



Vengeance and saintly cursing in the saints' Lives of England and Ireland, c. 1060-1215

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Jesse Harrington
Corpus Christi College

Faculty of History
University of Cambridge

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Title: 'Vengeance and saintly cursing in the saints' Lives of England and Ireland, c. 1060-1215'

Summary:

This dissertation concerns the narrative and theological role of divine vengeance and saintly cursing in the saints' Lives of England and Ireland, c. 1060-1215. The dissertation considers four case studies of primary material: the hagiographical and historical writings of the English Benedictines (Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, Eadmer of Canterbury, and William of Malmesbury), the English Cistercians (Aelred and Walter Daniel of Rievaulx, John of Forde), the cross-cultural hagiographer Jocelin of Furness, and the Irish (examining key textual clusters connected with St. Máedóc of Ferns and St. Ruadán of Lorrha, whose authors are anonymous). This material is predominantly in Latin, with the exception of the Irish material, for which some vernacular (Middle Irish) hagiographical and historical/saga material is also considered.

The first four chapters (I-IV) focus discretely on these respective source-based case studies. Each is framed by a discussion of those textual clusters in terms of their given authors, provenances, audiences, patrons, agendas and outlooks, to show how the representation of cursing and vengeance operated according to the logic of the texts and their authors. The methods in each case include discerning and explaining the editorial processes at work as a basis for drawing out broader patterns in these clusters with respect to the overall theme. The fifth chapter (V) frames a more thematic and comparative discussion of the foregoing material, dealing with the more general questions of language, sources, and theological convergences compared across the four source bases. This chapter reveals in particular the common influence and creative reuse of key biblical texts, the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, and the Life of Martin of Tours. Similar discussion is made of a range of common 'paradigms' according to which hagiographical vengeance episodes were represented. In a normative theology in which punitive miracles, divine vengeance and ritual sanction are chiefly understood as redemptive, episodes in which vengeance episodes are fatal can be considered in terms of specific sociological imperatives placing such theology under pressure. The dissertation additionally considers the question of 'coercive fasting' as a subset of cursing which has been hitherto studied chiefly in terms of the Irish material, but which can also be found among the Anglo-Latin writers also. Here it is argued that both bodies of material partake in an essentially shared Christian literary and theological culture, albeit one that comes under pressure from particular local, political and sociological circumstances. Looking at material on both sides of the Irish Sea in an age of reform, the dissertation ultimately considers the commonalities and differences across diverse cultural and regional outlooks with regard to their respective understandings of vengeance and cursing.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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Abbreviations

AASS	Acta sanctorum.
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible dictionary</i> , ed. D.N. Freedman et al., 6 vols. (London: Doubleday, 1992).
AD / <i>Aided Diarmata</i>	‘Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill’, in D.M. Wiley, ‘An edition of Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill from the Book of Uí Maine (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University, 2000), 110-38; trans. idem, ‘Translation’, 139-64.
ANS	Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference.
AFM	<i>Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616</i> , ed. and trans. J. O’Donovan, 7 vols. (Dublin: O’Donovan, 1851).
AI	<i>The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B. 503)</i> , ed. and trans. S. Mac Airt (Dublin: DIAS, 1944).
AU	<i>The Annals of Ulster: to A.D. 1131</i> , ed. and trans. S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (Dublin: DIAS, 1983).
<i>Betha Molaise</i>	‘Betha Molaise Daiminse’, in <i>SG</i> , 1:17-37; trans. <i>ibid.</i> , 2:18-34.
<i>Betha Máedóc Ferna I</i>	‘Betha Máedóc Ferna I’, in <i>BNÉ</i> , 1:183-9; trans. <i>ibid.</i> , 2:177-83.
<i>Betha Máedóc Ferna II</i>	‘Betha Máedóc Ferna II’, in <i>BNÉ</i> , 1:190-290; trans. <i>ibid.</i> , 2:184-281.
BNÉ	<i>Bethada náem nÉirenn: Lives of Irish saints</i> , ed. C. Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
<i>Bóroma</i>	‘Bóroma’, in <i>SG</i> , 1:359-90; trans. <i>ibid.</i> , 2:401-24.
CC	Corpus Christianorum.
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievals.

- CCCO *The Cambridge companion to the Cistercian order*, ed. M.B. Bruun (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).
- CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina.
- CFS Cistercian Fathers Series.
- CIH *Corpus iuris Hibernici: ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum recognovit*, ed. D.A. Binchy, 7 vols. (Dublin: DIAS, 1978).
- Companion to Aelred* *A companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*, ed. M.L. Dutton, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 76 (Boston: Brill, 2017).
- Contra academicos* Augustine of Hippo, 'Contra academicos libri tres', ed. W.M. Green, in Augustine, *Aurelii Augustini opera II: contra academicos; de beata vita; de ordine*, ed. W.M. Green, CCSL 29 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1972), 3-61.
- Contra paganos* Orosius, *Histoires: (contre les païens)*, ed. and trans. M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet, Collection des Universités de France, 3 vols. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1990-1); trans. A.T. Fear, in *Orosius: seven books of history against the pagans*, Translated Texts for Historians 54 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 27-414.
- Cuimin condeire cecinit* *Cuimin condeire cecinit*, in 'Cummín's poem on the saints of Ireland', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, ZCP 1 (1896-7), 62-7 [59-73].
- CSANA Celtic Studies Association of North America.
- CUP Cambridge University Press.
- De anima* Aelred of Rievaulx, 'Dialogus de anima', ed. C.H. Talbot, in Aelred, *Opera omnia I: opera ascetica*, ed. A. Hoste, C.H. Talbot, and R.V. Plaetse, CCCM 1 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1971), 685-754; trans. C.H. Talbot, in Aelred, *Dialogue on the soul*, CFS 22 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981).
- De civitate Dei* Augustine of Hippo, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47-8, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955); trans. W. Babcock, *The city*

of God, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* 1.6-7 (New York: New City Press, 2012-3).

- De ordine* Augustine of Hippo, ‘De ordine libri duo’, ed. W.M Green, in Augustine, *Aurelii Augustini opera II: contra academicos; de beata vita; de ordine*, ed. W.M. Green, CCSL 29 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1972), 89-137.
- De quodam miraculo* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De quodam miraculo mirabili’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 137-46; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Northern saints*, 109-22.
- De spiritali* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De spiritali amicitia’, ed. A. Hoste, in Aelred, *Opera omnia I: opera ascetica*, CCCM 1, ed. A. Hoste, C.H. Talbot, and R.V. Plaetse (Brepols: Turnhout, 1971), 281-350; trans. C.L. Braceland, in Aelred, *Spiritual friendship*, ed. M.L. Dutton, CFS 5 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2010).
- Dialogi / Dialogues* Gregory the Great, *Dialogi libri IV*, ed. U. Moricca, *Fonti per la storia d’Italia: Scrittori secolo VI* (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924); trans. O.J. Zimmerman, in Gregory, *Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great*, *Fathers of the Church* 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959).
- Dialogi Martini* Sulpicius Severus, ‘Dialogi’, ed. J.P. Migne, in *PL* 20, Cols. 0183D-0222D; trans. F.R. Hoare, *The Western fathers: being the lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles and Germanus of Auxerre*, *The Makers of Christendom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 68-144.
- DIAS Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- DIS P. Ó Riain, *Dictionary of Irish saints* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011).
- D Dublin collection.
- eDil* Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language [<http://www.dil.ie>].
- Eng.* Supposed now-lost tenth-century vernacular Life of Dunstan.

- ETC J. Gillingham, *The English in the twelfth century: imperialism, national identity and political values* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000).
- Epistola* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Epistola’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 3-4; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Historical works*, 41-3.
- Epistola ad Mauricium* Walter Daniel, ‘Epistola ad Mauricium’, in idem, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. and trans. F.M. Powicke, Medieval Classics (London: Nelson, 1950), 66-81.
- Epistola ad Wigornenses* William of Malmesbury, ‘Epistola Willelmi ad fratres Wigornenses in Vita uenerabilis Wlstan eiusdem loci episcopi’, in idem, *Saints’ Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 8-11
- Fragmentary Annals* *Fragmentary annals of Ireland*, ed. and trans. J.N. Radner (Dublin: DIAS, 1978).
- Genealogia / Genealogy* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Genealogia regum Anglorum’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 3-56; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Historical works*, 71-122.
- GP William of Malmesbury, ‘Gesta pontificum Anglorum’, in idem, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum: the history of the English bishops*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, 2 vols., OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 1:2-663.
- GR William of Malmesbury, ‘Gesta regum Anglorum’, in *Gesta regum Anglorum: The history of the English kings*, ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, OMT, 2 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 1:2-622.
- Hexham* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De sanctis ecclesie Haugustaldensis et eorum miraculis’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 77-108; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Northern saints*, 65-108.
- Historia haugustaldensis* Richard of Hexham, ‘The history of the founding of the Church of Hexham, and of the bishops of that place, by Richard, prior of Hexham’, in *The priory of*

- Hexham*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society 44, 46, 2 vols. (Durham: Andrews, 1864-1865), 1:1-62.
- Historia novorum* Eadmer of Canterbury, ‘Eadmeri historia novorum in Anglia’, in idem, *Eadmeri historia novorum in Anglia, et opuscula duo de vita sancti Anselmi et quibusdam miraculis eius*, ed. M. Rule, RS (London: Longman, 1884), 1-302; trans. G. Bosanquet, *Eadmer’s History of recent events in England: Historia novorum in Anglia* (London : Cresset Press, 1964), 1-231.
- Historia rerum anglicarum* William of Newburgh, ‘Historia rerum anglicarum’, in idem, *The history of English affairs, book I*, ed. and trans. P.G. Walsh and M. Kennedy, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts: Medieval Latin Texts (Warminster: Aris, 1988), 26-133.
- Historical works* Aelred of Rievaulx, *The historical works*, trans. J.P. Freeland, CFS 56 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005).
- HSJ* Haskins Society Journal.
- ITS* Irish Texts Society.
- Jocelin proceedings* *Jocelin of Furness: proceedings of the 2011 conference*, ed. C. Downham, (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013).
- JRSAI* *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*.
- Lamentatio / Lament* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Liber de vita religiosi Daudi regis Scotie’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 5-21; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Historical works*, 45-70.
- Lect. Eormenhilde* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘Lectiones in festiuitate S. Eormenhilde’, in *The hagiography of the female saints of Ely*, ed. R.C. Love, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 11-24.
- Liber confortatorius* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘The Liber confortatorius of Goscelin of Saint Bertin’, ed. C.H. Talbot, *Analecta monastica* 3.37 (1955), 1-117; trans. W.R. Barnes and R. Hayward, in *Writing the Wilton women: Goscelin’s Legend of Edith and Liber*

- confortatorius*, ed. S. Hollis and W.R. Barnes, *Medieval Women Texts and Contexts* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 99-212.
- MCB 'Mac Carthaigh's Book', in *Miscellaneous Irish annals: (A.D. 1114-1437)*, ed. and trans. S. Ó hInse (Dublin: DIAS, 1947).
- Mir. Dunstani* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Miracula S. Dunstani', in idem, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. A.J. Turner and B.J. Muir, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 160-211.
- Mir. Augustini* 'Miracula Augustini', in *AASS Maii* 6, ed. D. Papebroch (Antwerp: Michael Cnobarus, 1688), 397-411.
- Mir. Ivonis* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, 'Miracula S. Ivonis', in *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, ed. W.D. Macray, RS 83 (London: Longman, 1886), lix-lxxv.
- MISL R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives: an introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).
- Northern saints* Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Lives of the northern saints*, trans. J.P. Freeland, CFS 71 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006).
- O Oxford collection.
- ODNB *Oxford dictionary of national biography: from the earliest times to the year 2000*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 2004).
- Onomasticon Goed.* E.I. Hogan, *Onomasticon goedelicum locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae: an index, with identifications, to the Gaelic names of places and tribes* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1910).
- Oratio pastoralis* Aelred of Rievaulx, *For your own people: Aelred of Rievaulx's pastoral prayer*, ed. M.L. Dutton, trans. M. DelCogliano, CFS 73 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2008), 38-57.
- OUP Oxford University Press.

- PL Patrologia Latina.
- Regula Benedicti* Benedict of Nursia (attrib.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. and trans. J. McCann (London: Burns Oates, 1952), 6-163.
- Relatio* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Relatio de Standardo’, in idem, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 59-73; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Historical works*, 245-70.
- RS Rolls Series.
- S Salamanca collection.
- Sermones* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Sermones’, in idem, *Opera omnia IIA: Aelredi Rievallensis sermones I-XLVI*, ed. G. Raciti, CCCM 2 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1989), 3-370; trans. T. Berkeley and M.B. Pennington, in Aelred, *The liturgical sermons: Sermons 1-28, Advent-All Saints*, CFS 58 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2001), 57-394; and M.A. Mayeski, in Aelred, *The liturgical sermons: the second Clairvaux collection, sermons 29-46: Christmas-All Saints*, CFS 77 (Athens, Ohio: Cistercian Publications, 2016), 1-170.
- SG* *Silva Gadelica (1-31): a collection of tales in Irish with extracts illustrating persons and places*, ed. and trans. S.H. O’Grady, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892).
- SH Subsidia Hagiographica.
- Sources* J.F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical: an introduction and guide*, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies 11 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929; revised ed., Shannon: Irish University Press, 1966).
- SPCK Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.
- Speculum* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De speculo caritatis’, ed. C.H. Talbot, in Aelred, *Opera omnia I: opera ascetica*, ed. A. Hoste, C.H. Talbot, and R.V. Plaetse, CCCM 1 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1971), 3-161; trans. E. Connor, in Aelred, *The mirror of charity*, CFS 17 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 69-301.

- TMC* The Medieval Chronicle: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle.
- Tigernach* ‘The Annals of Tigernach’, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 16 (1895), 374–419; 17 (1896), 6–33, 116–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–303; repr. The annals of Tigernach, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, 2 vols. (Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1993).
- Translatio Augustini* ‘Historia translationis Augustini’, in *Acta Sanctorum Maii* 6, ed. D. Papebroch (Antwerp: Michael Cnobarus, 1688), 411–43.
- Translatio Edithae* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘La légende de Ste Édith en prose et vers par le moine Goscelin’, ed. A. Wilmart, *Analecta Bollandiana* 56 (1938), 265–307; ‘Goscelin’s legend of Edith’, trans. M. Wright and K. Loncar, in *Writing the Wilton women: Goscelin’s Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius*, ed. S. Hollis and W.R. Barnes, *Medieval Women Texts and Contexts* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 69–93 [17–93].
- Translatio Mildrithae* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘Libri translationis sancte Mildrethae virginis’, ed. D.W. Rollason in idem, ‘Goscelin of Canterbury’s account of the translation and miracles of St. Mildrith (BHL 5961/4): an edition with notes’, *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986), 154–210 [139–210].
- Vita Aelredi* Walter Daniel, ‘Vita Ailredi’, in idem, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. and trans. F.M. Powicke, *Medieval Classics* (London: Nelson, 1950), 1–64.
- Vita Ambrosii* Paulinus, ‘Vita beati Ambrosii episcopi ecclesiae Mediolanensis’, in *Vita di S. Ambrogio: introduzione, testo critico e note a cura*, ed. and trans. M. Pellegrino, *Verba Seniorum* N.S. 1 (Roma: Editrice Studium, 1961), 50–129; trans. F.R. Hoare, *The Western fathers: being the lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles and Germanus of Auxerre*, *The Makers of Christendom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 149–88.
- Vita Amelberge* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘Vita auctore fortasse Theodorico Abbate Trudonopolitano... Amelberga virgo, Tamisiae & Gandavi in Belgio’, ed. J.B.

- Sollerius, in *AASS Julii* 3 (Antwerp: Jacobus du Moulin, 1723), cols. 0090C-102F
- Vita Anselmi* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Anselmi', in *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. R.W. Southern, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1-172.
- Vita Antonii* Evagrius, 'Vita sancti Antonii', in P.H.E Bertrand, 'Die Evagriusübersetzung der Vita Antonii: Rezeption - Überlieferung - Edition: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Vitas Patrum-Tradition' (Utrecht: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Utrecht University, 2006), 160-91.
- Vita Augustini* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, 'Vita Augustini', in *AASS Maii* 6, ed. D. Papebroch (Antwerp: Michael Cnobarus, 1688), 375-95.
- Vita Benigni* William of Malmesbury, 'Vita Benigni', in idem, *Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 344-67.
- Vita Bernardi* William of Saint Thierry, 'Vita prima sancti Bernardi Claraevallis abbatis', ed. P. Verdeyen, in idem, *Opera omnia VI*, ed. P. Verdeyen and. C.V. Veire, CCCM 89B (Brepols: Turnhout, 2010), 31-214; trans. H. Costello, *The first Life of Bernard of Clairvaux*, CFS 76 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 1-258.
- Vita Bregowini* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita beati Bregowini Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et confessoris', ed. B.W. Scholz, in idem, 'Eadmer's Life of Bregwine, archbishop of Canterbury, 761-764', *Traditio* 22 (1966), 137-48 [127-48].
- Vita Comgalli* 'Vita sancti Comgalli abbatis de Bennchor', in *VSHP*, 2:3-21.
- Vita Dunstani B.* B., 'Vita S. Dunstani', in *The early lives of St Dunstan*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and M. Lapidge, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), 1-109.
- Vita Dunstani Ead.* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita S. Dunstani', in idem, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. A.J. Turner and B.J. Muir, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 41-159.

- Vita Dunstani Will.* William of Malmesbury, ‘Vita Dunstani’, in idem, *Saints’ Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 166-303.
- Vita Edithæ* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘La légende de Ste Édith en prose et vers par le moine Goscelin’, ed. A. Wilmart, *Analecta Bollandiana* 56 (1938), 5-101; idem, ‘Goscelin’s legend of Edith’, trans. M. Wright and K. Loncar, in *Writing the Wilton women: Goscelin’s Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius*, ed. S. Hollis and W.R. Barnes, *Medieval Women Texts and Contexts* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 21-67 [17-93].
- Vita Edwardi* Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘Vita sancti Ædwardi regis et confessoris’, in idem, *Opera omnia VII: Vita sancti Aedwardi regis et confessoris*, ed. F. Marzella, CCCM 3A (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 85-181; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Historical works*, 123-244.
- Vita Endei* ‘Vita sancti Endei abbatis de Arann’, in *VSHP*, 2:60-75.
- Vita Fintani D.* ‘Vita sancti Munnu siue Fintani abbatis de Tech Munnu’, in *VSHP*, 2:226-39.
- Vita Fintani S1.* ‘Vita prior S. Fintani seu Munnu abbatis de Tech Munnu’, in *VSHP*, 198-209.
- Vita Fintani S2.* ‘Vita altera S. Fintani seu Munnu abbatis de Tech Munnu’, in *VSHP*, 247-56.
- Vita Ivonis* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘Vita S. Yvonis episcopi Persae in Anglia depositi et trium ejus sociorum, auctore Goscelino’, *Patrologia Latina* 155 (1880), 81-90.
- Vita Helena* Jocelin of Furness, ‘The “Vita sancte Helene” of Jocelin of Furness (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 252)’, ed. A. Harbus, in idem, *Helena of Britain in medieval legend* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 152-82 [150-82].
- Vita Kenelmi* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, ‘Vita et miracula sancti Kenelmi’, in *Three eleventh-century Anglo-Latin saints’ Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi, and Vita S. Rummoldi*, ed. and trans. R.C. Love, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 49-89.

