of St Agatha. Mabel, along with the others, had so completely lost hope of a cure for her foot that a doctor stated that there was no alternative to amputating her foot, which was, she said, as black as her veil. As her complaint got worse the prioress wanted her to be anointed with the oil reserved for the sick, but Mabel asked for it to be put off.[508]

The doctor's recommendation of amputation as the only remedy implies that the foot had become necrotic and that gangrene was present, a death sentence if untreated.[509] The prioress's wish that Mabel be anointed supports the perceived inevitability of her imminent death since

[507] Mabel's story is in the miracle collection compiled for the canonisation process of Gilbert and contains miracles that occurred after his death. The successful outcome of this process was announced on 30 January 1202 and was followed by the saint's translation on 13 October of the same year. *BSG*, p. lxiii.

[508] *BSG*, *The Miracles*, 17*,* p. 286. 'Et cum multe multas adhiberent curas, tam trahendo, tum implastra ponendo, nichil profecerunt sed pocius dolorem suum augmentauerunt. Et creuit dolor de die in diem toto illo anno et sequenti usque ad aniuersarium Gileberti, scilicet proximum diem ante festum sancte Agathe; et adeo desperata est illa cum aliis de curatione pedis quod quidam medicus dixit aliam non superesse viam quam ut pes abscideretur; et dixit pedem nigrum esse ad similitudinem veli sui; et cum infirmitate aggravante uellet priorissa eam oleo infirmorum ungi, petiit id differri.'

[509] Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 6.

the biblical precept of anointing the sick, which had been common practice until the ninth century had, by the eleventh century, been transformed into a ritual of anointing for the dying.[510] Mabel declined the anointing and instead kept vigil in the church for the duration of Gilbert's anniversary, her foot wrapped in the liturgical towel that had lain on the saint's chest when he was about to die.[511] She fell asleep before the altar and dreamt she was visited by Gilbert. On wakening Mabel found herself fit, able to walk again, cured. The writer of Gilbert's *Life* noted that she remained healthy at the time of his writing eight years later. In short, a single night of looking to heaven for cure had succeeded where two years of human medicine had failed.

The manner in which doctors are described in the lives offers insights into one of the ways in which the practice of medicine may have been perceived in a monastic setting and, by extension, how this informed a work of hagiography. The lives, particularly those narratives concerning ill health in which doctors are seen, reflect stresses regarding the practice of worldly medicine within the context of a religious community and its focus on spiritual health. The tension between faith and rationalism regarding the natural world and man's existence within it, meant that the knowledge and practice of medicine could be a troubling area to those who subscribed to theories of God's omnipotence.[512] The antipathy of some churchmen to medicine is explicable. While it falls outside the remit of this thesis, in brief, theologically speaking, the church was in a difficult position regarding the juxtaposition of medical science and divine privilege. Successful medical intervention could be considered to attribute power and agency

[510] Paxton, *Death Ritual at Cluny*, p. 183.

[511] *BSG*, *The Miracles*, 17*,* p. 286. 'Priorissa involuit pedem eius in manutergio quod iacuit supra pectus magistri Gileberti laborantis in extremis.'

[512] French, *Medicine Before Science*, p. 66.

to nature, thereby running the risk of seeming to detract from God's omnipotence or omniscience.

Another factor that increases the complexity of the doctor narratives is the way in which the body could be regarded as a locus for sin with the health of the soul manifest through the condition of the body. In this, cure of the spirit was essential before physical healing could occur with the former being firmly in the realm of the divine; human medicine could not remedy spiritual malaise. Furthermore it was the health of the immortal soul, not the fallen body, that was paramount in the faith world that produced the lives. Medicine's focus on the corporeal body may have been yet another source of tension experienced by those who wrote the lives, a tension manifest through the manner in which the authors treated the medical profession in their creation of a work that was written, and designed to be read, with the eye of faith.

4.1 Names, Numbers and Designations

Table 4, below, details references to doctors found in the saints' lives and miracle collections considered here. For this analysis, in the instances where the miracles form an integral part of the life, only the life is listed but when a miracle collection is appended to the life it is given separately. It shows that doctors, named either as *medicus, phisicus, doctor* or *cirurgicus*, appeared a total of sixty-six times. The figures includes infrequent references to the same doctor, or doctors, who are mentioned in a narrative on more than one occasion, with the count having been made on the times the word appears rather than on the number of times a particular practitioner appears.

Table 4: References to medics in the lives

Life	**Author**	**Date written**	***Medicus***	***Phisicus***	***Doctor***	***Cirurgicus***
Margaret of Scotland: *Life*	Turgot	1100-7			1	
Anselm: *Life*	Eadmer	1112-25				
Anselm: *Miracles*	Eadmer		1			
Wulfstan of Worcester: *Life*	William of Malmesbury	1125	3			
Christine of Markyate: *Life*	Unknown	1155-66	1			
Ailred of Rievaulx: *Life*	Walter Daniel	1167-	3	1		
Ailred: *Lament*	Walter Daniel		1			
Godric of Finchale: *Life*	Reginald	1160/70s	4		1	
Godric of Finchale: *Miracles*	Reginald		7			
Wulfric of Haselbury: *Life*	John of Forde	1180-1184	4			
Waldef of Melrose: *Life*	Jocelin of Furness	1198-1209	1			
Waldef of Melrose: *Miracles*	Jocelin of Furness		3	1		
Gilbert of Sempringham: *Life*	Unknown	1202-03	1		1	
Gilbert of Sempringham: *Miracles*	Unknown		6	2		
Hugh of Lincoln: *Magna Vita*	Adam of Eynsham	By 1212	12	1	1	1
Hugh of Lincoln: *Life*	Gerald of Wales	c. 1213	1			
Hugh of Lincoln: *Miracles*	Gerald of Wales		6			
Hugh of Lincoln: *Metrical Life*	Unknown	1220-35	2			
TOTAL			**56**	**5**	**4**	**1**

It is instantly apparent that the commonest term used for a medical practitioner was, by far, *medicus.* The title *doctor* was used exclusively with reference to learned or sainted men. For example, Margaret of Scotland 'attended to her holy reading with wonderful eagerness, about which she would confer with the most learned men'.[513] Hugh of Lincoln was recorded as

[513] *SMQS*, p. 183. 'Cum doctissimus assentibus viris, subtiles sepius questiones conferebat.'

hearing mass on the feast of the great doctor, St Augustine.[514] The single reference to a surgeon occurs in Hugh of Lincoln's *Magna Vita* when the body of the bishop was embalmed and 'the hand of the surgeon made his internal organs visible'.[515] It is of interest to note that while doctors, *medici*, advised that the body of Hugh be embalmed, it was actually a surgeon, *cirurgica*, who performed the surgery.[516] As a further point of interest, it is worth noting that doctors do not appear much in the accounts of the life of a historical saint written in the twelfth century, although they do sometimes crop up in the miracle accounts. For one example from a number that could be used, Ailred of Rievaulx's *Life* of Edward the Confessor does not mention any medics in respect of Edward himself, although a failing doctor is seen in one of his miracles.[517] Excluding *doctor* and *cirurgica* from the table above leaves the remaining categories of *medicus* and *phisicus*, a total of sixty-one references.[518]

One of Gilbert's miracles concerned a doctor who suffered from a tertian fever. The case offers a possibly illuminating insight into nomenclature as in the account *phisicus* and *medicus* are

[514] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. v, p. 101. '… in die doctoris eximii sancti Augustini.'

[515] Ibid., xix, p. 219. 'Et quidam tunc, ubi manu cirurgica ipsa interaneorum secreta patuerunt.'

[516] Ibid., p. 218.

[517] Ailred, *Historical Works*, p. 179. A woman described as having stinking, pus-filled, wormy facial growths, which made her abhorrent to her husband and family, also suffered from infertility and was deemed beyond the skill of doctors. She was cured by a touch of Edward's hand, became attractive to her husband as a result, and proved to be fertile.

[518] As well as being used to describe a medical doctor, the word *phisicus* could be used with reference to a philosopher or a 'physicist', a natural philosopher. French, *Medicine Before Science*, p. 68, writes that Alfred of Sareshel, who translated Aristotelean physical works such as *De plantis* and Avicenna's *De congelatione et conglutinatione* into Latin during the twelfth century, described himself as such. Charles Burnett has identified twelfth-century English manuscripts from St Nicholas in Exeter and Bury St Edmunds which were translated from their original Arabic and were of interest to *phisici*, philosophers who investigated natural science, rather than medical doctors. The manuscripts contain works concerning natural physics, such as the *De elementis* as well as medicinal texts. See Charles Burnett, 'Physics Before the *Physics*', pp. 53-6 and 78. Although this is of interest, it is of relevance only to exclude it in this analysis since the five uses of the term here do refer to medical practitioners.

used twice each. Even though this choice of vocabulary may owe something to the writer's desire to avoid reusing the same words in close succession, the fact that *phisicus* has been noted only five times overall in the lives studied makes it significant.[519]

> Medicus quidam in castello de Duningtona incommodum pertulit febris terciane, quem morbum pacienter plerumque ferunt phisici, eo quod asserant febrem terciam si fuerit vera et morbum esse et medicinam [A certain doctor in Castle Donnington suffered the misfortune of tertian fever, which is an illness doctors bear patiently for the most part because they hold that if it is true tertian fever it is both disease and cure].[520]

In this passage, *medicus* refers to the man who happens to be both the patient and a doctor, a man from Castle Donnington, while a professional opinion that tertian fever is both disease and cure, is given by the same man named as *phisicus*. This division of terminology is repeated further on in the account when the doctor, *phisicus*, expressed concern about the length and severity of the fever which in his judgement was abnormal; this is, again, a professional opinion.[521] When, however, the doctor is recounted as drinking the water in which Gilbert's staff had been soaked, he was called *medicus*.[522] He had reverted to being a patient, who happened to be a doctor, rather than being a doctor voicing his professional opinion. Even if the writer chose to use the different terms to avoid repetition, it is still the case that he selected

[519] The single instance of *phisicus* being used in Hugh of Lincoln's *Magna Vita* is also in a passage in which doctors are mentioned twice and is discussed below. *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, p. 209.

[520] *BSG*, *More Miracles*, 2, p. 307.

[521] Ibid. 'The doctor replied that he was extremely worried about the length and severity of the fever and wished fervently to be cured if he possibly could [Respondit phisicus valde desuper diuturnitate febrium et molestia anxiari, et libenter velle si quo modo posset curare].'

[522] Ibid., p. 308.

the word *medicus* to refer to the doctor as a person, and *phisicus* when he voiced a professional opinion.

The other three times the word *phisicus* appears in a life are also in the context of a professional medical opinion being given. Walter Daniel wrote of a monk who suffered greatly from a serious gastric complaint. 'Medical men, *phisici*, testify that this is a most dangerous disease: it arises from the worst and most poisonous humours which gather together and solidify in the body.'[523] In Waldef's *Life* the word *phisicus* is used just once as well. It too occurs in the context of medical expertise being delivered and is found in the miraculous cure of a lay brother at Melrose. The brother had suffered in agony from an intestinal condition and despite using many different medicinal drinks and applications and taking time and again decoctions of herbs and potions prescribed by the doctors, *phisicis*, he felt no improvement.[524]

The final passage in which *phisicus* was used is from Hugh's *Magna Vita*, and occurs in the context of a vision one of Hugh's attendants had of the bishop's imminent death. The doctors did not agree with this divine prognosis. 'When the dawn came, he related [the vision] to his companions, and during the day, in spite of the mockery and rebukes of the doctors, *medicis*, in attendance took care to prepare what was necessary for the last rites. Even to the last hours of his life, the doctors, *phisici*, guaranteed he would recover and live for some time.'[525] It is of course probable that both *medici* and *phisici* were the same group of doctors and that Adam

[523] *VAil,* xxxiv, pp. 42-3. 'Est enim periculosa nimis hec passio, ut phisici testantur, que quidam, ex humoribus pessimis et venenosis cum mordicacione stomachi concreta et collecta circa precordia generator.'

[524] *LWal,* 130, pp. 194 and 349. 'Hic fomenta et emplastra multiplicia pluries adhibuit, decoctions herbarum et potions multoties sumpsit, quas a phisicis didicit …'

[525] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, p. 209. 'Quam ille mane facto sociis manifestans, ea que in sollempnes exequias opus erant, die ipsa, medicis qui aderant subsannantibus et obiurgantibus eum, sollicitius studuit preparare. Nam phisici sanitatem ei usque in horam vite ultimam vitamque spondebant longiorem.'

was avoiding using the same terminology twice in close succession. Irrespective of this, although both *medici* and *phisici* were proved wrong in their estimation of Hugh's pending demise, Adam's account has the latter giving an opinion, a firm prognosis, rather than mocking and rebuking. While five instances of the word *phisicus* from a total of sixty-six uses of names for doctors is too small a group from which to draw firm conclusions, it is nevertheless of interest to note that all occurred in the context of a medical professional offering opinion or treatment. Likewise, it is significant that the term is used infrequently in comparison with the much more commonly used *medicus* and is found only in the later lives. This may suggest a growing differentiation in the roles of doctors and reflect a general increase in the level of medical literacy.[526]

4.2 Medical Doctors in the Lives

There is no real clarity as to what the title *medicus* implied the twelfth century. Edward J. Kealey considered the title suggested a generalist role than a specialist practitioner, although offered no direct evidence for this, and stated that training could be obtained through apprenticeship or attendance at a school of medicine such as Salerno or Chartres.[527] John of Villula, Bishop of Wells (d.1122), was an example of the former with William of Malmesbury writing in the early twelfth century that he was doctor, but by practice rather than education.[528]

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[526] Of the four lives in which *phisici* are found, Walter's *Life of Ailred*, written from about the time of the saint's death in 1167, is the earliest.

[527] Edward J. Kealey, *Medieval Medicus: A Social History of Anglo-Norman Medicine* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 15-6 and 115, fn. 17, wrote that British attendance at these schools increased over the century, citing Alexandre Clerval, *Les Écoles des Chartres au Moyen-âge du Ve au XVIe siècle* (Chartres: Garnier, 1895), p. 180.

[528] 'The bishop of Wells was one John, a native of Tours and by practice rather than book-learning a skilled physician [Iohannes erat Wellensis episcopus, natione Turonicus, usu non litteris medicus probatus].' William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*: *The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thompson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999), ch. 340, pp. 588-9.

Walter Daniel called himself a doctor, *officio medicus,* in his *Lament for Ailred.*[529] His use of language and the amount of information concerning medical conditions he included in Ailred's *Life* certainly show his interest in the subject, even if this cannot be used to prove his status or indicate his medical training and background. He does, however, appear in his writing to be holding himself apart from the professional grouping of the medical fraternity, which is a little curious, particularly since in his writing Walter shows considerable interest in and facility for medical matters and is by no means diffident in giving his own opinion in other areas. In the miracle of the monk with the gastric complaint and the abnormal humours, Walter wrote, 'medical men testify that this is a most dangerous disease', his words placed to give their, the doctors', opinion rather than his own.[530] Walter's reticence here may be due in part to the attitude of the Cistercian order towards its members practising medicine, which has been described as being 'explicitly intolerant'; in the second half of the twelfth century, the time during which Walter was active, the order released sanctions against medical practice.[531] Such injunctions show that some monks were practising, even though the grounds for their training

[529] *Lament for Ailred* in *VAil*, p. xxvii, fn. 1. 'Et licet mihi sim in officio medicus, non tamen sine acerbo dolere curo.' Powicke voices a suggestion that Walter may have been Rievaulx's infirmarer, quoting an opinion expressed by C. H. Talbot and based on Walter's attendance on Ailred during his last years, and his being part of the group who performed last offices for the abbot.

[530] *VAil*, xxxiv, pp. 42-3. 'Est enim periculosa nimis hec passio, ut phisici testantur…' The miracle itself has been discussed in chapter 3.1. Walter gives no source for the opinion he attributes to the *phisici*, not saying whether he heard it directly from attending doctors or teaching masters or gained the knowledge from book-learning, or was giving his own professional opinion shielded behind the words of other medics.

[531] Florence Glaze, *The Perforated Wall: The Ownership and Circulation of Medical Books in Medieval Europe, ca. 800-1200* (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1999), p. 200. David Bell, in 'The English Cistercians and the Practice of Medicine'*, Citeaux: Commcntarii cisternienses* 40 (1989), 139-73, pp. 148-9 wrote that the Cistercians introduced injunctions against the practice of medicine by its members in 1157 and 1175. The fact that it was felt necessary to state this twice suggests that it had, despite the earlier sanction, been happening. Monks could not treat people outside their order or stay away from the monastery overnight in order to deliver medical care. While the intention of this was really to ensure the separation of monks from the world outside their monastery, it is interesting that the restrictions included treating those outside their own order.

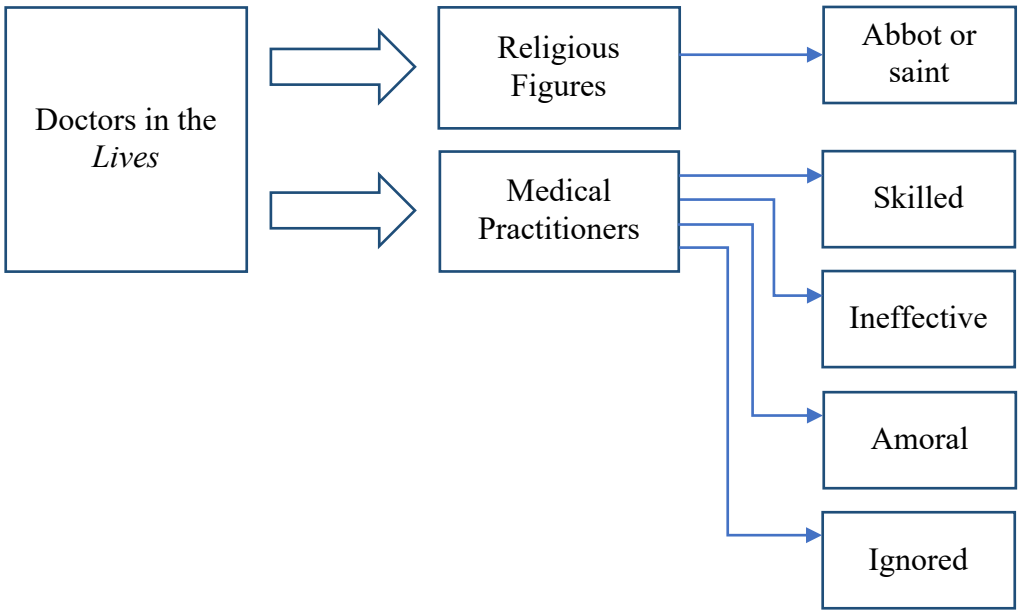
or qualification to do so are not always clear. Against this backdrop it is possible that Walter, a self-declared *officio medicus*, chose to exercise discretion in his choice of words, placing professional opinion into the mouths of other medics rather than appearing to practice medicine, either by diagnosing or prognosticating or even treating patients, himself.

There is a second reason why Walter may have chosen to position himself away from the professional grouping of the medical fraternity, and that concerns the way in which he wished to portray himself to his readers. Throughout the *Life* Walter wrote in a manner that located himself in a position of particular friendship and closeness with Ailred. This is seen, for instance, in the deathbed account where Walter placed himself, and he alone, in close proximity to his dying abbot. 'I sat with him on that day and held his head in my hands, the rest of us sitting apart. I said to him in a low voice, so that nobody would notice us, "Lord, gaze on the cross, let your eye be where your heart is".'[532] It is a tender scene, visually evocative of Mary holding the crucified Christ on his removal from the cross, with Walter and Ailred as the central, and only, participants. This presents a particular flavour of intimacy to their relationship and it seems to be this rather than any degree of medical authority that Walter was wishing to claim in the *Life*. If this is the case it also reinforces the importance of faith rather than human knowledge to the writers of hagiography, with Walter giving pre-eminence to the former and subsuming his medical expertise to his portrayal of himself as a man of faith and close friend to the sainted Ailred.

[532] *VAil*, lvii, p. 61. 'In illo die sedi ego et sustenavi capud eius manibus meis, aliis longius consedentibus nobis. Dixi autem demissa voce, nemine nobis intendente, 'Domine, respice ad crucem et ibi sit oculus tuus ubi est etiam cor".'