- Vita Kentigerni* Jocelin of Furness, 'Vita Kentigerni', in *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern: compiled in the twelfth century*, ed. A.P. Forbes, *Historians of Scotland* 5 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1874), 159-242; trans. *ibid.*, 27-120.
- Vita Máedóc M.* 'Vita sancti Maedoc episcopi de Ferna', in *VSHP*, 2:141-63.
- Vita Máedóc S.* 'Vita S. Aedani seu Maedoc episcopi Fernensis', in *VSHH*, 234-47.
- Vita Máedóc V.* 'Vita sancti Aidui siue Maedoc episcopi ex Codice Cottoniano', in *VSHP*, 2:295-311.
- Vita Martini* Sulpicius Severus, 'De vita Beati Martini liber unus', ed. J.P. Migne, in *PL* 20, Cols. 0159A-0176C; trans. F.R. Hoare, *The Western fathers: being the lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles and Germanus of Auxerre*, *The Makers of Christendom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 10-44.
- Vita Mildrithæ* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, 'Vita Deo dilectae virginis Mildrethæ', in D.W. Rollason, *The Mildrith legend: a study in early medieval hagiography in England*, *Studies in the Early History of Britain* (Leicester : Leicester University Press, 1982), 108-43.
- Vita Moling* 'Vita sancti Moling episcopi de Tech Moling', in *VSHP*, 2:190-205.
- Vita Niniani* Aelred of Rievaulx, 'Vita Niniani', in *idem*, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, *CCCM* 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 113-34; trans. J.P. Freeland, in Aelred, *Northern saints*, 35-64.
- Vita Odonis* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita S. Odonis', in *idem*, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. A.J. Turner and B.J. Muir, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 1-39.
- Vita Oswaldi* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita S. Oswaldi', in *idem*, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. A.J. Turner and B.J. Muir, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 213-89.
- Vita Patricii* Jocelin of Furness, 'Vita sexta', in *Triadis Thaumaturgae, seu Divorum Patricii Columbae et Brigidae, trium Veteris et Majoris Scotiae, seu Hiberniae, Sanctorum Insulae,*

- communium Patronorum Acta, Tomus Secundus Sacrarum ejusdem Insulae Antiquitatum*, ed. J. Colgan (Louvain, 1647; repr. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1948), 64A-108B; repr. Jocelin, ‘Vita auctore Jocelino monacho de Furnesio: Patricius episcopus, apostolus & primas Hiberniae’, in *AASS Martii* 2, ed. G. Henskens and D. Papebroch (Antwerp: Iacobus Meursius, 1668), cols. 0540B-0580D; trans. J. O’Leary, ‘The acts of St. Patrick’, in idem, *The most ancient lives of Saint Patrick: including the Life by Jocelin, hitherto unpublished in America, and his extant writings*, Irish Fireside Library (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1883), 132-347.
- Vita quarta* ‘Vita quarta’, in *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan’s Vita secunda, quarta, tertia, and quinta*, ed. L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 8 (Dublin: DIAS, 1971), 47-114.
- Vita Ruadani D.* ‘Vita S. Ruadani abbatis de Lothra’, in *VSHP*, 2:240-52.
- Vita Ruadani S.* ‘Vita S. Ruadani abbatis de Lothra’, in *VSHP*, 160-7.
- Vita Samsonis* ‘Vita Samsonis’, in *La vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol*, ed. and trans. P. Flobert, *Sources d’Histoire Médiévale* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1997), 134-269; trans. T. Taylor, *The Life of St. Samson of Dol* (London: SPCK, 1925; repr. Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991), 1-78.
- Vita secunda* ‘Vita secunda’, in *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan’s Vita secunda, quarta, tertia, and quinta*, ed. L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 8 (Dublin: DIAS, 1971), 47-97.
- Vita tertia* ‘Vita tertia’, in *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan’s Vita secunda, quarta, tertia, and quinta*, ed. L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 8 (Dublin: DIAS, 1971), 118-90.
- Vita tripartita* *Bethu Phátraic: the tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. K. Mulchrone (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., 1939), 1-155; trans. W. Stokes, in *The tripartite Life of Patrick: with other documents relating to that saint*, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, RS 89, 2 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887).
- Vita Waldevi* Jocelin of Furness, ‘The Latin text of the Vita Waldevi’, in G.J. McFadden, ‘An edition and translation of the Life of Waldef, Abbot of Melrose by Jocelin of Furness’ (New York: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: Columbia University,

- 1952), 92-200; trans. McFadden, 'The Life of Waldef: translation and notes', in idem, 'An edition', 201-357.
- Vita Werburge* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, 'Vita S. Werburge', in *The hagiography of the female saints of Ely*, ed. R.C. Love, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 25-52.
- Vita Wilfridi Ead.* Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Wilfridi auctore Edmero', in idem, *Vita sancti Wilfridi auctore Edmero: the Life of Saint Wilfrid by Edmer*, ed. and trans. B.J. Muir and A.J. Turner, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 8-161.
- Vita Wilfridi St.* Stephen of Ripon, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid, by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge: CUP, 1927; repr. 1985), 2-149.
- Vita Wulfrici* John of Forde, 'The Life of Blessed Wulfric', in idem, *Wulfric of Haselbury, by John, Abbott of Ford*, ed. M. Bell, Somerset Record Society 47 (London: Butler and Tanner, 1933), 13-135; trans. P. Matarasso, in John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, anchorite*, Cistercian Fathers Series 79 (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2011), 87-217.
- Vita Wulfstani* William of Malmesbury, 'Vita Wulfstani', in idem, *Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 10-155.
- Vita Wulsini* Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, 'The Life of Saint Wulsin of Sherborne by Goscelin', ed. C.H. Talbot, *Revue Bénédictine* 69 (1959), 68-85; trans. R.C. Love, in 'The Life of St Wulfsige of Sherborne by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin', in *St. Wulfsige and Sherborne: essays to celebrate the millennium of the Benedictine abbey, 998-1998*, ed. K. Barker, D.A. Hinton and A. Hunt (Oxford: Oxbow, 2005), 102-17 [98-123].
- VSHH* *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae: ex Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, ed. W.W. Heist, SH 28 (Brussels: Société des bollandistes, 1965).
- VSHP* *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae partim hactenus ineditae, ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum recognovit prolegomenis notis indicibus instruxit*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).

ZCP

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Introduction

The present dissertation concerns the dual, intertwined themes of cursing and miraculous vengeance as they appear in the vernacular and Latin hagiography of England and Ireland, c. 1060-1215. Spanning the long twelfth century, the chronological range covers the period of conquest, reform, and changing cultural contact among the diverse polities of the Irish Sea world. The 1060s saw the beginnings of a process of reform in England and Ireland and of conquest in England, along with a coinciding resurgence in hagiographical production in both polities.¹ The year 1215 marked the convocation of the Fourth Lateran Council, and the continuing progress of ecclesiastical reform in Latin Christendom with a new series of systematising and universalising norms.² Between those two dates, the world of the hagiographer on either side of the Irish Sea was shaped and reshaped by conflicts between kings and clerics, by the promotion of new saints and the resurgence of old ones, by the continuities of local tradition and by the introduction of universal ideals, by old and new religious orders, and by the political consequences of the conquests of England in 1066 and of Ireland in 1169. Those processes left their inevitable mark on the religious culture and literature of the period, and on the ways in which divine providence, saintly intercession, maledictions and miracles were understood and represented in the contemporary narratives which made sense of those same changing worlds. The following introduction sets out the scholarship concerned with hagiography (I) and with cursing and vengeance (II), along with the sources, aims, and chapters for the dissertation (III).

I

¹ The complex relationships between these two sets of developments in England are set out briefly in P.A. Hayward, 'Saints and cults', in *A social history of England, 900-1200*, ed. J. Crick and E. van Houts (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 314-20 [309-20]; and M. Lapidge and R. Love, 'The Latin hagiography of England and Wales (600-1500)', in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, CC, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-2006), 3:225, 3:254-7 [3:203-325]. For this process in Ireland, whose beginnings are pinned down with less precision, see M. Herbert, 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland from the origins to the sixteenth century', in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, CC, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-2006), 3:344-50 [3:327-60].

² Ending the chronological range of the thesis just before the Fourth Lateran Council allows one to avoid its potential impact on hagiography, along with the broader scholarly debate over whether the council represented the acceleration or even inauguration of the universalising process of reform, or a transformation that filtered down more slowly in regional and local contexts. See C.S. Watkins, *History and the supernatural in medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought Fourth Series 66 (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 2.

As a rich body of primary source material repaying close study and broad cultural comparison, the primary focus for the present study will be on saints' Lives (Latin 'vitae' and vernacular Irish 'bethada').³ The dissertation will also consider some Latin chronicles, miracle collections, translation narratives, and vernacular saga-material, to the extent that those materials are associated with either the authors or the subjects of the Lives under examination, or otherwise help to shed light on those Lives. The aim shall be primarily to study the cursing episodes contained in these texts within the context of the surrounding narrative: as textual constructions with particular narrative purposes, existing as products of particular historical and intellectual milieux, reflecting the attitudes of particular authors or circumstances, and serving particular agendas and interests. Only once this work has been undertaken is it possible to show what the imagined realities they represented may reveal of broader patterns and understandings of cursing within eleventh- and twelfth-century religious culture and society. By adopting this approach, I address the question of how the literary representation of cursing as exemplified within the Lives was shaped by the needs of their varied audiences and intellectual environments, and as such how it may have conformed to or differed from the theological and canonistic presentations which have thus far received the bulk of scholarly attention on cursing. To do so requires sensitivity to the conventions of the Lives and to the underlying shifts and continuities which characterised its development in diverse geographical regions and contexts during the period in question.

Since the time of Hippolyte Delehaye, it has been widely acknowledged that the hagiographer was never in the modern sense a simple historian or biographer.⁴ One ostensible aim of the hagiographer was to edify and instil religious devotion, such that the literary figure of the saint might be constructed both as an exemplary virtuous model and as a cultic object for that devotion.⁵ The hagiographer might also, as a principal or secondary aim, depending on his motivations, use his text to express contemporary clerical or

³ The most important texts of England and Ireland in this period are most recently surveyed in Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 3:224-79; and Herbert, 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland', 3:344-54. In general in this dissertation I am guided by scholarly translations where they exist and provide corresponding references to those translations alongside the primary editions as a courtesy to the reader, but I freely adapt those translations when quoting the primary text in order to bring out the most precise sense with respect both to the original and to the subjects under discussion. In general I have only found need to signal this explicitly in cases where departures from an established reading may require further justification or where variant readings shed especial light on the subjects under immediate discussion.

⁴ See eg. K.W. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: introduction to the sources*, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 219; T.J. Heffernan, *Sacred biography: saints and their biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 38-71, esp. 55-66; R. Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?: saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 519.

⁵ H. Delehaye, *The legends of the saints (Les légendes hagiographiques)*, trans. D. Attwater (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1905; trans. London: G. Chapman, 1962), 3; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 510-3.

secular claims regarding property and status.⁶ Whatever information the Lives contained was primarily gathered, structured, and sometimes invented a priori for those purposes.⁷ A key underlying premise was that there were not so much ‘lives’ as a single ‘life’ of the saints, with such recognisable markers of sanctity as supernatural grace, asceticism, good works, miraculous power, and evangelical activity – typically manifest from birth or childhood – being held in common by all saints.⁸ In that respect, the Lives are highly conventionalised, with language and topoi drawn from those of scripture and earlier Lives serving as deliberate markers of encoded meanings and universal truths, transcending the historical particulars of time and place and serving to place the saint within the ‘*communio sanctorum*’.⁹ On either side of the Irish Sea, the three most important patristic texts which served as hagiographical models and universal markers of sanctity were the Athanasian translation of Evagrius’ Life of Antony the Great, Sulpicius Severus’ Life of Martin of Tours and *Dialogues*, and Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*, which each achieved a resurgence of popularity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁰ It is the common premises which provide much of the overall stability of convention and comparative ‘sameness’ of the Lives, and this shared set of patristic sources which additionally provides a ready basis for cross-cultural unity and inter-regional comparison.¹¹ Miracles might be included in so far as the defining feature of the saint was his ‘virtutes’, which could encapsulate both thaumaturgical ‘powers’ and moral ‘virtues’.¹² Though hagiographical texts might differ in their emphasis on the moral and the miraculous – particularly as reformers over the course of the twelfth century began to emphasise the former as the principal test of sanctity – the interplay of both was at the heart of narrative representations of vengeance miracles, which

⁶ Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 512.

⁷ P. Ó Riain, ‘St. Abbán: the genesis of an Irish saint’s Life’, in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies held at Oxford, from 10th to 15th July, 1983*, ed. D.E. Evans, J.G. Griffith and E.M. Jope (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989), 159 [159-70]; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 519-20, 523-4.

⁸ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 6-10; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 520, 524-7; D. Weinstein and R.M. Bell, *Saints and society: the two worlds of western Christendom, 1000-1700* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 149.

⁹ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 85-7, 103-122; R.C. Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims: popular beliefs in medieval England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 50-1.

¹⁰ Herbert, ‘Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland’, 3:333-4; idem, ‘The Life of Martin of Tours: a view from twelfth-century Ireland’, in *Ogma: essays in Celtic studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, ed. M. Richter and J.-M. Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 76-8 [76-84]; Lapidge and Love, ‘England and Wales’, 3:208-9. This scholarship has principally focused on their formative influence on early hagiography, but the extent of their influence in the eleventh and twelfth centuries will be seen in Chapter V especially.

¹¹ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 15.

¹² C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his hagiographer: history and miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 9, 98-9; A.M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own country: living saints and the making of sainthood in the later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 8.

were often the most dramatic manifestation of the early and central medieval saint's charisma and could moreover be used for homiletic purposes.¹³

At the same time, the hagiographer was 'an agent of a myth-making mechanism that served a variety of publics'.¹⁴ Lives could be written with different audiences in mind, and rewritten in accordance with changing political needs, historical sensibilities, cultural tastes and intellectual fashions.¹⁵ Indeed, while a Life might be composed or assembled by an individual writer, often the hagiographer is perhaps more accurately understood less as an author, and more as the locus for an interaction between the set of community interests that prompted the composition of the Life and the audience for which it was composed.¹⁶ For the modern scholar, such interactions can be determined through careful and mutually-supporting attention to close textual reading, source criticism, and contextualisation of the individual Lives: identifying sources the hagiographer may have used, discerning where possible editorial processes in his revision and reworking of those texts, and explaining those changes in terms of the overlapping interests of author, patron, and audience. Such explanation goes hand in hand with any explanation of attitudes to cursing in a central medieval context. What will be of crucial importance therefore is the contemporary social and cultural reality and intellectual outlook of the hagiographer and his audience, which these texts, sometimes deliberately and sometimes inadvertently, reveal to us.¹⁷

In the modern positivistic sense, hagiography and historiography are today often understood as separate and irreconcilable genres. Importantly however, it is now recognised that the sharp distinction drawn since the nineteenth century between the two medieval genres is not a valid one. On either side of the Irish Sea, history and hagiography alike were products of an essentially shared literary culture and learned milieu and were often produced by the same sets of writers. Moreover, as Thomas Heffernan and Felice Lifshitz have shown, medieval writers of history often also conceived their genre as being primarily edifying in purpose and content, and writers of saints' Lives similarly often described their task as one of

¹³ B. Ward, *Miracles and the medieval mind: theory, record and event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Wildwood, 1987), 24-6, 184. The reformers' claims were balanced later in the twelfth century by the canonists' demands for proofs of both miracles and moral virtues for the nascent canonisation process, for which see *ibid.*, 184-91.

¹⁴ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and society*, 13.

¹⁵ Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims*, 114-6; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 541-6; F. Lifshitz, 'Beyond positivism and genre: "hagiographical" texts as historical sources', *Viator* 25 (1994), 98 [95-114].

¹⁶ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 18-22.

¹⁷ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and society*, 7, note that the challenge for the modern reader of medieval hagiography is twofold: 'First, to determine whether the information reflects the world of the saint and his contemporaries or the experience of a much later biographer; second, to distinguish between those details that are intended to establish the saint's relations to the supernatural community of all saints and that belong, therefore, to hagiography "tout court", and those that connect the saint to the natural order, to family, peers, class, and the broader society, and therefore belong to history.' It is into the latter two categories that the present study falls.

'historia'.¹⁸ Definitions of 'historia' in eleventh- and twelfth-century Ireland further encompassed vernacular sagas: where religious and secular themes and outlooks overlapped, saintly and heroic protagonists readily crossed between genres, and ostensibly 'secular' saga literature was produced, transmitted and preserved in significant quantity within ecclesiastical foundations.¹⁹ Indeed, it was not until the twelfth century that a meaningful distinction between hagiography and historiography began to emerge, and even then the patterns of that emergence were uneven.²⁰ The source selection for the dissertation is therefore less strictly determined by genre than by subject and content, in particular the extent to which the figure of the saint and the saint's curse is central to the narrative. This principle accordingly favours the form of the Life as its principal focus, but also brings in the other categories mentioned where appropriate.

The hagiographer and historian alike were thus grounded in a shared and 'serious scholarly enterprise, one which had intellectual and political roots and rationale.'²¹ Texts of either genre could function as politically-motivated aetiology or as allegory, allowing the author to project explicit or coded statements of power, prestige, institutional relationships, and even reformist interests and ideals into the ancient past, in order to lend legitimacy and authority to a current or desired state of affairs.²² Though these messages

¹⁸ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 67-9; Lifshitz, 'Beyond positivism and genre', 101-8. For a good example of twelfth-century overlap between Latin history and historiography, see also the number of saints whose lives and miracles appear in William of Malmesbury's ostensibly secular-oriented chronicle (the *Gesta regum*) as listed in M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, 'Introduction', in William of Malmesbury, *Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), xiii fn. 1 [xiii-xxxviii, 307-13].

¹⁹ G. Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle: historiography or fiction?', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 40 (2000), 1-20; T.O. Clancy, 'Gaelic literature in Ireland and Scotland, 900-1150', in *The Cambridge history of early medieval English literature*, ed. C.A. Lees, New Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), 650 [637-59]; P. Sims-Williams and E. Poppe, 'Irish medieval literary theory and criticism', in *The Cambridge history of literary criticism*, ed. P. Brooks, H.B. Nisbet, C. Rawson, 9 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1989-), 2:302 [2:291-309].

²⁰ Lifshitz, 'Beyond positivism and genre', 104-8. Similarly in Ireland, it was only from the latter half of the twelfth century that secular learning properly began to migrate out of the Church and into the hands of lay learned families, though in clerical and secular learned environments of both periods, texts of multiple genres in either or both languages could be preserved within the same manuscripts; for which see M. Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The literature of medieval Ireland, 800-1200: from the Vikings to the Normans', in *Cambridge history of Irish literature*, ed. M. Kelleher and P. O'Leary, 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 1:32-5 [1:32-73]; Herbert, 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland', 353-4.

²¹ Clancy, 'Gaelic literature', 642.

²² R. O'Connor, *The destruction of Da Derga's hostel: kingship and narrative artistry in a mediaeval Irish saga* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 287-8; D. Schlüter, *History or fable? The Book of Leinster as a document of cultural memory in twelfth-century Ireland*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 9 (Münster: Nodus, 2010), 20-1; Clancy, 'Gaelic literature', 650-1; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 512; Hayward, 'Saints and cults', 313-20.

and morals could sometimes be explicit, often the hagiographer and historian operated using a sophisticated common code of figurative allusion and argumentation, largely irrespective of whether they were addressing a court or monastic audience, and the work of either genre accordingly requires the same critical methods to understand. On the Irish side, T.O. Clancy has observed in a formulation as true of hagiography as of history: ‘The narrators of these tales rarely offer clear explanations of what morals or insights we are to take from them. Rather, almost in a form of biblical exegesis, the narrative is left to do such work by means of its structure and rhetoric. The result... is a literature that allows, perhaps even demands, its audience to make mature interpretations of cause, effect and meaning.’²³ Contemporary historians and hagiographers in England could be similarly allusive or more direct, though both believed that truth could be distilled from the past through rhetoric and structure.²⁴ According to the symbolist mentality prevalent throughout the learned circles of Latin Christendom, the past was not only historical but also metaphorical, and multiple levels of meaning could accrue according to the interpretative degrees of author and audience.²⁵ Moreover, these productions could be intensely intertextual, reworking motifs and material from a disparate range of texts on both sides of the alleged genre divide, and demanding from their audience a vivid awareness of wider literary culture.²⁶ Thus, even in cases of works which are compilatory in nature, the redactor is able to stamp a new and cohesive meaning on the gathered text through structure, ordering, and rhetoric.²⁷

Scholars have outlined general trends in the development of hagiography in England and Ireland. For Anglo-Latin hagiography, the most recent and comprehensive guide is that of Michael Lapidge and Rosalind Love, which schematises three general periods of hagiographic production of relevance to the dissertation, each with their own themes and interests. These comprise the composition of Lives for the promotion of cult in the late eleventh and early twelfth century; the development of intimate biography, psychological elaboration, and gathering of miracle accounts from the early twelfth century on; and the

²³ Clancy, ‘Gaelic literature’, 649. See also Sims-Williams and Poppe, ‘Medieval Irish literary theory’, 302; Ó T. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The rhetoric of “Fingal Rónáin”’, *Celtica* 17 (1985), 125, 130, 144 [123-144]; Ó Corrain, ‘Legend as critic’, 29-30.

²⁴ See Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 74-9, 84-92; R.W. Southern, ‘Aspects of the European tradition of historical writing I: the classical tradition from Einhard to Geoffrey’, in *History and historians: selected papers of R.W. Southern*, ed. R. Bartlett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 14-18, 23-4, 27-8 [11-29]; idem, ‘Aspects of the European tradition of historical writing II: Hugh of St. Victor and the idea of historical development’, in *ibid.*, 30-33 [30-47].

²⁵ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 84-122. On the broader twelfth-century context, see M.D. Chenu, *Nature, man and society in the twelfth century: essays on new theological perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. and trans. J. Taylor and L.K. Little, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 37 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 99-102.

²⁶ Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘The literature of medieval Ireland’, 32, 35-6; Clancy, ‘Gaelic literature’, 647-8; Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 78-9, 103-22.

²⁷ T. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The rhetoric of “Fingal Rónáin”’, *Celtica* 17 (1985), 144 [123-144]; O’Connor, *The destruction*, 37-8, 39-41, 49-50.

formalisation of the canonisation process, the long shadow (in life and death) of Thomas Becket, and canonistic developments in general influencing hagiographers in the second half of the twelfth century.²⁸ In Ireland, the phases of hagiographical production have been most recently sketched by Máire Herbert, while the broad ecclesiastical contexts have been established by M.T. Flanagan.²⁹ By the middle of the eleventh century, hagiographical writing both in Latin and the vernacular was being produced in significant quantity, with Lives produced or recast in homiletic form and displaying concerns for property and clerical-secular relations.³⁰ The twelfth century saw further writing and rewriting of Lives in Latin to depict their subjects as exemplars of clerical life and episcopal leadership, under the influence of Continental contact, reformist and canonistic impulses, and the introduction and rearrangement of diocesan boundaries and structures.³¹ Finally, the Anglo-Norman conquest of 1169 initiated a new phase of Latin hagiography, concerned with communicating the traditions of native saints to a non-native audience, impressing new patrons, and defensively arguing for clerical autonomy or property in potential dispute with the agents of conquest.³² Without being committed to any hard boundaries of periodisation, which represent shifts of emphasis rather than radical transformation, all six sets of developmental influences associated with these proposed phases touch on texts in the dissertation, and will be expanded upon in further detail in their proper place.

II

Beyond questions of genre, attention must be given to the specific scholarship on saints' vengeance, punitive miracles, and the often porous ritual practices of cursing and excommunication. The importance of miracles and miracle-lists to the communities that held the saint's relics and the pilgrims that flocked to them has been well studied, as in the work of Ronald Finucane, Barbara Abou-El-Haj, and Rachel

²⁸ Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 3:224-5, 3:254-7, 3:268-72; but cf. also Hayward, 'Saints and cults', 309-20, which problematises some of the earlier views of the development of the genre's function. Because the majority of the cases in the present study predate the sensational aftermath of Becket's martyrdom in 1170, the importance of Becket will here be chiefly in terms of the influence of excommunications he promulgated, as will be alluded to briefly in Chapter II, rather than the posthumous development of his cult.

²⁹ Herbert, 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland', 344-55; M.T. Flanagan, *The transformation of the Irish church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, Studies in Celtic History 29 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 14-7.

³⁰ Herbert, 'Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland', 3:339-40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3:347-50.

³² *Ibid.*, 3:350-3; P. Ó Riain, 'St. Abbán', 162-6; *idem*, 'The O'Donohue Lives of the Salamanca Codex: the earliest collection of Irish saints' Lives?', in *Gablánach in scélaigeacht: Celtic studies in honour of Ann Dooley*, ed. S. Sheehan, J. Findon, and W. Follett (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), 44-52 [38-52].

Koopmans.³³ The eleventh and twelfth centuries have been particularly seen as a heyday for punitive miracles, which in turn have been described as ‘the obverse and reverse of a shrine’s attraction for pilgrims and its value for the clergy.’³⁴ In the work of André Sigal on the recorded miracles of eleventh- and twelfth-century Francia, for example, punitive miracles comprise the second most common posthumous miracle performed by a saint, after miracles of healing.³⁵ The social role of the departed saint as patron, intercessor and miraculous defender of his community created fertile conditions for a range of formal and ad-hoc ritual practices designed to elicit the saint or the Divinity’s miraculous support in times of pressure and crisis, the categories of which have been discerned from liturgical and legal texts and been made well-established in modern scholarship. One such practice, identified and studied by Patrick Geary, was the ritual humiliation of relics – a liturgical practice which aimed to ‘coerce’ saints into acting on behalf of their communities in times of tribulation and hardship.³⁶ Closely related to this was the Benedictine liturgy of malediction, the ‘clamor’, first identified by Lester Little in an article on the practice in ninth- and tenth-century Francia.³⁷ Little later expanded the geographical and chronological range of this study into the thirteenth century and into Wales and Ireland in an important monograph on the subject, and to the eighteenth century within the broader Latin Church in a later article on the separation of blessings from curses.³⁸ Later work building on Geary and Little has clarified our impression of the clamor and of ritual humiliation in England also.³⁹ Meanwhile Dan Wiley and Bernard Mees deepened scholarly understanding of clerical ritual cursing in an Irish context, with the former in particular focusing on the analogue to the Benedictine clamor in the Irish maledictory psalms (‘sailme escaíne’, lit. ‘psalms of

³³ Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims*; B. Abou-El-Haj, *The medieval cult of saints: formations and transformations* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994); R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate: miracle stories and miracle collecting in high medieval England*, *The Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

³⁴ Abou-El-Haj, *Cult of saints*, 43-6, 55-60, quoted at 55; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 401-9, see esp. 405.

³⁵ P.-A. Sigal, *L’homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe-XIIe siècle)*, *Histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 276-82, 289-90; Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 342-4, 404. Moreover, almost nine-tenths of the punitive miracles analysed by Sigal were posthumous.

³⁶ P. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 95-115, described in liturgical terms at 97-106 in particular.

³⁷ L.K. Little ‘Formules monastiques de malédiction aux ix^e et x^e siècles’, *Revue Mabillon* 58 (1975), 377-99.

³⁸ Idem, *Benedictine maledictions: liturgical cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 44-51, 121-49; idem, ‘The separation of religious curses from blessings in the Latin West’, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006/2007), 29-40.

³⁹ Aside from noting formulas from Rochester, Saint Germans and Winchester, ‘all foreign imports’, Little saw ‘no evidence’ of such practices in England; see idem, *Benedictine maledictions*, 48-50, 129. The picture of ritual cursing in England has been expanded and modified by C. Cubitt, ‘Archbishop Dunstan: a prophet in politics?’, in *Myth, rulership, church and charters: essays in honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. J. Barrow and A. Wareham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 152-66 [145-166]; while further analogues are lightly surveyed by R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings, 1075-1225*, *New Oxford History of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 447-9, who maintains that the examples were ‘traditional practice’.

excommunication⁴⁰);⁴⁰ while Flanagan has argued that the specifically Continental practices of ritual humiliation and the clamor may have additionally been imported to Ireland at some point in the eleventh or twelfth century.⁴¹ Also important in the Irish context is the work of D.A. Binchy and Fergus Kelly on ritual fasting as a form of legal distraint, which in the hagiographical literature could be used by saints to coerce superior dignities through the dual threats of social shame and miraculous effect.⁴² Little, Wiley, Kelly, and Geary have respectively seen the clamor, the maledictory psalms, coercive fasting, and ritual humiliation as instances of a graded conflict management mechanism. Whereas the utterance of an outright malediction called on God to pronounce the absolute act of damnation, the scope of the liturgy and of ritualised practice allowed for a range of isolated, repeated, or combined performances with differing levels of severity and duration according to the gravity of the situation.⁴³ Lacking effective judicial, political or military mechanisms of recourse, monks thus manipulated their religious function of continuing the proper cult of Christ and the saints via the deliberate inversion of the expected social and cosmic hierarchy, to act as ‘leverage on the rest of society.’⁴⁴ These findings echo those of Barbara Rosenwein, who saw the Cluniac liturgy as a form of ‘ritual aggression’ deployed by monks to ensure the protection of their property.⁴⁵

Similar arguments have been made more recently by Christian Jaser, who saw the clerical arsenal in times of heightened conflict with secular powers as consisting of ‘several different, yet tightly interrelated, mechanisms: hagiographical “barbed-wire miracles”, sanction clauses in charters, liturgical calls for justice of religious communities, visionary literature and, finally, ritual excommunication.’⁴⁶ The importance of

⁴⁰ D.M. Wiley ‘The maledictory Psalms’, *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 262-8 [261-279]. B. Mees, *Celtic curses* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 117, notes that the literal name of these as ‘excommunicating psalms’ suggests they were originally modelled on early ecclesiastical rites of excommunication.

⁴¹ Flanagan, *Transformation*, 234-8, which notes the practice as performed by native clergy in Connacht around the time of the 1169 conquest.

⁴² F. Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin: DIAS, 1988; revised 2015), 20. For earlier, still relevant, surveys, see R. Thurneysen, ‘Aus dem irischen Recht II: Das Fasten beim Pfändungsverfahren’, *ZCP* 15 (1925), 260-75; F.N. Robinson, ‘Notes on the Irish practice of fasting as a means of distraint’, in *Putnam anniversary volume: Anthropological essays presented to Frederic Ward Putnam in honour of his seventieth birthday, April 16, 1909, by his friends and associates*, ed. F. Boas, et al. (New York: G.E. Stechert and Co. Publishers, 1909), 567-83; D.A. Binchy, ‘A pre-Christian survival in mediaeval Irish hagiography’, in *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. N. Dumville (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), 165-78; idem, ‘Irish history and Irish law’, *Studia Hibernica* 15 (1975), 23-7 [7-36].

⁴³ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 124; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 217-218; Wiley, ‘The maledictory psalms’, 268-269.

⁴⁴ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 123.

⁴⁵ B. Rosenwein, ‘Feudal war and monastic peace: Cluniac liturgy as ritual aggression’, *Viator* 2 (1971), 129-57.

⁴⁶ C. Jaser, ‘Ritual excommunication: an “ars oblivionalis”?’ in *Memory and commemoration in medieval culture*, ed. E. Brenner, M. Cohen, M. Franklin-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 122 [119-139]. See also idem, *Ecclesia maledicens*:

charters and sanction clauses in influencing the language and liturgy of cursing more broadly had been previously considered by Little and Jeffrey Bowman, who showed that this category of sources could be evidence for cursing practices more generally in the absence of other categories of evidence.⁴⁷ To this can be added the biblically-inspired maledictory formulas of excommunication, which Jaser described in his recent study of excommunication as a kind of ‘rhetorical amplification’.⁴⁸ In its sociological interpretation of these performances, Jaser’s work built on research by Dominique Barthélemy, Paul Hyams and Gerd Althoff on medieval feud and conflict management, which saw such ritualised actions as rule-bound leveraging mechanisms designed toward temporary, face-saving, negotiated settlements, rather than aiming at the definitive cessation of conflict.⁴⁹

Such work is crucial in understanding the carefully graded progression of conflict between cursing saints and their clerical and lay antagonists in hagiographical texts either side of the Irish Sea, though the question of whether the hagiographical texts themselves were intended to deter would-be transgressors, or were directed toward internal consumption or other homiletic ends, is one this dissertation will critically consider. For example, Robert Bartlett, summarising one established scholarly view, argues that accounts of punitive miracles in cases of theft or violation of ecclesiastical lands and sanctuary in the Lives had ‘an explicitly deterrent purpose’, with the social role of the saint being the protection of the status and property of his community.⁵⁰ Other texts might alternatively themselves serve as evidence in dispute over competing claims, as in rival eleventh- and twelfth-century Lives of Dunstan produced on behalf of Glastonbury and Canterbury, or the rival Lives of Ciarán of Saigir attributed to a thirteenth-century context.⁵¹ However, Koopmans and Abou-El-Haj have proposed that the predominantly Latin Lives and miracle collections of England chiefly circulated instead within a small, private readership of the

rituelle und zeremonielle Exkommunikationsformen im Mittelalter, Spätmittelalter Humanismus Reformation 75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 118-149.

⁴⁷ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 52-9; J.A. Bowman, ‘Do neo-Romans curse?’, *Viator* 28 (1997), 8-20 [1-33].

⁴⁸ Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens*, 171-84, quoted at 171: ‘Rhetorische “amplificatio”...’

⁴⁹ D. Barthélemy, *Chevaliers et miracles: la violence et le sacré dans la société féodale*, Collection les Enjeux de L’histoire (Paris: Colin, 2004); P.R. Hyams, *Rancor and reconciliation in medieval England*, Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past (London: Cornell University Press, 2003); G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997). For the ‘Spielregeln der Politik’, in Althoff and Jaser’s terminology, see Althoff, *ibid.*, 128; Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens*, 129; Jaser, ‘Ritual excommunication’, 122.

⁵⁰ Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 512.

⁵¹ See Winterbottom and Thomson, ‘Introduction’, xxii-i; P. Ó Riain, ‘The Lives of Saint Ciarán, patron of the diocese of Ossory’, *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 3 (2008), 27-31 [25-42]. The case is most specifically relevant in Irish hagiography, where the saint’s curse or blessing was often provided as the aetiology for a particular grant of land or for a particular dynastic or institutional relationship.

monastic or clerical community, with little interest in communicating those miracles back to the laity.⁵² Abou-El-Haj notably argued from her study of the Benedictine Life of Cuthbert against the presumed instrumentality of the Lives in more material struggles: in her view, the textual and pictorial representations of punitive interventions were ‘the fantasies the monks visualised for themselves as what ought to be, while they pragmatically pursued their objectives with every realistic means’ of legal or economic recourse available to them.⁵³ Hagiographical episodes of past vindications might thus principally operate as private or communal meditations to instil faith and resilience in the face of oppression. The picture naturally depends on what audience a particular text was addressing. Audience and purpose might detectably vary with the in-house Latin texts of the English Benedictines, the vernacular homiletic and saga texts of Ireland, or the homiletic and edificatory texts produced by the English Cistercians – the latter two of which addressed mixed clerical and lay audiences alike.⁵⁴ This is another advantage of close sensitivity to context and audience, and those cases will be used in the dissertation to nuance the overall picture.

The social contexts of conflict management are also important in explaining why reported punitive miracles are represented as fatal or redemptive in their narrative setting. For Little, the formulas of excommunication and malediction contained in liturgical books and charter sanction-clauses were always envisioned as a temporary and medicinal corrective: excommunication could be lifted by rites of reintegration, while sanction-clauses and curses were often constructed as being automatically self-lifting under conditions of repentance.⁵⁵ For Jaser, the damnation concomitant with excommunication was necessarily dependent on the obstinacy of the excommunicant; with even post-mortem absolution receiving official papal sanction in 1199, provided that the excommunicant had shown clear signs of repentance before death.⁵⁶ The same observations have also been drawn by scholarship on the biblical context: Nebuchadnezzar’s seven-year exile was a temporary condition to humble his pride; while St. Peter’s fatal malediction of Ananias and Sapphira, in the view of D.R. McCabe, was only made effective

⁵² Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, 133; Abou-El-Haj, *Cult of saints*, 59.

⁵³ Abou-El-Haj, *Cult of saints*, 59.

⁵⁴ For the monastic audiences of the Benedictine Lives, and the clerical and lay audiences of the Cistercian Lives, see the first sections of Chapters I-III. For the homiletic audiences of Irish vernacular hagiography, see Herbert, ‘Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland’, 344-5; idem, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: the history and hagiography of the monastic familia of Columba* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 194-8; Flanagan, *Transformation*, 15-16; C. Doherty, ‘The transmission of the cult of St. Máedhóg’, in *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: texts and transmission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), 274-5, 279, 282 [268-83]; K. Simms, *Medieval Gaelic sources*, Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History 14 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 57, 59; F. Mac Donncha, ‘Medieval Irish homilies’, in *Biblical studies: the Irish contribution*, ed. M. McNamara (Dublin, 1976), 59-71.

⁵⁵ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 13, 143-6; idem, ‘Separation of curses from blessings’, 30, 38.

⁵⁶ Jaser, ‘Ritual excommunication’, 125, 129, 138.

by the offenders' obstinacy in the face of correction.⁵⁷ The nature of cursing as a temporary corrective is in principle also partly true of the hagiographic material, although fatal episodes of cursing also appear. It is characteristic of the diverse nature of the evidence that scholars can come to precisely the opposite conclusions depending on whether they approach the question primarily from theological and canon-legal texts or primarily from narrative evidence. In the view of one scholar looking at a narrative text herein considered, 'malediction is anything but medicinal and it cannot be remedied'.⁵⁸ As the dissertation will show, such assessments might reasonably vary not only across different narrative texts, but even across narrative episodes of the same text. Assessing whether hagiographical accounts of miraculous vengeance and cursing do indeed sit within a theology of redemptive chastisement, and determining precisely which local and contextual factors place pressures on that theology – whether the insecurity of the hagiographer's institution, the hostility of the oppressor, the perceived alienness of an ethnic other, or the obstinacy of the recalcitrant sinner – are questions the dissertation can test through the case studies. Such close and contextualised comparison allows one to bridge the gap between legal historians and literary historians arising from their respective sources.

There additionally exists a chronological paradigm for the changing practice of cursing in this period. Notably, Little and Geary argued – albeit using largely Continental evidence – for a general decline in cursing from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The causes were seen as twofold. The first cause was functionalist, seeing an increase in political stability and judicial structures over the course of the twelfth century, with the maledictions in charter sanction-clauses being replaced by threats of fines.⁵⁹ A parallel narrative of the increased 'judicialisation' of society exists also for excommunication in England. Richard Helmholz argued that alongside the changing conceptions of excommunication in the twelfth century, the earlier immediate and *ex parte* pronouncements of the saint's curse had given way by the beginning of the thirteenth century to the stricter canonistic rules of issuing proceedings of excommunication with prior notice to the defendants.⁶⁰ England and Ireland's political and social contexts however varied internally and differed from one another, which provides a good series of cases to test these observations. The second, more universal attributed cause was intellectual, reflecting a shift in scholarly emphasis from the Old Testament to the Gospels inspired by the reformist orders of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, said to have opened up malediction to increased criticism from

⁵⁷ D.R. McCabe, *How to kill things with words: Ananias and Sapphira under the prophetic speech-act of divine judgment (Acts 4.32-5.11)*, T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies, Library of New Testament Studies 454 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 26-7.

⁵⁸ Wiley, 'The maledictory Psalms', 277.

⁵⁹ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 230-3; idem, 'Separation of religious blessings from curses', 35.

⁶⁰ R.H. Helmholz, 'Excommunication in twelfth-century England', *Journal of Law and Religion* 11.1 (1994-5), 237 [235-53].

prominent figures such as Peter Damian, Norbert of Xanten, and Stephen of Muret.⁶¹ Ritual formulas of cursing became less complex than those of their eleventh- and twelfth-century height, and eventually the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 forbade outright the humiliation of saints as a ‘detestable abuse’ and ‘unspeakable impiety.’⁶²

These impressions from canon law and reform-minded theologians may however oversimplify the situation. Jaser has recently spoken of these latter centuries as representing more of ‘a slow shift of emphasis than a radical change’, and his study of the later exempla collections used for preaching after the end of our period shows that excommunication did not lose any of its imaginative terrors as a result of this process of bringing excommunication under more formalised and centralised control.⁶³ A similar case has been argued by Felicity Hill using thirteenth-century English political evidence.⁶⁴ These insights are particularly important when such ritualised or *ex tempore* practices of cursing are represented in the literary setting of such a rhetorical genre as hagiography – a genre in which the hagiographer may be attuned to developing canonistic and theological outlooks, yet might subordinate those universal concerns to the more immediate, localised needs and contingent pressures affecting his patron, community, and audience. Another advantage of the present study therefore is that the range of cases drawn from diverse regions and textual communities provide a series of bore-holes that test and challenge the overall chronological picture of cursing – investigating patterns of synchronic diversity in addition to diachronic change, as well as a range of available theologies deliberately selected and adapted according to the immediate local circumstances, contexts, and narrative needs.

III

For the dissertation, my approach is to subject a selection of four relatively discrete case studies of ‘textual clusters’ to close reading before drawing wider thematic comparisons, on the grounds proposed by Aviad Kleinberg that “‘thick descriptions’... of a small number of cases are more likely to do justice [to those cases] than a cursory survey of a great number of cases.”⁶⁵ For this approach to succeed, the selection of primary sources must be texts representative of the wider genre of hagiography, which contain episodes of miraculous vengeance and cursing, and which afford sufficient degrees of thematic similarity and

⁶¹ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 233-9; idem, ‘Separation of curses from blessings’, 35-36. For the context of the ‘Evangelical Awakening’, see Chenu, *Nature, man, and society*, 239-69.

⁶² Geary, *Living with the dead*, 115; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 236-7; idem, ‘Separation of curses from blessings’, 35-6.

⁶³ Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens*, 309, 322-359, quoted at 309: ‘...einer langsamen Akzentverschiebung als einem radikalen Umbruch.’

⁶⁴ F.G. Hill, ‘Excommunication and politics in thirteenth-century England’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: University of East Anglia, 2016), 19-20, 77-82, 120.

⁶⁵ Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own country*, 9.

contrast to illustrate the richness and diversity of the material and form a surefooted basis for comparison. The contexts of the texts and authors will be set out in each chapter but it is useful here to introduce the general selection. The starting point for **Chapter I** is the work of the southern English Benedictines, who stand as representative of the diversity of traditional forms of monasticism and religious culture within England at the start of the period, while also being the most active hagiographers during the renewal of history-writing in the period of c. 1060-1140.⁶⁶ The key Benedictine writers comprise Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, Eadmer of Canterbury, and William of Malmesbury, all men unique and outstanding for their individual scholarly and literary achievements while also being steeped in the conventions and concerns of Benedictine monasticism in England.⁶⁷ The sheer breadth of their corpora and the relative security with which their texts have been attributed and dated makes them the securest anchor with which to begin the project, and they will be adverted to as a key reference point in the later case studies. After them the project broadens to the English Cistercians of c. 1140-1215, as representatives of the most prominent reformed order of the period who may have held distinctive approaches to the question of curse and vengeance, and who also wrote abundantly for a wide range of monastic and non-monastic audiences.⁶⁸ These are split across two chapters. **Chapter II** covers the long-celebrated theologian and historian of Aelred of Rievaulx, his noted secretary and eventual hagiographer Walter Daniel, and the no-less important hagiographer John of Forde. With these, the project progresses chronologically and expands regionally to the north, while retaining a foothold in southwest England to provide bases for comparison. **Chapter III** is dedicated to the more belatedly appreciated northern hagiographer Jocelin of Furness, active in a series of high profile commissions in England, Scotland and Ireland, and who stands as a figure of interest in his own right – in terms of the breadth and variety of his work, his wide-ranging participation in the cross-regional contact and exchange of the Irish Sea world, and his position amidst chronological developments leading into the early decades of the thirteenth century.

For **Chapter IV**, establishing a relevant corpus of securely dated and attributed material in an Irish context is more difficult. From medieval Ireland there survive some one hundred Latin Lives known of

⁶⁶ Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 3:224-60. For the state of this traditional monasticism on the eve of the conquest, see J. Burton, *The monastic order in Yorkshire, 1069-1215*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought Fourth Series 40 (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 1-7, 15-8.

⁶⁷ Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 3:224-33, 3:239-42, 3:258-60. The assessment is an adapted paraphrase of that of R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 6, 8, 12, on William; and of R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm and his biographer: a study of monastic life and thought, 1059-c.1130*, Birkbeck Lectures (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), 274-5.

⁶⁸ Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 3:260-1, 3:266-7. For the general development of the order, their coming to Britain, and their impact on literary activity, see M.G. Newman, 'Foundation and twelfth century', in *CCCO*, 27-35; Burton, *Monastic and religious orders*, 69-77, 187-8. The audiences of the hagiographers cited ranged from neighbouring canons and local laity to royal, episcopal and papal courts.

some sixty Irish saints, nearly all said to have lived some time from the fifth to seventh centuries.⁶⁹ The majority of these Lives are anonymous texts that survive (sometimes in multiple recensions) across three great compilations of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, designated by Richard Sharpe as the Dublin (D), Salamanca (S), and Oxford (O) collections.⁷⁰ The major vernacular collections meanwhile were compiled in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷¹ These collections saw differing degrees of editorial intervention, sometimes amounting to simple transcription but more often bearing the heavy stamp of the redactor.⁷² Being transmitted in this way, a major difficulty is the anonymity of the Lives and the fact that many of them still await detailed critical dossier study to establish their precise dates, provenances and contexts. Where such work has been done, Lives may be dated on either linguistic or contextual grounds. The first approach is possible for the vernacular, allowing one to situate a text within the broad periods of Old Irish (600-900), Middle Irish (900-1200), or later (Early Modern Irish, 1200-1600).⁷³ This is

⁶⁹ The main surveys of this material and its subjects can be found in C. Plummer, 'A tentative catalogue of Irish hagiography', in idem, *Miscellanea hagiographica hibernica: vitae adhuc ineditae sanctorum MacCreiche, Naile, Cranat*, SH 15 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1925), 171-285; J.F. Kenney, *Sources*, 288-621; R. Sharpe, *MISL*, 390-8; and P. Ó Riain, *DIS*, 49-583. The figure for the number of saints and Lives is quoted from Sharpe, *MISL*, 5.