Doctors are mentioned significantly more often in the later lives than they are in the earlier ones. Adam's early thirteenth century *Magna Vita* has fourteen doctor references. Reginald's lengthy *Life* of Godric, written around the time of the saint's death in 1170, is next with eleven. Gilbert's *Life*, which was written in the early thirteen century, follows this with nine references. The fact that doctors are mentioned more frequently in the lives of saints who died in the closing years of the twelfth century than in the lives of those who died in the first half of the period is indicative of the growth of the profession over the century. It also offers several other suggestions: that there was an increasing acceptability of using doctors' services in a monastic setting; that the hagiographers no longer considered the role of doctors and medicine to be irrelevant within a work of hagiography; that monks themselves were increasingly medically qualified and practising within a monastery. However, this last point cannot be determined from the lives since the writers never suggest whether or not the doctors they mention were monks, other religious or lay practitioners, a possibly significant omission if the practice of medicine by monks was frowned upon in some quarters.

Table 5: Types of doctors in the lives



Although the naming protocols, education and status of the medical practitioner may be obscure, the fact is that doctors are seen not infrequently in the saints' lives studied. Their function in these texts was various and, as shown in Table 5, above, can be broadly divided into two categories: narratives that named the abbot or saint as a doctor and those in which a medical practitioner was recorded as practising his trade. This latter category can be subdivided into four subgroups.

The first category concerns descriptions of a religious figure, a saint or abbot or bishop affecting spiritual and perhaps bodily healing. The notion of an abbot as a doctor with the responsibility for the care and cure of souls in his charge is found in Benedict's *Rule* where it is stated that the abbot should be 'like a wise physician' taking care of the souls of the sickly.[533] This group is discussed in section 4.3 below. The second category, that of medical doctors, relates to narratives that describe medics in one of four ways. In the most positive image the doctor is seen as a skilled practitioner, trusted to deliver professional opinion and treatment which may, or may not, have led to a cure. In a less positive image, such as in the examples above from Gilbert's *Life*, the doctor was ineffective. He acted professionally but despite using all his knowledge and skill the condition he had been called in to treat worsened. This usually

[533] *BR*, RB 27, 1, p. 240. 'Et ideo uti debet omni modo ut sapiens medicus …' This is based on Matthew 9: 12. 'But Jesus hearing it, said: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill." ' The conceptual linking of the image of a doctor with a religious concern for the health of the soul is seen earlier than Benedict. In the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen in his work *Oration 2*, '*In Defence of his Flight to Pontus*', 27, considered how the guiding of man rather than the medical treatment of man was the 'art of arts and science of sciences [ars artium et disciplina disciplinarum]'. *Orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni Novem Interpretatio*, trans. Rufinus, ed. A. Engelbrecht (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 46.1, Vienna, 1910). English translation in *Orations, Sermons, Letters Orations, Sermons, Letters*: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). The impact that Gregory's teaching in this area had upon the Latin west is discussed by Giles E. M. Gasper in '"A Doctor in the House"? The Context for Anselm of Canterbury's Interest in Medicine with Reference to a Probable Case of Malaria', *Journal of Medieval History,* 30 (2004), 245-261, p. 246.

opened the way to a miraculous cure. The worst image of a doctor was as grasping and greedy, amoral and self-seeking, draining his desperate patients of their cash and deserting them when either they could no longer pay or were likely to die. Finally, sometimes a doctor was included in the narrative only for the purpose of being ignored.

4.2.i The Skilled Doctor

In this category, the professional opinion of doctors is used as a corroborative device in passages that were written primarily to show the saint demonstrating some of the desired, or expected, attributes of a twelfth-century monastic saint. This is seen most markedly in Adam's *Magna Vita.* In a passage about Hugh's extreme fasting as a young monk Adam described the saint's Lenten diet. He wrote that Hugh ate only on three days of the week and on those days he would take just dry bread and water.[534] This led to future health problems for the bishop. 'The doctors ascribed the numbness of his digestive organs, which caused him so much pain and discomfort in his later years, to this abstinence.'[535] Adam presented the doctors' opinion here as authoritative. Likewise, in Hugh's final illness, the doctors expressed amazement at Hugh's fortitude and ability to endure suffering throughout an extended period of extreme pain. Adam cited the doctors directly in this narrative, placing biblical quotations on their lips.

> The doctors observed his behaviour and said: 'This man's spirit is not defeated by illness. In fact, like the apostle he can mock at the body of this death and say: "When I am weakest, then am I strongest and most powerful." '[536]

[534] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. xii, p. 37.

[535] Ibid. 'Abstinentie vero huic ascribebant medici in etate progressiori stomachi illius nimiam infrigidionem unde plures interdum perferebat dolores et iuges pene molestias.'

[536] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 193. 'Et dicibant medici, huiusmodi gestus eius intuentes: "Vere spiritus hominis istius sustentat infirmitatem eius. Vere cum apostolo insultare potest iste corpori mortis huius et dicere, 'Quando infirmor, tunc fortior sum et potens." ' The biblical references are to Proverbs 18: 14, 'The spirit of a

The ability to endure extreme suffering with faith and fortitude were essential characteristics of a twelfth-century saint. That Adam used the professional opinion of doctors to authenticate these attributes shows a significant degree of regard for the medical profession. Further, and perhaps remarkably, Adam entrusted the doctors with quotes from the Bible. His monastic readers would have readily recognised these references and, by placing them on the lips of the doctors, Adam validated those professionals, endowing them with not just medical expertise but with the eyes of faith as well.[537]

Perhaps this passage had further significance too. Although there is no indication as to whether or not the doctors mentioned were religious or lay, having them quote from the Bible makes it possible to speculate that they may have been monks or other religious. Whether or not this was the case, his portrayal shows the Bible-quoting doctors as acting in tandem with faith, not against it. This is an important point if Adam was writing against a background of ambiguity and perhaps hostility towards monks working in a medical capacity. Adam's respect for the profession is seen again after Hugh's death when 'by the advice of the doctors and in spite of strong opposition from others who felt it was wrong, his [Hugh's] bowels were removed from his body because it had to be taken a long way for burial'.[538] Not only was the opinion of the doctors listened to in this instance, but it was actually followed in the face of strong opposition from others. The professional judgement of the doctors overrode the preferences of the other,

man upholdeth his infirmity' and II Cor. 12: 9 in which Paul writes of how God's power is made perfect in man's weakness. 'For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, in Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful'. Both passages have a focus on humility and the hagiographers use them to show how spiritual strength is developed and manifest through periods of physical abasement and abjection.

[537] Adam's intended readers were the monks of Witham, at whose request he had written the *Magna Vita*.

[538] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 193. '… de consilio medicorum, cum id penitus fieri non oportere alii sentirent et assererent, exta corpori eius, quod longius ad sepeliendum portari debuit, auferuntur.'

presumably non-medical, members of the bishop's household and those involved in the care of Hugh's body.[539]

Adam's generally positive portrayal of medical doctors, and the fact that the *Magna Vita* has more narratives containing doctors than are found in the other lives considered, seems significant.[540] Additionally, he is the only hagiographer who uses all four designations for a doctor: *medicus, phisicus, doctor* and *cirurgicus.* It has been suggested that Adam came from a medical family and that his father was a doctor.[541] Certainly Adam himself demonstrated knowledge of both medical practice and theory as regards using a pulse reading as a means of prognostication.[542] Adam described how he had tried to comfort Hugh when the bishop was dying and in extreme pain. 'Soon, my lord, you will be at peace, for when I feel your pulse it shows the crisis is ending.'[543] This is a fascinating insight from Adam and unexplained by any further context. He made no direct claim to having medical knowledge himself nor did he suggest that attending monks would as a matter of course be able to take a pulse and interpret

[539] Usually religious of like rank would travel to attend the death bed of one of their own. However, in Hugh's case the pending general council at Lincoln meant that the prelates were not able to attend. Hugh requested instead that the Dean of St Paul's with clerks and monks from Westminster should perform his exequies. Had some more senior clerics been present, the decision about embalming, and the doctors' preference to do it, may have been overruled. *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 191.

[540] The only exception to Adam's positive portrayal of doctors in the *Magna Vita* is the aforementioned episode concerning Hugh's dying in which the doctors trusted their own professional judgement rather than the vision of the monk who predicted the bishop's imminent death. *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvii, p. 209.

[541] In her introduction to the *Magna Vita,* Douie used information from the *Eynsham Cartulary* to hypothesise that Edmundus Medicus, who owned property in Oxford where Adam was from, and who died between 1185 and 1190, was Adam's father. *Eynsham Cartulary*, 2 vols, ed. H. E. Salter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), vol. II, pp. 262 and 272 and quoted by Douie in *MV,* p. ix, fn. 1.

[542] Wallis, 'Signs and Senses', p. 271, notes from her study of texts from Monte Cassino around the millennium that pulse reading was used prognostically, for example to indicate when a fever would peak again, rather than diagnostically.

[543] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 192. 'Iam domine quiescetis, tactus nempe pulsus vestri finiri nunc innuit accessionem instam.'

the findings. His assertion that Hugh's pulse indicated that his current crisis was ending is a confident one, although he did not say what it was about the pulse reading that led him to think that.[544] In the absence of further information it is reasonable to speculate that if Adam's father had indeed been a doctor Adam may have gained some medical knowledge and practical diagnostic techniques from him. If this is the case it could also explain constructive regard that Adam shows for the profession and suggest a degree of medical literacy within monastic communities with the utilisation of so-called medical techniques not being limited solely to those who held, or were designated, an official title to practice.

4.2.ii The Failing Doctor

The failure of human medicine occurring prior to divine healing, and the necessity of placing faith in God before a cure would be affected, is a constant feature in the lives. In Waldef's *Life* Jocelin wrote of a monk who was thought to be mortally ill, suffering with 'stone and intestinal trouble … fluids clotted with blood issued from both parts, so that skilled medical men diagnosed his disease as dysentery complicated by lientery'.[545] The doctors were called skilled, *periti*, and their diagnosis presented to the reader with respect; however, there is no mention of any medical treatment received in its wake. Instead, it appears that the case was deemed to be beyond medical help since Jocelin recorded that 'he [the sick monk] was led, therefore, to the

[544] Adam was of course writing with the wisdom of hindsight as Hugh had already died.

[545] *LWal*, 118, pp. 185 and 339. 'Calculi et intestinorum molestia … per utrumque enim meatum partis anterioris et posterioris, cruor coagulatus emittebatur, et ideo periti medici dysentreiis vel etiam lienteriis illum laborare arbitrabantur.' The reference to blood being passed 'from the anterior part' suggests haematuria, seen in cases of calculi in the urinary tract and probably used by the doctors to confirm their diagnosis of 'stone'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), defines lientery as 'a form of diarrhoea in which the food passes through the bowels partially or wholly undigested.' The word is archaic and is not used in modern medicine. Lientery is mentioned in the *Life* of Godric and that of Wulfric and in each instance the hagiographer wrote that the condition of the patient was considered to be grave. 'Infirmitate gravi quam medici lienteriam vocant ...' *WH*, 105, p. 132. 'Post dysenteriae languorem incurabilem incurrit lienteriae dissolutionem.' *LG*, ch. 101 [202], p. 214.

saint's tomb'.[546] The use of the word 'therefore' indicates the severity of the monk's condition implying that only a miraculous healing or a holy death adjacent to the saint's burial place could be expected. A miracle did indeed occur and the monk recovered to full health. In this account, the doctors were required to fail in order for the point of the miracle to be clear; namely that while the case was too grave for human medicine to cure, heavenly medicine did not fail.

The single episode of a doctor seen in the *Life* of Christina of Markyate is typical of the sort of healing miracle intended to focus and inspire the reader to place their hope solely in God and not in man. Christina had what was described as an incurable illness. It was deemed to be incurable, the hagiographer wrote, because 'everything known to human capacity had been tried in vain'.[547] He listed Christina's symptoms in detail describing the severity of her condition, which included paralysis over one half of her body spreading from her lower limbs up to the top of her head. 'For this reason, experienced physicians were sent for and to the best of their power they practised their craft with medicines, blood-letting, and other kinds of treatment.'[548] It is apparent that the doctors were robust and thorough in their treatment of Christina, employing their skills and trying various remedies for her ills. But they failed. Despite the doctors' confidence that Christina would improve with their treatment, her condition instead deteriorated further and for five days worsened until on the sixth day she thought she would die. This suffering was a test for Christina, an ordeal she needed to endure in part so that she would learn to put her faith only in divine help. She did this by refusing human medicine in the form of an electuary sent to her by an old man and was then, by the grace of God and through the agency of the Virgin Mary, healed. The narrative stresses this

[546] *LWal*, 118, pp. 185 and 339. 'Is ergo ad sancti Abbatis adductus monumentum.'

[547] *LC*, 48, p. 122. 'Nam humana industria quicquid artis habebat in curam illarum nequicquam temptaverat.'

[548] Ibid. 'Quamobrem probati medici ei missi sunt et stadium suum antidotis, diminucione sanguinis, aliisque medicandi generibus in eam solerter exercuerunt.'

point for the reader. 'You see how easily and how appropriately God cured his virgin daughter with heavenly medicine through his virgin mother, deeming anything employed by mortal man to be unworthy of his spouse.'[549]

The failure of the doctors in these types of accounts does not appear to have been meant as a slur on the ability or integrity of the medical professional. Mankind's lot was illness and corruption and it was inevitable that man would sicken and die. No earthly doctor could stop that. The focus of these narratives is on the fact that heavenly medicine was the only cure that would never fail mankind and, ultimately, it was in this alone that each person should place their faith. This is a seminal point in a saint's life. In such works miraculous healings were not generally handed to their recipients as a reason to have faith and were not initially bestowed as a proof of God's efficacy and omnipotence. Rather, they required the beneficiary to show their faith first, and perhaps show remorse for wrongdoing, then once this was established for the reader, healing followed.

For the reader, of course, the opposite pertained. They had, in the lives, the advantage of hearing how faith in the divine could open the way to spiritual healing and, by extension, sometimes physical cure followed for the afflicted and faithful person. The objective of the hagiographer was to inspire his reader to place their faith likewise in heaven and to cease looking to human succour for their ills. In order for this to be achieved and the point made, the narratives concerning sick people being treated by doctors had no option but to position the doctor as failing. The way in which the writers present the failing doctor narratives suggests that the practice of medicine itself was not being denigrated. Quite the opposite in fact, as is

[549] Ibid., 49, p. 124. 'Vides ergo quam facile quam apte virtus Dei per suam virginem matrem curavit suam virginem filiam celesti medicamine. Cui iudicavit indignum quicquid adhiberi potuit a mortali homine.'

seen in Christina's case, where the writer's emphasis on the skilled, *periti*, and experienced, *probati*, medics shows that they and their skills were held in regard. These narratives were not intended to put human medicine down, rather they served to elevate and emphasise the ultimate supremacy of heavenly cure.

4.2.iii The Bad Doctor

In complete contrast to Adam's positive regard for doctors and the narrative necessity of the failure of the profession seen above, Gerald of Wales' *Life* of Hugh of Lincoln suggests that he, Gerald, held medics in very low esteem.[550] He was scathing about doctors in the *Life*, having nothing positive to say about them and disparaging them in a variety of ways. His *Life* contains several passages in which he denounced medics as being greedy and incompetent.[551] In a particularly excoriating account Gerald wrote of a knight, Milo, who engaged in military games after having been bled. The phlebotomy site on his left arm became infected and Milo experienced swelling and great pain. His lord called for doctors whom Gerald noted were 'more

[550] Gerald wrote his *Life of Hugh* around the first decade of the thirteenth century, by which time he had moved to writing theological works rather than the history and natural science works of his earlier years. His antipathy to the medical profession may be reflective of this, a sign of his demarcation between faith and reason, voicing a spiritual distain for rational science. Also, as someone who had travelled widely, Gerald may have had more exposure to doctors and seen more of the worst of them than was the case for some of the other writers considered here who, as monks, lived within the encompassing and regulated walls of a monastic community. For Gerald on natural science and theology see Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud: The History Press, 2006), pp. 104-27.

[551] Gerald was not alone in this view. John of Salisbury (d. 1180) and Alfred of Sareshel (d. 1245) expressed similar opinions with John considering that they over-promised what could be achieved and regarded themselves and their skills too highly. John of Salisbury is quoted regarding doctors. 'When I hear them, they seem to me to be able to raise the dead, thinking that they are as good as Aesculapius. See *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policrati sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philisophorum,* 2 vols, ed. C. C. I. Webb (Oxford: Oxford University, 1909), vol. I, p. 167 and French, *Medicine Before Science*, pp. 68-9.

costly and burdensome than beneficial and productive'.[552] Worse still was to come. 'After efforts that were really longer and more strenuous than useful, more promising than healing, the doctors who are accustomed to follow fortune lost all hope of his recovery and abandoned the desperate knight'.[553] The medics here were portrayed as being entirely self-serving, showing no professional skill or pride and devoid of any concern for their patient. Their sole intention, in Gerald's opinion, seemed to be to drag out treatment for as long as possible in order to reap the maximum profit for their service, and then desert the patient before he or she died and tarnished their reputation by a death on their record. They are unscrupulous in the extreme.

Gerald mentioned the cost of employing a doctor elsewhere in his *Life* when he told the story of another knight whose right arm suddenly became paralysed. The knight sought cure through 'the expensive aid of doctors' as well as saints of the land, but healing evaded him.[554] He eventually returned to his mother church, Lincoln, and spent several days at the tomb of Hugh, during which time the sensation and movement of his arm gradually returned and he was fully cured. Gerald here parcelled ineffective doctors together with equally ineffective local saints; it is clear that he was not just anti-doctor in this instance but was, rather, pro-Hugh. In the account, Gerald was telling his readers bluntly that human medicine was not just expensive and exploitative but was useless too, and that while heavenly cure was essential, it still needed to be the *right* heavenly cure.

[552] *LSHA*, part III, v, p. 91. 'Medicorum ei solacium, quamquam sumptuosum magis et honerosum quam proficuum aut fructuosum, ilico perquisivit.'

[553] Ibid. 'Medici vero, post operas longas et sedulas revera magis quam utiles, plusque promissionis habentes quam curacionis, de sanitate penitus diffidentes, qui fortunam sequi solent, militem desperantum reliquenunt.'

[554] Ibid. ii, p. 83. 'Cum ergo nec medicorum opera sumptuosa sanitate secuta, nec per sanctorum terre …'

Expensive doctors are mentioned in Gilbert's *Life* as well. They are found in the account of Henry Biset, a man described as being of noble birth, who had been suffering for over two years with abdominal swelling. The writer of the *Life* described how Henry's abdomen was so distended that when he sat only two fingers lengths of his thigh could be seen. He was reported as being 'afraid that his death was imminent, for although he had spent much money on them, the doctors' efforts had profited him nothing'.[555] He was eventually cured by tying a girdle of Gilbert's around himself and drinking water in which the saint's body had been washed. It is a consistent feature of the lives that people mentioned as having medical doctors attend them were from the noble or monied echelons of society, including patients from monastic foundations. This indicates the cost of medical consultation and treatment as well as the status of person doctors sought to treat, as noted in this type of record at least. For the hagiographer there was a further benefit in having doctors fail in their treatment of high-profile people. Having senior members of society as recipients or witnesses to the miracle which followed upon the failure of the doctors provided validity to the hagiographers' claim of it having happened.

The cost of doctors was an enduring issue, it seems. Writing around eighty years earlier than Gerald of Wales or the author of Gilbert's *Life*, William of Malmesbury in his *Life* of Wulfstan gave two separate accounts of people spending money on doctors to no avail. In one, he wrote that although the doctors were sedulous in their treatment of a woman, Segild, bedbound by a sudden sickness attacking her limbs, they were ineffective, substituting promises for what they could actually do.[556] Segild and her husband spent nearly all of their savings, 'excessive sums',

[555] *BSG*, *Miracles*, 18, p. 288. 'Timeret mortem sibi imminere, non proficiente sibi industria medicorum, licet in illum multa expendisset.'

[556] *VWulf*, ii, 13. 2, p. 85. 'Quod minus possent facto, promissis supplere …'

in trying to obtain a cure through the professional attentions of the doctors, but gained no benefit.[557] Having been brought to this state of affairs, William described the financial situation of the still sick woman and her now impoverished husband as a blessing because it inspired them to seek heavenly aid. This came in the shape of a letter from Wulfstan. Segild received this gift from the bishop, applied it to the afflicted parts of her body and was cured.

The subject of medical practitioners giving up hope of a cure and abandoning a critically ill patient is seen in the single reference to a doctor in Eadmer's *Life* of Anselm in the miracle of a nobleman, Humphrey, who suffered from dropsy. This was an event to which Eadmer himself was party, stating that Humphrey was his nephew. So severe was Humphrey's case that 'he was given over by the doctors and lay, as it was thought, near to death'.[558] Humphrey had known Anselm, and with the late archbishop's name in his mouth, asked God to have mercy on him. He was lent Anselm's belt and through contact between this and the oedematous parts of his body, he received relief and then cure with, to Eadmer's amazement, the excess fluid simply disappearing. Eadmer levied no criticism towards the doctors in his account; his inference was simply that the case was too severe for them to treat.

This same miracle, with the same failure and desertion by the doctors, is found in John of Salisbury's later *Life* of Anselm.[559] John also expanded on a subsequent miracle of Eadmer's

[557] Ibid. 'Ipsa interim, nec minus maritus, medicorum opem immodicis sumptibus sollicitabant.'

[558] *VA*, *Miracles*, p. 158. '… gravissimus morbo percussus, eo scilicet quem quidam ydropim nominant, a medicis desperatus morti ut estimabatur propinquus jacebat.'

[559] 'A nobleman named Humphrey, a knight who was upright and known to many, suffered from dropsy and was abandoned by all his doctors out of despair [Vir nobilis, miles probus et multis notus, Humfridus nominee, lapsus in hydropem ab omnibus medicis ob desperationem relictus est].' John of Salisbury, *Vita Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, *PL* 199, col. 1038-9, trans. Pepin, *Anselm and Becket*, p. 70.

to incorporate a doctor into the account.[560] The miracle is that of a Canterbury monk who suffered from fever and was cured by Anselm's belt with, in Eadmer's account, no mention of medical opinion or intervention being either sought or given.[561] In John's version, however, the miraculous healing was preceded by the best endeavours of the doctors coming to nothing. 'In the church at Canterbury a sick brother was afflicted by a violent fever. When all the aid of doctors had come to naught, Eadmer took care to encircle his [the monk's] neck with the cincture we have spoken about, and he was cured.'[562]

Overall, the largest number of references to doctors is in accounts where they failed to cure their patients, whether through incompetence, indifference or because the condition was beyond the reach of human medicine. Such accounts represent about one third of all the doctor narratives seen in the texts considered.[563] This high percentage shows that the failure of the

[560] London, Lambeth Palace MS 159, Johanis Sarisberia *Vitam Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, 175r and 175v shows *medicus* used to describe the doctors in both miracles.

[561] Both Eadmer and John appear to be describing the same miracle which is found among others in a group of miracles in which someone is cured by the application of Anselm's belt. In Eadmer's account though 'as his sickness increased, he was almost given over both by himself and others, and he turned himself entirely to God [is ergo crescente languore a semetipso pene et ab aliis desperatus. Ad Deum modis omnibus conversus est.' Doctors are not mentioned among the people who despaired and gave up on him. *VA*, *Miracles*, p. 164.

[562] 'In Cantuariensi Ecclesia acuta febre laborabat frater aegrotos. Cum ergo medicorum omne cesserat auxilium memorato cingulo circumdatum est collum eius, procurante Edmero, et sanatus est.' John of Salisbury, *Vita Sancti Anselmi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, *PL* 199, col. 1040, trans. Pepin, *Anselm and Becket*, p. 71. John's addition of a doctor into the miracle of the feverish monk, and the report of their failing to effect a cure, reflects John's less than positive views about the profession.

[563] It is impossible to be exact in terms of percentage, without the risk of double-counting, as in some instances a doctor appears in the narrative for more than one reason; for instance, he both gives apparently skilled treatment and fails to affect a cure. An example of this is seen in the account of Christina's illness, mentioned above, where experienced doctors treated her with medicines, blood-letting, and other kinds of treatment but failed to cure her. 'Indeed the malady, which they ought to have cured, became on the contrary so irritated and inflamed, that she suffered from it for five whole days without ceasing [Quippe morbus ille quem perimere debuerant econverso hiis irritates et exacerbatus in tantum illam absque remissione quinque continuis diebus afflixit].' LC, 48, p. 122.

doctor, whatever the reason, was a necessary precursor to a healing miracle and one of the key reasons for including a medic in the narrative. In a sense, whether described as amoral or simply ineffectual, professionally speaking, the doctors were set up to fail, victims of the complex strands of theology that underpinned a work of hagiography.

4.2.iv The Ignored Doctor

In several of the lives doctors are seen tending to the sick or dying saint but their professional services are ignored. In these passages the doctors are presented as doing their proper jobs, offering advice and treatment and fulfilling their responsibilities. There is no suggestion of their being either the scurrilous rogues described by Gerald or the ineffectual medics who treated Henry Biset and the woman Segild; rather they are portrayed as being part of the human accoutrement surrounding the illness and death of an important man. The purpose of their inclusion in these narratives was not, however, to describe their medical prowess and efficacy, nor as a starting point for a miracle. Instead, they were there to be ignored.

Ailred of Rievaulx, whose long illness and infirmity necessitated particular care and ongoing medical attendance, had a special room constructed for him close to the infirmary and was attended there by two brothers to whom he entrusted the care of his illnesses.[564] The doctor, Walter Daniel was not, it seems, one of these two and although there is no indication that Ailred's attendants were doctors, it can be inferred from the text that they cared for him on a

[564] *VAil*, xxxi, p. 39. 'He felt diffident about his generous provision for his freedom, and found it so hard to bear that he ordered a 'mausoleum' to be built for him close by the common infirmary, and, taking up his quarters there, he entrusted the care of his illness entirely to the ministration of two of the brethren, refusing with distain all dainties and useless blandishments [Quam liberalem condicionem verecunde quidem suscipiens et graviter ferens, iussit sibi fieri mausoleum iuxta communem cellam infirmorum et ibi consistens duorum solacio fratrum curam tocius infirmitatis sue subiecit, omnem detestans voluptatem deliciarum et blandicias vanitatis].'

daily basis assisting him as he needed.[565] Over the last years of his life doctors prescribed Ailred treatment, curatives and wine, in an endeavour to manage his pain. For his final four years though, Ailred either refused or reduced this. Walter described him removing medication from his mouth when his attendants were not looking and grinding it to powder with his foot so that it should not be noticed. Ailred also declined to follow his doctors' advice about drinking wine 'although the physicians had prescribed pure wine as the particular remedy of his infirmity, asserting that otherwise the disease would take its course and that he would soon die'.[566] The passage continued: 'But the father, taking his soul into his hands, gave greater weight to his own counsels than to those of the physicians, and for God's sake despised the cure of the body and considered in all ways the cure of the soul'.[567] This account is predicated on the fact that it was professional medical advice that Ailred ignored. Ailred's disregard of his doctors' prescription, and so by extension his mortal body, allowed Walter to direct his readers' attention to the inspiration offered by the example of the saint who ignored his body to focus solely on his soul, and did this not for his own purposes but for God's sake. The theme of the saint prioritising the welfare of his soul over that of his body, stated so unequivocally by Walter, and with disregarded medical opinion at its core, is seen too in Hugh of Lincoln.

Hugh was recorded as snubbing doctors' advice in all three of his lives, although Adam's version of the episode of disregard is set within a different context to that of the other two. Adam, who as Hugh's chaplain was with him during his final illness and death, wrote that after having received the viaticum Hugh spoke to the attending monks. 'Now let the doctors and our

[565] Ibid. Walter wrote of Ailred being carried from one bed to another and in order to relieve himself. 'Sic ad necessitate nature deportari, vel ad lectorum alternacionem removeri.'

[566] Ibid., xli, p. 49. 'Quamquam hec infirmitas eius speciale a medicis accepisset remedium quatinus naturalibus poculis uteretur et puris. Alioquin, ut asserebant, prevaleret passio, et ille cito deficeret'

[567] Ibid, pp. 49-50. 'At pater ponens animam suam in manibus suis medicorum consilia postponderavit propiis et pro Deo contempnens remedia corporis anime sanitati consuluit omnibus modis.'

sickness come to what agreement they will, neither henceforth are of any consequence to us.'[568] Hugh continued. 'I have committed myself to him whom I have received. I will hold fast and cleave to him to whom it is good to adhere'.[569] The sense of this is clear; Hugh, having received Christ in the form of the communion he had just taken, was stating that from now he was turning his face from the world, ignoring his failing body and its needs, and that thereafter he would look only to heaven. In his statement about his doctors and illness coming to whatever agreement they choose, Hugh appeared to be personifying and externalising his illness, setting it apart from himself. While his doctors could continue to work with his maladies, Hugh himself was no longer identifying with his corporeal form and the calls of the world. This is a similar sentiment to that seen in Ailred's assertion that he would give greater weight to his own counsels than to those of his doctors.

The doctors are necessary in both accounts, representing, as they do, the material world that the saint was choosing to ignore in favour of the world to come, the extrapolation from this being that cure of the soul overrode cure of the body. This was a particularly significant message at the time of dying and the aim of the narrative here was to focus the readers' attention on the condition of the immortal soul rather than that of the failing body. In the *Magna Vita* this device, supported by the place of doctors within it, allowed Adam to juxtapose the physical with the spiritual person of Hugh, setting one apart from the other, the physical in the hands of the medics and the spiritual in the hands of God. The dying Hugh, like Ailred, chose to identify himself with only the spiritual, and this despite the suffering his human body was experiencing. His example in this served as a reminder to the receivers of the *Life* that the proper focus of a

[568] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 186. 'Iam medicis et morbis nostris, ut poterit, conveniat; de utrisque amodo erit in pectore nostro cura minor.'

[569] Ibid. 'Ei me commisi, illum suscepi, ipsum tenebo, ipse adherebo cui adherere bonum est.'

monk's attention should be on his soul and that the ultimate destination for each one of them was the afterlife. The presentation of the ignored doctors fussing about his body, while the heavenward-bound Hugh disregarded them and whatever they were doing, is the underpinning and necessary image that makes the hagiographic point of the passage.

Gerald and the unknown author of the *Metrical Life* made no reference to that particular episode in their accounts of Hugh, but both brought doctors into their narrative in the death account and had the saint ignore their advice regarding diet.[570] They wrote that, despite being advised to do so by his doctors, Hugh refused to remove his hair-shirt or eat meat in his last illness.[571] Adam, by contrast, recorded that after the doctors had advised it, the sick Hugh was ordered by the archbishop to eat meat, and in obedience did so.[572] Although Gerald knew Hugh and was writing about him during his lifetime, there is no suggestion that he was with Hugh during his final months and he makes no eye-witness claim in his account of Hugh's refusal. The *Metrical Life* too used Hugh's refusal of the meat recommended by his doctors to show the sanctity of the bishop and his lasting adherence to the requirements of his Carthusian avowal.[573] This is seen in the author's remark that 'no force of malady or fear of death, no advice of physician or desire of health could induce him to compromise in the sharp exactitude of his usual religious observance.'[574] The Hugh of these accounts was not setting his body with its

[570] This episode has been discussed previously with reference to diet in chapter 2.4; here the focus is on the role of the doctor.

[571] *LSHA*, part I, xi, pp. 43-4 and *MLSH*, pp. 70-1.

[572] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 195 and discussed in chapter 2.4. The length of the passage in which this account occurs and the apologist tone shows that it was a controversial point and may explain why Gerald chose instead to say that Hugh refused meat.

[573] This episode with its respective handling by three different hagiographers supports Garton's belief that the author of the *Metrical Life* drew more from Gerald's *Life* than he did from Adam's. *MLSH*, p. 5.

[574] Ibid. p. 70. 'Nulla languoris vi vel formidine mortis, nullo consilia medici vel amore salutis, flectere consuetae vult religionis acumen.'

illness apart from his spiritual self as is seen in Adam's *Magna Vita*. Instead, he was ignoring the doctors' advice about eating and wearing his hair-shirt in order to hold to specifically Carthusian requirements on diet and dress. This is an interesting dynamic in the light of the monastic call to obedience that was followed by Adam's Hugh in the same narrative. Despite the permissible relaxation in dress and diet that was allowed in cases of serious illness, and the apparent licence Hugh was given by Witham, the Hugh of both Gerald's and the *Metrical Life* refused to compromise and was depicted as a model of unassuaged Carthusian practice, an ideal monk to the end.[575]

In the accounts in which a doctor was ignored, the narrative point of the passage was strengthened by it being the prescription of a medical professional that was disregarded. It was not just the pleading of the saint's attendants to take some wine, or medication, or to eat meat or to put off a hair-shirt that was snubbed, but the medically authoritative input of the doctors as well. There is a paradox here in that the passage in which the doctor is ignored is a passage that also gives doctors a status. Plainly it was deemed to have more of an impact on the reader of the life that not just community beseeching but medical prescription too should be ignored. That is the point of its inclusion. This shows that the role of the doctor was actually held in some regard, a balancing point in a genre of literature that otherwise often shows the medical practitioner to be inept, immoral or prone to failure.

The portrayals of doctors show that the hagiographic endeavour necessitated the reduction, or in some cases the obliteration, of human agency in accounts of cure. A method of doing this

[575] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 190. 'We knew that often among the Carthusians it was the custom to remove the hair shirt in sickness.' For Adam's account of the monks at Witham entreating Hugh to eat meat in order to aid his recovery, see *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 195. Dom Robert of Witham and the monks wrote from there exhorting Hugh to obey the archbishop's injunction to eat meat.

was by lessening the efficacy of worldly medicine and traducing the role of the medical doctor. Of necessity, this affected the portrayal of doctors in the narratives and the accounts should be read accordingly. While the accounts practically always appear to be either negative or indifferent about doctors, or show them to be ineffective, this was not necessarily the reality of the situation but was rather a narrative requirement in a work of hagiography. Mabel's story illustrates this. The doctor there did his best but failed. He personified the inadequacy of worldly medicine in order to emphasise the omnipotence of divine healing. The one is juxtaposed with the other to accent the hagiographer's point that authority and cure, both physical and spiritual, are in the gift of the divine. Such accounts of doctors failing should not be read as indicative of the efficacy, or rather, lack of efficacy, of medicine and the medical profession in the twelfth century. The intention of the passage was not to describe medical care and competence but to direct the attention of the readers of the life away from the fallibility of their material world to the infallibility of God and the promise of the next.

4.3 The Holy Doctor

4.3.i A differential diagnosis[576]

About twenty percent of doctor references are ones in which the saint, or another religious figure, is seen as delivering spiritual treatment for the body or, usually, the soul. Often the treatment was described though allusion to, or explicit utilisation of, the body and the application of medical cure. This is seen in Adam's account of the miraculous and virtual castration of Hugh, by Basil, his late prior of Chartreuse. In this narrative Hugh, as a young monk, had been plagued for a long period by sexual desire. The *Magna Vita* describes his fierce and prolonged battle against this as Hugh prayed for delivery. One night, Basil came to him in

[576] A differential diagnosis is one in which several possible diagnoses are suggested with the preferred one being selected after further examination.

a vision and 'cut open his [Hugh's] bowels with a knife that he seemed to be holding in his hand, and extracting something resembling red hot cinders, he flung it out of the cell a long distance away. The doctor then withdrew after giving him his blessing'.[577] Basil's surgery relieved Hugh of the enduring torments which had previously troubled him, and thereby offered him both spiritual and physical cure. The description is surgical. Basil was holding a knife, made an incision, exposed the abdominal cavity and performed an orchidectomy. Adam chose to describe the operating Basil as *medicus*; however, later on the *Magna Vita,* when Hugh's bowels were removed from his body for embalming, Adam referred to the operator there as a surgeon, *cirurgica.*[578] There was plainly then a difference in Adam's mind in the nomenclature due to a person performing an operation to that in the naming of a late prior undertaking a divine intervention couched as a surgical process. Although Adam was familiar with the naming and role of a surgeon, he did not describe Basil as such. Basil's spiritual surgery was carried out in his position as a monastic leader and was recognised and named as such by the use of the analogy, drawn from Benedict's *Rule*, of the abbot as a doctor.

In the *Life* of Waldef, Jocelin of Furness used images from medicine to show how he thought the notion of the abbot as a doctor should be manifest in practice. It is part of a lengthy diatribe against abbots who exposed to the public sins that had been confessed privately and expelled rather than cared for their monks. Jocelin compared abbots like this to Waldef and his loving concern for the souls of his community. Waldef, so Jocelin told his readers, treated kindly with those who confessed their hidden faults to him and repented of their sins. 'To the wounds of the soul he applied a medicinal ointment and antidote, yet in such a way that the wound or

[577] *MV*, vol. I, book 2, ch. ii, pp. 51-2. 'Moxque patefactis novacula, quam manu tenere videbatur, visceribus eius quasi strumam igneam inde visus est exsecuisse et longius extra cellam poriecisse; dataque benediction, medicus discessit.'

[578] Ibid., vol. II, book 5, ch. xix, p. 219.

disease was not exposed nor made worse by the medicine, bitter as it might be, but was effectively brought back to health.'[579] This was in contrast to those abbots who were purportedly 'physicians of souls, but who exercise such tyranny over their patients, are rather to be called assassins, who pretend a poisonous draft is a healing drink'.[580] In Jocelin's analogy, the wounds of the soul were caused by sin and cure could be obtained through the loving and skilled abbot, doctor-like, applying the healing unguent of punishment and remorse. The language of human medicine is used but the emphasis was entirely on spiritual healing, the health of the soul being infinitely more important than that of the body, and the abbot as doctor being the only practitioner skilled enough to achieve cure.

It is apparent that Waldef's heavenly medicine was not pain-free. Jocelin called it bitter, *amara*, and wrote of the saint bringing the sinner to repentance through 'the rod of the cross of the Lord'.[581] There are several accounts in Waldef's *Life* of the abbot requesting punishment with the rod for himself, so it is thematically coherent that Jocelin should use the same motif in the context of the heavenly castigation, or treatment, leading to spiritual cure. Crucially, though, the abbot's application of medicinal ointment to the wounds of the soul did not expose the injuries to wider scrutiny; the matter was between him and the sinning monk, the 'sweet healing, *mellifluumque medicam*' affected privately and so allowing cure. The wound was treated, covered and allowed to heal; a familiar method of wound management then as now. Waldef was thus the true physician of souls and Jocelin employed medical language to describe him as such. Jocelin considered those abbots who exposed the wrongdoing of their monks and

[579] *LWal*, 38, pp. 122 and 249. 'In his tamen tam discrete medicativum emplastrum et antidotum apposuit animarum vulneribus, ut nec vulnus aut morbus ullatenus detegeretur, nec confectione licet aliquantulum amara gravarentur, sed efficaciter sanitatem consequerentur.'

[580] Ibid. 'Plane tales animarum medici, qui talem potestatem super aegros suos exercent, venefici vocantur, qui pro theriaca toxicu propinare probantur.'

[581] Ibid. 'Cum virga Dominicae crucis de duro cordis silice fontem lacrymarum producteret.'

expelled them from the community to have administered the equivalent of a lethal dose of medicine and condemned the miscreant to spiritual death. They were, like Gerald's medical doctors, without scruple. It is perhaps with this same sense of the pain of cure that the doctor Walter Daniel described himself as a medic who 'applied treatment not without sharp grief'.[582] The context of the passage from which Walter's quote is taken concerns divine punishment being enacted upon the body and mind of a person as a means of providing healing for the ills of their sins.[583] This he likened to his own medical experience with the means of healing being itself a cause of pain and suffering to the patient. Like both Hugh's surgery and Waldef's doctoring, Walter's observation was meant to be understood as a reference to spiritual intercession but was presented through the language and practice of worldly medicine.

Some of the lives used the notion of extended medical practice to refer to the abbot visiting the sick and tending them. Hugh of Lincoln cared for an aged monk who was too infirm to leave his cell. 'Hugh chanted the offices and supplied his every need, attending to him devotedly and unceasingly just as a nurse cherishes her nurseling, or a mother her son.'[584] Anselm too assumed a nursing role in his care for his young colleague, Osbern. Eadmer recounted how Anselm sat by Osbern's bed day and night, giving him food and drink and taking responsibility for every form of service to the sick monk. 'Most diligently he looked after his body, and his soul likewise.'[585] Both of these passages, which have been discussed in the previous chapter

[582] *VAil*, p. xxvii, fn. 1. 'Et licet mihi sim in officio medicus, non tamen sine acerbo dolere curo.'

[583] Walter called Ailred a doctor who had cured his, Walter's, soul in a passage from his 'Lament for Ailred'. Dutton, *Walter Daniel*, pp. 141-2.

[584] *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. xi, p. 34. 'Hugo in horis regularibus decantandis vel quibusque necessariis suppenditandis, servitor devotus et indefessus tamquam nutrix alumpunum aut mater filium iuvabat et mulcebat.' Although the word 'nutrix' suggests a wet-nurse, the sense of the passage remains that of delivering care to the weak and vulnerable with the thematic point being reinforced by the notion of the nourishment of an infant.

[585] *VA*, I, ix, p. 17. 'Ipse corpus, ipse animam ejus studiosissime refovebat.'

with reference to the delivery of hands-on care in the lives, showed their subject fulfilling their double duty of providing both practical and spiritual care for the sick.[586] Waldef took his responsibilities to the patients in the infirmary extremely seriously and, like Anselm, was recorded as caring for both the body and soul of a patient.