⁷⁰ The collections are otherwise known by the titles given to them by their seventeenth-century owners: the *Codex Kilkenniensis*, *Dublinensis* or *Ardmachanus* in the case of the Dublin collection; the *Salamanticensis* in the case of the Salamanca collection; and the *Codex Insulensis* or *Codex Insulae Sanctorum* in the case of the Oxford collection. For the early modern histories of the collections, see Sharpe, *MISL*, 93-108, 228-30, 247-65.

The first two of these collections, with selections from the third, have been edited respectively in *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910); *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae: ex Codice olim Salamanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, ed. W.W. Heist, SH 28 (Brussels: Société de bollandistes, 1965).

⁷¹ The main collections of vernacular Lives are those contained in the fifteenth-century Book of Lismore, the fifteenth-century Royal Irish Academy A.4.1, Stowe MS No. ix, and two seventeenth-century manuscripts copied by Michael O'Clery, Brussels MS 2324-40 and Brussels MS 4190-200. These Lives have been edited and translated in *Bethada náem nÉirenn: Lives of Irish saints*, ed. and trans. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922); *Lives of saints from the Book of Lismore*, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890; repr. Felinach: Llanerch, 1995). See BNE, xi-iv for comments on the original MSS.

⁷² One can notably contrast the Lives of the Salamanca collection, a compilation which seems simply to have copied the Lives as they were being gathered without the intervention of any identifiable editorial style, with those of the Dublin collection, whose evenness display heavy revision such that 'almost every Life in the collection betrays the interests, the idiosyncrasies, and the linguistic stamp of one redactor'. See Sharpe, *MISL*, 115-8, 240-6. Sharpe, *ibid*, 213-5, also established the most common habitual markers of the Dublin redactor, allowing one control for his interventions. The manuscripts copied by Michael O'Clery are also taken as faithful transcriptions without the intervention of the copyist, whereas those of Oxford collection are the most heavily revised of all, representing homiletic reworkings of the thirteenth century.

⁷³ M. Richter, *Medieval Ireland: the enduring tradition* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), 11-13; L. Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', in *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Phádraig Ó Fiannachta*, ed. Kim McCone et al. (Maynooth: Roinn na Sean-Ghaeilge, Coláiste Phádraig, 1994), 221-333.

not possible for the Latin Lives except where certain names display vernacular orthographic features, which even then bears the risk that later hagiographers and compilers had the interest and ability to replicate archaic forms in order to imbue their texts with an air of antiquity.⁷⁴ In the absence of secure linguistic footholds, one may evaluate the Lives in terms of the hagiographer's perceived interests and allusions to contemporary political events, and thence suggest the immediate political contexts which might best explain them; although in extreme cases, gaps in our present understanding of the surviving historical record and the inherent multivalence of literary allusion and allegory can mean that the same Life might seem equally well-fitted to different contexts as much as five hundred years apart.⁷⁵ The tensions inherent in these methods can be notably illustrated by a group of material common to the Latin compilations known as the O'Donohue Lives, which Sharpe argued on largely onomastic grounds might be datable to a period of transcription some time between 750x850, but which Pádraig Ó Riain suggested contain evidence of historical anachronism and geographical associations that might point to a context of deliberate forgery in the twelfth century by the newly introduced Augustinian canons, concerned with projecting their foundations' privileges and interests.⁷⁶ Neither case can be proved for the constituents of such collections except by close attention to relevant recensions of the individual Lives, which will thus be set out in some detail at the beginning of Chapter IV.

One is fortunate however in that the texts most prominently associated with cursing in the scholarship are also among those which have received the most attention with regard to date and context. An early textual cluster comprises the Lives connected with the federation of churches associated with Saint Máedóc of Ferns in the period of c.1060-1160, with texts produced within the kingdom of Leinster in the southeast and the kingdom of Bréifne in the northwest. The later textual cluster is that associated with

⁷⁴ E. Slotkin, 'Medieval Irish scribes and fixed texts', *Éigse* 17 (1978), 437-50; idem, 'Folklorists and medieval Celtic philology: a theoretical model', in *Celtic folklore and Christianity: studies in memory of William W. Heist*, ed. P.K. Ford (Los Angeles, California: McNally and Loftin, 1983), 213-25; L. Maney, 'Rethinking the political narrative of medieval Ireland: the hagiographer as witness', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 15 (1995), 90 [89-105]; Ó Riain, 'O'Donohue Lives', 52. See also K. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature*, Maynooth Monographs 3 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1990), ch. 3.

⁷⁵ See for instance the rival views on the Lives of Ciarán of Saigir and whether they should be assigned to an eighth- or twelfth-century context, as respectively propounded by I. Sperber, 'The Life of St. Ciarán of Saighir', in *Offaly: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, ed. W. Nolan and T.P. O'Neill (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1998), 131-2 [131-152]; and P. Ó Riain, 'The Lives of Saint Ciarán, patron of the diocese of Ossory', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 3 (2008), 27-31 [25-42].

⁷⁶ *MISL*, 326-9; Ó Riain, 'O'Donohue Lives', 44-52. Also important are the criticisms of Sharpe's thesis on linguistic grounds, which open the possibility that the linguistic features of the O'Donohue Lives may actually date the group as a whole to the Middle Irish period of 900-1200 or later. See J. Carey, 'Review of "Medieval Irish saint's Lives: an introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae"', by Richard Sharpe', *Speculum* 68.1 (1993), 261-2 [260-2]; C. Breatnach, 'The significance of the orthography of Irish proper names in the Codex Salmanticensis', *Ériu* 55 (2005), 85-101.

Saint Ruadán of Lorrha, ranging across the period c. 1100-1200. The majority of these texts survive in Latin, but many were originally written in the vernacular, and key attention will also be given to the late eleventh- or early twelfth-century vernacular saga containing arguably the most famous episode of cursing, *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill* ('The death-tale of Diarmait mac Cerbaill'). The selection crucially enables the dissertation to trace across a wide range of political, historical and literary contexts in an Irish setting the themes of vengeance and cursing discerned from an English context, while also affording another base for comparison.

Of this material, the questions which are foremost in the dissertation are whether there are discernible theological-literary paradigms of vengeance and cursing which feature or predominate for given texts or authors: for example the vindication of the saint, his community, and the religious life; the demonic trials of the cloister and of the secular arena; or the punishment of interior sins.⁷⁷ Given that these paradigms were derived ultimately from biblical and patristic models (as close reading will show), and might therefore be equally available across the range of cases, what will be particularly relevant here are the audiences and purposes that the individual texts served, as well as the environments, mutual influences, and circumstances in which they were produced. Additionally relevant is whether vengeance is understood principally in redemptive and temporary terms – as Little and Jaser have argued – or whether vengeance might be construed and represented in more punitive, fatal, and indeed damnatory terms. The latter possibility is an instance in which the normative genres of law and theology and the imaginative and rhetorical genres of history and hagiography might part ways, and again local contextual factors will be necessary to explain why this gap emerged.

Narrative material is also particularly useful for the question of whether medieval commentators understood the ritual act of cursing and the invoked miracle as 'coercive' or 'magical' (with the words of the saint controlling the natural order through the saint's autonomous will, power and charisma), 'predictive' or 'referential' (announcing and forewarning events according to the pre-existing divine will, but not willing the vengeance that ultimately befalls), or 'performative' (with ritual form, agent, and circumstance all requiring appropriate conditions before the curse can be enacted).⁷⁸ The second explanation was favoured by patristic commentators who sought to reconcile the need to pray for one's

⁷⁷ I use 'theological-literary' to refer to both the underlying theological rationales for the operation of particular episodes of vengeance, and to the favoured rhetorical emphasis in the literary representation of such episodes.

⁷⁸ McCabe, *How to kill things with words*, 7, 31-55; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 88, 94-99, 113-8; Wiley 'The maledictory Psalms', 271-6; Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan', 154-5; and cf. also R. Bartlett, *The natural and the supernatural in the Middle Ages: the Wiles lecture given at the Queen's University of Belfast, 2006*, Wiles Lectures (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 23, for related scholastic and anthropological views. Wiley and Cubitt seem to lean toward the predictive or referential view, while McCabe seems to take an intermediate position on what he terms the 'prophetic speech-act', which in announcing judgement both foretells and enacts the punishment that is to befall the judged.

enemies with cries for vindication and punishment; while the third explanation, following the modern speech-act theory of J.L. Austin, is generally favoured by such recent modern scholars as Little and Jaser.⁷⁹ The already-mentioned acts of ‘coercive fasting’ and ritual humiliation to compel social compliance or miracles suggest however that all three understandings might be coexistent in the period, and determining through close reading which was used to frame narrative episodes can be used to reveal what was deemed acceptable in the thought-patterns of particular authors.⁸⁰ Finally, broader chronological patterns and the impact of reformist influences can be discerned from across the diverse material of the period, allowing one to test patterns of synchronic variation and diachronic change in the period.

With those aims in mind, each of **Chapters I-IV** frame their discussion of their respective source-based studies in terms of their given authors, sources, provenances, audiences, patrons, agendas and outlooks, before proceeding to show how the representation of vengeance and cursing operated according to the logic of the texts and the thought-patterns of their respective authors. For **Chapters I-III**, I begin typically with the operation of divine vengeance and punitive miracle enacted without the explicit saintly curse, in order to place the theme of malediction within the wider theological and social frames provided by accounts of miraculous vengeance. This broader landscape is often omitted from more focused scholarship on cursing as a ritual act rather than as one mechanism among several to invoke divine vengeance, but this broader perspective is necessary for understanding the medieval logic of vengeance and cursing as a properly contextualised and integrated whole. **Chapter IV** follows a different pattern, divided between the two clusters and focusing on particular themes which emerge most strongly from the respective sources. Thereafter, **Chapter V** brings together the preceding cases in a more general discussion of language, biblical and patristic models, and shared theological outlooks and thematic paradigms which emerge from the sources under discussion. This chapter allows for a cross-regional and cross-cultural comparison – with English Benedictine, English Cistercian, and Irish pre- and post-reform material brought into careful dialogue with each – and for a broader contextualisation of the sources within the universal frame of Latin Christendom.

⁷⁹ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 88, 94-99, 113-8; Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens*, 161-3.

⁸⁰ For a further illustrative example of this ‘coercive’ mentality with respect to prayer and cursing more broadly, compare the claim of the early twelfth-century Flemish chronicler Galbert of Bruges that certain words could compel God to act in particular ways whether he wanted to or not, cited by Helmholz, ‘Excommunication in twelfth-century England’, 238. Against neat compartmentalisation of general medieval outlook and practice into modern categories, see also Geary, *Living with the dead*, 122-4, using the ‘coercion of saints’ as illustration.

Chapter I: The English Benedictines: Goscelin, Eadmer, and William, c. 1060-1140

This first chapter focuses appositely on the region, period, and textual clusters that provide the historiographically securest initial anchors for the project. This is southern England in the period 1060-1140, represented by the three Benedictines who stand out as the most prolific and wide-ranging historical and hagiographical writers in the three generations after the Norman conquest: Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, Eadmer of Canterbury, and William of Malmesbury.¹ With these three writers the post-conquest traditions of historical and hagiographical composition in England took off: Goscelin and Eadmer were the only two men to write more than one saint's Life in the years prior to 1100,² while in the generation which followed, Eadmer and William have traditionally been considered the only possible contemporary 'rivals' of the first rank.³

The backgrounds and corpora of these individual authors shall be introduced in detail (I) before proceeding to discussion of two broad analytical categories of punitive miracle drawn across the three authors. These categories are largely etic in derivation, divided according to analytical convenience and given modern labels. The first are vengeance miracles (II), comprising the general kind of punishment enacted through an identified or unidentified miraculous cause. These miraculous punishments could be variously represented as arising spontaneously as outward material manifestations of the corrupt interior spiritual state of the sinner; as miraculous vindications of a transgressed saint or spiritual order enacted under the divine or saintly aegis; or as trials and torments inflicted through demonic intermediate agents. What is important about these types of miracles is that they do not seem to require the performative act of an earthly agent to enact them, though very occasionally such an actor may be present. The second category are maledictions (III), the more specific kind of punishment or sanction enacted through the explicit spoken word of a human figure during their earthly career. The first kind is common in Goscelin with an emphasis on the interior state, in Eadmer with an emphasis on vindication and demonic trial, and in William with an emphasis on vindication. The second category features most prominently for William,

¹ M. Lapidge and R. Love, 'The Latin hagiography of England and Wales (600-1500)', in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, CC, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-2006), 3:224-33, 3:239-42, 3:258-60 [3:203-325].

² T. Licence, 'Introduction', in Herman the archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Miracles of St Edmund*, ed. and trans. T. Licence and L. Lockyer, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), cxv [xiii-cxxxi].

³ R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm and his biographer: a study of monastic life and thought, 1059-c.1130*, Birkbeck Lectures (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), 274, assigned William as Eadmer's 'only possible contemporary English rival, in the range and importance of his writings', noting that to some he may be considered 'in the first place' among English writers after the Conquest.

being considerably rarer if not indeed consciously disavowed entirely by the other two authors. Before considering these, it falls first to consider the hagiographers in their contexts.

I

It is fitting that a study of cursing in the hagiography of central medieval England and Ireland should begin with the Flemish monk Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. Active over a period of five decades (fl. c. 1060-1107) and considered ‘the busiest of all Anglo-Latin hagiographers’, Goscelin has had more hagiographical works attributed to him than any other writer of the period in the British Isles.⁴ He has been called ‘a notable harbinger’ of the twelfth-century renaissance, as his conception of the spiritual life emphasised a more dynamic, progressive union with God in place of the traditional emphasis on the more static, defensive struggle against sin.⁵ Yet despite his Continental background, his main cultural and intellectual formation and outlook inasmuch as they can be identified were English rather than Continental,⁶ he drew on earlier written and oral testimony that stretched back before the Norman conquest,⁷ and he showed apparently little concern on behalf of his patrons for the politics of the conquest itself.⁸ Given the breadth of his career and output, Goscelin is therefore an appropriate starting point, providing both the cultural and intellectual baseline for texts and outlooks carried over from the earlier pre-conquest period as well as an indication of things to come.

Although there is evidence he had already composed a *Life of Amelberga* while still in Flanders, Goscelin’s career as a hagiographer began in earnest with his joining the household of Bishop Hermann of Wiltshire as personal secretary sometime in the 1060s. In that role, Goscelin wrote a number of *Lives* at Hermann’s behest before becoming an itinerant hagiographer working on commission for various English houses shortly after the death of his patron in 1078.⁹ The canon of his works has yet to be established with certainty. His known works composed following his arrival in England are his *Lives* of Eadgyth of Wilton; Wulfsgie of Sherborne; Eadwold of Cerne; Kenelm; Wulfhild, Hildelith, and Æthelburh of Barking; Ivo of Ramsey; Wærburh of Chester; Seaxburh and Eormenhild of Ely; Mildburh

⁴ Lapidge and Love, ‘England and Wales’, 3:225-33.

⁵ S. Hollis, ‘Introduction’, in *Writing the Wilton women: Goscelin’s Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius*, ed. S. Hollis and W.R. Barnes, *Medieval Women Texts and Contexts* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 8-9 [1-13].

⁶ Hollis, ‘Introduction’, 4, 10.

⁷ R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate: miracle stories and miracle collecting in high medieval England*, *The Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 66-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 62, 72-5.

⁹ R.C. Love, ‘Introduction’, in Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *The hagiography of the female saints of Ely*, ed. and trans. R.C. Love, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), lxxvii [xiii-cxxviii]; *idem*, ‘Goscelin of Saint-Bertin’, in *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 218; F. Barlow, ‘Goscelin (b. c.1035, d. in or after 1107)’, in *ODNB*, 22:1020-1.

of Much Wenlock; Mildrith of Minister-in-Thanel; Augustine, and his successors at Canterbury; and Abbot Hadrian of Canterbury.¹⁰ In all but two texts examined, his lections on the feasts of Eadwold and Seaxburh, enacted or threatened punitive miracles are in evidence.

After Goscelin, Eadmer of Canterbury (fl. c. 1087-1126) stands as the most important hagiographer active in England in the generation after the Norman conquest and as ‘the first major English historian since Bede.’¹¹ Having become a member of the household of Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury while in his thirties in 1094, Eadmer is best known for his intimate, two-part biography of Anselm, the *Historia novorum in Anglia* and the *Vita Anselmi*, begun during the three-year period he shared in exile with his patron from 1097-1100.¹² Equally important however were Eadmer’s Lives and Miracles of much older Anglo-Saxon saints: the archbishops of York, Wilfrid of Ripon and Oswald of Worcester, and the archbishops of Canterbury, Bregowine, Dunstan and Oda.¹³ It is far from clear when Eadmer first began writing hagiography, although the Life of Wilfrid (1087x1109) seems to have been his first work to gain wide circulation,¹⁴ followed by those of Oda (1087x1100¹⁵), Dunstan (1095x1116¹⁶), Oswald (perhaps 1113x1116¹⁷), and Bregowine (c. 1123¹⁸).

Eadmer’s chief interest as hagiographer was to preserve the Anglo-Saxon heritage, which he perceived as under threat from the post-conquest elite, and to defend its saints and traditions as worthy of

¹⁰ Love, ‘Goscelin of Saint-Bertin’, 218.

¹¹ R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: a portrait in a landscape* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 405; idem, *Biographer*, 274; idem, ‘Forward’, in Eadmer of Canterbury, *Eadmeri historia novorum in Anglia, et opuscula duo de vita sancti Anselmi et quibusdam miraculis eius*, ed. M. Rule, RS (London: Longman, 1884), vii–viii [vii–xiii]. The quote summarising this view is from B.J. Muir and A.J. Turner, ‘Introduction’, in Eadmer, *Vita sancti Wilfridi auctore Edmero: the Life of Saint Wilfrid by Eadmer*, ed. and trans. B.J. Muir and A.J. Turner, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), xxvi [ix–lxxxv]. See also Lapidge and Love, ‘England and Wales’, 239–42.

¹² Southern, *Biographer*, 198–200, 229, 234, 298–309; idem, *Portrait*, 404–5; idem, ‘Forward’, viii–xii; B.J. Muir and A.J. Turner, ‘Introduction’, in Eadmer, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. A.J. Turner and B.J. Muir, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), xvii, xix–xx [xiii–cxxxiv]; J.C. Rubenstein, ‘Eadmer of Canterbury (b. c.1060, d. in or after 1126)’, in *ODNB*, 17:530 [17:530–1]. On the ground-breaking new tradition of intimate biography, see Southern, *Biographer*, 334–6; idem, *Portrait*, 422–6; Lapidge and Love, ‘England and Wales’, 254–6. On the period of exile for Anselm, see Southern, *Biographer*, 160–80.

¹³ Southern, *Biographer*, 277–87. Though none of these gained such wide circulation (*ibid.*, 229), they are as important in illustrating the broader thought-patterns of Eadmer as hagiographer.

¹⁴ Muir and Turner, ‘Introduction (Lives and Miracles)’. xxii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxvi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, lxvii–lxix.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, cvi–i.

¹⁸ B.W. Scholz, ‘Eadmer’s Life of Bregowine, archbishop of Canterbury, 761–764’, *Traditio* 22 (1966), 132–3 [127–48].

reputation.¹⁹ At the same time, Eadmer was a firsthand observer of high ecclesiastical politics, as in the disputes between Church and state during Anselm's time, as well as in the disputes over episcopal primacy among Canterbury, York and St. Andrews in which Eadmer himself became increasingly embroiled toward the end of his life.²⁰ In content, then, Eadmer's writing displays a preoccupation with both politics and English identity, while retaining the theological sensitivity of a writer who lived and worked in close proximity to one of the most prominent scholastic theologians of his day.²¹ In terms of sources, Eadmer displayed a further dependence on a number of hagiographers whose work also survives: in particular, the eighth-century Stephen of Ripon for the *Life of Wilfrid*;²² while for the *Life of Dunstan*, the anonymous 'B.' (the secular clerk of Liège who composed his *Life of Dunstan* at the end of the tenth century)²³ and his own colleague Osbern of Canterbury (fl. c. 1089x1093).²⁴

After Goscelin and Eadmer, William of Malmesbury (c. 1090-1142) stands out for the most wide-ranging historical enterprise.²⁵ Of mixed Norman and English descent, William entered Malmesbury abbey as a child, assisted its reforming abbot Godfrey of Jumièges in building up the monastic library of Malmesbury, became librarian and cantor by the 1120s or 1130s, and attended councils at Winchester on behalf of his abbey in 1139 and 1141.²⁶ William was a product of the geographical and intellectual context of the southwest of England in the former kingdom of the West Saxons, which from the start of the twelfth century had begun to produce a distinctive ecclesiastical culture within the Anglo-Norman world, emphasising 'biblical studies, history and hagiography, classical reading and scientific research, primarily in

¹⁹ Rubenstein, 'Eadmer', 530; Southern, *Biographer*, 231-3, 344-5; idem, 'Forward', viii-ix; Turner and Muir, 'Introduction (Lives and Miracles)', xv.

²⁰ Rubenstein, 'Eadmer', 530; Southern, *Biographer*, 234-7; idem, 'Forward', xi-i.

²¹ On his proximity to Anselm, see Southern, *Biographer*, 198-202, 219-20, 275; idem, *Portrait*, 384-5; idem, 'Forward', ix. On the influence of Anselmian thought on Eadmer, see idem, *Portrait*, 428-30.