> The saint, not only in health, but often while suffering from manifold illnesses, sometimes leaning on a crutch, sometimes upheld in the arms of his sons, used every day to visit the infirmaries, not only of the monks and lay brothers, but of the poor and the guests as well. Ascertaining from each patient what he would like, not merely what he needed, he took loving care in seeing that everyone was supplied with what he required for soul and body.[587]

Here, the abbot, Waldef, is not seen delivering the care himself, but ensuring that care was delivered and that it met both the needs and desires of the patient. This is a more strategic role in the provision for the sick than is seen in the accounts of Anselm and Hugh above and is the one which accords most closely with other references to an abbot visiting the infirmary to ensure the ill and feeble were served.[588] It must be hoped that the patients in the brothers' infirmary at Melrose did not take undue advantage of Waldef's loving care but subscribed to

[586] See, chapter 3.6, pp. 163-6.

[587] *LWal*, 51, pp. 133 and 266. 'Vir sanctus non solum sanus, verum etiam multoties multiplicti laborans infirmitate, quandoque baculo innixus, quandoque filiorum ulnis sustentatus, infirmitoria non solum monachorum et conversorum, sed pauperum et hospitum visitare quotidie consuevit, et a singulis sciscitans quid appeterent, quo indigrent, unicuique, quae necessaria erant, utrique homini, diligenter administrari fecit.'

[588] *VAil*, xxi. p. 30, for example, describes Ailred coming into the infirmary and visiting the sick beds one by one.

Benedict's diktat that the sick monks 'should not irritate the brothers serving them with excessive demands'.[589]

Miraculous healings by the subject of a life sometimes resulted in their being called doctor. Hugh delivered a woman of a familiar spirit after which 'she who had before been fatally strong, but in the clutches of a mortal disease, was left weak but curable in the hands of the skilful doctor'.[590] This was recorded as having happened after others had tried and failed to achieve a cure. The implication is that Hugh cured her spiritually, allowing physical healing to follow. In Melrose, the previously discussed monk who had suffered extreme headaches and was troubled in spirit was cured by 'his doctor St Waldef' after having fallen asleep with his head on the saint's tomb.[591] Again, the importance of soul over body is evidenced with the abbot cast as doctor.

It is apparent then that the hagiographers wove Benedict's injunctions that the abbot should be like a wise doctor and should care for the sick through the fabric of their narrative. It is seen consistently and explicitly in differing accounts from the lives and is voiced too through allusion and imagery. Examination of the texts has shown that there were several ways in which the hagiographer highlighted this quality in their accounts of their respective subjects. Although abbots were referred to as *medicus* when they effected a miraculous physical healing, their principal curative role was as Benedict's doctor of souls. Physical cure was sometimes a secondary feature of this, a visible manifestation for the observer that spiritual cure had

[589] *BR*, RB 36, 4, p. 300. 'Nonsuperfluitate sua contristent fratres suos servientes sibi.'

[590] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. viii, p. 118. 'Aufugerat enim internus agitator qui eam male vegetaverat, et illa remanserat sub manu sanantis medici salubriter debilis, que sub impetus perimentis morbi extiterat prius letaliter fortis.'

[591] *LWal*, 129, pp. 194 and 349. This miracle has been discussed fully in chapter 3.1.

occurred. On occasion, an account of spiritual healing was expressed through a description of medical treatment, as is seen in Hugh's miraculous, virtual, castration and in Waldef's treatment of the wounds caused by sin. The visible body was presented as a locus for sin, the invisible soul incurred the resultant damage and the abbot was the doctor who, by the administration of one healing intervention or another, brought about cure. In these accounts, medicalised language and imagery were utilised to show the subjects of a life being at one and the same time both ideal abbots and skilled doctors, administering with care and success to the spiritual health needs of their flock and ensuring too the comfort of the physically sick.

4.3. ii A *Mis*diagnosis?

A miracle story from the *Life* of Wulfric of Haselbury named the hermit as both prophet and *medicus*.[592] In the account a possessed man had been dragged, bound, to Haselbury in the hope of finding healing.

> It happened that during the usual overnight halt, as the others slept, a sleep of the Lord fell on this demoniac, who woke up in his right mind, took off the harness he found himself trammelled with and threw it aside. When the men responsible for him found him free, they set about tying him up again, knowing nothing of the shortcuts of divine compassion and their conjunction with his healing which they were seeking. But the demoniac protested, saying: "There's no longer any need for you to pull me along tied up. Look, I'll walk of my own accord to my master

[592] *WH*, 61, p. 91, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 3, p. 177. 'Quia enim propheta pariter et medicus erat, per prophetiam praevenit quibus in opitulatione subvenit, et in compendio praescientiae negotia sanitatem expediens, simul et aegritudines et fatigationes absolvit [And because he was both seer and physician, blessed Wulfric visited first in prophetic guise those he relieved with succour, and by expediting the practice of healing with the short-cut of foreknowledge, at one and the same time he eased anxiety and cured disease].'

Wulfric. He appeared to me while I slept and freed me from the power of the evil spirit and broke the cords around my wrists."[593]

Despite the man's lucidity his attendants did not believe he was truly cured, so tied him up again and continued on down the road. They were met a day away from Haselbury by Wulfric's servant who delivered a message from his master asking why they were dragging, bound, a man whom God had already freed. They were instructed to set the cured man free and to return home. This encounter on the road served to confirm for the recipients of Wulfric's *Life* both the saint's prophetic gift and, by allusion, his apostolic authority.[594] Through God's grace the prophet Wulfric had known that the demoniac was coming and as *medicus* Wulfric provided the channel for divine healing.

A second reference to Wulfric as a doctor is found in his *Life* when John described Wulfric's pending death. 'Learning that their father was ill and that the physician, *medicus*, of all the world had taken to his bed, they came flocking to weep over him and to receive his final blessing.'[595] These two references to Wulfric as *medicus* supported his inclusion in both Talbot's and Kealey's lists of medieval medical practitioners, although Talbot considered that

[593] Ibid. 'Factum est autem ambulantibus illis, dum per viam ex more dormirent ut et ipsum corriperet somnus Domini et in mentem saniorem evigilans homo vincula jumentorum quibus se ligatum invenit solveret atque abiceret. Quem solutum invenientes hi qui eum in fidem suam susceperant apposuerunt denuo ligare hominem, ignorantes videlicet compendia miserationis divinae et eius quam quaerebant salutis occursum. Ad quos ille: "Non est," ait, "necesse ut amodo ligatum trahatis, quoniam ecce iam ultroneus proficiscar ad dominum meum Wulfricum qui dormienti mihi apparuit et me ab oppressione maligni spiritus absolvit, et vincula manuum dirupit." '

[594] The reference is to the authority given by Jesus to the disciples. 'Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.' Matthew 18: 18.

[595] *WH*, 101, p. 126, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 42, p. 210. 'Et ecce sermo lugubris egresus est ad finitimos fideles quia infirmaretur pater ipsorum et quia medicus universae terrae lectulo accubuisset.'

his healing skill was 'a matter of the miraculous rather than the art of medicine'.[596] Matarasso noted that the association of the words 'father' and 'doctor' would have been a natural one to John of Forde as they were traditionally used to describe the priest-confessor.[597] Kealey, however, included Wulfric in his roster and directory of Anglo-Norman physicians, considered him to have been in 'actual medical practice' and devoted several pages to this, though acknowledging that he was not what he called a typical practitioner.[598] He based this surmise upon the aforementioned reference to Wulfric as both 'seer and physician'.[599] This statement of John's is set within the miracle of the healing of the demoniac on the road to Haselbury. The healing was remote; Wulfric had no contact with the patient and the cure was obtained through miraculous, not medical means. The context makes it clear that John was describing a divine cure accomplished through the agency of Wulfric and his prophetic gift; he was not saying that the hermit was a medical doctor. Kealey's listing Wulfric as a doctor is in contrast to his passing reference to Wulfric's fellow hermit Godric, whose name does not occur in Kealey's roster but is described as a healer, 'more like a paramedic than a trained physician'.[600] To bring about healing was part of the role of the saint, a visible sign of their sanctity, a necessary feature of their life. Sometimes such accounts are mediated through the language of medicine and the saint is called *medicus*, but this should be understood as an attribution of sanctity and not a claim of medical competence or qualification.

[596] C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond, *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England: A Biographical Register* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1965), p. 421, and Kealey, *Medieval Medicus*, pp. 22, 33, 53-6.

[597] Matarasso, *Wulfric*, p. 243. She noted that while Wulfric had healed many ills he was, at this juncture, being described as a father and doctor of the soul. The association of medicine and cure for the soul has been discussed in the section 4.3.i, above.

[598] Kealey, *Medieval Medicus*, pp. 33, 41, 53-6, 123-4 and 151.

[599] Ibid., p. 54 and *WH*, 61, p. 91, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 3, p. 176. 'Propheta pariter et medicus erat.'

[600] Kealey, *Medieval Medicus*, pp. 55-6.

This point is reinforced by reference to a similar use of *medicus* seen in Ailred's *Life.* The abbot is, like Wulfric, listed by Kealey in his directory of physicians.[601] Walter described Ailred as follows: 'He himself was a friend to the sick, the physician, *medicus*, who used to relieve them so manfully in their imperfect state and to cure so many.'[602] This statement is followed by an account of how Ailred ensured that a wayward monk was able to die, saved, in the abbey. Walter then moved on to relate how under Ailred, Rievaulx became a haven of peace for both weak and strong where tolerance of the infirm and compassion for the necessities of others was taught.[603] Even though the language Walter used here could be understood to refer to those sick in body, he was in fact referring to those who were spiritually infirm and in need of cure for their soul. This is made apparent by his closing question in the passage. 'When was anyone, feeble in body and character, ever expelled from that house, unless his iniquity was an offence to the community or had destroyed all hope of his salvation?'[604]

As an abbot Ailred, like Waldef and Hugh, had a double duty to provide succour for both the body and soul of each monk in his charge.[605] The lives make it apparent that spiritual ills could be manifest through physical illness, with cure of the former leading on occasion to restoration

[601] Ibid., pp. 31, 41, and 123-4. Talbot, in *Medical Practitioners*, did not include Ailred in his register of doctors. This suggests either that Talbot was not familiar with the reference Kealey used or that he understood Walter to have called Ailred *medicus* in the context of the abbot's responsibility, 'like a doctor', for the health of souls.

[602] *VAil*, xxvii, p. 34. 'Erat eciam amicus infirmorum et medicus, et mores inperfectorum viriliter tolerabat et sanabat plurimos.'

[603] Ibid., xxix, p. 36. 'Hic ergo domum Rievallem fortissimam reddidit ad tollerandos infirmos, ad fortes nutriendos et perfectos … Qui debilis umquam venit ad eam et in Alredo non reperit paternam dileccionem et in fratribus debitam consolacionem?'

[604] Ibid. 'Quis aliquando fragilis corpore vel moribus a domo illa expulsus est nisi eius iniquitas vel universitatem offenderet congregacionis vel propriam omnino salutem extingueret?'

[605] Visiting the sick is listed among the tools of good works in the *Rule* of Benedict where care of the sick in the monastery merits a full chapter, requiring that 'before and above all else, care must be taken of the sick so that they may be served as Christ himself in very deed'. *BR*, RB 4, 16, p. 80, 'infirmum visitare' and RB 36, 1, p. 300. 'Infirmorum cura ante omnia adhibenda est …'

of bodily health, this being a visible sign of the soul's healing.[606] The abbot affected this healing and descriptions of cure sometimes called on the medical vocabulary of illness and health. Despite the hagiographers' choice of terminology, they are not suggesting that the abbot was actually a medical doctor or that he was delivering hands-on care. Although Wulfric, Waldef and Ailred are called *medicus* in their respective lives, there is no indication that they had undergone any formal medical training or practised as doctors.[607] The context in which *medicus* is used makes it clear, even by the unclear attribution of the period, that the saints were not being referred to as an acknowledged medical doctor or, in Walter's words, an *officio medicus*.

It is the case then, that consideration of any passage from a life in which a monastic leader or saint is called *medicus*, must ask first whether the term was intended to be understood as a reference to Benedict's injunction that the abbot should be as a wise physician. Only if this is shown not to be the case, either in part or in whole, can it be asked whether they were indeed being described as a medical doctor. This highlights one of the challenges in identifying medical doctors from works of hagiography. As has been shown above, the term *medicus* was not used just for those in actual medical practice. It was a necessary and analogous feature of exemplary monastic leadership too. In a work of hagiography it was self-evidently essential that the writer showed their subject as sainted and setting Benedict's requirements against medical models and language was one way of achieving this. In such accounts, the condition of the body was sometimes used by the writer to reflect the condition of the soul and medicalised language was employed present the disease and cure of both. For all the religious saints considered here, monastic, eremitic or, as in Margaret's case, lay, healing miracles and

[606] See, for example, the account of the grossly distended man Ailred delivered from a frog. *VAil*, xxxix, p. 47 and chapter 3.1.

[607] As discussed in chapter 1, Ailred did have access to medical texts at Rievaulx and used contemporary medical theory in his writing.

concern for the sick were one of the ways in which the hagiographer could show them as blessed, uniquely endowed by God with extraordinary compassion and miraculous ability. But in the absence of corroborative evidence to show that they were actually medical practitioners, the saints named as doctors should not be considered as such. Their designation as *medici* was a useful and multi-purpose hagiographic tool used by the writers in a way that would have been readily comprehensible to their intended recipients; it was not a declaration that the saint was, or had ever been, a practicing physician.

Summary

The manner in which the hagiographers chose to describe doctors seems to owe much, perhaps everything, to the attitude of the writer towards the profession. Adam, who may have been from a medical family, was almost unfailingly positive towards them and demonstrated some medical skill himself. Similarly, Walter who called himself a doctor but whose Cistercian profession may have made him cautious about playing on his medical antecedents, is positive. Gerald by contrast is excoriating in his accounts of medics. What is not seen in the lives is any indication as to how people called *medicus* and practising as such gained the training or education to do so. Medical practitioner nomenclature and the increase in frequency with which doctors are mentioned does suggest there was some change over the century. The small number of instances in which a practitioner is called *phisicus* are all seen in the context of opinion being given and occur in the later works. This may indicate a growing differentiation of roles during the later twelfth century and a shift in the way different medical functions were perceived.

The role of doctors in the lives considered here was significant beyond their presence within the texts. They were variously respected, disparaged and ignored, at times showing fine medical skills while on other occasions failing miserably. In whatever way the writers depicted

them though they were never included just for the sake of the record; there was always a hagiographic subtext. The appearance, and failure of a doctor, prior to a miraculous healing was a staple feature, their incompetence or ineffectiveness setting the stage for the miracle which followed. This was a narrative necessity. Such accounts were predicated upon the doctors' inability to heal and it is through this that heavenly medicine was shown to be supreme.

By contrast, the sainted abbots were excellent doctors, tending to their flocks both body and soul, enabling spiritual healing which was sometimes described through the language, and actuality, of bodily cure. They were, as *medici*, monastic exemplars, meeting the requirements of Benedict's *Rule*, acting as wise physicians of the spirit as well as visiting the sick in their care. Because of this feature of monastic sanctity it is clear that the use of the word *medicus* in a work of hagiography needs to be interpreted within the entirety of its setting. When applied to the subject of a monastic life it should always first be considered that it refers to their role as abbot in mediating a healing miracle or affecting a spiritual cure. It was not in any of the lives considered here intended to suggest either medical qualification or, probably, any particular practical proficiency. Overall, the inclusion of doctors in the lives is as might be expected in a hagiography. Whether they are praised or vilified, succeed or fail, religious or lay, the doctors' narrative function is to show the subject of the work as sainted, to encourage the recipients of the life, to inspire faith and to establish the supremacy of the heavenly world over the mutability and suffering of this one.

Chapter Five: Mortal Illness

The death narratives occupy a significant proportion of a saint's life. Frequently graphic, most of them are tales of burning fever and prolonged agony with their subject poised between the sufferings of the mortal world and the joys of the divine. The importance of the death narrative in the life of a saint cannot be overemphasised. For a monk, death could be considered, in principle at least, as the apogee of his living monastic experience, the moment towards which the brother had been yearning, his last and greatest change of status, the final and most significant transition of his religious life.[608] As the death of Jesus, that defining death of the Christian faith, was the necessary preemptor to his resurrection, so too the death of the saint was an occasion of both grief and promise to those attending and to the receivers of the life.[609] It spoke to the hope, or belief, that although the Christian dead were defunct in body they had, through the grace of God, the possibility of ongoing life. During the liminal period of dying the saints were at one and the same time dead and alive, present in both heaven and earth.

5.1 Passing: the Death of Aelric.

The death of Aelric, related in Reginald's *Life* of Godric, is the fullest death narrative in the hagiographies considered here. Godric nursed Aelric, his fellow hermit and mentor, during the old man's last days and was with him as he died. The account offers its reader a fascinating insight into Reginald's own interest with the logistics of dying, the inherent paradox of death leading to life, the visibility, corporeality almost, of the soul and the interface between the

[608] The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep identified key transitional events in life, including initiation and death. For a monk this would include moments such as their monastic profession and dying. *The Rites of Passage,* trans., M. Vizedom and G. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960), p. 11; originally published as, *Les rites de passage* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1909).

[609] See Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 79, and Benedicta Ward, *Signs and Wonders* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), p. 11, for the hagiographic use of Christ's death as a paradigm for the death of all Christian martyrs.

worlds of the living and the dead.[610] Reginald wrote that Godric did not leave Aelric for a moment during the last fifteen days of his final illness, but watched him intently. His purpose in this was apparently twofold: he delivered practical nursing care to the dying man and he wished to witness and understand the actuality of death.

> For he said to himself, "I now will experience the doors of death, and God willing, I shall more completely understand about the passing of men when they die." For the breath of life does not leave the body in such a way that it cannot be seen by those unworthy servants of the Lord who desire only those things which pertain to the soul. Anyone who has first very clearly witnessed this death of ours and who does not thereafter become more circumspect, prudent and cautious deserves to undergo the pains of eternal death.[611]

There is an immediacy, a tangibility, to elements of Reginald's account. His stated view is that the breath of life, or spirit, leaves the body in a manner that is visible although, a little confusingly, it is not clear whether he meant the reader to understand that the spirit itself could be seen, or that the action of its leaving had visibility. Godric personified the soul and gave it agency. 'Oh soul, poured out into this body in the image of God, and still confined inside this breast, I beg you by the only Lord, Three and One, not while I am lost in sleep to leave the

[610] Tudor, *Reginald of Durham*, p. 73, wrote that Reginald liked to describe death but that only Godric's own death narrative could be said to represent a stock in trade of hagiography. This being the case, Reginald's account of Aelric's demise cannot be explained by reference to the hagiographic model.

[611] *LG*, ch. 12 [33], p. 49, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Dixit enim inter se, "Mortis januas nunc experiar, et qualis sit transitus finientis hominis plenius, Deo jubente, conjiciam." Neque enim spiritus sic de corpore progreditur, quod a Domini servulis, sola quae sunt spiritualia desiderantibus, non videatur. Atque dignus existat aeternae mortis subire supplicia, qui prius huius nostrae mortis veracissima tenens indicia, sui non fuerit in posterum providus circumspector cum sollicitiore providentia.'

prison in which you live and work.'[612] This prayer actualised the soul and articulated what Reginald considered to be its activity; that of living and working imprisoned in the body. While the subject of body and soul is enormously complex and beyond the scope of this work, it is worth noting that the duality expressed by Reginald here reflects Augustinian notions of body and soul and that he is describing Augustine's bodily, not spiritual, death in his account of Aelric.[613] Although Reginald stated that the moment of the soul's departure was such that it would make any who witnessed it amend their ways for the better, he did not detail what it was about this occurrence that made it so striking.[614] There is no indication either that the remaining human body itself served as a warning to witnesses to amend their ways. It appears to be wholly the action of the soul departing the body, a process Reginald described as visible, wherein the significance, and warning, of death lay.

Almost inevitably, after staying awake for fifteen days to witness Aelric's dying, Godric fell asleep and awoke to find the hermit with his mouth closed, unmoving and not breathing.[615] Horrified and distressed, thinking he had missed the death, Godric called to God in his grief, and God responded. Aelric's soul, which Godric 'believed had departed, returned through his

[612] Ibid., [34], pp. 49-50. 'O spiritus, qui ad Dei similitudinem in corpore isto difenderis, et pectoris istius adhuc in interiora concluderis adjuro te per unum Dominum, Trinum et Individuum, ne me per soporem ignorante de hoc habitaculo tui ergastulo recedas.'

[613] Augustine of Hippo described bodily death as the first death, occurring when the soul leaves the body; the soul itself dies only if God abandons it. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate dei*, ed., B. Dombart and A. Kalb, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 47-48* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955). English translation in *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), book xiii, ch. 2, p. 510. A late eleventh-century copy of Augustine's *City of God* listed as *De civitate Dei* was in the Cathedral library at Durham during Reginald's time there. See Durham Cathedral Priory, MS B.II.22. It is reasonable to suppose that Reginald was familiar with the work.

[614] Augustine described the sundering of body and soul as a violent act, harsh and unnatural. *City of God*, xiii, ch. 6, p. 515. Later in this same passage Augustine noted that enduring this with patience and devout faith may ensure that there is no sin to be recompensed. This opinion accords entirely with the descriptions of holy deaths considered here.

[615] *LG*, ch. 12 [35], p. 50, trans. Coombe, *Godric*.

mouth and in his panting heart a fluttering soul breathed gently and softly'.[616] It is noteworthy that Reginald did not claim Aelric was actually dead, but that Godric believed he was. Despite the fact Godric saw the soul return to the body this is not claimed as a resurrection miracle. Perhaps this was due to Reginald's awareness of the possible reception of such a claim if made without witnesses and with a genuine uncertainly about when exactly death could be said to have occurred.[617] Whichever it was, on the return of his spirit, Aelric breathed four times, then grew pale and trembled. Although growing pale was recognised among the Hippocratic signs of death, what follows next was not. Godric saw Aelric's spirit 'coming out from the body of the man whom he previously saw in the body, and whom he used to know clothed in physical garments, now leaving the body clothed in spiritual garments.'[618] Then, Reginald wrote, the chains of the body loosened, the bars and fetters of the limbs lifted, and the spirit released from its bodily shackles.[619] This notion of a visible soul leaving the body can be found in illustrations of the period such as the following image from a late twelfth or early thirteenth-century *Life of Guthlac*. The saint's soul is depicted as a small naked person being lifted from his mouth by an angel, with another waiting adjacent ready to transport it to heaven.

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[616] Ibid. 'Spiritus quem egressum credidit, inter fauces rediit, et sub anhelo pectore palpitans anima modice et sensim respiravit.'

[617] Lanfranc wrote in the death ritual found in *Monastic Constitutions* that death occurred 'when the soul has left the body'. *MCL*, 112, p. 183. The wording of the Cluny death ritual acknowledges that there may be uncertainty in knowing whether or not death has come. 'When, however, they do not doubt he is dead [Cum autem iam eum non dubitaverint ob[i]isse …]', where the use of the word doubt shows that it did exist. Paxton, *Death Ritual at Cluny*, pp. 104-5.

[618] *LG*, ch. 12 [35], p. 50, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Videt subito egressum de corpore quem prius videbat in corpore; et quem exuviis corporalibus involutum noverat, procedentum de corpore iam indumentis spiritualibus amictum facillime dinoscere poterat.' The departing soul is described by Walter too in a vision of the dying Ailred received by a monk of Rievaulx. *VAil,* xlvii, pp. 52-4.

[619] Heffernan *Sacred Biography*, p. 36, considers that the presence of the divine in everyday life was as real to medieval people as was the visible world. The former could be seen with the eye of faith and the latter with the physical eye. This accords with Reginald's description of a visible soul.

Image 3: 'The Death of Guthlac', from *The Life of Guthlac*, late twelfth century, England[620]

The focus of Reginald's account of the death of Aelric is on spiritual progression in the act of dying, the severing of soul and body, the Augustinian first death. At this juncture, it is not, despite Reginald's previous description of Aelric's physical condition, about the signs and bodily experience of death.[621] If Reginald's views on dying, as displayed through his account of the death of Aelric, reflect attitudes of the time and were seen as a necessary expression in

[620] British Library, MS Harley Y 6, roundel 14. The text is possibly from Crowland. Accessed online 27 November 2020. https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=26452

[621] Aelric's physical condition is found in *LG*, ch. 12 [33], p. 49, trans. Coombe, *Godric* and discussed in chapter 3.6 and below 5.3.

a saint's life, it is no wonder that the physical care of the dying person is rarely mentioned. If the body was seen as entirely passive in the process of dying with all the action concerning spiritual progression, then care of the corporeal person was simply irrelevant in a hagiography. Here, the principal point of the narrative, and Reginald's focus, was to give an account of death as being foremost a spiritual event, the succession of the soul, rather than the cessation of the body. It also allowed Reginald the opportunity, through his allusion to the unspecified horrors that separation of soul and body presented, to remind his readers of the irremediable nature of death and the necessity of paying attention to their own way of living and spiritual wellbeing.[622]

5.2 Principles and Practice: Monastic Death Ritual

The death narrative of a saint's life presented the hagiographer with the chance to reinforce the ideals of the community they were representing, to emphasise the sanctity of their subject with their progression to heaven and to make a political point. The writers made full use of these benefits when they judged it expedient, and frequently presented their points through setting their narrative, to some degree at least, within the framework of monastic death ritual. Although death ritual is not in itself health-related, death is, and since the ritual often underpinned accounts of the saints dying, it is considered here.

Lanfranc of Canterbury included a detailed death ritual in his late eleventh-century customary, the *Monastic Constitutions*. Other monastic death rituals from around the same period include

[622] This message is seen elsewhere. For example, in his *Meditations* Anselm reflected on the manner of living and the consequences of this upon death and its aftermath. 'I am afraid for my life. For when I examine myself carefully, it seems to me that my whole life is either sinful or sterile [Terret me vita mea. Namque diligenter discussa apparet mihi aut peccatum aut sterilitas fere tota vita mea].' He warned that the day of judgement was coming and wrote of the final accounting that each man must make before God, comparing the sinner's life to that of a barren tree that deserves eternal burning. *Opera Omnia,* vol. 3, meditation 1, p. 76, line 4 with English translation by Ward, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 221-2.

that in the late tenth-century English *Regularis concordia* and two separate accounts of death ritual from Cluny.[623] While Lanfranc's death ritual differs in some details from those in the *Regularis concordia* and the Cluny rites, the four are similar in the main and show consistency in the prescribed processes for managing the death of a monk during the period under consideration. As it is contemporary, and English, and as the differences between rituals are minor, only Lanfranc's ritual is considered here as the framework for monastic death management, noting particularly that a copy was available in Durham during both Turgot's and Reginald's time there.[624] It is not possible to know whether Lanfranc's customary was present, or used, in the other foundations in which the saints studied here lived and died but, as will be shown, key elements from the ritual are seen consistently in the death narratives. Lanfranc was meticulous in his descriptions of what was considered necessary to ensure an optimal state of ongoing spiritual wellbeing for the dying monk. His death ritual was a regulated process with a staged and sequential progression managed according to rite as far as was possible given the uncertainties and variables surrounding the act of dying. It involved the entire community of monks and reached beyond the burial of the dead monk into continuing rites of remembrance.

5.2.i Premortem

The dying monk himself initiated the death ritual by asking to be anointed. He made his final confession to the community and sought and offered absolution for sins committed either by

[623] *RC*, xii, 65-68, pp. 64-8, and Paxton, *Death Ritual at Cluny*, pp. 57-171 for all practical details of the Cluny ritual and its accompanying liturgy, with dating information on p. 25. The Cluny rituals date from the late eleventh century and are attributed to the monks Udalrich and Bernard of Cluny. For possible links between the rituals see Barbara Hargreaves, *The Agony of Passing: Monastic Death Ritual in Medieval England* (MAR thesis, Durham University, 2016), pp. 29-36.

[624] This is in the Durham 'Cantor's Book' MS B.IV.24, fols 47r-71v, which is thought to have been created in Canterbury about 1090-95. It was given to the cathedral community at its own request, by Bishop William of Saint-Calais (d. 1096). See *MCL*, pp. xliii-xlviii and p. xlv for details of the provenance and spread of copies of the *Constitutions*.

or against him.[625] If the customaries were followed, and the circumstances surrounding the death allowed, the monk spent his final hours in the infirmary. He was never alone and prayer was a constant feature. As his condition declined he was monitored carefully for signs of his imminent demise. When the infirmary servants and attending brothers saw that the monk's death was upon him, they lifted him, if he so wished, from his bed on to a sack cloth or hair shirt sprinkled with ashes in the shape of a cross. Then the community was summoned.[626]

5.2.ii Perimortem[627]

The community was called to the deathbed by a board being beaten in the cloister 'when he [the attending monk] sees him now in the agony of passing'.[628] The monks surrounded their brother offering the prescribed prayers until death occurred and, so Lanfranc wrote, the soul left the body.[629] The moment of death signaled, and was signaled by, the separation of soul from body, that event described so vividly by Reginald.

5.2.iii Postmortem

Community members sought to meet the requirements of both the body and soul of their late brother: his soul through prayer, and his body through preparing it for the grave. Assigned monks gathered what was necessary for washing and clothing their brother with these offices performed by those of the same rank as the deceased.[630] The postmortem washing served more than just a practical function in that it continued the ritual purification which endured throughout the death process. This office is mentioned in most of the sources considered here

[625] *MCL*, 112, p. 179.

[626] Ibid., p. 181.

[627] The time of dying.

[628] *MCL*, 112, p. 180. 'Cumque eum iam in exeundo viderit laborare …'

[629] Ibid., p. 182. 'Egressa iam de corpore anima.'

[630] Ibid., p. 183. 'Portetur corpus ad lavandum ab iis de quorum ordine fuit, sacerdos a sacerdotibus …'

and is the time when, as discussed previously, bodily changes were discovered and the saint's resurrection body revealed. Having been washed and dressed the dead monk was taken to the church and placed before the altar where he remained until burial. Following the interment the community entered a period of remembrance which consisted of offering prayers and masses for the dead brother and giving alms to the poor.

5.2.iv Politics and Possession

The processes of death ritual are seen consistently in the lives. One of the reasons for this stated conformity of practice was in order to mark ownership. Reginald's description of Godric's dying is set within the framework of monastic ritual and probably forms part of the endeavour by Durham to claim, or retain, the memory of the hermit and the Finchale site itself within its community and to protect itself from Cistercian expansion into the county.[631]

> The servant informed the monks, and those who were nearby immediately running there and embracing his lifeless body, placed him in a hair shirt sprinkled with ashes, dressed him on top of that in the monk's habit, that is an undershirt of linsey-wool and a hooded robe. For he was a monk of the church of Durham, yielding to its moderate teaching and in all things subject to superior commands of obedience. And although he did not live in a monastery as a cloistered man, he nevertheless fought for the Lord in a hermitage under their control and guidance, and had worn

[631] Licence in 'The Benedictines, the Cistercians', pp. 315-29, discusses this in relation to Godric and Finchale and notes that one of the ways in which a community could assert ownership of a hermit was by providing a hagiographer.

their habit for many years and had become a companion of theirs in fraternal friendship by a decree of the community in the chapter.[632]

It is not possible to know from Reginald's account what form of death ritual was in use at Durham during his time there. However, as mentioned above, it is known that Durham Cathedral Priory library possessed a copy of the *Constitutions* in the twelfth century and Reginald's almost exact following of the death ritual described by Lanfranc gives rise to the interesting speculation that those practices it may in fact have been used by Durham monks during the later twelfth century when Reginald was writing Godric's *Life*. In his formal instigation of monastic death processes, Godric himself summoned the monks to attend him when he felt death approaching, sending the watching servant to wake them. His final quoted words were to that effect, saying that 'they [the monks] will commend my spirit to the Lord as it leaves, because that is why they were sent here by God'.[633] The monks ran to his bedside, this detail being in accord with *Constitutions.* 'Wheresoever else they may be [if not at office] and whatsoever they are doing when the alarm reaches them, they shall make no pretext for delay but run to the sick man, chanting the *Credo*.'[634] The action of running was not one which was considered suitable and seemly for a monk, and the only other eventuality in which Lanfranc

[632] *LG*, ch. 169 [308], pp. 325-6, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Quod ministro fratribus denunciante, qui et ipsi in proximo adherant, statim accurrentes corpusque exanime circumplectentes, in cilicio cineribus superjecto deponent, et habitum monachilem stamineam videlicet ac cucullam, ipsum superinduunt. Erat quidem quondam monachus Dunelmensis Ecclesiae, redditus illius moderabili disciplinae, ac per omnia subditus mandatis imperialibus obendientiae; ac quamvis coenobium ut claustralis non incoluit, tamen in heremo positus, sub ipsorum iugo imperii Domino militabat, habitumque illarum multis annis induerat, et fraternae familiaritatis eorum consocius ex communis capituli decreto effectus fuerat.'

[633] Ibid. 'Ipsi enim spiritum migrantem Domino commendabunt, quia ideo hue a Domino sunt.' This quotes the final words of Jesus on the cross. 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Luke 23: 46.

[634] *MCL*, 112, p. 182. 'Ubicunque vero alias, vel quocunque alia negotio occupados predictus sonus invenerit, sine aliqua excusatione vel mora similiter currentes, et Credo in unum Deum canates, ad egrum veniant.'

allowed for a dispensation on the no-running rule was in the case of fire.[635] Once the running monks arrived at the dying Godric's side, they dressed him in a monk's habit and placed him on sackcloth sprinkled with ashes. He was lain on the floor of his church, opposite the altar, and died there.

Godric was laid out by the monks, washed and shrouded, so Reginald wrote, in the custom of monks, with his body having been moved from the church to an attached building for washing.[636] He was then re-clothed in clean habits which were sewn up.[637] Reginald commented that the saint's head was covered with a cloth and that the shrouding was done according to the custom of monks, other than the use of night shoes, which were left off Reginald explaining that this allowed those coming to say their farewells to Godric to touch and kiss his feet.[638] From the time of his death until his burial Godric was accompanied by monks chanting psalms and was buried the following day, placed into his tomb by two of the brothers. Reginald's account follows the practicalities of Lanfranc's death ritual step by detailed step. In his conscious placing of Godric's dying within the framework of the customary monastic death processes, Reginald was using the ritual as a political tool. Through embedding the narrative of Godric's death into the formal structure of monastic death ritual and clothing

[635] Paxton, 'Signa mortifera', p. 632.

[636] *LG*, ch. 170 [309], p. 327, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Fratres postmodum illi, qui prius illic ad exitum illius astiterant, corpus patris abluendum, ac de more monachorum obvolvendum …' Lanfranc too required the body to be moved to a different room for washing. *MCL*, 112, p. 183.

[637] *LG*, ch. 170 [309], pp. 327-8, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. '…ac diligenter prius ablutum in stamina nova, deinde in cilicio, novissimi vero cucullam decenter coopertum undique consuerunt.' This detail of sewing, which is mentioned only in Godric's *Life* of those studied, is found in Lanfranc's *Constitutions* where the cowl was sewn together from arm to arm and around the legs, as were the night shoes. *MCL*, 112, p. 185.

[638] As mentioned in chapter 1.3.iii, Godric's bare feet occasioned the first postmortem miracle described in his *Life*. *LG*, ch. 170 [310], p. 328.

him as a monk of Durham, the *Life* claimed Godric as Durham's own. It was a mark of their ownership of both the saint and his hermitage.[639]

A similar, although less emphatic, mark of ownership is seen in Adam's account of Hugh's death and concerns his focus on the sackcloth and ashes element of monastic death ritual. The practice of lying the expiring monk on sackcloth and ashes is mentioned in most of the lives considered here so was plainly a matter of importance.[640] In Hugh's case, he ordered his ashes in advance and blessed them at the point of death, this adherence to monastic death ritual serving to reinforce Hugh's identity as a Carthusian monk. The point Adam was making through his careful recording of the death and in his detailing of the practices of monastic death ritual was that Hugh, despite being a bishop, was first and foremost a monk. This message would have been of importance to the Carthusian community at Witham which commissioned Adam to write the *Magna Vita*. It was a narrative device through which they could mark the saint as their own, an inspiration and credit to the Carthusian order and its members.[641]

While the hagiographers' aim in writing about the demise of their subject was to confirm that their pathway to death met the practical and established requirements for the passing of a holy person, there was often, as is seen in Godric's and Hugh's accounts, a subtext to the narrative.

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[639] William of Newburgh, who died in 1198, wrote a brief account of Godric in his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* in *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I,* 4 vols, ed. Richard Howlett, Rolls Series 82 (London: Longman and Co, 1884-9), vol 1, pp. 149-50. In this William recorded Durham's place in the life of Godric and their authority over the memory and habitation of the saint.

[640] Gilbert's *Life* makes no mention of his being lifted onto sackcloth and ashes although it does say that he was wearing a hair-shirt which perhaps was thought to suffice. Wulfric's *Life* is silent on the matter too, as is Wulfstan's. Margaret of Scotland is the only other saint here for whom the practice is not mentioned, which since she is not monastic, or even religious, is not surprising.

[641] The Carthusian *Rule*, which contains a death ritual and dates to around 1109-1136, is substantially similar to that of Lanfranc, albeit briefer. See Green, '*Perfectissimus*' for details of the ritual.

In Gilbert's case the description of his death was used for validatory and perhaps apologist uses. Although under Gilbert's leadership the Gilbertine order had grown and in some ways flourished it had also been dogged by controversy.[642] The tone of the *Life* has, accordingly, an apologist tone as the writer sought to validate Gilbert and his order.[643] Gilbert's death, other than the omission of ashes from the account, followed the standard features of monastic ritual. He died surrounded by praying brothers, was washed, dressed as a priest, and buried 'according to the custom'.[644] In setting Gilbert's death and burial within the framework of monastic death ritual the writer authenticated the practices of the Gilbertine order and provided validity for it, and its founder and master, in the face of criticism.

Death ritual was also used by the hagiographers to award status. Wulfric instructed Robert, bishop of Bath, to come to Haselbury as soon as he heard of his, Wulfric's, death so that Robert could officiate at the commending of the hermit's soul and the committal of his body.[645] John of Forde stressed that this was not vainglory on Wulfric's part.[646] The officiation of a bishop

[642] An example of this can be inferred from Ailred of Rievaulx's nun of Watton letter when he addressed 'pater G.'; a reference to Gilbert. 'Ubi tunc, pater G., tuus in custodia disciplinae vigilantissimus sensus? Ubi tot tam exquisite ad excludendam vitiorum materiam machinamenta? Ubi tunc illa tam prudens, tam cauta, tam perspicax cura? [Where, father G., was your more diligent concern for the maintenance of discipline then? Where then were your many ingenious devices for eliminating occasions of sin? Where then was that care so prudent, so cautious, so perspicacious, that supervision so strict?'] *NW*, col. 792A; trans. Boswell, p. 453.

[643] This is a feature of the 'aggressively defensive' tone described by Brian Golding in *Gilbert of Sempringham*, pp. 8-9.

[644] *BSG*, 52 and 55, pp. 123-4 and 129-30. 'Circa corpus vero exanime rite per quadriduum celebrate sunt exequie…'

[645] *LWH*, 99, p. 125, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 41, p. 208. 'Ad Robertum piae quoque memoriae Bathoniensem episcopum de transitu suo loquens: "Vide," ait, "ut cum de hac vita migrasse me audieris, venire non differas et commendando animae meae corporique sepeliendo deservire." '

[646] Ibid., The fact that this was mentioned suggests that there may have been some criticism of this nature levelled at Wulfric. John defended Wulfric by writing that he, who had been 'frank and free in his simplicity [in libertate simplicitatis suae]', had foreseen in the spirit that this should be done.

at Wulfric's exequies, when set against Lanfranc's monastic death ritual, indicates the status that John wished to attribute to Wulfric. *Constitutions* directed that postmortem offices should be carried out by those of the same rank as the deceased.[647] That this happened in practice is seen through the accounts of the abbots and bishops rushing to Anselm when he was thought to be dying, and in Hugh's sending for the dean of Westminster when no bishops were available to attend him on his deathbed.[648] In having Wulfric tell the bishop of Bath to attend him, as indeed happened, John was elevating the hermit Wulfric to the status of a bishop. It is possible too that there is an implicit understanding through the account that the anointing of last rites was equated with the anointing of a person being consecrated bishop.

Even Margaret, the only non-monastic saint considered here, had elements of monastic death ritual in her *Life.*[649] Turgot recounted that the queen ordered her priest and other churchmen to 'stand with her and commend her soul to God while reciting psalms'.[650] This is completely in line with monastic death ritual, Lanfranc writing that monks should surround their dying brother chanting the seven penitential psalms while the priest commended the dying man to God.[651] While it is to be expected that the queen would be attended by other non-religious attendants there is no mention of them and it appears as if Turgot couched this element of her demise as a monastic rite. Although she was a woman, and a fecund one at that, at the moment of her death she was accorded the same prayerful process as she would have received had she been an avowed member of a religious community.