²² Turner and Muir, 'Introduction (Wilfrid)', xxxii-iv; idem, 'Introduction (Lives and Miracles)', xxx.

²³ M. Winterbottom and M. Lapidge, 'Introduction', in *The early lives of St Dunstan*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and M. Lapidge, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), lxiv [xiii-clxvii]; Turner and Muir, 'Introduction (Lives and Miracles)', lxxi-i.

²⁴ Turner and Muir, 'Introduction (Lives and Miracles)', lxxvii, lxxiii-vii. On Osbern, see J.C. Rubenstein, 'The life and writings of Osbern', in *Canterbury and the Norman conquest: churches, saints and scholars, 1066-1109*, ed. R. Eales and R. Sharpe (London: Hambledon Press, 1995), 38 [27-40]; idem, 'Osbern (d. 1094?)', in *ODNB*, 41:983 [41:983-4].

²⁵ Southern, *Biographer*, 274; see also Lapidge and Love, 'The Latin hagiography of England and Wales', 258-60; A. Gransden, *Historical writing in England*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974-82), 1:166-85; R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 14-15.

²⁶ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 4-6. Thomson, *ibid.*, 6, gives the date by which William became cantor as 1137, but later revises that date to the 1120s in idem, 'Malmesbury, William of (b. c.1090, d. in or after 1142)', in *ODNB*, 58:348 [58:348-51].

the area of astronomy'.²⁷ Displaying an active interest in each of those fields, the bulk of William's writing took place during the single, extraordinarily active decade of c. 1124-1137.²⁸ During that time, William's corpus displays an emphasis on ancient and national history, before he shifted his attentions as a writer to theological commentary from 1135 onwards.²⁹ Rodney Thomson has seen him as a 'detached scholar' whose opinions were nonetheless 'conventional within a Benedictine community of the time': 'on the one hand unique and outstanding' for his scholarly and literary achievement and sense of self-expression, 'on the other representative of the concerns, traditions, virtues and limitations of Benedictine monasticism'.³⁰ The view has been refined by Sigbjørn Sønnesyn, who has identified the ethical purpose that guided William's work in all genres of literature, designed to orient the reader toward God and towards the moral truths of history with a view toward the improvement of his audience.³¹

For the present study, William's hagiographical work, which displays a stated preference for 'native' English saints, is simultaneously abundant, fertile, and elusive.³² Because of its elusiveness in particular, some further elaboration of the sources is needed here than for Goscelin or Eadmer. The primary point of entry to William's historiographical enterprise is his *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* ('GP', c. 1125), the more religiously-oriented counterpart to the *Gesta regum Anglorum* ('GR') – being part chronicle, part cartulary, and part hagiographical collection.³³ After it, his saints' Lives are difficult to date in absolute or relative terms, but the easiest to pin down is the Life of Dunstan (c. 1129x1130), with the Lives of Wulfstan of Worcester, Patrick, Indract and Benignus written en bloc some years earlier (c. 1126x1130).³⁴ These individual texts moreover present a number of difficulties and challenges. William's Lives of Patrick,

²⁷ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 4.

²⁸ Once again, there is an unexplained conflict of dates between Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 7 (c. 1124-1137) and Thomson, 'Malmesbury', 58:350 (c. 1125-35); the broader range is here referred to. Of the few works outside that range, William had begun his *Gesta regum Anglorum* before 1118 but undertook most of its writing in 1124-5, while his *Historia novella*, continued as late as the early 1140s, falls outside the scope of the present hagiological study.

²⁹ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 7-8.

³⁰ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 6, 8, 12. See also Southern, *Biographer*, 274-5.

³¹ S.O. Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the ethics of history* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 260-2.

³² For these preferences for native saints, see eg. William, *GP*, 2.85, 3.116 (Winterbottom, 1:292-3, 1:384-7); and also more generally R.M. Thomson, 'Introduction', in William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum: the history of the English bishops*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, 2 vols., OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 2:xxix-xxxiii [2:xvii-liii], which further notes (2:xxix) that his hagiographical coverage of saints whose cults were current in England in his day is 'virtually complete'.

³³ On the hagiographical overlap between these two complementary volumes, see M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, 'Introduction', in William of Malmesbury, *Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, OMT (Oxford: OUP, 2002), xiii [xiii-xxxviii, 307-13]; Thomson, 'Introduction (Gesta pontificum)', 2:xix-xxii.

³⁴ Winterbottom and Thomson, 'Introduction', xiv-xv.

Indracht and Benignus survive only in fragments embedded in later texts of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in consequence have only been partially reconstructed.³⁵ All three in their present form omit any explicitly maledictive propensities for their subjects: contrary to what one might expect from the Patrician material on which the Life of Patrick was based, but which cannot be taken as a proven feature of William's original writing given the layers through which they have been transmitted.³⁶ The Life of Dunstan is more secure in its sources and transmission, and has already been studied in connexion with the practice of cursing by Catherine Cubitt.³⁷ The Life itself is a reworking of the earlier writings on Dunstan by B., Eng., Adelard of Ghent, Osbern and Eadmer, supplemented by other historical writings.³⁸ Nonetheless, as William's general editorial policy was to favour his earlier sources and to produce a compromise version between the extant B. and now-lost vernacular Eng. where the two conflicted,³⁹ any conclusions from the text regarding his attitudes to cursing must be tentative, and carry the most weight only when his treatment of episodes of cursing runs up against his more general preferences for particular sources.⁴⁰ The Life of Wulfstan for its part is the single most fertile ground for a study of cursing in William's entire corpus, at least in terms of the number and variety of cursing episodes. This however was a close adaptation of a single, now-lost vernacular source: the Old English Life by Wulfstan's chaplain, the monk Coleman of Worcester. Completed in the short span of six weeks, closely following Coleman's narrative order but with the looseness and abridgement considered typical of William's method of translation, it can therefore be difficult to determine which parts of the text are William's and which are Coleman's.⁴¹ Nonetheless, through close intertextual reading between the Life of Wulfstan and attitudes

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiv-xxv, 307-13.

³⁶ In terms of sources, the Life of Patrick appears to have been a pastiche of a wide variety of Patrician texts and in-house traditions, while the Lives of Indracht and Benignus have no earlier written sources that survive. The Patrician sources comprise the *Vita tertia* of Patrick (c. 800x1100), the common source of the *Vita secunda* and *Vita quarta*, Patrick's own fifth-century *Confessio* and *Epistola*, and now-lost inhouse tradition at Glastonbury. See Winterbottom and Thomson, 'Introduction', xxiv-xxv.

³⁷ C. Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan: a prophet in politics?', in *Myth, rulership, church and charters: essays in honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. J. Barrow and A. Wareham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 153-157 [145-166].

³⁸ Winterbottom and Thomson, 'Introduction', xvii-xxiv.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁴⁰ I build here on an approach I have previously applied in another related context to William's hagiographical treatment of such illicit practices as incantation, in which William's unstated departures from his stated editorial policy and otherwise adhered-to source preferences can be used to reveal contemporary anxieties in his thought. See J. Harrington, 'Vain spells or vain songs? The meaning of the "uanissima carmina et friuoleas incantationes" in the hagiography of Saint Dunstan of Canterbury, 997-1130', *Quaestio Insularis: selected proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic* 17 (2016), 118-25 [101-126].

⁴¹ William, *Epistola ad Wigornenses*, 3-4 (Winterbottom et al., 8-11); Winterbottom and Thomson, 'Introduction', xv-xvii; A. Orchard, 'Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ', in *St. Wulfstan and his world*, ed. J. Barrow and N. Brooks, *Studies in Early Medieval Britain* 4 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 45 [39-57].

more generally expressed in his heavily hagiographical *GP* and more broadly historical *GR*, it should be possible to sketch William's attitudes to cursing during the short period in which he produced his work. The foundation sketched represents a selection of prolific writers operating according to similar conventions but with a disparate range of immediate concerns and outlooks. Having thus introduced them, it falls to consider the three themes of vengeance in their writings.

II

The analysis of punitive miracles in the work of these authors begins with that category of vengeance miracles enacted through an identified or unidentified miraculous cause. A favourite theme of Goscelin in his presentation of punitive miracles is his depiction of them as the decisive spiritual confirmation of the path wilfully chosen by the unrepentant sinner and as the publicly visible material marker of that path. On the superficial level, the material marker served the function of making the hidden crime visible, thereby fulfilling the promise of Luke 12:2 that 'there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed'.⁴² This is particularly explicit in the trope of the shaft of light revealing the place of a secret murder: this appears in the Life of Kenelm, in which the light reveals the site of the child saint's martyrdom that his assassin had hoped to remain hidden; and in the Life of Mildrith, in which another concealed murder of the royal saint is similarly revealed.⁴³ The weight of sacrilege is also made evident in miracles punishing for sabbath-breaking and dishonouring the saints' feastday: for example, in the Life of Kenelm, a blacksmith in Hereford who wantonly insisted on working on the saint's feastday finds his hands irremovably fastened to his tools; while a similar miracle befalls a sabbath-breaking flax-spinner in the Life of Wulfsgige.⁴⁴ Rhetorically, such miraculous episodes serve the didactic and deterrent functions of making the gravity of particular sins known and deterring the audience from committing them through the threat of divine punishment. In both sets of episodes, the figure of the awestruck bystander, inspired to increase in fearful reverence and virtue, stands in for the audience deterred from prospective crimes.

Notable on a deeper figurative and theological level is that the character of a given punishment in Goscelin's writing is often of specifically like-kind with the character of the causative sin in question: with the punitive miracle merely extending into the material realm the physical manifestation of the spiritual

⁴² Goscelin, *Vita Kenelmi*, 8 (Love, 62-3): '...nichil opertum quod non reueletur.'

⁴³ Ibid.; idem, *Vita Mildrithae*, 5 (Rollason, 116-9). On the trope's original function, see D.W. Rollason, *The Mildrith legend: a study in early medieval hagiography in England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 51.

⁴⁴ Goscelin, *Vita Kenelmi*, 21 (Love, 76-7): '...ut solui cuneis et malleis impellentibus nequiverit, magisque teneretur quam teneret' ('...such that it could not be freed by striking it with chisels and hammers, and he was more himself held than holding'); *Vita Wlsini*, 15 (Colker, 81; trans. Love, 112): '...faciliusque uidebatur digitos articulis suis dissolui quam a colo uel fuso uelud inretos expediri' ('...and it seemed easier to pull her fingers from their joints than to free them from the distaff and spindle with which they seemed to be fused').

transgression, as the literalisation of the bondage of sin. Hence, in Goscelin's *Life of Wulfsgie*, when the monk Ælfmaer lost his sight at the intercession of the saint in punishment for his efforts to appropriate an endowment unlawfully, the point is made explicit: 'blindness of greed was turned into physical darkness.'⁴⁵ The same fitting punishment befell the avaricious craftsmen who cut corners on the royal shrine in the *Translatio of Eadgyth*, by fashioning only thin gilding and embezzling the rest of the gold with which they had been provided: 'they were punished with perpetual blindness of the eyes with which they had desired the gold, and because of their darkened minds they were sent out into the outer darkness.'⁴⁶ So too in the *Miracles of Mildrith* with a perjured usurper of Mildrith's lands: 'From this merit the internal blindness of the crafty mind plunged him into the outer shadows, the perpetual blindness of the body.'⁴⁷

What one regularly comes across in Goscelin's writings are sinners who find themselves caught up in the direct physical manifestations of their sin, with the physical habits first formed by their obstinate and rebellious wills confirmed by a miraculous authority to such a literal degree that they no longer have the physical ability to act otherwise. This essential narrative model can be taken as a condensed literalisation of the patristic theology of the habituated weight of sin as notably elaborated by Augustine of Hippo, in which the habituation of disordered loves becomes its own self-vitiating punishment that the individual is powerless to lift without divine help.⁴⁸ The attractiveness of that theology for Goscelin can be seen in terms of its narrative function as a didactic on the spiritual state and 'reformatio' of the individual soul.⁴⁹ Hence the miraculous fastening of the blacksmith in the *Life of Kenelm*, and of the flax-spinner in the *Life of Wulfsgie*, for whom 'it seemed easier to pull the fingers from their joints than to free them from the distaff and spindle.'⁵⁰ In the *Miracles of Ivo*, a man who mocked the saint by pretending to be crippled finds himself crippled for life.⁵¹ Thieves in particular could find themselves miraculously bound to the object they tried to steal, as in the *Lives of Eadgyth* and of Augustine; only more rarely did they

⁴⁵ Goscelin, *Vita Wlfsini*, 16 (Colker, 82; trans. Love, 113): 'cecitas cupiditatis in exteriores tenebras transiit'.

⁴⁶ Goscelin, *Translatio Eadithe*, 13 (Wilmart, 280; trans. Wright, 78): '...iugi cecitate oculorum quibus aurum concupierant sunt puniti, et de tenebrosis mentibus in exteriores tenebras missi.'

⁴⁷ Goscelin, *Translatio Mildrithie*, 32 (Rollason, 202): 'Vnde eum merito interna cecitas dolose mentis in exteriores tenebras dimersit – perpetua cecitas corporis!'

⁴⁸ P.J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), 57-8; W.E. Mann, 'Augustine on evil and original sin', in *The Cambridge companion to Augustine*, ed. D.V. Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 107 [98-107].

⁴⁹ B.T. Coolman, *The theology of Hugh of St. Victor: an interpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 12-17; Hollis, 'Introduction', 8-9; S.A. Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: legend and ritual in medieval Tours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 117, 122-7. This background will be elaborated more broadly in a comparative frame in Chapter V.

⁵⁰ *Vita Kenelmi*, 21 (Love, 76-9); *Vita Wlfsini*, 15 (Colker, 81; trans. Love, 112).

⁵¹ Goscelin, *Mir. Ivonis*, lxix-xx.

suffer some other curse or perish outright.⁵² Most dramatically, in the *Translatio* of Eadgyth, a group of Saxon peasants in the town of Colbek are cursed to dance in perpetuity in punishment for dancing outside the church during the first Mass of Christmas and refusing to join the divine service like Christians.⁵³ Taken together, the poetic justice implied in such vengeance episodes represented a wide range of variations on one essential biblical theme: that of the sinner falling into the pit he himself had dug.⁵⁴

According to the implicit theology underlying these episodes, sin and vengeance operated as a single undifferentiated servitude, lacking the need for a specific agent outside the abstraction of divine justice, and being enacted by saints in heaven when an agent was applied at all. Such representations stemmed directly from Goscelin's implicit understanding of the thematic pairing of material effects with spiritual causes, taking actions in the material world as directly reflective of the higher spiritual reality. This underlying causative relationship between spiritual sin and physical punishment had its most explicit biblical basis in Christ's curing of the paralytic man in the Gospels,⁵⁵ and would have been readily reinforced by the twelfth-century theologian and writer of history's predisposition to see 'the mysterious kinship between the physical world and the realm of the sacred.'⁵⁶ Hence, in a passage concerning the release of the Saxon from the bonds of iron by Eormenhild, modelled on Christ's curing of the paralytic, it was made 'clear that she who even releases from iron, is able in the Lord to release supplicants from the shackle ('uinculo') of their souls, that is, from sin'.⁵⁷ The *Life of Eadgyth* described how supplicants would be freed from iron while the guilty without iron would be miraculously bound.⁵⁸ Conversely, for

⁵² Goscelin, *Vita Edithe*, 27 (Wilmart, 100-1; trans. Wright, 62); idem, *Mir. Augustini*, 1 (Col. 0397E-F); idem, *Vita Wlsini* 19 (Colker, 83; trans. Love, 114-5).

⁵³ Goscelin, *Translatio Edithe*, 16 (Wilmart, 285-92; trans. Wright, 82-5).

⁵⁴ Goscelin, *Translatio Mildrithae*, 32 (Rollason, 202): 'Ve captiosis sicophantarum strophis, ue qui fodiunt foueam et incidunt in eam!', invoking Ecclesiastes 10:8.

⁵⁵ Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26, John 5:1-14. See also J. Barton and J. Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible commentary* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 858: 'the story presupposes that the infirmity has a spiritual cause'; cf. *ibid.*, 891, 970; and R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, and R.E. Murphy (eds.), *The Jerome Biblical commentary*, 2 vols. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 2:78: 'the afflictions of the human condition are the consequences of sin, and forgiveness of sins removes the root of evil.'

⁵⁶ M.D. Chenu, *Nature, man and society in the twelfth century: essays on new theological perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. and trans. J. Taylor and L.K. Little, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 37 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 99-102, 104.

⁵⁷ Goscelin, *Lect. Eormenhilde*, 7 (Love, 20-1): 'Patet ipsam in Domino posse supplices ab animarum uinculo id est peccato que etiam soluit a ferro.' Cf. idem, *Vita Kenelmi*, 26 (Love, 82-3): '...statim ferreus nexus eius confractus dissiliit, et absolutus reus cum uenia peccatorum' ('immediately his iron fetter shattered in pieces, and the guilty man was loosened [or 'absolved'] with forgiveness of his sins').

⁵⁸ Goscelin, *Vita Edithe*, 27 (Wilmart, 101; trans. Wright, 62); *Translatio Edithe*, 18 (Wilmart, 293; trans. Wright, 86).

the sabbath-breaking flax-spinner in the Life of Wulfsige, the distaff and spindles were her ‘shackles’ (‘uincula’);⁵⁹ for the dancers in the Translatio of Eadgyth, their dancing became their servitude.⁶⁰ It is appropriate that the priest responsible for the curse in Goscelin’s account of the dancers describes both the sin and the effect of the curse as a ‘servitudo’, with the punishment merely continuing the path of sin already chosen: ‘By God’s command, henceforth you shall not cease from this servitude.’⁶¹ The dancers lamented that once cursed for their obstinacy, ‘none of us was able to cease from what we had begun’.⁶²

The purpose of miraculous vengeance, in punishing the sin and in making its effects manifest to the sinner, was embraced by Goscelin as a necessary means of purgative grace and healing to avert spiritual rather than material punishment, following the theme of the destruction of the flesh for the salvation of the spirit in 1 Corinthians 5:1-11, Mark 9:42-7, and Matthew 18:8-9.⁶³ The most agentive roles applied to the saint were in healing and forgiveness, as miracles of punishment on earth were primarily a corrective measure, temporary in all but the most obstinate of cases. Thus the bulk of Goscelin’s punitive episodes are in accord with scholarly claims that vengeance is principally medicinal, corrective and temporary, as argued by Little and Jaser.⁶⁴ Such a model of purgative chastisement was notably the case of the smith Eadnoth, forced to spend the remaining fifteen years of his life as a cripple for doubting Ivo of Ramsey. On his deathbed however, he was greeted by the saint in a dream, and forgiven his offence following his time of punishment.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Goscelin, *Vita Wlfsini*, 15 (Colker, 82; trans. Love, 113): ‘Surgit et collum et fusos quasi uincula sua proicit...’ (‘She rose and threw down the distaff and spindles as if they had been her shackles...’).

⁶⁰ Goscelin, *Translatio Edithe*, 16 (Wilmart, 288-92; trans. Wright, 83-5).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16 (Wilmart, 288; trans. Wright, 83): ‘Ab isto, inquit, officio ex Dei nutu amodo non cessetis.’

⁶² *Ibid.*: ‘...nullus nostrum ab incepto cessare, nullus ab alio dissolui potuerit.’

⁶³ C. Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens: rituelle und zeremonielle Exkommunikationsformen im Mittelalter*, Spätmittelalter Humanismus Reformation 75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 26-7, 37-8; E. Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 5-6, 42.

⁶⁴ L.K. Little, *Benedictine maledictions: liturgical cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 13, 143-6; *idem*, ‘The separation of religious curses from blessings in the Latin West’, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006/2007), 30, 38 [29-40]; and C. Jaser, ‘Ritual excommunication: an “ars obliuionalis”?’ in *Memory and commemoration in medieval culture*, ed. E. Brenner, M. Cohen, M. Franklin-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 125, 129, 138 [119-139].

⁶⁵ Goscelin, *Vita Iuonis*, 2.9 (AASS, Col. 0289F): ‘Jam tempus instat, ut verbera, quibus te corripui, in remedium tibi transeant sospitatis; & pro longa nocte incolatus, lætissimum diem possideas æternæ felicitatis: septimo quippe abhinc die, modo paratus esto, veniam te suscipere in nostram lucem de hoc carnis ergastulo’ (‘Now the time is at hand when the lashes with which I seized you may become a healthy cure for you; and, having lived for a long time in darkness, you may have the most welcome day of eternal happiness: for on the seventh day from now, just be ready – I shall come to take you up from this prison of flesh into our light’). Translation based on S.B. Edgington, *The life and miracles of St Ivo* (St Ives: Friends of the Norris Museum, 1985), 9-11.

Accordingly, when one of the dancers of Colbek lost her arm and later died under curse, it was seen not as a curse but as a ‘blessing’: the very act which ultimately assured her salvation, ‘preserved from corruption by divine scourging, and also liberated from death by dying.’⁶⁶ The loss of limb to avert hellfire fulfilled the specific promise of Mark 9:42 and Matthew 18:8, while final destruction of the flesh represented salvation of the spirit. Goscelin reported that the arm was subsequently hung in the church at Colbek as a relic, ‘transformed by gold and silver into a demonstration of the mighty works of God’⁶⁷ – much as the spindle and distaff released from the flax-spinner by Wulfsige’s intercession were similarly displayed at Sherborne ‘in commemoration of such great miracles.’⁶⁸ It was only when the accursed sinner refused to accept the signs calling for his repentance that a curse became truly permanent in the next life: as in the death of the wicked counsellor and unrepentant murderer Thunor in the Life of Mildrith, worthy of neither tomb nor name, and swallowed up by the earth;⁶⁹ or in the punishment of the Britons forewarned by Augustine on account of their incorrigibility.⁷⁰

The understanding of vengeance miracles implicit in Goscelin’s writings differs however from that of the hagiographers who followed him. William was agreed at least on sin as the underlying condition of punitive miracles and as something which could become ingrained through habit, so that the effects of sin were more difficult to loose from oneself than to commit.⁷¹ On the whole however, though a number of instances in William’s writings occasionally resemble Goscelin’s patterning, the specific character of the

⁶⁶ Goscelin, *Translatio Edithae*, 16 (Wilmart, 290; trans. Wright, 84): ‘Beata, cuius periit unum membrum, ne perires tota; que, diuinis flagellis a corruptione seruata, et moriendo a morte es liberata.’ (‘You were blessed, for one limb of yours perished, so that you should not perish wholly; you were preserved from corruption by divine scourging, and also liberated from death by dying.’)