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[647] *MCL*, 112*,* p. 183.

[648] *VA*, II, lviii, p. 136 and *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 191.

[649] Turgot, like Reginald after him, would have had access to the copy of Lanfranc's *Monastic Constitutions* held in Durham's library since the late eleventh century so may have been drawing from its death ritual.

[650] *SQMS*, p. 215. 'Facies eius iam in mortem palluerat, cum ipsa me et alios sacri altaris ministros mecum sibi astare suamque animan deo psallentes iubet commendare.'

[651] *MCL*,112, p. 183.

5.3 Prognostication

In a monastery, which is where most of the deaths considered here took place, the monastic infirmary staff held the significant responsibility of identifying when a dying monk would actually die.[652] The attending staff were required to summon the community to the infirmary for the death itself and to lift the dying monk from his bed onto sackcloth and ashes on the floor where he would expire. It was crucial that this moment was attended by the community in order that the dying monk left this world surrounded by the comfort and protection of prayer and commenced his post-death journey in as optimal a state of spiritual health as was possible. Therefore, accurate prognostication was essential to achieving the best outcome for a passing soul. Increasingly, monks applied their growing knowledge of the physiology of dying in support of their religious beliefs about death and its aftermath.[653] Monastic death management was an expression of faith and expectation, enacted through ritual, with its timing predicated upon the application of medical observation. Although no reference is made in the customaries about training, it is reasonable to suppose that infirmary staff whether religious or lay, learnt from the example and teaching of more experienced personnel and, as they worked with the sick and dying, would have become increasingly familiar with the signs of pending death. As the entire community was, in theory at least, present at the moment of death, the monks

[652] Although Lanfranc was silent on the subject of the infirmary servants, one of the eleventh-century Cluny death rituals specifically mentions them, saying they were well trained and highly skilled in identifying the advent of death. 'Famuli qui sunt in talibus multum exercitati, multumque periti.' Paxton, *Death Ritual at Cluny*, p. 90. No mention is made of who the infirmary servants were in terms of background and monastic profession, or of how they were trained. That they were found in earlier monasteries in England is seen in *RC*, xii, 65*,* p. 64. 'In ea itaque domo servitores sint, Dei timore fraternoque amore ferventes, qui in quibuscumque indiguerit suppeditent; aut, si necesse fuerit, cum sollicito fratre famulorum adhibeatur obsequium.' Symons identified *servitores* as monks and f*amuli* as lay servants.

[653] Paxton, 'Signa mortifera', p. 642, fn. 46, notes there was a rich body of texts concerning prognosis and signs of death from which to draw, and monastic scribes had been increasingly collecting and collating such works from the ninth century, indicating a growing interest in the logistics and significance of death and what lay beyond.

encircling the dying man's bed must have become accustomed to its visual and somatic presentation.

Besides learning by witness and through experience, the monks and infirmary staff at major foundations had access to the medical texts, including those concerned with prognosticating death, that were held in their libraries.[654] The *Prognosis* described the signs of pending death.[655] These are listed as: a sharp nose, sunken eyes, the temples fallen in, ears cold and drawn in with distorted lobes, the skin of the face hard, stretched and dry, with a pale and dusky colour.[656] Other symptoms which came to be included in prognostic texts included anomalies of the eye; white, loose, parted lips; tooth grinding. The face was of particular significance in Hippocratic prognostication because of the belief that the five senses were located there.[657] The art of prognostication was drawn not only from medical texts but included divination, astrology, and the interpretation of auguries as well. Among what has been described as an 'eleventh-century miscellany' of manuscripts from Christ Church Canterbury is a collection of

[654] Among Durham Cathedral library's rich collection of medical works was a copy of the Hippocratic text, *Prognosis* and a computus. *Catalogues of the Library of Durham*, pp. 142-6. Monica Green, 'Medicine in France and England', has listed a twelfth-century copy of *Prognosis* among the medical texts held in the monastic library of Bury St Edmunds.

[655] *Prognosis* was available in a variety of different versions from the earlier period. Frederick Paxton cites two ninth-century texts from the Abbey of Echternach which appear derivative from *Prognosis* and contain some (though not all) of the same prognostic details as the Hippocratic version and add more of their own. Paxton states that these works had a long and independent life and remained apparently unaffected by the presence of more accurate translations of some or all of *Prognosis.* 'Signa mortifera', pp. 634-7.

[656] *Prognosis*, from 'Prognosis' in *Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G. E. R. Lloyd, trans. J. Chadwick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 170-85.

[657] Maurice Saffron, 'Maurus of Salerno Twelfth-century *Optimus Phisicus,* with his commentary on the Prognostics of Hippocrates', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society,* 62 (1972), p. 17.

prognostic texts attached to a copy of the *Regularis concordia* and written in the same hand.[658] The texts identify ways in which a pending death may be known. For example, the reader is advised that if a person falls sick on 'the 25th day of the moon, they will languish and die'.[659] It has been suggested that the circulation of medical texts related to prognostication may have been linked to the development of ritual care for the dying and dead and emerging thought about the nature of death and what lay beyond, a subject area that was enhanced through the arrival in western Europe of the newly-translated works of medical writers from Greece and the Islamicate world.[660]

The death narratives considered here offer glimpses into the practicalities of prognostication, and the inherent difficulties in anticipating the moment at which someone would die. Eadmer described how the watching monks realised Anselm's death was upon him. 'He began to draw his breath more slowly than usual. We felt therefore that he was now on the point of death, and he was lifted from his bed onto sackcloth and ashes.'[661] Walter Daniel wrote of Ailred's death. 'Then, when we were aware that death was near, he was placed on a hair-cloth, strewn with ashes, as the monastic custom is.'[662] Although Walter did not say how the attending monks knew that death was imminent, he had described Ailred's terminal condition previously. 'Then I came and saw the father sweating in anguish, the pallor of his face flushed, his eyes filled

[658] *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics*, ed. and trans., R. M. Liuzza (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010). The texts Liuzza considers are from the British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii and contain, in addition to the *RC* and eighteen prognostic texts, a copy of the *Rule* of Benedict.

[659] Ibid., p. 166. 'Luna xxv languet et morietur.'

[660] Paxton 'Signa mortifera', pp. 646-8.

[661] *VA*, II, lxvi, p. 143. 'Lentius solito spiritum trahere cepit. Sensimus igitur eum iamiam obiturum, et de lecto super cilicium et cinerem positus est.'

[662] *VAil*, lvii, p. 62. 'At tunc nobis eum iam iamque obiturum sencientibus, positus est super cilicium et cinerem more monachorum.'

with tears, the ball of his nostrils twitching, his lips bitten by his teeth.'[663] In line with the *Prognosis,* Walter used Ailred's pallor and the signs he saw in his face to indicate his pending death. Reginald identified the coming of death in his account of the hermit Aelric saying his throat closed up so he could not eat, and his jaw dropped causing him to gape. 'That horrid sign of death' Reginald called it.[664]

Turgot, in Margaret's *Life*, also mentioned the Hippocratic signs of pending death, recounting how the queen's face paled prior to her death and her entire body grew cold.[665] As previously mentioned, when Hugh was dying and in extreme pain, Adam described how he had tried to comfort the bishop. 'Soon, my lord, you will be at peace, for when I feel your pulse it shows the crisis is ending.'[666] The slowed breathing, pulse changes, dropped jaw, facial pallor and cooling body of these episodes describe various Hippocratic, and actual, signs of death.[667] They

[663] Ibid., xlix, p. 56. 'Cum ecce venio et video patrem sudare pre angustia et faciem versam in pallorem subrafam et oculos lacrimantes et pirulam narium fluctuantem et labia constricta dentibus.'

[664] *LG*, ch. 12 [33], p. 49, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. 'Faucium rictus patulos horrendo mortis spectaculo aperiendo dejicere …' It is the case that no matter what position a person is in, at the time of death the jaw drops and the person gapes. Winifred Hector describes this her directions for performing last offices in *Modern Nursing* (London: Heinemann Medical Books Ltd, 1976, pp. 530-1. She instructs that the gaping jaw should be supported by a pillow and then secured by a piece of cloth. The medieval depiction of the soul departing the body through the open mouth fits with the actual presentation of the human body immediately following death.

[665] *SQMS*, p. 215. 'Facies eius iam in mortem palluerat, cum ipsa me et alios sacri altaris ministros mecum sibi astare suamque animan deo psallentes iubet commendare.'

[666] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 192.

[667] The temperature of a dying patient typically falls in the hours prior to death, pulse volume diminishes, and the person feels cold to the touch as their peripheral circulation shuts down. Pallor is likely. A respiratory pattern known as Cheyne-Stokes respiration often occurs before death. Lasting minutes or even hours, it is characterised by periods of shallow rapid breathing interspersed by times where deep breaths are followed by cessation of breathing for up to a minute, before another gasping, heaving breath is taken. Hector, *Modern Nursing*, pp. 40 and 529. It may well have been a Cheyne-Stokes respiration pattern that Walter was describing when he wrote that the dying Ailred 'lingered with slow gasps of breath'. *VAil*, liv, p. 60.

read as accounts written by people who had witnessed death first-hand and were familiar, and quite possibly comfortable, with its presentations.

Despite the experience and skill of the watching monks in identifying pending death, Jocelin's account of the demise of Waldef shows how difficult it could be to gauge.[668] He recounted how, at around the third hour of the day, Waldef's attendants thought he was about to breath his last.[669] They placed him on a shroud, Jocelin noting that this was in accordance with custom, and called the community by knocking rapidly on the board.[670] The brothers arrived and were chanting psalms and the litany when to their amazement Waldef revived. They returned him to his bed. Then, for a second time he was deemed to be at the point of death, lifted to the shroud, and the community summoned. Waldef, again, revived. Finally, on the third summoning of the monks, who were called away from their meal on this occasion, Waldef did die, surrounded by his brothers chanting psalms. This offered Jocelin a hagiographic opportunity. Between the first and second episode Waldef was reported as giving thanks with bowed head and lighted face, although Jocelin neither suggested nor included biblical allusion as to what the dying abbot was giving thanks for.[671] It will not have been for his continued presence on earth, unless he was seeing the benefits of extended purgation, but appears instead to be a liminal account in which Waldef was present, at one and the same time, on both earth and in heaven. His lighted face and spoken thanks reflected the glory he saw awaiting him, while his continued presence

[668] *LWal*, 90, pp. 161-2 and 310.

[669] A death at the third hour of the day had an important biblical precedent in the crucifixion and death of Jesus. See Mark 15: 25. It can be wondered whether the watching monks hoped that their abbot may expire at such an auspicious time of the day, and were overly hasty in moving him from his bed to the floor.

[670] The knocking on the board to summon the community to a death appears to have been standard practice. See, for example, *MCL*, 112, p. 181 and *RC*, xii, 65, p. 65.

[671] *LWal*, 90, pp. 162 and 310. 'Ecce, vir dei, redivivo spiritu resumpto, vultum suum illuminavit super eos. Obstipo capite, quasi gratias referens, admiratione non modica percussit eos.'

on earth in the heart of his entire community allowed this to be made evident to the watching brothers. This supposition is supported by Jocelin's stating that before the first revival Waldef's attendants thought that the breath had left his body and he was actually dead.[672] The inference is that in his dying moments Waldef was bestriding the threshold of death. He was able to face both inwards and outwards, was both dead and alive, and conveyed though his body and his spoken thanks the wonders that he saw beyond. [673]

5.4 Premortem Purgation

The death narratives considered here contain sometimes grueling accounts of the suffering of their subjects. For most of the saints a prolonged period of illness and pain, usually with fever, is described in detail before their eventual demise. This feature of a life can be considered a hagiographic necessity predicated upon the requirement for premortem purgation to be seen to have occurred. This was essential so that the receivers of the life would understand the putative saint had been cleansed of sin and thus, fully sanctified, was received into heaven at the moment of their death. This is a matter of sequence and consequence. Without pre-purgation the dying person could not enter heaven at the moment of their death; without being in heaven they could not be considered a saint; without being a saint they could not intercede on behalf of the sinner or act as a conduit for the miraculous. If they lacked the authority and influence of a heavenly presence then hagiographically speaking there would be little or no point to them and whatever purposes the life was intended to serve would be invalidated if its subject was not shown and acknowledged to be a saint residing in heaven.

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[672] Ibid. 'Circa diei horam tertiam ultimum spiritum efflare a servitoribus censebatur, super cilium ponatur juxta morem.'

[673] This narrative, with its notion of dead/not dead, resonates somewhat with that of Aelric although the handling and focus of the two accounts is very different. While Reginald was concerned with the moment of death and the severing of body and soul, Jocelin's account is liminal, his focus being on Wulfric's presence at one and the same time in both in heaven and on earth.

The notion of premortem purgation as a way to reduce the burden of sin and lessen postmortem suffering was not limited to those considered actual or aspiring saints. It was a feature of the Christian condition. This is seen in a letter written in about 1075-76 by Anselm to Hernost of Rochester. In the letter Anselm expressed his grief at the bishop's serious illness then moved to comfort him. 'But when I consider that in this way your soul is being prepared for eternity, your progress comforts me with spiritual delight. It is known to your holiness that it is through the tribulation and the scorching of the flesh that the stain of sin is burnt away.'[674] Anselm was voicing the belief that premortem suffering reduced the burden of sin and resulted in an improvement of the postmortem experience.

Honorius Augustodunensis, (d. 1154), considered the expiation of sin. He wrote that purgation during life could be achieved by self-inflicted fasts and penances, loss of worldly goods, want of clothing or by the bitterness of death itself, while after death it took the form of excessive heat or excessive cold or any other kind of trial, and was significantly worse than any suffering in this life.[675] Honorius' message was clear. While the monastic life could be regarded as premortem purgation, and so had long-term value, its suffering was as nothing compared to the cleansing agonies that lay beyond death. It was these that most of the hagiographers considered here were endeavouring to present in their still living saints.

[674] Anselm of Canterbury, *Letters of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, vol. 1, The Bec Letters*, ed. Samu Niskanen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), i. 44, 2, pp. 129-30. 'Sed cum considero quia per haec anima vestra ad aeternitatem nutritur, consolatur me spirituali laetitia vester profectus. Notum quippe est sanctitati vestrae quia in tribulatione carnis et per ustionem rubigo peccatorum exeritur, et per patientiam iusti vita perficitur.' The notion of being tried in fire is biblical. I Peter 1: 7 is one example among several. 'That the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold which is tried by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

[675] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarium,* III, *PL* 172, 1157A-1176D.

Jocelin wrote of Waldef's suffering during his final weeks, describing his final nine days as ones of harsh and continuous torture with the abbot poised on the brink of death, but unable to pass its boundary.

> The dog days had come. Waldef's severe and lingering sickness ravaged his body with sharper and bitterer bite. All food, even what was most nourishing to the system, was tasteless to him and a source of pain. The faculties of his body were worn out, his vital power was spent, and already his breathing rattled as if in a breast half-dead … Still, for nine successive days before his passing, repeatedly both day and night he struggled as if at the point of death, and filled his attendants and the rest who watched with anguish and wonder and great astonishment. Rightly so! Well might it cause astonishment, that so weak and fragile a vessel could undergo such grim and ceaseless torture. Yet, as the saint himself, while in health, had told them many times: it was his prayer to the Lord that he deign to temper him thoroughly with the fires of the severest sickness before his life's end.[676]

There is an inference from the passage that Waldef was being held in this world deliberately, permitted through God's grace to suffer while still on earth and allowed too to show sanctity though his ability to endure torment with patience and grace. Jocelin expanded upon this theme.

[676] *LWal*, 88, pp. 159-60 and 307-8. 'Aderant dies caniculares, ac durus ac diutinus morbus morsu acriori et amariori corpus debilitate dilaniabat, et fere singulis diebus trium septimanarum subsequentium in ianuis adesse mortem minitabat; omnis etiam cibus humanae naturae nutritivus illi non sapuit, sed fastidio fuit, ac corporis exhaustis viribus, virtute vitali vacuato, iamque quasi praemortuo spiritus in pectore palpitabat … Novem tamen diebus continuis ante exitum bis in die vel nocte, velut in mortis articulo, agonisabat, servitoribus suis ac ceteris aspicientibus angorem et admirationem ac stuporem magnum incutiebat: nec mirum; stupor merito fuit, quod vas tam fragile ac imbecilles tam diros et continuos cruciatus perpeti potuit. Sanctus tamen iste, sicut sanus suis pluries protestabatur, exoraverat Dominum, ut eum ignibus aegritudinis durissimae diutius decoquere dignaretur ante vitae terminum.'

'[God] wore out His beloved Waldef with a multitude of infirmities, racked him with pain, weakened him with sickness.'[677] The agonies of Waldef's illness were purposeful and kind. They were a sign of his blessed state, permitting him to burn away the stains of sin which even in the holiest person were an inevitable feature of man's fallen nature, and to commence the transformation from earthly to heavenly body. Jocelin reinforced this point. 'For two days and nights his bones were fried as if in a frying pan, and his flesh baked as if in an oven. So that in his soul no tarnish or stain or blemish of sin might appear, nor should he be confounded when he spoke to his enemies at the gate of death.'[678]

The image of burning subtly changed to one of refining as Jocelin continued the passage and extended its theme from purgation to purification and reshaping. The notion of extreme heat carried Waldef from his earthly to his heavenly condition with Jocelin conveying the reader too through the themes of purgation to permanence, from a mortal body to one that was immutable. Waldef's agonies continued until the moment he passed from this life to the next.

> That saintly soul, fired in the furnace of fever and affliction and in the flames of wholesome penance, and like the purest and refined gold, departed from a most pure fleshly habitation. His way led through fire and water of earthly tribulation,

[677] Ibid., 81, pp. 155 and 301, 'Hinc est quod dilectum suum Waltevum infirmitatis multitudine, crebris flagellis attriverat tensionibus attrectraverat, morbis debilitabat …'

[678] Ibid., 89, pp. 161 and 310. 'Dehinc duabus diebus ac noctibus quasi in frixorio confrixa sunt ossa eius, et velut in camino decocta est caro eius, ut in anima nulla peccati rubigo appareret aut macula vel ruga, nec confunderetur cum loqueretur inimicis suis in mortis porta.' The passage is suggestive of martyrdom and is particularly reminiscent of the early church martyr, St Lawrence, who met his end on a gridiron. Jocelin's allusion here has a further link. The story of Lawrence recounts him giving the riches of the church to the poor. Jocelin described Waldef doing likewise in a lengthy passage about a famine that brought the poor to the point of starvation. In order to feed them Waldef ordered the monastery herds slaughtered, its granaries opened and the monks to reduce their own intake. *LWal*, 51-57, pp. 265-73.

> but he was now bought into the repose of eternal quietude. Thus passed the holy father: from the world to the Father, from faith to His face, from hope to sight, from shadow to substance, for darkness to light, from the toilsome course to the victor's crown, from the miseries of the present life to the glory of indefeasible life eternal.[679]

The reference to fire and water here is significant. Earlier on in Waldef's *Life*, Jocelin recounted two visions experienced by Walter, a lay brother of Melrose, who had been tempted to leave the monastery and convert to Judaism.[680] In his visions, Walter was transported beyond this world and shown by the late Waldef what the afterlife could hold for him. He was bound to a wheel above a fiery abyss before being released and shown an ocean with a dungeon in its depths and a doorway from which he heard weeping and wailing. Waldef explained to Walter that he had been shown purgatorial regions and hell. In Waldef's death narrative, Jocelin's description of the abbot experiencing tribulations of fire and water harks back to Walter's visions. It shows Waldef experiencing in his living form the cleansing torments that the ordinary

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[679] Ibid., 90, pp. 162 and 310-1. 'Santa illa anima felicium flagellorum flammis in fornace febrium et aliarum multiplicium infirmitatum excocta et instar auri purissimo examinata, de mundissimo carnis habitaculo exivit: pertransito namque igne et aqua mundanae tribulationis,introductus est in refrigerium aeternae quietis. Transivit ergo Pater sanctus de mundo ad Patrum, de fide ad faciem, de spe ad speciem, de umbra ad veritatem, de caligine ad claritatem, de stadio labores ad bravii coronam, de praesentis vitae miseria ad indefectivae vitae gloriam aeternam.' As mentioned previously the notion of a person being refined as gold in a furnace is biblical. An example can be found in Zechariah 13: 9. 'And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined: and I will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say: You are my people: and they shall say: The Lord is my God.'