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 (Wilmart, 291; trans. Wright, 84): ‘Brachium uero puelle inseparabile imperator Henricus auro argentoque fabricatum ad exemplum Dei magnalium in ecclesia iussit dependere.’ (‘The emperor Henry ordered the girl’s arm, which could not be buried, to be hung up in the church, transformed by gold and silver into a demonstration of the mighty works of God.’)

⁶⁸ Goscelin, *Vita Wltsini*, 15 (Colker, 82; trans. Love, 113): ‘...collum et fusos quasi uincula sua proicit que appensa sunt coram sancti meritis in memoriam tante uirtutis’ (‘...she threw down the distaff and spindles as if her they had been her shackles, and they have been hung in public in commemoration of such great miracles by the merits of the saint’).

⁶⁹ Goscelin, *Vita Mildrithae*, 5 (Rollason, 118-9).

⁷⁰ Goscelin, *Vita Augustini*, 34-5 (AASS, Col. 0389A-E).

⁷¹ See eg. William, *GP*, 5.259.5 (Winterbottom, 1:616-7): ‘Peccatum ergo, quod aspernanter inierat, libenter fouebat uoluptate addicta’ (‘Thus the sin which she had entered with aversion, she freely indulged with the pleasure to which she had become enslaved’); *ibid.*, 5.276.2 (Winterbottom, 1:658-9): ‘Veruntatem non sic facile indulgentiam rapimus ut reatum committimus, quia uoluptas quidem auolat et transit, sed peccatum pertinacem radicem infigit’ (‘We do not snatch pardon as easily as we commit crime, since pleasure flies away and passes, but sin puts down solid root’).

punishment rarely corresponded as neatly or as frequently to the character of the sin as it did for Goscelin.⁷² If anything, vengeance operates in the opposite direction. Goscelin's vengeance miracles typically force the sinner against their will to continue in the path willingly embarked upon to the point that it becomes to them an ironic and unbearable burden, thus making them recognise their fault and repent of it. William's miracles on the other hand are much blunter instruments that make the sinner immediately desist from their transgression once they have taken effect. A woman who continued spinning on Sunday in William's *GP* is miraculously crippled and suffers for some years for her transgression, for instance; whereas the woman guilty of the same crime in Goscelin's *Life of Wulfsgie* finds her hands miraculously adhered to her spindle.⁷³

If William has an underlying theological or intellectual framework through which he gathers and orders punitive miracles, it is not the model of punishment as the extended manifestation of sin that Goscelin uses, but something closer to a model of punishment as the simple vindication of a transgressed figure or divine order. This implicit framework may be seen in William's organisation of the miracles of Wulfstan in *GP*. In their narrative order, these comprise a curse, a legal victory, a curse, and four generic prophecies.⁷⁴ The inclusion between the two cursing episodes of a miraculous legal victory – and it was indeed deemed miraculous, given that Wulfstan slept for the bulk of the proceedings – shows that in this instance at least William thought of what we would consider cursing and vengeance miracles as falling within the somewhat broader category of miraculous vindication or dispute resolution, with prophecy as something distinct. All three events are construed as coming to a miraculous conclusion which both vindicates the saint and restores the proper order, placing the two punitive miracles primarily within the context of divine justice.

Eadmer too had held a similar implicit framework of punishment as the vindication of the transgressed order, though not corresponding in form with the specific character of the transgression. Thus, in Eadmer's *Life of Dunstan*, the saint returned from exile when King Edmund was brought to the brink of a precipice by his charging steed and saved by promising satisfaction to the saint;⁷⁵ and later the floor

⁷² The closest episode in William's writing is a man of Cologne who was ordered by Archbishop Anno of Cologne to shackle his arms and belly with a lance and breastplate for seven years, and wander in punishment for the crime of fratricide, 'so that the instrument of the fault should be the instrument of punishment' ('ut quae fuerat auctor ad culpam esset punitrix ad paenam'). See William *GP*, 5.268.2-3 (Winterbottom, 1:636-7).

⁷³ William, *GP*, 5.276 (Winterbottom, 1:656-9); Goscelin, *Vita Wlfsini*, 15 (Colker, 82-3; trans. Love, 112-3), cited above in Chapter I at 42; cf. also idem, *Vita Kenelmi*, 21 (Love, 76-7), cited above in Chapter I at 42.

⁷⁴ William, *GP*, 4.142-8 (Winterbottom, 1:430-9).

⁷⁵ Common to B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 13-14 (Winterbottom et al., 42-51); Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 18 (Stubbs, 90-2); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 17 (Turner et al., 78-81).

beneath Dunstan's opponents at the council of Calne collapsed causing injury to those standing on it.⁷⁶ In at least one instance Eadmer surpasses his source Osbern in playing up an episode of vindication. Osbern had recounted how Dunstan was beaten and thrown into a cistern by his persecutors, but protected by a pack of dogs until men could come to his relief.⁷⁷ Eadmer followed Osbern's account, which differs from that of the earlier sources, but in particular he emphasised the providential aspect of the event: attributing it to the ineffable grace by which God preserved the archbishop that he might not utterly be brought to ruin.⁷⁸ Dramatic episodes of vindication can additionally be seen at work in the posthumous miracles which Eadmer records of Oda, Dunstan and Bregowine – as befell for instance the hapless monks Helias and Samuel, struck twice by Bregowine for having their backs turned to his shrine – where miraculous punishment befalls those who fail to show the proper veneration and respect due to the departed saint.⁷⁹

Why Goscelin, Eadmer and William's emphases should differ in their preferred theological frameworks for rhetorically organising punitive miracles – seeing them as arising either from the internal state of the individual sinner or from the external vindication of a transgressed order – is an important question which brings out some general points of comparison and contrast. Goscelin and William were both writers concerned with the exemplary and edificatory functions of their writings, and whose works were more explicitly directed toward the instruction and reform of the individual than were Eadmer's.⁸⁰ Accordingly, it should not come as too great a surprise that among the three hagiographers, it is these two whose narrative episodes of vengeance display the most concern with the internal state of the sinner. On the other hand, William and Eadmer in particular were, as noted above, writers whose broader

⁷⁶ Common to Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 36 (Stubbs, 114); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 57 (Turner et al., 142-3); but unknown to B. See Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 57 fn. 131 (Turner et al., 142); Winterbottom and Lapidge, 'Introduction', xlii.

⁷⁷ Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 11 (Stubbs, 81). B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 6.5-9 (Winterbottom et al., 22-5), in contrast, recounts the dogs as appearing merely to welcome Dunstan after his escape, in an ironic comment on Dunstan's persecutors being worse than dogs.

⁷⁸ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 9 (Turner et al., 62-3): 'Ne autem penitus ab eis perimeretur, post gratiam Dei, quae illum suis in posterum reseruauit, quaedam ingens molosorum multitudo obstitit...' ('Lest however he be utterly brought to ruin by them, through the grace of God which preserved him for his own people afterwards, a huge pack of dogs confronted them...').

⁷⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Odonis*, 15 (Turner et al., 32-5); idem, *Mir. Dunstani*, 4, 14, 17, 23-24 (Turner et al., 162-3, 170-5, 178-81, 194-205); idem, *Vita Bregovini*, 10, 12-14 (Scholz, 143-6). Helias and Samuel appear at *Vita Bregovini*, 12-3 (Scholz, 145).

⁸⁰ On Goscelin's work as a spiritual instructor and his emphasis on the individual, particularly illuminated through his *Liber confortatorius* ('Book of consolation') for Eve of Wilton, see Hollis, 'Introduction', 2-3, 8-11; for William, see again Sonnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the ethics of history*, 260-2. Cf. the assessment of Southern, *Biographer*, 287, that even Eadmer's devotional works 'express primarily a personal devotion' rather than being consciously directed toward a wider audience as such.

hagiographical projects were attuned to perceived contemporary political misfortunes and were principally concerned with a lack of veneration toward the saints by their contemporaries; a pair of often very personal motivations which may contrast with Goscelin's generally more apolitical and 'freelance' motivations as an itinerant hagiographer and spiritual teacher.⁸¹ Looking at *GP* in particular, the veneration due to the saints may be taken as William's overarching explanation both for the turn of misfortune which befell the English (in terms of insufficient veneration) and of the surest path to their revival. This can be seen from the reflexions in its first book on the deserved sufferings of the English under the 'scourge of God' for their sins,⁸² from which William goes on to decry on multiple generations that England's native saints have been forgotten and lost through the laxity of subsequent generations;⁸³ before concluding the *Gesta* with the figure of a still-living native English woman cured of a decades-long blindness through belated appeal to the saint, followed by a series of open-ended observations on the sorrows of his own time.⁸⁴ This running theme and concluding didactic allegory would align well with William's ethics which held that man had turned away from his maker on account of arrogance and earthly desire, and that man's sufferings would persist until he had turned away from earthly temptation and devoted the mind and will to God alone.⁸⁵ Insofar as history functioned as a carefully chosen collection of moral exempla, recording the miraculous vindications of the saints wrought against those who paid them insufficient respect was thus integral to the rhetorical motivation and edificatory function of his hagiographical work.⁸⁶

For Eadmer, there were the additional influences and interests tied up with his immediate association with his patron. One was the intellectual influence of Anselm, whose theological work emphasised the importance of the divine honour and argued that the horror of all sin lay not in the vitiating effects on the individual (as it was for Augustine of Hippo and Goscelin), but in the dishonour the sinner intentionally inflicts on God.⁸⁷ The other was Eadmer's personal loyalty toward his long-suffering patron, whom he was convinced was a saint, during their shared period of disgrace and exile.⁸⁸ Both influences would have

⁸¹ For the apparent political disinterest of Goscelin and political engagement of Eadmer and William, see again Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, 62, 72-5; Rubenstein, 'Eadmer', 530; Southern, *Biographer*, 231-3, 344-5; idem, 'Forward', viii-ix; Turner and Muir, 'Introduction', xv.

⁸² William, *GP*, 1.42.6.5-6 (Winterbottom, 1:94-5): 'Flagellum Dei est quod patimini. [...] Malis ergo illorum bene in uos utitur Deus, et per indignos exercet ultionem in meritos' ('It is the scourge of God that you are suffering. [...] Therefore God uses their evils well against you, and wreaks his vengeance through the unworthy upon those who deserve it').

⁸³ William, *GP*, 2.74.23-4, 2.75:27-8, 3.116, 5.Prologue (Winterbottom, 1:244-5, 1:258-9, 1:384-7, 1:498-9).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.278 (Winterbottom, 1:660-3).

⁸⁵ Sonnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the ethics of history*, 260.

⁸⁶ In this I extend the point made *ibid.*, 261.

⁸⁷ Southern, *Portrait*, 200.

⁸⁸ M. Brett and J.A. Gribbin, *Canterbury, 1070-1136*, English Episcopal Acta 28 (Oxford: OUP, 2004), xxxiii.

predisposed Eadmer to look for vindications of the saints in the past and to accentuate that theme in his writings: as a consolation during his own period of trial as well as for that of future generations. Such an appeal to consolation is the explicit justification in the introduction of his *Historia novorum*,⁸⁹ while trust in God's 'bountiful mercy' and 'inscrutable justice' amidst contemporary tribulation is invoked in the final chapter of the Life of Dunstan.⁹⁰ In terms of its possible influence on texts composed during his period of exile, it may be that Eadmer's desire to see Anselm vindicated led him directly to look for historical precedent from the lives of exiled bishops such as Wilfrid or Dunstan as a comfort. While it is impossible of course to say whether the political experiences of Eadmer first shaped his hagiographical enterprise or whether his hagiographical writing shaped his reception of his experiences, in either case they can be expected to have informed each other as the complementary aspects of his two life works.

These differences in chosen theological frameworks seem to require a differing sense of explicit agency within the texts of Goscelin, Eadmer and William. Whereas Goscelin's framework required him go no further in explaining the ultimate cause of a punitive miracle than the already implicit logic of the narrative that attributed it to the sinner, Eadmer and William needed to account more directly for why a particular punishment occurred at a particular time and under whose immediate aegis it did so: whether that of the divine agency or the departed saint. The attribution of agency did not necessarily compromise the general passivity of these vindications, however; on the whole these vindications were more commonly performed through the divine agency or through the saints in heaven, and only rarely through saints still engaged in their earthly lives in the form of prophecy or malediction.

Where the three hagiographers did generally agree was on the ability of miracles and punishments to make the transgression apparent; that, 'as the prophet put it, vexation gave understanding to hearing'.⁹¹ We have already seen this with Goscelin. For the others however, there were in practical terms some

⁸⁹ Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 1 (trans. Bosanquet, 1), writes of those who 'search laboriously into the doings of their predecessors, anxious to find there a source of comfort and strength' ('acta praecedentium anxie investigare, cupientes videlicet in eis unde se consolentur et muniant invenire'), and of the writings of the past affording a 'helpful precedent'.

⁹⁰ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 68 (Turner et al., 158-9): 'Finis illarum quis, uel quando sit euenturus ignoro, sed tantum procul dubio ignorare non queo quod omnia quae fecit nobis Deus in uero iudicio fecit, quia peccauimus ei et mandatis eius non oboediimus. Quadpropter quid aliud dicatur aut agatur... non intelligo, nisi ut humiliato corde rogetur Deus qui nos contriuit quatinus det gloriam nomini suo, et faciat nobiscum secundum multitudinem misericordiae suae.' ('I do not know what the outcome of these might be or when it will occur, but I have no doubt at all that everything which he has done, God has done in true judgement of us because we have sinned against him and not obeyed his commandments. What might be said or done... I do not know, except that God, who has ground us down, should be begged with humbled heart that he give glory to his name and deal with us according to the bounty of his mercy.')

⁹¹ See eg. William, *GP*, 3.107.6 (Winterbottom, 1:364-5): '...uexatio dedit intellectum auditui', quoting Isaiah 28:19.

notable reservations. Eadmer for instance seemed less convinced from his own immediate experience that inflicted misfortunes would always lead to clear recognition and repentance. When William Rufus was struck by immediate illness in divine punishment for refusing to make Anselm archbishop, on his recovery he simply reverted to his old manners and hostilities, becoming all the worse for his former chastisement.⁹² Anselm himself had cautioned against the failure of sternly applied, loveless discipline to bring about virtue,⁹³ and a similar attitude is reflected in Eadmer's other writings: in the Life of Dunstan, the escalation of a sentence of excommunication against a powerful count seemed at first only to make matters worse in driving him into a rage;⁹⁴ while in the Life of Oswald, the unrelenting divine punishment upon the Ælfsige of Canterbury leads him not to repentance, but to blasphemously curse God and die.⁹⁵ William of Malmesbury for his part regularly used the trope of malefactors being initially too brutish to realise why God was punishing them, or even that he was doing so.⁹⁶ Such slow realisation characterises for instance a mob of Alpine rustics whose town was afflicted with a mysterious fire after their robbery of Ælfheah of Canterbury;⁹⁷ a group of sailors punished with a threatening storm after abusing Aldhelm of Malmesbury in Dover;⁹⁸ and the murderous stepmother of Edward Martyr, who found her horses unwilling to move when she went to visit his shrine at Shaftesbury.⁹⁹ As before however, that running theme of slow recognition yielding to pleas for forgiveness in *GP* may have been a rhetorical figure for his audience: communicating that the cause of their punishment and national misfortune lay in the

⁹² Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 38-9 (trans. Bosanquet, 39-40).

⁹³ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.22 (Southern, 37-8): 'Itaque indiscrete oppressi pravas et spinarum more perplexas infra se cogitationes congerunt, fovent, nutriunt... sed omnia vestra ex odio et invidia contra se procedere credant' ('Being thus injudiciously oppressed, they harbour and welcome and nurse within themselves evil and crooked thoughts like thorns... but believe that all your actions proceed from hatred and malice against them').

⁹⁴ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 45 (Turner et al., 116-7): 'Tunc ille se ipso deterior effectus, immani est furore correptus' ('Then [the count] became even worse than he was and was seized with uncontrollable rage').

⁹⁵ Eadmer, *Vita Odonis*, 15 (Turner et al., 34-5).

⁹⁶ This trope is observed by R.M. Thomson, 'Commentary', in William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum: the history of the English bishops*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, 2 vols., OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 2:114 [2:1-326].

⁹⁷ William, *GP*, 2.76.5-6 (Winterbottom, 1:268-71): 'Tum brutae mentis homines, egre licet animaduertentes delictum...' ('Then the brutes realised, rather slowly, what they had done wrong...').

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.224.4-5 (Winterbottom, 1:564-7): 'Congeminant terrorem uentorum furor, rudentum stridor. ...uidebanturque in miserorum mortem omnia conspirasse elementa, cum licet brutos animos intelligentia subit propter iniuriam sancti cui conuitiati fuerant se luere penas. Exclamant ergo in planctum, et suplices tendunt ad littora palmas. Orant opem, pollicentur emendationem' ('Their terror was compounded by the fury of the winds and the screech of the rigging. ...and all the elements were seen to have conspired the death of these miserables, when it occurred even to these brutes that they were suffering for the wrong they had done in abusing the saint. They wailed aloud, and held out suppliant hands to the shore. They begged for help, and promised to reform').

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.86.6 (Winterbottom, 1:294-5): 'Intellexit tarde licet brutum pectus quo portentum illum respiceret' ('Her brutish heart slowly came to realise the meaning of the portent').

vindication of the saints, and that their fortunes could revive in a plea for forgiveness and revival of devotion.

Ultimately, the important feature of these miracles of vengeance and vindication is that they allow the sinner the avenue and opportunity for repentance, whether or not they ultimately take it. This can be seen for instance in *GP*'s account of the noblewoman Ælfhild, struck with paralysis in punishment of her adultery with Olaf II of Norway. The debility is labelled 'a merciful punishment', 'chastised by a temporary scourge', while her tongue alone remained unparalysed 'that she could confess her error and pray for forgiveness.'¹⁰⁰ As William wrote, the very fact that the sinner was still alive rather than killed by the punitive miracle was a demonstration that the sin was forgivable and that repentance was intended. 'Certainly, if she had committed a damnable fault, she would not have had a pardonable vengeance.'¹⁰¹ Only rarely do the punishments themselves result in death, and virtually never without opportunity to repent. Ambiguous instances in which cursed figures die soon after repenting might be explained in terms of a sin so great that only death itself could bring about final absolution: a destruction of the flesh for the sake of the spirit, reminiscing 1 Corinthians 5:1-11, whose influence we have already seen. On the whole, the lifting of spiritual guilt of course would lead eventually to the lifting of physical torment, as William wrote of the repentance of the thief invisibly bound at Padarn's shrine: 'Thus having been released from damnation, he was released from his punishment.'¹⁰²

There is however a third possible understanding of inflicted suffering that should be briefly introduced, which is similarly divorced from an earthly enacting agent, but can moreover often be divorced even from a causative offence. This is the category of demonically-inflicted chastisement or trial, which among the three hagiographers is most prominent as an editorial theme in the work of Eadmer. The importance of this theme for Eadmer can be identified through comparison between his *Life of Wilfrid* and his principal extant source, the eighth-century *Life* by Stephen of Ripon. Eadmer's major contribution to the narrative is the ever-present envy and malice of the Devil, meting out trials and punishments through human agents with seemingly little restraint. Where Stephen of Ripon referred to the Devil on only three occasions, and even then typically only in passing, Eadmer placed him in the background as the central

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 2.259.10 (Winterbottom, 1:618-9): '...clemens animaduersio... quae delictum diceret, ueniam oraret... temporali castigata est uerbere...'

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 'Ceterum, si penalem commisisset culpam, non habuisset ueniam uindictam.'

¹⁰² Ibid., 5.248.3 (Winterbottom, 1:596-7): 'Soluto itaque dampno, solutus est ille supplitio'; and cf. the wandering penitent of Cologne, *ibid.*, 5.268 (Winterbottom, 1:636-7). That loosing did not need to exist in a miraculous context: see the episode of the self-imposed chains of bishop Ecgvine of Worcester, unshackled by the recovery of a key he had thrown into the river to rest until his sins were forgiven, returned to him miraculously in the belly of a fish at the appointed time. *Ibid.*, 4.160 (Winterbottom, 1:452-3).

instigator of no fewer than seven episodes.¹⁰³ A similar diabolical presence pervades the Life of Dunstan: the Devil torments the saint in the guise of beasts and human tempters,¹⁰⁴ undermines the justice and virtue of kings,¹⁰⁵ and brings about Dunstan's expulsion and exile from the royal court.¹⁰⁶ These episodes too are accentuated in Eadmer's recasting of the Life. Concerning Dunstan's exile from the royal court of Edmund, for instance, the Flemish clerk B. attributed the expulsion without further theological explanation to the lies of 'backbiters' ('execratores') and to 'the bitter hatred of the empty-minded'.¹⁰⁷ The English Benedictine Osbern too went no further than a social explanation, attributing it to the envy that often naturally occurs toward the diligent.¹⁰⁸ Eadmer however removes the ultimate source of Dunstan's trial from human instigation, introducing the Devil as background antagonist: 'The enemy, jealous of all good deeds, noticed these things and, considering by what means he might throw them into disarray with his cunning, he discovered certain men whom... he ardently inflamed against Dunstan.'¹⁰⁹

On one level, this is a classic Benedictine outlook: seeing the world in the monastic terms of constant temptation and trial, with monks in the frontline of a perpetual battle between angelic and demonic forces.¹¹⁰ It is only by the power of the angelic hosts that the demons are restrained from causing as much harm to men as they would otherwise wish.¹¹¹ This was a view which Anselm shared and reinforced in his chaplain: Eadmer includes in his Life numerous letters and musings by the archbishop which deal extensively with the ever-present temptations of the Devil,¹¹² and many of the demonic trials in the Life find their counterparts in the Life of Dunstan.¹¹³ The Lives of Wilfrid and Dunstan both contain sustained rhetorical set-pieces, one in the mouth of the narrator and one in the mouth of the subject,

¹⁰³ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi St.*, 21, 24, 39 (Colgrave, 42-5, 48-51, 78-9); Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 42-3, 46, 48-9, 74-5, 77, 79-80, 93 (Muir et al., 54-7, 60-3, 64-7, 92-9, 114).

¹⁰⁴ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 3, 11, 18, 28 (Turner et al., 54-5, 66-9, 82-3, 94-7).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 36, 55-56 (Turner et al., 106-9, 132-5).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, 30 (Turner et al., 60-3, 98-101).

¹⁰⁷ B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 13.5-6 (Winterbottom, et al., 46-7): 'Perplures... coepere eundem Dei uirum amarissimo odio uanitatis detestari...'

¹⁰⁸ Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 18 (Stubbs, 90-1): '...ut ex aliorum industria aliorum crescat inuidia...' ('...that from the industry of some arises the envy of others...').

¹⁰⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 17 (Turner et al., 78-9): 'Haec omnium bonorum inuidus hosti attendens, et quonam modo ea turbaret sua arte perquirens, inuenit quosdam... ardentem contra uirum inflammat'

¹¹⁰ Little, 'Separation of curses from blessings', 33-34.

¹¹¹ Eg. the dicta of Anselm in Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.10 (Southern, 19): 'Ursarii Dei, boni angeli sunt. Sicut enim ursarii ursos ita angeli malignos demones a saeuitia sua coercent et opprimunt, ne nobis noceant quantum volunt' ('The bear-keepers of God are the good angels. For just as bear-keepers tame and restrain the savagery of bears, so do the good angels prevent the evil demons from injuring us as much as they wish').

¹¹² See eg. *ibid.*, 1.20 (Southern, 32-4).

¹¹³ Cf. the demonic trials in the *Vita Dunstani* cited above in Chapter I, at 51-2.

addressing the ultimate futility of the Devil's interferences.¹¹⁴ Yet in his predilection to attribute political events to demonic influence, Eadmer is unusual in comparison with the hagiography both of his contemporaries Goscelin, Osbern and William and of his predecessors. If the Devil looms particularly large in Eadmer's hagiographical writing it must be in large part due to his own belief that the persistent 'instigation of the Devil and evil men' turned the king against Anselm,¹¹⁵ reinforced by received opinion cited by Eadmer attributing the archbishop's prolonged exile to 'a device of the Devil'.¹¹⁶ Once again, personal interests and experience are a crucial conditioning factor, influencing the hagiographer in his preferred theological-rhetorical framework for constructing a narrative of the world of suffering around him. This will have implications for the hagiographers' treatment of cursing below.

III

The other broad category of punitive miracle to be considered is that of spoken or enacted malediction. As already noted, explicit cursing by a saint during the course of their earthly career is rare in the writings of Goscelin and Eadmer. Among female saints in Goscelin's work, the closest instance of a spoken command by an earthly saint preceding a punitive miracle appears in the Lives of Amelberga and Wærburh, both of whose respective commands temporarily robbed geese of their flight in punishment for devastating their adjoining fields.¹¹⁷ Among male saints, Bishop Wulfsige of Sherborne was reported to have held 'the sharp blade of anathema' against those who threatened his flock, though this is a fleeting

¹¹⁴ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 80 (Muir et al., 98-9), beginning: 'Quid, diaboli furor immanis, quid tanopere aduersus famulum Domini seuiendo vagaris?' ('Why, o great madness of the Devil, why do you extend yourself so furiously against the servant of the Lord?'); *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 30 (Turner et al., 100-101): 'Eia, eia, auctor et amice omnium malorum, modo de exilio meo laetaris, et pro tribulatione plurimorum, unde me dolere conspicis, iam gratularis. Sed absque dubio fixum habere potes, quia nichil est gaudium quod nunc habes, me recedente, comparatione tristitiae quam habiturus es, me reuertente' ('Listen, listen, author and lover of all evils, you may now rejoice because of my exile and take delight in the suffering of many, on account of which you see me saddened. But you can rest assured of this, that the joy which you have now is as I am leaving is nothing in comparison with the sadness you will experience once I return').

¹¹⁵ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.5 (Southern, 67): '...instinctu diaboli hominumque malorum...'

¹¹⁶ Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 167 (trans. Bosanquet, 178): 'Unde vehemens admiratio multorum corda concussit, arbitantium tantam de reditu viri dilationem diaboli esse seductionem...' ('At this great wonder struck the hearts of many, judging that such a delay over the man's return was a device of the devil...').

¹¹⁷ Goscelin, *Vita Werburge*, 6 fn. 1 (Love, 40-1); idem, *Vita Amalbergae*, 31-2 (*AASS*, Col. 0098D-F). The two episodes are also compared alongside each other in extenso in R.C. Love, "Et quis me tanto oneri parem faciet?" Goscelin of Saint-Bertin and the Life of St Amelberga', in *Latin learning and English lore: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keefe and A.P.M. Orchard, Toronto Old English Series, 2 vols. (London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 2:245-7 [2:232-52].

reference, and Goscelin does not report any specific instances of its deployment.¹¹⁸ Otherwise, punitive miracles in Goscelin's work occur without an earthly agent to deliberately enact them, largely in the terms which have been set out above.

Eadmer for his part refers extensively to the formal ecclesiastical practice of excommunication in his historical and hagiographical narratives, which is unsurprising given that discussion of excommunication loomed large in the circles he moved in.¹¹⁹ Spoken imprecations below the level of excommunication however are less frequent and almost exclusively the preserve of lay figures: attributed both to allies of Anselm such as the duke of Burgundy, and to enemies of Anselm such as William Rufus.¹²⁰ It is also possible as before to identify an editorial process at work in Eadmer's reworking of his sources: this time in which negative pronouncements spoken by the saint against wrongdoers are reconstrued in a way that divorces the outcome from the saint's intent, and frames the saint's pronouncement more as prophecy than imprecation. A striking instance is the violent death of Ælfwine of Deira in battle in the Life of Wilfrid, following his brother Ecgfrith's opposition to the archbishop. In Stephen of Ripon's account, Wilfrid issues the terrible prophecy: 'On this day next year, you who now laugh at my condemnation through malice shall then weep bitterly over your own confusion.'¹²¹ The narrative then jumps immediately to the lifeless body of Ælfwine being led into York from the battlefield in a tearful procession a year later.¹²² In Eadmer's account however, the saint's wish and the eventual outcome are noticeably more detached. Wilfrid addresses the men: 'O my sons, would that you might lead long periods in fortunate prosperity: but may you know, and the sooner the better, that an adverse stroke of fate will undo these joys of yours, nor will you see this year passed before you have washed in bitter grief, as for these mockeries which you hold over me now.'¹²³ After recounting the death of Ælfwine, Eadmer then proceeded to outline how the Northumbrian military achievement had been underpinned by Wilfrid's

¹¹⁸ Goscelin, *Vita Wlssini*, 4 (Colker, 76; trans. Love, 106): '...anathematis... mucrone...'

¹¹⁹ For a sample of Eadmer's numerous references to excommunication in his *Historia novorum*, see *ibid.*, 10, 107, 111, 127-8, 131, 139, 148, 143, 144, 148-50, 154, 162-6, 168, 202, 209 (trans. Bosanquet, 10, 111, 115, 133-4, 138, 146-7, 156-8, 163, 172-7, 180, 216, 223-4).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 90, 117, 122 (trans. Bosanquet, 94, 121, 127-8).

¹²¹ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi St.*, 24 (Colgrave, 50-1): 'Hoc anniversario die, qui nunc ridetis in meam pro invidia condemnationem, tunc in vestram confusionem amare flebitis.'

¹²² *Ibid.*: 'Et sic secundum prophetiam sancti evenit. Nam eo die anniversario Aelfwini regis occisi cadaver in Eboracam delatum est; omnes populi amare lacrimantes vestimenta et capitis comam lacerabant, et frater superstes usque ad mortem sine victoria regnabat.'

¹²³ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 51 (Muir et al., 68-9): 'O', inquit, 'filii, felici prosperitate ducatis tempora longa: sed noueritis, quantotius sors infesta resoluet hec gaudia uestra, nec prius hunc annum transisse uidebitis, quam istas quas super me derisiones habetis, acerbo merore luatis.'

continued intercession, and how the bishop's exile necessitated their defeat.¹²⁴ The point was original to Eadmer, and was one he had made not only earlier in the *Life*,¹²⁵ but also in his other works.¹²⁶ The bishop's role is thus one of unwilling omission rather than of commission: he is the reluctantly absent protector and admonisher rather than the active avenger, and what ultimately came about did so not by his design but 'by the just judgement of God'.¹²⁷ Importantly, where Stephen and Eadmer both saw the death of Ælfwine and the defeat of the Northumbrians as the fulfilment of Wilfrid's prophecy, Eadmer's comments serve to detach him from its consequences.

If imprecations are written out, the terms 'maledictio' or 'maledictum' too have little place in either Goscelin or Eadmer's work. Where they do appear in an unambiguous relation to a spoken practice, they are associated with illicit witchcraft or pagan incantation: as in Goscelin's account of the witch Cwoenthryth in the *Life of Kenelm*,¹²⁸ or Eadmer's account of Saint Wilfrid's encounter with the South Saxons.¹²⁹ Eadmer had encountered the term in that context in Stephen of Ripon's *Life*, and it seems to have coloured his later usage of the term.¹³⁰ William however is much more liberal in his use of the term,

¹²⁴ Ibid.: 'Nec iniuria. Repulso etenim eo per quem uictores extiterant, nil erat residui, quare passim uinci non debuerint' ('No injustice. Having expelled him through whom they were victors, there was no reason left why they should not be defeated far and wide').

¹²⁵ Earlier in Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 43-4 (Muir et al., 56-7): 'Hic ergo pontifici negotium Pictorum, quod incumbabat, exposuit, atque ut rebus opem sue intercessionis ferret, supplici prece admonuit. Cuius dehinc benedictione uallatus, atque sanctissima oratione comitatus, cum parua militum manu Pictis occurrit... Ea nimirum re huic regi sic processit, quo Deus ostenderet preces beati Wilfridi ante se penitus cassari non posse.' On the whole, the role of Wilfrid as intercessor is much more present in Eadmer's work than in Stephen's. Cf. Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi St.*, 19-20 (Colgrave, 40-3), in which no mention of Wilfrid is made in reference either to the Picts or the Mercians.

¹²⁶ See the theme of episcopal intercession on the battlefield in reference to the victory at Brunanburh, in Eadmer, *Vita Odonis*, 7 (Turner et al., 12-3): 'Duxerat autem secum in aciem rex sanctum Odonem, eius meritis se multo maxime quam militum copiis confidens hostem uicturum' ('The king however had brought with him into battle the holy Oda, trusting that by his merits he would defeat the enemy much more than by abundance of soldiers'); and idem, *Vita Oswaldi*, 2 (Turner et al., 218-9): '...memoratum Odonem cuius meritis se quam maxime credebat hostem uicturum in aciem duxit' ('...he took into battle the renowned Oda, by whose merits he greatly believed he would defeat the enemy'); and in reference to the victory of Henry I over his brother Robert at Tinchebrai following the king's reconciliation with Anselm, in idem, *Historia novorum*, 184 (trans. Bosanquet, 197): 'Igitur ob pacem quam rex fecerat cum Anselmo hac victoria eum potitum multi testati sunt' ('Therefore it was on account of the peace which the king made with Anselm that many claimed he gained this victory').

¹²⁷ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 51 (Muir et al., 68-9): 'Que prophetia ueritas facta est. ... iusto Dei iudicio in tristitiam uersa est.'

¹²⁸ Goscelin, *Vita Kenelmi*, 16 (Love, 70-3).

¹²⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead.*, 29 (Muir et al., 40-1).

¹³⁰ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfrid St.*, 13 (Colgrave, 28-9).

and refers to it in a way that paints it as an episcopal weapon. He refers for instance in *GP* to the ‘weapon of cursing’ used by Ealdred of York,¹³¹ and the ‘thunderbolt of cursing’ used by Wulfstan.¹³² One possible reason for this difference among the hagiographers in their usage of ‘maledictio’ is the predominant usage in the sources in which they encountered it. While Goscelin and Eadmer knew it chiefly as a term of criticism for paganism and witchcraft, William had encountered threats of malediction on dozens of occasions in the sanction clauses of the charters of Malmesbury abbey – texts whose legal force he had a vested interest in defending, and which moreover he himself had copied in Book V of *GP*.¹³³ The peripatetic career of Goscelin might have meant that he had little opportunity to become attached to the charter traditions of any one Benedictine community, and was thus relatively detached from the language of cursing that might be taken as conventional of the most important legal texts in a monastic context. Eadmer was certainly partisan of his community,¹³⁴ and witnessed and copied episcopal acts in his own hand, but the charters of Anselm’s tenure were notably less maledictive than those of his successors.¹³⁵ Further factors influencing Eadmer may have included Anselm’s humility, charity, restraint and discretion: disavowing his own ability to perform any miracle,¹³⁶ ‘praying daily for the king’s conversion and safety’,¹³⁷ intervening against his excommunication,¹³⁸ and declaring with tears on his death that he would have preferred himself to have died than for the king to have suffered bodily death in his spiritual state.¹³⁹ Basing his models of sanctity on the person and outlooks of the living saint he knew,

¹³¹ William, *GP*, 3.115.20, 3.115.22 (Winterbottom, 1:384-5): ‘...maledictionis telum [...] Dei maledictionem...’.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 4.144.2 (Winterbottom, 1:432-3): ‘...maledictionis fulmen...’.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 5.199-210 (Winterbottom, 1:524-35). On the extent of William’s partisanship to his abbey and its saintly patron, see Harrington, ‘Vain spells or vain songs?’, 118-25.

¹³⁴ Southern, *Biographer*, 231, saw Eadmer as wholeheartedly devoted to Christ Church’s interests.

¹³⁵ Brett and Gribbin, *Canterbury, 1070-1136*, lxxix, lxxiii, 16, 28, 54, 83, 85.

¹³⁶ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.40 (Southern, 118): ‘...nichil quod miraculo posset ascribi velle facere’ (‘...to do nothing which could be ascribed to a miracle’). Cf. *ibid.*, 2.41-2 (Southern, 119-21), including further anxiety or reluctance to perform miracles or take credit for their performance.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.45 (Southern, 122): ‘...cotidie pro conversione et salute ejus Deum deprecabatur.’

¹³⁸ Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 107 (trans. Bosanquet, 111): ‘Audiens haec Anselmus illico surrexit, et flexis genibus coram papa, praefatum regem jam tunc excommunicare parato, vix obtinuit ne in regem faceret quod communis omnium sententia promulgavit. Qui ergo bonitatem viri solo prius fuerant auditu edocti, nunc eam facto se experiri gavisus sunt dum illum et pro malo bonum reddere, et pro persequente se non ficta vident prece intercedere. Admirabilis itaque universis factus est.’ (‘Hearing this, Anselm immediately rose up and falling on his knees before the Pope, who was ready then and there to excommunicate King William, he with difficulty prevailed on him not to put into effect against the king the sentence which had been unanimously pronounced. So those who before had only learned by hearsay of Anselm’s goodness had the joy of themselves experiencing it in actual deed, seeing him return good for evil and with prayer unfeigned interceded for his persecutor; and they were all filled with admiration of the man.’)

¹³⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.49 (Southern, 126): ‘At ille singulta verba ejus interrumpente asseruit quia si hoc efficere posset, multo magis eligeret se ipsum corpore, quam illum sicut erat mortuum esse’ (‘But he declared in words broken

representations of cursing could only have come reluctantly and with reservation in Eadmer's writing. Familiarity with the formal language and procedures of excommunication evident from the letters and episodes included in his *Historia novorum* may also have given him the further view that the apostolic power of binding and loosing – the biblical authority on which curses might be traditionally justified – was suitable only for excommunication proper.¹⁴⁰ This may explain why when Eadmer reworked Stephen of Ripon's accounts of curses, pagan or otherwise, he was careful to exclude any references to binding.¹⁴¹

Properly analysing instances of spoken malediction thus requires attention to a series of episodes in the writings of William, for which a partial foundation of secondary scholarship already exists. In particular, Catherine Cubitt has focused on an episode in the Life of Dunstan apparently original to William and possibly taken from Glastonbury house-tradition.¹⁴² In it, the layman Ælfwold, who withdrew a donation from the monastery, is eaten by foxes at his funeral in fulfilment of a pronouncement of vengeance by the saint.¹⁴³ Dunstan had addressed his monks: 'Look to the Mother of the Lord for vengeance. As for him, let foxes eat him.'¹⁴⁴ Cubitt has tantalisingly argued that the first half of Dunstan's reported speech may be a veiled reference to a liturgical clamor by the monks of Glastonbury to their Marian patron, and as a sign of liturgical malediction being in use among English Benedictines as early as the eleventh century.¹⁴⁵ While any claims to reliable report of tenth-century circumstances may be a stretch from William's

with sobs that if it had been possible he would much rather that his own body had died than that the king had died in his present state'); cf. idem, *Historia novorum*, 118 (trans. Bosanquet, 123).

¹⁴⁰ On the apostolic commission of binding and loosing and its importance in undergirding the power of excommunication, see R.F. Collins, 'Binding and loosing', in *ABD*, 1:743-5; F.L. Cross et al., 'Binding and loosing', in *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 208; Vodola, *Excommunication*, 6.

¹⁴¹ For example, in his account of the South Saxons, he crucially omitted the intention of a pagan magician to bind the hands of his opponents with his malediction, describing the curses more ambiguously as 'weakening' Wilfrid's followers. Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi Ead*, 29 (Muir et al., 40-1): 'Stans quoque princeps sacerdotum idolatrie coram paganis in tumulo excelso, suis magicis incantaminibus suos quasi benedicendo confrotare, ac socios famuli Dei maledicendo satagedbat eneruare' ('The chief priest of the idolatrous people stood before the pagans on a lofty mound; he busied himself with emboldening his people by magical incantations, just as if he were blessing them, and with weakening the followers of the servant of God through his cursing'); cf. Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi St.*, 13 (Colgrave, 28-9): 'Stans quoque princeps sacerdotum idolatrie coram paganis in tumulo excelso, sicut Balaam, maledicere populum Dei et suis magicis artibus manus eorum alligare nitebatur' ('The chief priest of the idolatrous people stood before the pagans on a lofty mound, like Baal, endeavouring to curse the people of God and bind their hands with his magical arts').

¹⁴² Cubitt, 'A prophet in politics?', 153.

¹⁴³ William, *Dunstani Will.*, 2.25 (Winterbottom et al, 280-3).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.25.3 (Winterbottom et al, 280-1): 'A Domini matre ultionem exigit; illum comedant uulpes.'

¹⁴⁵ Cubitt, 'A prophet in politics?', 161.

otherwise uncorroborated twelfth-century account, there is at least evidence for the liturgical clamor at nearby Winchester, identified by Little and Cubitt.¹⁴⁶

There is however additional twelfth-century evidence from Worcester of direct relevance to William that has hitherto escaped attention, but which can be found in the compressed hagiographical context of the Life of Wulfstan.¹⁴⁷ The episode in question recounts Wulfstan's attempts to reconcile a blood-feud while on a preaching tour of his diocese. According to the narrative, the men told the saint they would rather be excommunicated than fail to avenge their brother's killing. Wulfstan grovelled at their feet in his episcopal vestments, making repeated prayers and promising restitution in the form of votive masses and spiritual benefits at Worcester and Gloucester.¹⁴⁸ When the men rejected his entreaties, Wulfstan 'applied a harsher remedy to a disease which had become ingrained', naming them sons of the Devil for standing against the peacemakers whom the Gospel named as sons of God.¹⁴⁹ The crowd shouted this was true, and hurled abuse and curses at the men. 'All at once, upon the curses of the people followed vengeance from God: one of the brothers, and at that the fiercest, suddenly went mad... and something I have scarcely heard tell of, his limbs smoked, so that a foul smell polluted the air around.'¹⁵⁰ The sign caused the others to repent for their brother and for themselves, seeking and receiving the mercy, cure and forgiveness of the bishop.¹⁵¹

In its narrative context, the episode reads as a spontaneous series of events within a single exchange, but the narrative contains no clear temporal markers, and many of its individual components bear a formal similarity to the carefully staged and orchestrated liturgical clamors and ritual humiliations known from the work of Little and Geary. In these, after failed entreaties against wrongdoers, communities of monks would hold liturgical services in which the community 'humiliated' itself by lying prostrate on the ground.¹⁵² In variations of the ritual, the relics of saints would also be humiliated, deposited on the ground for their failure to protect their community.¹⁵³ It is important to underline here that the Latin 'humiliatio' literally refers to placing something on the ground, 'humus'.¹⁵⁴ The central action of the ritual

¹⁴⁶ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 48-50; Cubitt, 'A prophet in politics?', 158-61.

¹⁴⁷ William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15 (Winterbottom et al, 88-93).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.15.3-4 (Winterbottom et al, 90-1).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.15.5 (Winterbottom et al, 90-3): '... qui parum blanditiis promouerat, seueriori remedio inueteratis occurrens morbis...'

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.: 'Secuta est e uestigio maledicta populi diuina ultio, uno ex fratribus eodemque acerrimo statim insano facto.'