[680] Ibid., 100-104, pp. 170-5 and 322-8. Walter's story is markedly similar to Bede's 'Vision of Dryhthelm' as well as to a version of this adapted by Helinand of Froidment in his early thirteen-century work, the *Chronicon*. See, Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* 5.12, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 488-99 and Helinand of Froidment, *Chronicon* 48, *PL* 212, 1059A-60C. The three accounts are considered in detail by Helen Birkett, 'Visions of the Other World from the Cistercian Monastery of Melrose', *Mediaeval Studies*, 74 (2012), 101-41.

sinner would endure after their death. Jocelin closed the passage above by confirming, through the use of several paired and contrasting phrases, that Waldef had indeed been received into heaven and gained his victor's crown.

The interpretation of premortem pain as a blessing leads to the supposition that the agonies faced after death would be even worse than those experienced by the dying saints, as witnessed by those watching, and reflects Honorius' teaching to that effect. It is self-evident that there would be no particular blessing in premortem purgation if it had to be endured to the same degree at some stage anyway. This is in line with some Cistercian teachings on purgation, which also considered that the process of purification would start prior to death. Guerric of Igny, who died in 1158, taught that it would begin in this world and could be achieved by either fire or water, with the latter being worse.

> How certain it is, my brothers, that it is sweeter to be purged by water than by fire. Make no mistake, those who have not been purged by water will have to be purged by fire, if they are worthy of purgation at all, on the day when the judge shall sit in person like a fire ready to melt, to melt and purify silver, and he shall purge the sons of Levi ... and so it is with this world: first baptised by the water of the flood, then purged by the fire of judgement, it will pass into a new state, incorruptible.[681]

[681] 'Satius est o fratres et suauius fonte purgari quam igne. Prorsus qui fonte non fuerint modo purgati igne habent purgari si tamen purgari meruerint quando scilicet iudex ipse quasi ignis conflans sedebit conflans et emundans argentum et purgabit filios leui … Sic nempe et mundus iste prius baptizatus aqua diluuii postea purgatus igne iudicii in nouum transibit statum incorruptionis.' Guerric of Igny, 'Sermons: On purification, 4', in John Morson and Hilary Costello ed. *Guerric d'Igny: Sermons*, 2 vols, vol. 1, *Sources Chrétiennes* 166 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1970), pp. 358 and 364, lines 31-32 and 121. English translation from le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 139. The passage also introduces the notions of baptism and incorruptibility, playing on the theme of the body as a precious metal being fired, and reflects the elements of fire and water seen in

Guerric also expressed the incremental nature of purgation. 'Woe unto us if we let these days go by without completing our purgation and must later be purged by that most cruel of fires, quicker and more violent than any that one can imagine in this life.'[682] The staged, and worsening, nature of purgation was expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux too in a sermon delivered at the funeral of Humbert of Igny in 1148. 'Whatever debts have not been paid here below must be repaid a hundredfold in the places of purgation, *in purgabilis locis*.'[683] It is these views that Jocelin, in his later *Life* of Waldef, appears to using when he recounted Waldef's thankfulness for his torment during his final illness.

While all of the saints except Anselm, and to a lesser extent Wulfric, are described as suffering significantly, or lengthily, during their final journey to death, the two Cistercians, Waldef, as described above, and Ailred, were written as having particularly punishing final illnesses. Although Anselm experienced episodes of fever and increasing debility prior to his death, Eadmer's emphasis is more on Anselm's demeanour than his suffering during these times. The model of sainthood Eadmer presented is at odds with that of the suffering saint described by the other hagiographers. While this could perhaps reflect a changing model of sanctity seen over the twelfth century it is, of course, important not to ignore the fact that Eadmer could have been writing what he actually witnessed, and that what he observed may have fitted the

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Jocelin's accounts of Walter's visions and Waldef's death and serves as an association too with the ritually cleansing properties of water used in baptism and in last rites.

[682] 'Et quidem dies qui ad purgandum nobis dati sunt uelimus nolimus implemus sed uae nobis si dies implentur et purgatio minime impletur ut postea necesse sit illo nos igne purgari quo nihil poenalius nihil acrius in hac vita aut vehementius potest excogitari.' Guerric of Igny, 'Sermons: On purification, 5', pp. 372, line 37, trans., le Goff, *Purgatory*, p. 139.

[683] Bernard of Clairvaux, *In obitu Domni Humberti,* in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, 8 vols. ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais, (Rome: Editiones Cistercienes, 1957-1998), vol. 5, p. 444. There is a biblical reference in this statement from Bernard. Matthew 5: 26 states that an offender would not be released from prison until they had 'repaid the last farthing'.

particular model of sainthood he was aiming to describe. Or, conversely, he chose to write what he observed and presented it in hagiographical terms in order to describe a saint. Regarding the harsh descriptions in Waldef's and Ailred's *Lives*, these may have been intended to reflect and endorse the lifestyle austerities advocated and adopted by the relatively young Cistercian order and its members.

Ailred's health was so poor for so long that it is difficult to determine when ill health became terminal illness but Walter recorded it all with medical exactitude. For the final year of his life Ailred was weakened by a cough so severe that at times he could scarcely breathe, was racked by fevers, and was periodically so hypersensitive to touch that he could not bear any weight upon him.[684] By Christmas Eve 1166 he was in extreme pain and by his own account ready 'to depart and be with Christ'.[685] He longed to die. 'I wish and crave, if it please Him, that God may speedily deliver me from this prison and lead me into a place of comfort.'[686] It was nearly three weeks before his wish was granted, weeks that brought increasing bodily weakness and great pain. Walter described the breathless and gasping Ailred as he fixed his eyes 'like great lamps of fire' upon the cross held in front of him and prayed for release.[687]

Although Walter did not make an explicit link between premortem purgation and Ailred's extreme suffering, it is implicit in the text. The comparatively lengthy account of Ailred's illness is immediately preceded by an account of a vision experienced by a monk of

[684] *VAil*, xlviii, pp. 54-5.

[685] Ibid. 'Dissolui et esse cum Christo.' This is a reference to Philippians 1: 23. 'But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better.'

[686] Ibid. 'Volo et desidero, si Deo placet, quatinus me de hoc carcere cito educat et in locum refrigerii deducat.'

[687] Ibid., liv, p. 60. 'Et oculos erigens ut lampades ignis ad crucem que ibi aderat in facie.' The description of Ailred's eyes as lamps of fire is significant in that the eyes, like the mouth, were seen as a gateway between body and soul. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, p. 8.

Rievaulx.[688] In this vision the brother saw the soul of Ailred, in the form of a man, suspended above the lifeless body of the saint. The soul was described as shining bright, pure and clear, glistening as though lit by a thousand candles. It was entirely transparent except for a small cloud near its navel. Other than the small cloud, the description of the soul is almost identical to that of the resurrection body. The account continues by explaining that the cloud was the last remaining trace of sin that Ailred needed to change into light before he died, after which the brother saw Ailred's soul return, through his mouth, to his body.[689] So powerful was this vision that the monk roused the brothers resting in the dormitory with his shouts of joy. Although Walter attributed no significance to the positioning of the cloud, it is interesting that it appeared close to the navel. Perhaps the cloud was meant to suggest the final vestige of original sin, situated alongside the umbilicus, that enduring physical mark carried by a body of gestation and birth.

Premortem purgation is seen in the *Life of Wulfstan* in the form of corporal punishment as well as through the fever and pain that afflicted the bishop. Wulfstan was elderly when he died and having previously been well he was struck down by severe discomfort in all his limbs and took to his bed.[690] From there he sent for Robert, bishop of Hereford, to come and hear his confession after which he received 'discipline' and was beaten with rods on his back.[691] This event is not mentioned by William in his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, but was plainly an action that he considered showed Wulfstan's saintliness and was worth including in a hagiography. 'What a man! Who, though feeble with age, broken by illness, and quiet in conscience, yet did

[688] *VAil,* xlvii, pp. 52-4.

[689] This is the same image Reginald described in Godric's account Aelric's death.

[690] *VWulf,* iii. 21. 1, p. 141, '…gravi per omnes artus tactus molestia lecto accubuit.'

[691] Ibid.

not flinch from corporal punishment to shake off the remaining stain on his soul!'[692] Wulfstan is the only saint here who received a punishment administered by man during his final illness, but like the others, he endured the chastisement of fever. Both accounts by William spoke of fever. In the *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* it was present for six months before Wulfstan died, while in the *Life* it is mentioned first after he received corporal punishment. William described it as a 'slow but incessant fever that was driving him towards his end'.[693] Despite being incessant, it appears to have ebbed and flowed as there were periods when the bishop felt better before relapsing and having to return to his bed.[694] William made an explicit link between Wulfstan's fever and its purpose as premortem purgation observing that the heat of Wulfstan's illness was able to 'sweat off anything in him that was unprepared for eternal glory'.[695]

From the physiological point of view there is an interesting omission in most of the accounts of fever and pyrexia. Usually there is no mention of the rigors which would be expected in a person who is experiencing a rising and falling temperature, where sweating accompanies a

[692] Ibid. 'Quantus hic vir, qui aevo invalidus, morbo infractus, conscientia etiam serenus, non abstinuerit flagellis corporis, ut discuteret si quid reliquum erat animae sordis!' Lanfranc's *Constitutions* makes no mention of corporal punishment during sickness or the death ritual and mentions it only for a grave fault [culpam gravem commiserit] which was known to the community and could not be amended by private penance. *MC*, 99-100, pp. 148-9. By the time William wrote Wulfstan's *Life* around 1125 Lanfranc's *Constitutions* was circulating in England. While there is no suggestion here that William was following Lanfranc it can be speculated that he was drawing from a similar model of monastic discipline. It seems unlikely that the aged, ill and saintly Wulfstan had committed such a grave fault that corporal punishment was required. This being the case, William appears to be showing the thoroughness of the premortem purgation that the dying bishop underwent.

[693] *VWulf*, iii. 21. 2, p. 141. '… ita pigra sed assidua febre agebatur in exitum.'

[694] William's description of an incessant fever that worsened at times suggests it was a remittent fever in which the temperature is always above normal but considerable fluctuations occur. It is often seen in patients with an infection. Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 36.

[695] Ibid. 'Labes corporis augebat vires animae, ut s quid in eo erat immaturum aeternae gloriae fervour infirmitatis posset decoquere.'

dropping temperature and rigors serve to drive it up again.[696] The exception to this is seen in Hugh of Lincoln's *Magna Vita*. Adam, the quality of whose medical observation has been noted previously, described Hugh's condition. 'Meanwhile he was growing worse and worse. Every day he had two paroxysms, and his whole body was consumed by the fever, and his internal organs were weakened by dysentery.'[697] Adam wrote that Hugh was sweating too, but despite this he refused to remove his hair shirt, tunic and cowl. 'Neither the heat of the fever nor the excessive perspiration caused him to lay them aside.'[698] Since the Carthusian order allowed its members to remove their hair-shirt during severe illness Adam was probably making a hagiographic point here. However, it is framed within a realistic account of fever and its presenting pattern of rigors and sweating.

Although doctors were present during Hugh's last illness and death, there is no reference to their trying to diagnose or treat the cause of his fever.[699] Medical treatment for fever is not seen in any of the other lives either. Of course, this does not mean that it did not happen, but does mean either the hagiographer chose not to mention it, or that it did not in fact occur. Of these

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[696] Toohey, *Medicine for Nurses*, p. 37. A rigor is described as a 'severe shivering attack which is usually accompanied by a rise in temperature'. Rigors are considered to be characteristic in some diseases: septicaemia, sepsis, pneumonia and malaria, with Toohey noting that daily rigors are a particular feature of malaria.

[697] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 190. 'Urgere eum interea languor vehementius cepit. Geminatis cotidie paroxismis, in solida eius menbra febrile seviebat incendium; vitalia et internorum medullas dissenteria exhauriebat.' While *dissenteria* had been translated here as 'dysentery' it cannot be assumed that it had the same diagnostic features as would be understood by use of the word today. Whatever Hugh's condition was though, it did apparently effect his gastro-intestinal system. The subsequent description of his bowels shining like glass when removed for embalming noted that some people attributed this to the violent attack of dysentery that had troubled the bishop prior to his death. Ibid., ch. xix, p. 219. Adam wrote elsewhere of Hugh's bouts of fever during this time which suggests that Hugh was, like Wulfstan, probably suffering from a remittent or intermittent fever. A humoral basis for Hugh's fever is offered in *MLSH*, p. 71, where the author explained that the elements of fire and water passed wholly into fire.

[698] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 190. 'Non ardor febris, non corporis tantus sudor, aliquid horum ei detraxit.'

[699] Ibid., p. 193.

two options the former seems the most likely. Medical works available in England at the time contained information on fevers with their causes and treatments and it can be assumed that the attending doctors would have had at least some familiarity with the subject.[700] The fact that treatments for fever were not recorded in the lives suggests that the hagiographers wished to present an unexpurgated account of the pyrexia as that would best represent the picture of burning premortem purgation they wished to convey to their readers. Had medical interventions been put in place then the fever would probably, in some instances at least, have responded and the patient's temperature returned to normal. This would reduce the feeling of heat and, for the time this lasted, make them feel better. The omission of treatment in the detailed fever accounts is a hagiographic necessity. The use of the burning fevers and pain experienced by most of the saints was a most convenient tool for the hagiographers. With the saint seen to endure in this life the purgatorial fires and agonies which awaited in the next, fever was readily useable as visible evidence of premortem purgation. It served other functions too. It was a warning, reminding the watching monks of what the future held for them, a prompt to amend their own sinful ways and it provided the hagiographer with an opportunity to express the God-given ability of their subject to endure.

Even in the saints for whom no purgatorial episode of fever is mentioned, the writer included evidence as to how expiation for sin was achieved by the still living saint. In Gilbert's case, the many years and associated infirmities of the aged monk were used as reason for his going directly to heaven. 'He left the darkness of this age and worldly labours for the true light and

[700] For example, one of the twelfth-century texts of the doctor Herebertus held in Durham Cathedral Library, has a work listed as *Liber Febrium Ysaae qui dicitur Liber Constantini de Febribus.* See, *Catalogues of the Library of Durham*, p. 144. In the Galenic work, *On Prognosis from the Pulse*, the pulse was used as a diagnostic tool for a variety of conditions, including fever. In hectic fevers (those with wide swings in temperature) the pulse was considered to increase in size, frequency and speed. Vivian Nutton, 'Roman Medicine 250 BC to AD 200', in *The Western Medical Tradition*, ed. L. I. Conrad, pp. 39-70, p. 69.

everlasting rest; more than a hundred years old and full of days, he went to dwell in the house of the Lord and received a blessed seat amongst the chaste.'[701] Premortem purgation, whether achieved through fever or the white martyrdom of many years of righteous, and harsh, living was obviously an important point for the hagiographers.

For the community receiving the life, being confident that their saint was received into heaven at the moment of death was a crucial point. As discussed above, without this assurance they would be neither worthy of particular veneration nor capable of intercession. In short, they would not be able to perform the functions of a saint and bestow the desired benefits of sanctity on the receivers of the life. Therefore it was imperative for a community that their saint should actually, demonstrably, be a saint, pre-purgated and received into heaven at the moment of their death.[702] It is no wonder then that the death narratives give such emphasis to the visible signs of purgation; the burning fevers, drenching sweats and extreme suffering of the dying saint.

5.5 Posture and Positioning

Close reading of the death narratives offers a suggestion about the posture and positioning of the person at the time of their death which, although speculative, is nevertheless interesting.

[701] *BSG*, 52, pp. 124-5. 'Tenebris huius seculi et laboribus mundi veram lucem requiemque eternam migravit, plus quam centennis senex et plenus dierum, habitatarus in domo Domine et Deum in secula laudaturus, ubi in ordine suo, ut dignus erat, sicut cuidam postea revelatum est, credimus eum inter agmine virginem beatam sedem percepisse a Domino.'

[702] This feature of a death narrative is consistent across the period, seen both before and after the necessity for papal authority in canonisation was introduced around 1200. It is present in the lives written in the twelfth century which did not form part of a canonisation process, as well as the later ones like Hugh's and Gilbert's that did.

While it might be expected that the dying person would be lying down in bed, several of the accounts state or infer that the person was sitting. This is supported by images of the period.

Image 4: 'The Death of Cuthbert' from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, twelfth century, Durham[703]

[703] British Library, MS Yates Thompson 26, fol. 73. Accessed online 27 November 2020 http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=45539

A seated position is described in William of Malmesbury's relating of Wulfstan of Worcester's death. William wrote that the dying bishop remained assiduous in his religious observances until the end, praying often in words and always in the mind and 'sitting rather than lying kept his ears attentive to psalms and his eyes fixed on the altar for he placed his chair where he could see without obstruction what went on in the chapel'.[704] While this observation was to show Wulfstan's religious dedication to the point of death, interpreting details from some of the other accounts allows for the suggestion that a dying person may indeed have been sitting up rather than, as might be expected, lying down.

Wulfric of Haselbury was described as dying at the time he had predicted and 'with joined hands pointing heavenward, passed from our light to light eternal'.[705] It is the reference to joined hands pointing heavenwards that is curious here, because the only way to have joined hands pointing upwards for more than a moment is if the person is seated rather than lying down. The same is seen in Waldef, who on his deathbed 'with eyes and hands directed to heaven, face calm and head bowed, would give thanks to God'.[706] In addition to the reference to hands pointing up, Jocelin commented on Waldef's bowed head, a posture which comes naturally in someone sitting, but not to a person lying down, especially at the point of death.[707]

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[704] *VWulf*, iii. 21. 3, p. 141, '… magisque sedens quam iacens aures psalmis, oculos altari applicabat, sedili sic composito ut libere cerneret quicquid in capella fieret.'

[705] *LWH*, 101, p.126, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 42, p. 210. 'Igitur parvulus et amabilis Christi Wulfricus plenus dierum bonorum, die et hora qua praedixerat, iunctis directisque in caelum manibus, ab hac luce in lucem migravit eternam.' While there is no suggestion in the sources about in which direction heaven was thought to lie, praying hands typically point up, so it can be assumed that these references to hands pointing to heaven are depicting them as directed upwards.

[706] *LWal*, 89, pp. 160 and 308. 'Oculis ac manibus in caelum intentus, vultu sereno, capite inclinator, gratias agebat Deo …'

[707] It is difficult to correspond how, practically speaking, Waldef could manage a posture in which his head was bowed while at the same time his eyes were looking to heaven, but this is perhaps an example of the mutual

Hand positioning as indicative of posture is seen in Margaret of Scotland too when she was at the point of death. 'And so with her entire body growing cold, yet while the heat of life pulsed in her breast she prayed always, and singing the fiftieth psalm in sequence, she held the cross to her again with both hands, holding it before her eyes.'[708] If Margaret were lying down it would really not be possible for her, a dying woman, to hold the cross before her eyes without dropping it on her face. If she were in a sitting position it would be feasible for her to hold the cross on her lap and look at it there.[709]

It makes sense that the dying person should be upright in bed rather than supine, for decease was a public event and the expiring individual would have been familiar with the role they were expected to take. It has been noted that dying surrounded by community was usual in deaths of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and that the process was organised and directed by the central figure, namely the person doing the dying.[710] For practical purposes it would be easier for the dying monk to play the required role if he were upright. Easier too for the surrounding brothers to witness his final moments if he was seated until he was lifted from his bed to the sackcloth and ashes awaiting him on the floor.

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incompatibility that can sometimes be noted in a work of hagiography. It is the devout position that is important, not the postural practicalities.

[708] *SQMS*, p. 216. 'Iamque frigescente toto corpore et vitalis adhuc calor palpitabat in pectore nichilominus ipsa semper orabat et quinquagesimum psalmum ex ordine decantans crucem sibi interim ante oculos statuens utraque manu tenebat.'

[709] Ailred's *Life* has a description of the cross being held before the dying abbot's face, but by someone else. *VAil*, liv, p. 60. The practice is described in the Cluny death ritual. Paxton, *Death Ritual at Cluny*, p. 90. 'Crux est contra faciem ejus affixa, et lumen cerei usque ad claram diem non defuerit.' It is not mentioned in Lanfranc's *Constitutions*.

[710] Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present,* trans., P. Ranum (London: Marion Boyars, 1976); originally published as *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en occident du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 11.

From the medical point of view if the dying person was having difficulty breathing it would make them feel more comfortable and ease their passing if they were sitting up.[711] A person who is short of breath will find their dyspnoea, difficulty in breathing, eased if they are in an upright position and it is reasonable to suppose that the infirmary staff would have known and utilised such a simple intervention in their care of their patients. Several of the saints were reported to have had difficulty in breathing during their last days. Walter wrote that Ailred could only speak in gasps and that in his opinion the abbot's dyspnoea was due to an abnormal distemper in his head.[712] In Waldef's case, Jocelin described how the abbot was on his deathbed for three weeks, writing of a lingering sickness that ravaged the abbot's body. Dyspnoea is included in the account of signs and symptoms, and Jocelin wrote that 'his [Waldef's] breathing was rattling as in a breast half-dead'.[713] Taken as a whole it is reasonable to infer from the death narratives that in some instances the dying subjects of the lives were positioned upright rather than lying supine. This supposition satisfies the details in the accounts and is seen in contemporary illustrations. It makes practical sense too as it enabled the dying person to be visible and present at the centre of their own performance of death, as well as helping to alleviate any respiratory difficulty they may have been experiencing.

5.6 Pushing and Pulling: Inexorable Death

The narrative style of some of the death accounts typically carried with it a sense of urgency, of inevitability, of a person being driven towards their passing by an external agency. This is particularly notable in those lives that were written from witness accounts rather than in those where the hagiographer was present in person and observed the demise of their subject. The

[711] Hector, *Modern Nursing*, p. 41.

[712] *VAil*, xlviii, p. 55 and xlix, p. 57.

[713] *LWal*, 88, p. 308.

style of the received oral testimony narratives is suggestive of a story growing in the telling; they read like accounts that had been told before and were being related with familiarity and vigour. These descriptions convey a rising sense of urgency which builds as the tale reaches its narrative climax, the moment of death itself.[714] The inexorability with which the saints were borne towards death served as a cautionary tale for the receivers of a life. While the pre-purgated saint may have had nothing to fear from dying, the same was not true of the readers. The hagiographic subtext for them was that there could be no escaping their own mortality and that in order to avoid eternal death they needed to amend their ways before it was too late.

In the accounts of the dying person being thrust forward towards their death, the nature of the force that was doing the driving is attributed to varying agencies. For Margaret of Scotland it was her mortal sickness itself that was urging her on. 'Aggravated by her former pains, she is urged onward to her death more forcibly by her growing illness.'[715] The use of *urgetur* here, the present passive tense, enhances the helplessness of the subject and the accentuates the immediacy of the account, placing it in the moment of its telling. There is a sense of personification to the mortal illness, a presence; it has a discrete role in Margaret's story. Likewise with Wulfstan who, as mentioned above, was described as being driven towards his death by fever.[716] Illness as a personified agent of death is seen even more markedly in Waldef.

[714] It can be supposed that it was indeed the case that the lives based on received witness accounts, rather than those written by the witness himself, had already acquired a familiar cadence and form within the community telling the story of their saint, and that the hagiographers adopted this oral tradition into their work. Birkett in *Jocelin of Furness*, p. 119, notes that oral testimony, even derived from second- or third-hand accounts, formed a staple source for hagiographers of the period and that, in Waldef's case, there can be little doubt that the stories commemorating his life and miracles would have been told and retold by Melrose monks from the time of his death until Jocelin wrote the *Life* some fifty years later.

[715] *SMQS*, p. 215. '… mox aggravate doloribus lecto proscernitur, et ad exitum crescent molestia vehementius urgetur.'

[716] *VWulf*, iii. 21. 2, p. 141. '… ita pigra sed assidua febre agebatur in exitum.'

‘And by now the sickness, familiar and inveterate, more than ever like a savage torturer, had laid hold of the whole man, and was urging his soul to its exit with most grievous pain.’[717] For Waldef, his illness had become intimate and habitual and adopted the attributes of a torturer. It was a cruel presence.

Although the agent of death was not always so very harsh it was always unremitting. In Godric’s case it was ‘the debility of his years’ that propelled him towards death.[718] ‘The shades of night were smothering the bright lamp of day, and all those monks were preparing to undertake night vigils around him, because they saw he was being urged on to his end.’[719] Time itself could play this role and in Wulfric’s *Life* it was brought into play as the personified force compelling the saint to his death. ‘And so, urged daily on towards his end by those last days of his, now nearly spent, the blessed man sent for Osbern the priest to come and speak with him one to one.’[720] Whatever the agency compelling the saint to their death, whether it was illness or time, there is the same inevitability, the same sense of a mordant external force bearing the saint forward, powerless to resist.[721] The subject of the life was unable to contest the personified illness, but was driven onwards, helpless and suffering, a victim to their malaise.

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[717] *LWal*, 89, pp. 161 and 309. ‘Et ecce aegritudo solita et inviscerata plus solito, velut tortor saevissimus, totum hominem occupabat; gravissimus aculeis animam ad exitum urgebat.’

[718] *LG*, ch.163, [291], p. 309, trans. Coombe, *Godric*. ‘Transactis itaque in heremo lx. annis, aetis senium virum Dei compellebat ad transitum.’ This accords with the description of an aged man approaching death seen in Gilbert’s *Life* where the hagiographer described him as being worn out by illness and old age. *BSG*, 51, p. 119.

[719] LG, ch. 169 [307], p. 324, trans. Coombe, *Godric.* ‘Nocturnis Denique umbris diei clariorem lampadem sepelientibus, fratres illi omnes vigilias noctis circa eum agere praeparabunt, qui eum ad extrema perurgere perspiciebant.’

[720] *LWH*, 99, p. 126, trans. Matarasso, *Wulfric*, 3. 41, p. 209. ‘Itaque dies ejus utique novissimi cum se cotidie perurgerent ad exitum suum, ipsis jam propemodem exactis, vocat vir beatus Osbernum presbyterum secretius locuturus cum eo.’

[721] Although the *Life* of Godric and that of his fellow hermit, Wulfric, reported them as having periodic battles with demons, there is no intimation in either of their death narratives that the external agency thrusting them towards death is demonic.

It is only in Wulfstan of Worcester's case that the hagiographer recounted an instance in which the impending death was portrayed as a calling to, rather than a pushing towards, death. 'The severity of his illness welled up as the days went by, and Christ hurried on his passing, for he was calling him to heaven.'[722] This is a gentler account in which William told his readers that Christ chose to shorten the saint's time of suffering and perhaps rescue him from illness. For the other saints though, the moment of narrative climax, the inevitability and nature of dying, Lanfranc's 'agony of passing', is offered to the reader unameliorated by any softening features.[723]

5.7 Poised Between Two Worlds

The death narratives position the dying saints hovering between heaven and earth, poised between two worlds, their watching attendants able to glimpse what the future held through the liminal condition occasioned by the presence of death. Waldef appeared to be communing beyond the realm of this world, saying that he had seen marvels, which those attending him took to be visions of the punishments of the guilty and the glory of the saved. 'Oh, if the powers of telling were given to me, how much might I disclose to you of the marvels I have seen!'[724] Walter described the dying Ailred's growing withdrawal from this world and his increasing awareness of the next.[725] The abbot, physically on earth but seeing into heaven, called on angels for release from life. 'Let me go free to Him, whom I see before me, the King of Glory. What

[722] *VWulf*, iii. 21. 2, p. 141. 'Ebulliebat in dies vis valitudinis, maturabatque Christus transitum qui vocabat ad caelum.'

[723] 'Cumque eum iam in exeundo viderit laborare [When he sees him now in the agony of his passing].' *MCL*, 112, p. 181.

[724] *LWal*, 89, pp. 160 and 309. 'O si mihi suppeteret facultas fandi; quammulta et magna mirabilia possem vobis enarrare, quae vidi!'

[725] *VAil*, liii, p. 59. 'Quasi iam interesset celestibus terrena sapere minus.'

do you linger for? … hasten for the love of Christ, hasten.'[726] Walter observed that those around Ailred believed he was speaking with the angels, although only the dying man could hear them. Their implied presence at the bedside, waiting to carry the soul to heaven, is a written representation of the visual image depicted in the Guthlac Roll illustration.[727] Even those saints, like Hugh, whose death narrative is not quite so explicit in positioning the death narrative between heaven and earth, nonetheless evince a sense of the drama being played out in both places at once. In the *Magna Vita* this is seen after Hugh received communion for the final time and turned away from the world.[728] From that time on, while his suffering body remained on earth his non-corporeal self was attaining heaven; like Ailred, he had turned his face from this world to the next.

In order for any death-bed messages the dying saint conveyed to be both comprehensive and compelling, it was necessary that they remained lucid. Explicit mention is made in the lives of the consciousness and coherence of the saint. This shows that this was an important point for both the hagiographers and the receivers of the account. Even when *in extremis*, Gilbert, who had been silent for some time and apparently unable to see or hear anyone was, according to his hagiographer, 'conscious in his spirit' and showed this by quoting from the psalms.[729] Walter reported that the dying Ailred retained his five senses unimpaired until the end, although his speech began to fail in his final days.[730] At times, and with sometimes a hundred monks

[726] Ibid., liv, p. 60. 'Ad illum quem video ante me, Regem glorie, dimittite me quamtocius abire. Quid moramini … festinate pro Christi amore, festinate.'

[727] Image 3, p. 218.

[728] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 186. 'Now let the doctors and our sickness come to what agreement they will, neither henceforth are of any consequence to us [Iam medicis et morbis nostris, ut poterit, conveniat; de utrisque amodo erit in pectore nostro cura minor].' This has been discussed more fully in chapter 4.2.iv.

[729] *BSG*, 51, p. 121.

[730] *VAil*, liii, p. 59. 'Sensus quinquepertiti perdurantes in eo integerrimi et inviolabiles usque in finem, verba tamen brevissima et divisa faciebant.'

about him, Ailred listened to the scriptures. Although unable to speak he responded appropriately to what he heard using motions of his hands and smiles and tears, showing joy or sorrow at particular passages.[731] Hugh was able to bless the ashes upon which he was about to die immediately before being lifted onto them, while Anselm was described as being weak in flesh but strong in spirit and 'mentally as alert as he ever had been'.[732] The saints were consistently and determinedly recorded as coherent, even at the point of death, their lucidity mediated through the language of the cloister. Whether it was in blessing the ashes, listening to scripture, or even, in the cases of Ailred and Godric, quoting the final words of the crucified Jesus as they themselves expired, they showed they were fully present in mind and body at the time of their passing while simultaneously being received, fully purgated, into heaven, there to assume their appointed places and commence their new responsibilities as saints in heaven.[733]

Taken in their entirely, the accounts are concerned with premortem experience as an indicator of postmortem experience and in displaying the saint as faithful to the end. As role models their spirit remained steadfast in faith despite the terrible agonies their body endured. The absence of treatments for fever, when such were available, speaks to the importance of the process of burning premortem purgation, both for the individual and for the witnesses. It was a blessing for the former in fulfilling in advance any postmortem suffering due and a lesson for the latter

[731] Ibid., lvi, p. 61. '…quoniam eloquio nequibat, signis manuum mirabiliter collaudabat leccionis leticiam et interdum mocione labiorum et similitudinem cuiusdam risus prorsus spiritualis.'

[732] Ibid., lxv, p. 141. 'Sensim corpore deficiebat, animi virtute semper idem qui esse solebat existens'; *MV*, vol. II, book V, ch. xvi, p. 198; *VA*, II, lxv, p. 141. 'Animi virtute semper idem qui esse solebat existens.'

[733] Walter placed onto the lips of the dying Ailred the final words of the crucified Jesus from Luke 23: 46. 'Into your hands I commend my spirit [In manus tuas commendo spiritum].' *VAil*, lvii, p. 61. Godric quoted John 19: 30. 'It is finished [Consummatum est].' *LG*, ch. 169 [306], p. 322, trans. Coombe, *Godric.* This is not such an elevated appropriation of scripture as might at first be considered. Heffernan wrote that saints were thought to share a substance of holiness which is contained fully in Christ, therefore, despite their accidental differences, they have a fundamental alikeness. *Sacred Biography*, p. 12.

in what they could expect to experience in the fiery aftermath of their own death. It was both an inspiration and a warning. The narratives serve to endorse the saint as a saint, pre-purgated and newly forged, equipped with their resurrection body, both dead and newly alive, ready to be received in heaven at the moment of their death and perform their saintly duties.

Conclusion

This study of health-related narratives taken from twelfth-century saints' lives has demonstrated three key points. First, that understanding, or endeavouring to understand, the illness and death accounts requires that they, as well as the work in which they reside, be approached as pieces of hagiography. Second, they are entirely reflective of, and designed to reflect and uphold for the reader, the faith world and monastic context from which they emerged. Third, they show by inference the progression of medicine and medical familiarity within the monastic milieu of the twelfth-century, and hint at the grey area which is the changing status of the medical profession over the period. The studied lives, taken collectively, and representing the majority of relevant works from the period, have shown consistent themes and tensions as well as allowing hagiographers' individual interests to surface.

Tension is evident throughout the health narratives. It is seen in the descriptions of suffering and pain, those signs of human imperfection, and signifiers of spiritual malaise which, when manifest in the person of the saint, required subtle management and explication by the hagiographers. In crafting their accounts of sickness and health, the writers were obliged to affect a delicate and precise balancing act in achieving a necessary equilibrium between their particular theology and objectives in writing and the actuality of illness and decline. There could be no avoiding the latter and, of necessity, the hagiographers were required to address issues of pain, malaise and death, those degraded and degrading signs of humanity's fall from grace. The hagiographers' challenge was to site them in the person of a saint, turning them to good, using them to show how they were, in the case of their subject, signs of blessing, not signs of debasement. Sometimes this is expressed explicitly, as in Gilbert's case and his hagiographer's explanation of the saint's blindness or in the amazement of Hugh's doctors at his ability to endure. Mainly though it appears as an undercurrent in the writing, a constant

pull. This is seen in, for example, the hagiographers' handling of the need to balance conflicting aspects of nutritional intake, and the narratives that they scripted to ensure they conformed to several apparently incompatible factors; monastic obedience, bodily health, humility, and saintly asceticism.

The roles ascribed to medical doctors also voice a degree of conflict. In a very particular way the profession represents the anxiety evinced between faith and science. Doctors allowed the writers to articulate notions of physical and spiritual health, with the state of the latter being paramount and ultimately the only state of health that, in the context of their writing, really mattered. However, despite their almost constant presence, the tensions which pervade the health narratives across a range of health-related subjects, are rarely explained. It is plain that although the lives reflect the faith world from which they came and offer insights and hints into the issues current at the time of their writing, they were not intended to debate the disputes or questions that might have been troubling the writer and their community. So although tension is manifest through the health narratives, and was plainly a reality of the hagiographer's experience, the writers did not usually engage with it overtly. Instead they maintained the emphasis of their work firmly on promoting its subject as a saint and interpreting illness, its signs and symptoms, its outworking's, as signs of grace and salvation. In a very particular way the hagiographer's strength of purpose in this evokes the unswerving single-mindedness of the saint themselves in their heavenwards focus.

There are almost always multiple themes at play in the health narratives, for example in descriptions of the condition of the saint's body. The condition of the body of the saint, that future relic, was never intended to be read only as a physical description nor was it ever entirely just about the saint themselves. The use of the body as a narrative vehicle is seen with

remarkable consistency across the century. In a manner that is immediate and sometimes visceral, and whether living, dying or dead, the body was often the central protagonist in a narrative. The physical person of the saint mapped their changing condition and at one and the same time articulated both the humanity and the sanctity of the person described. The body could be a visible locus of sin, as was seen in the case of the nun of Watton, but equally it represented the road to salvation and, finally, heavenly glory. This is portrayed through the emaciated frames of the fasting, sick and patiently suffering saints and is manifest too in the immutable purity of the resurrection body of the newly dead saint, with its bright and shining countenance, jewel-like appearance and promise of heaven. The body signified both the corporeal person in their journey in this world and the present and future condition of the immortal soul. It can be argued, strongly, that the accounts were also intended to engage directly with the readers' own state and act as an ongoing reminder of their inevitable dwindling, decline and ultimate decay. The narratives served as an invitation to the reader to consider their own spiritual condition, a reminder of the perils and opportunities that their future might bring and an injunction to live, insofar as they could, in grace. There is a constant sense of warning in the health narratives, and this, alongside the recuring descriptions of emaciation, of fever and pain patiently borne, shows not just the enduring nature of the model but speaks of the importance and value of these accounts to the changing audiences who received them over the decades.

A detailed study of the health narratives has enabled commonalities and themes to emerge, enhanced on occasion by being regarded through the lens of contemporary medical insight. This has allowed for a sharper way of reading and analysing the health narratives, as a knowledge of current medicine has facilitated the identification of anomalous features in a narrative, which has, in turn, opened avenues for exploration and offered insights into the

hagiographers' writing. An excellent example of this has been seen through Ailred's description of the body of the nun of Watton with her prenatal lactation, the obstetric unlikelihood of which leads to the realisation that Ailred was depicting the nun in humoral terms. He used humoral notions of imbalance to describe both her physical and spiritual malaise, the account showing a direct alignment in his writing between theology and medicine. Taking the accounts within their context, both historically and as works of hagiography, and applying the eye of current medical insight has enabled an enhanced understanding and interpretation of the health narratives offering a more comprehensive methodology for reading the accounts than has previously been the case.

There are subtle but distinct changes seen in the nature of the health narratives written over the twelfth century and into the early thirteenth. While the sample size here is small it nevertheless represents the majority of lives written about saints of the period by people who either knew them or were working from first-hand testimony. Because of this, changes noted in the health accounts written as the century progressed should not be disregarded. While all of the works studied contain passages concerning the saint's health, illness and, other than Christina's, death, the narratives from the mid-century onwards, show a distinctly more medicalised approach both in their use of language and the descriptions themselves. Humours are referred to more often and two of Hugh's *Lives* refer to pulse reading and uroscopy as prognostic methodologies.[734] Medical doctors are seen with much greater frequency in the accounts from later in the century that they are in the earlier ones. These features reflect the growing availability of, and interest in, medical science and the texts that were arriving in England over the period. While much work has been done in recording the advent of the 'new' medicine into England, this study of contemporary hagiography shows how it permeated and was articulated,

[734] *MV*, vol. II, book 5, ch. xvi, p. 192 and *MLSH*, pp. 70-1.

albeit informally, within the aegis of monastic life. However, despite this growing expression of medical familiarity, the narratives remained firmly hagiographic in intent. Walter Daniel, *officio medicus*, filled his accounts of illness with signs and symptoms, with prognoses. His treatment, however, always swung to the heavenly.[735] His were not the clerking notes of a medical practitioner, but a utilisation of his medical knowledge and eye for observation in his endeavour to describe the supremacy of heavenly medicine over human. Despite his apparent medical credentials, for Walter writing with the hand of faith, ultimate healing, that of body and, principally, soul, that which saved man from his fallen condition and spiritual malaise, could come only from God.

The health accounts of the monastic saints are woven into the fabric of the monastic days and nights, this being seen particularly in the deathbed scenes. These show almost unfailing adherence to monastic death ritual, with several of the saints dying during the offices that either opened or closed the day's prayer. Accounts concerning the sickness of the saint are more heavily laden with biblical reference than is found in other passages in the lives, as the hagiographers sought to explicate and justify the suffering of their subject. Such passages called on the familiar environment of the receivers of the accounts, reflecting their lived and liturgical experience in a way that embedded the work into the community for whom it was written and invited the readers' personal identification with the saint.

Despite their adherence to the traditional framework of a work of hagiography, the writers did, at times, enable the human as well as the saintly face of their subject to be glimpsed through the narratives. This is particularly apparent in the accounts written by hagiographers who knew

[735] For example the miracle of the monk with the stomachic complaint cured by Ailred putting his finger in the patient's mouth. *VAil*, xxxiv, pp. 42-3.

the saint. It has been seen in Anselm's imprecation that people enjoy their meal, in Godric's tender care of the dying Aelric, through Hugh's nursing of his aged father and the infirm Ailred running, stumbling, to the bedside of a dying monk.[736] While such passages undoubtedly have a hagiographic subtext, there is an immediacy to them, a lack of grandeur, an indication of the person behind the saint. This makes sense in a work being written for those who knew the subject. It allowed the saint to be retained, alive, inside the collective memory of their community. This feature has emerged as an interesting point of comparison between historic and contemporary *Lives* of the same saint and might be a subject that would benefit from future consideration.

At the core of the arguments over health narratives in hagiography lie the 'what' and the 'why' of accounts of sickness and health from the selected saints' lives. While the 'what' has shown itself to be variable in terms of content and period of writing it has also exposed consistent tensions that questions of physical and spiritual health and healing presented to the monastic mind. The 'why', however, has shown itself to be anything but variable. With complete consistency and unswerving focus, whatever the differences in detail, and whenever and by whomever they were written, the purpose of the health narratives in the writing of the lives is plain. The hagiographers' narrative choices in the inclusion, or indeed exclusion, of health-related episodes were predicated primarily upon their viewing the accounts as presenting a vehicle upon which to display the sanctity of their subject and to and explain and validate the beliefs of the faith world within which they lived.

[736] *VA*, II, xi, p. 78; *LG*, ch. 12 [32], p. 48, trans. Coombe, *Godric*; *MV*, vol. I, book 1, ch. iii, pp. 12-14; *VAil*, xxxvi, p. 43.

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