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 2.15.6 (Winterbottom et al, 92-3).

¹⁵² P. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 97-106; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 26-30.

¹⁵³ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 98, 101-2, 105, 110-4; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 27-30.

¹⁵⁴ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 103; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 26-7.

was thus one of collective self-abasement rather than outward shaming, as it was foremost the monks themselves who lay on the ground, and the patron saint was therefore as much a participant in the ritual as a member of the community as he was the ritual's target.¹⁵⁵ Taken together, these actions of self-shaming prostration were understood as symbolic of the injury inflicted upon the saint and his community, inviting vindication from God and society, while allowing also for the participation of the local laity in the liturgy in the pronouncement of the curse upon the wrongdoer.¹⁵⁶

Something similar appears to lie behind the account in the Life of Wulfstan. While monastic clamors typically responded to transgressions against monastic property, blood-feud transgressed the institutes of peace that were Wulfstan's responsibility as bishop, and rolling on the ground in his episcopal vestments would have been both in the literal sense a 'humiliatio' and by extension a symbolic sign of that transgression.¹⁵⁷ The bloodfeuders' rejection of the prostrate Wulfstan is described as constituting not merely contempt toward the saint but injury upon the Divinity, and as such it set the scene for punishment by miraculous means.¹⁵⁸ Given that here it is the saint himself who lies prostrate on the ground in the narrative, the episode may thus be taken either as a compressed account of a ritual performed by Wulfstan himself, whose meaning would have been readily intelligible to the Life's monastic audience, or as a hagiographical justification of such rituals performed in Wulfstan's name at Worcester.¹⁵⁹ In real terms, the enactment of the ritual clamor and the pronouncement of its effects would have been drawn over a protracted period to allow for repentance and reconciliation, but it could be expected that the simplifying needs of narrative would naturally compress into a shorter episode.¹⁶⁰

The impression from these accounts is of a vibrant environment of monastic cursing in the ecclesiastical culture of the south and west, at the communities of Glastonbury, Worcester and Winchester, which William too must have been aware of and understood. Another possible echo of a liturgical episode can be found in *GP's* account of Ralph Luffa, bishop of Chichester, interdicting services to the laity and obstructing the church doors of his diocese with brambles in protest of Henry's tax on married clergy.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 101-3, 110; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 26-7. This is not to exclude the multivalent symbolism and drama of the liturgical performance, but merely to focus on the principal act of the ritual and its ability to explain the hagiographical episodes under present discussion.

¹⁵⁶ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 102-3, 106-10; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 20; idem, 'Separation of curses from blessings', 30-1.

¹⁵⁷ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 208-11, 218-29.

¹⁵⁸ William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15.5 (Winterbottom et al, 90-1).

¹⁵⁹ For an instance analogous to the former, cf. the self-humiliation of Bishop Godefrid of Amiens, recorded by Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 142-3.

¹⁶⁰ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 124; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 217-218.

¹⁶¹ William, *GP*, 2.96.4-9 (Winterbottom, 1:320-3). The episode is noted also by R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings, 1075-1225*, New Oxford History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 447-9.

It has already been known from a Frankish context that thorns and brambles could be deployed around the entrances to churches as part of the clamor in a visible representation of the trial and suffering the community was undergoing.¹⁶² Ralph could have acquired the practice either from nearby Winchester or from his time as royal chaplain to William Rufus, exposing him to Continental influences.¹⁶³ William omitted any element of the divine in his account of Ralph's interdict and was uncertain, perhaps uncomfortable, with how best to label it – he termed it 'atrocitas', carrying with it connotations of fierceness and hardship – though he could only admire the results of such brinksmanship. 'This hardship moved the king to remit the priests' tax for Ralph alone, as being a man who could not be reasoned with.'¹⁶⁴ Whether Ralph deployed similar sanction against individuals is unclear: there is only the tantalising reference in William's final assessment of the bishop that he was 'unsparing in rebuking the delinquent, and if his rebukes were less effective, he would use a noble play to crush the guilty.'¹⁶⁵

Intriguingly however, William treats the humiliation of Wulfstan very differently in *GP*, where he was less constrained by dependence on the structure and narrative of Coleman's *Life*. There the humiliation – the prostrate pleas of Wulfstan from the ground – is excised and replaced instead with the much-abbreviated line, 'when after much lecturing he persisted in his refusal'.¹⁶⁶ The curse of the people is also removed, though a crowd is still present, and the enacting sentence of Wulfstan is replaced with what William reports as the bishop's exact words:

The Lord said in the Gospel: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' If the peacemakers are blessed and the children of God, those who quarrel must be unhappy and the children of the Devil. I commend you therefore to him whose child you are, and deliver you unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, according to the apostle's precept, 'that the spirit may be saved in the day of Lord.'¹⁶⁷

William adds that scarcely were the bishop's words complete when the demonic possession took effect, and that the bishop had to inflict him with a demon and cure him three times before he relented in his

¹⁶² Geary, *Living with the dead*, 34-5, 99, 103-5.

¹⁶³ H. Mayr-Harting, 'Ralph [Ralph Luffa] (d. 1123)', in *ODNB*, 45:870 [45:870-1]. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings*, 447-9, asserts that the examples were 'traditional practice', but does not clarify whether such tradition is to be understood as Anglo-Saxon or Frankish in origin and currency.

¹⁶⁴ William, *GP*, 2.96.6 (Winterbottom, 1:322-3): 'Atrocitas facti regem inflexit, ut ei soli, quasi mentis inconsideratae homini censum presbiterorum indulgeret.'

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.96.9 (Winterbottom, 1:322-3): '...delinquentibus increpando non parcens, et, si minus increpatio ualeret, ingenuo ludo culpam elidens.'

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.142.1 (Winterbottom, 1:430-1): '...et post multum sermonem pertinacissime recusanti...'

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.142.2 (Winterbottom, 1:430-1): 'Dominus dixit in euangelio: "Beati pacifici quoniam filii Dei uocabuntur." Constat ergo quod si pacifici sunt beati et filii Dei, discordantes sunt miseri et filii diaboli. Illi igitur cuius filius es te commendo, et trado te Sathanae in interitum carnis, iuxta preceptum apostoli, "ut spiritus saluus sit in die Domini".'

obstinacy.¹⁶⁸ Once brought to the edge of death the third time, he repented and until his death enjoyed good health.¹⁶⁹ William's changes invite comment. The absence of the humiliation and of the curse of the people make the episode look less like a liturgical clamor, and more like a conventional excommunication, with the bishop serving as the sole actor. The first part of the bishop's speech establishes a separation between the sons of God and the sons of the Devil, placing the wrongdoer into the latter category, and separating him from the church. The justification of 'the destruction of the flesh' onwards is new to William's account and taken from 1 Corinthians 5:1-11, a key text in the theology of excommunication.¹⁷⁰ Wulfstan delays in accepting the people's pleas, underscoring his authority as a bishop, independent of that of the people.¹⁷¹

This is not the only seeming anxiety about malediction identifiable in William's work. Saint Dunstan's seemingly offhand remarks on the layman Ælfwold in William's *Life* have drawn further attention for similar reasons. Cubitt has noted that William prefaces the episode with the comment that 'even words he uttered by chance and not of set purpose did not lack fulfilment', and concludes it by claiming that he did not believe that Dunstan 'said this in any spirit of cursing, but rather that it slipped out by chance or was impelled as prophecy.'¹⁷² Noting earlier disapprovals of cursing, Cubitt has argued that malediction could however be palatably explained to contemporary churchmen as 'prophecy in the guise of imprecation', following the patristic categories identified by Little.¹⁷³ Thus William's subjects would not be inviting or enacting but simply announcing and forewarning the penalties which heaven already ordained, and it is this attitude which has been seen behind William's hedging of the episode. Similar hedges can be found in Goscelin and Eadmer's writing. In Goscelin's *Life of Augustine of Canterbury*, in which he recounts the saint shaking the dust from his feet and passing sentence after having been rejected by the people of Dorset, Goscelin adds that it was 'not in prayer of cursing, but by divine judgement and as a type of Elijah.'¹⁷⁴ The editorial emphasis on prophecy in Eadmer's own adapted accounts of saintly sentences has already been alluded to above.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.142.2-3 (Winterbottom, 1:430-1).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.142.3 (Winterbottom, 1:430-3).

¹⁷⁰ Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens*, 26-7, 37-8; Vodola, *Excommunication*, 42.

¹⁷¹ William, *GP*, 4.142.3 (Winterbottom, 1:430-1).

¹⁷² William, *Dunstan's Will*, 2.25.1, 2.25.3 (Winterbottom et al, 280-1): 'Illud erat in Dunstano mirabile quod etiam uerba quae casu non studio effunderet effectu non carerent... Quod illum non crediderim dixisse maledicentis animo, sed uel pro casu lapsum uel uaticinio impulsam.'

¹⁷³ Cubitt, 'A prophet in politics?', 154-155; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 95.

¹⁷⁴ Goscelin, *Vita Augustini*, 41 (*AASS*, Col. 0391B): '...dignam suis meritis sententiam (non maledicentis voto, qui omnium salutem optabat; sed divino iudicio & Eliæ typo) atrocibus iniecit...' ('...he hurled the sentence deserved by their savage merits – not in prayer of cursing, since he wished the salvation of all, but in divine judgement and as a type of Elijah...').

This expanded picture reopens the question regarding the precise nature of the discomfort that these men showed with regard to spoken malediction. It could be a residue of the patristic condemnation of malediction, but that would principally explain the condemnation of the specific term, not the precise range of practices to which that the term attached itself.¹⁷⁵ It would also fail to account for the fact that William is broadly comfortable referring to the spoken imprecations of his protagonists as ‘maledictions’, and seeing the excommunication episode as anything other than a curse imposed by the saint requires a much greater mental leap when one considers the image of Wulfstan’s effective ‘waterboarding’ of the excommunicant with demonic possession – a series of repeated lifting and reimposition of demonic torments at the saint’s express command.

One possibility is that malediction was considered illicit because it was seen as coercive of the power of the Divinity, and thus improperly subverted the reverence due to God and the saints in order to serve baser human ends.¹⁷⁶ One thinks here of Bartlett’s work on the decline of the judicial ordeal, increasingly disapproved of in the theologically refined world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries because it tempted God to perform a miracle.¹⁷⁷ Similar terms ultimately framed the condemnation of ritual humiliation at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, whose canons forbade outright the humiliation of saints as a ‘detestable abuse’ and ‘unspeakable impiety.’¹⁷⁸ It may be suggested however that such concern about the coercion of the miraculous is not at play in our hagiographers. Eadmer, Coleman and William had each recounted instances of miracles extorted from their subjects against their will or without their knowledge. In one episode in the *Life of Anselm*, the saint refused outright to cure two knights of quartan fever, and Eadmer had to provide them with scraps from the saint’s table against Anselm’s instruction in order to effect their cure.¹⁷⁹ In another episode the saint firmly refused to perform a cure requested by a local priest until the crowd turned on him with insults, eventually compelling him to perform the sign of the cross as a compromise.¹⁸⁰ So too in Coleman’s *Life of Wulfstan*: in two instances Wulfstan explicitly denied that he was capable of performing a miracle at all, and the cure, ‘for which he is neither present nor physically involved, has to be extorted from him by guile.’¹⁸¹ Among several mutually complementary biblical models for these episodes, the most pertinent was arguably the curing of the

¹⁷⁵ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 88-99. The biblical and patristic attitudes to cursing will be considered in greater detail in Chapter V.

¹⁷⁶ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 122-3.

¹⁷⁷ R. Bartlett, *Trial by fire and water: the medieval judicial ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 81-8; idem, *The natural and the supernatural in the Middle Ages: the Wiles lecture given at the Queen’s University of Belfast, 2006*, Wiles Lectures (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 28-9.

¹⁷⁸ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 115; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 236-7; idem, ‘Separation of curses from blessings’, 35-6.

¹⁷⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.41 (Southern, 119).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 2.42 (Southern, 120-1).

¹⁸¹ Orchard, ‘Parallel Lives’, 53-54.

bleeding woman through Christ's cloak, in which it was possible to effect a miracle through an intermediary instrument, and in so doing effectively bypass the need for the explicit consent of the ultimate cause of that power.¹⁸² Another possible model was the parable of the persistent widow and the unjust judge known from Luke 18:1-8. What was important from these episodes was the faith and insistence of the petitioner, rather than the explicit consent of the divine.¹⁸³

Moreover, the language of violence and coercion is used explicitly by William in his description of the operation of prayer. In *GP*, William described how Saint Wilfrid was successfully confronted by a woman urging him to heal her dead son: 'Rolling at his feet, she did him a sort of violence, and absolutely refused to move'.¹⁸⁴ William recounted elsewhere how 'daring in belief plundered aid from heaven'¹⁸⁵ and how 'violent prayers beat at heaven, invaded the stars, dragged forth support from those above'.¹⁸⁶ He refers to the success of another petitioner's 'violence of prayers and rude cry' – and it may not be coincidence that this 'inconditus clamor' shares a term with the ritualised clamor known to scholars.¹⁸⁷ The *Life of Wulfstan* for its part stops just short of the farthest possible image of the coercive saint, invoking the fasts and vigils of Wulfstan as a violent means of securing the support of heaven, 'to bring Christ over to his side even, that I should put it thus, when Christ was unwilling'.¹⁸⁸ Though the tone of the passage in question might be Coleman's rather than William's, it is nonetheless reflective of the latter's broader patterns of language, and evoked its basis in Matthew 11: 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force'.¹⁸⁹ That Gospel passage was also cited by Goscelin in his *Liber confortatorius*, a

¹⁸² Mark 5:21-43, Matthew 9:18-26, Luke 8:40-56. See also Barton and Muddiman, *Oxford Bible commentary*, 897, 938; Brown et al., *Jerome Biblical commentary*, 2:33, 2:79.

¹⁸³ Barton and Muddiman, *Oxford Bible commentary*, 938; Brown et al., *Jerome Biblical commentary*, 2:33, 2:79, 2:140.

¹⁸⁴ William, *GP*, 3.100.25 (Winterbottom, 1:336-7): 'Simul uestigiis aduoluta, uiolentiam quandam facere, loco penitus non moueri.'

¹⁸⁵ William, *GP*, 5.228.2 (Winterbottom, 1:572-3): 'Audatia credulitatis de caelo traxit auxilium...'

¹⁸⁶ William, *GP*, 5.268.5 (Winterbottom, 1:636-8): 'Pulsabat uiolentia orationis caelum, intrauit sidera, traxit a superis auxilium'; cf. idem, *GP*, 5.227.1 (Winterbottom, 1:570-1): '...et ipsis caeli ianuis imminens...' ('...knocking on the very gates of heaven...'); idem, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.12.3 (Winterbottom et al, 82-4): '...pulsat caelum oratio' ('...his prayers were beating at heaven').

¹⁸⁷ William, *GP*, 5.272.5 (Winterbottom, 1:650-1): 'Nec illi precum uiolentia et inconditus clamor fuit fraudi, sed apud homines laudi, apud Deum et Sanctum celeri et integrae salutis' ('Nor was the violence of her prayers and rude cry false, but praised among men, and among God and the saint brought swift and complete health').

¹⁸⁸ William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 1.14.2 (Winterbottom et al, 50-1): '...postremo Christum etiam, ut ita dicam, repugnantem parti suae attraheret.'

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.: 'Regnum caelorum uim patitur, et uiolenti rapiunt illud.' It is of course difficult to say whether the phrase 'ut ita dicam' represents a hedge against potential theological criticism original to Coleman or to William, given Coleman's concern elsewhere for possible criticism; see William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.19.3-4 (Winterbottom et al, 98-101); Orchard, 'Parallel Lives', 46.

work composed for the spiritual instruction of the nuns of Wilton, and suggests that Goscelin's theology would have been similarly open to such kinds of aggressive supplication.¹⁹⁰

It can be alternatively suggested that what was considered theologically problematic with imprecation, ritual or otherwise, was not the operation of the curse per se – the way in which it coerced the divine or saintly authority – but rather the intended effect of the curse. In Goscelin's *Life of Augustine*, in disavowing Augustine's sentence as 'a prayer of cursing', he adds the crucial phrase: 'since he wished for the salvation of all.'¹⁹¹ It seems that for Goscelin 'malediction' bore with it the connotations of intended damnation and an explicit sense of terminality, as the highest possible sanction upon the unrepentant sinner, and as inappropriate for all but God himself to ordain. This sense would readily account for Eadmer and Anselm's anxieties about malediction also, as well as for the fact that its enactment is left in the hands of the departed saint. A sense of the terror of malediction can be seen in the episode of the Dancers of Colbeck, recounted by both Goscelin in the *Life of Eadgyth* and William in *GR*, in which a disconnected limb of one of the cursed dancers was forcibly rejected by the earth each time it was buried – a sure sign of their damnation.¹⁹² In much the same way, the divinely pronounced consumption of the deceased Ælfwold by foxes through similarly miraculous means had prevented the offender from being given a Christian burial, and could be taken as nature symbolically enacting a perpetual damnation performatively invoked through Dunstan's words.¹⁹³ Legitimate maledictions were understood as being a primarily disciplinary measure, temporary and corrective in nature, as the maledictions in *GP* and the 'until they repent' clauses in contemporary charter sanctions and liturgies of cursing reveal.¹⁹⁴ It would have been inappropriate to see Dunstan as calling for the death and damnation of an offender as his first course, and the effect of terminal malediction – rather than more temporary maledictions – needed to be disconnected from the active agency of the saint to whom it was attributed.

IV

The foregoing discussion furnishes a range of theological-literary frameworks for punitive miracles invoked without the need for an earthly agent or curse: whether the literalisation of the internal spiritual state of the habituated sinner, the external vindication of a transgressed saint or moral order, or demonic chastisement and trial. Those frameworks – all ultimately derived from biblical or patristic sources, as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter V – were all available to the three hagiographers discussed as possible ways of framing their narratives and explaining the providential workings of the miraculous in

¹⁹⁰ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 3 (Talbot, 51; Wright, 130).

¹⁹¹ Goscelin, *Vita Augustini*, 41 (*AASS*, Col. 0391B), cited above in Chapter I, at 61 fn. 174.

¹⁹² Goscelin, *Translatio Edithæ*, 16 (Wilmart, 289; trans. Wright, 83); William, *GR*, 2.174 (Mynors et al, 1:294-7).

¹⁹³ Jaser, 'Ritual excommunication', 133-6.

¹⁹⁴ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 13, 143-6; idem, 'Separation of curses from blessings', 30, 38.

the world. Nonetheless, the three hagiographers all differed from each other in their favoured choice of emphasis with respect to those paradigms: whether because of their emphases on the reform of the individual (Goscelin, William), on the transgression of the saints owed veneration or vindication (Eadmer, William), or on explaining the frustrations of the hostile contemporary political arena and providing comfort in times of personal or 'national' trial (Eadmer, William).

These broader paradigms of vengeance provided the necessary imaginative backdrop against which the Benedictines' attitudes toward maledictions were set. Favoured understandings of the operations of providence and the miraculous might for instance make the human enactment of the curse unnecessary, if it could be properly situated in the internal state of the sinner becoming spontaneously materially manifest, or in the actions of demons and the court of heaven punishing or testing the earthly sinner and saint alike. At the same time, the experiences, interests, personalities and outlooks of the individual authors could shape what they deemed both theologically acceptable and rhetorically useful with regard to curses attributed to their subjects. In terms of chronology, it is noticeable that the hagiographers Coleman and William were more willing to recount the maledictive propensities of their subjects than their predecessors, Goscelin and Eadmer. This seems of interest given the current scholarly paradigm in which malediction is seen as more prevalently accepted at the start of the period and thereafter begins to decline. The present case study shows that such broad patterns of chronological development could be more uneven on the ground in the cases of individual authors and contexts. These initial patterns and conclusions are ones which we will see refracted through the following chapters of the dissertation: with a similar range of available theological-literary frameworks appropriated and adapted (with their own subtle shifts of emphasis) later on among the English Cistercians of the north and southwest, and at the same time as the present authors by authors on the other side of the Irish Sea.

What unified the three authors was their sensitivity to the question of intention and terminality of the spoken curse as a spiritual damnation, preferring (albeit to different degrees) to minimise and represent it as an admonitory prophecy or temporary medicinal corrective when they admitted it as an acceptable saintly action. This emphasis on the curse as a temporary corrective or graded sanction is one we will also see as part of the general normative theology of the authors in three case studies which follow, though one which comes under pressure in additional contexts which the southern English Benedictines did not have to face.

Chapter II: The English Cistercians: Aelred, Walter, and John, c. 1140-1214

Moving on directly chronologically from the previous chapter, the second case study represents a shift in period, order affiliation, and region. In this case, the subject is three prominent English Cistercian hagiographers of c. 1140-1214: Aelred and Walter Daniel of Rievaulx in the north, and John of Forde in the southwest.¹ With these authors the study broadens out to consider the outlooks of a different set of authors in different regional and local cultural and social settings, operating within the shared conventions of another monastic context, while also expanding beyond a solely monastic audience. These are the Cistercians, a reformist monastic order of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which hearkened back to the primitive Rule of Benedict, first reaching England in 1128 and founding important abbeys at Rievaulx and Forde in 1132 and 1141 respectively.² Long seen as the most successful and innovative of the reform orders, and once called the twelfth century's 'outstanding example of a "textual community"', it has traditionally been assumed that the Cistercians were distinctive in their theology and unified in their culture and outlook.³ This view has been challenged in particular by Constance Berman, who questioned the overall coherence and unity of the order as a later invention not set in motion before the third quarter of the twelfth century. Though elements of Berman's argument were controversial, the broader claim of the order's renewal or consolidation in the latter half of the century is notably accepted (with certain reservations) by Elizabeth Freeman.⁴ Some important 'Cistercian' themes nonetheless continue to be

¹ M. Lapidge and R. Love, 'The Latin hagiography of England and Wales (600-1500)', in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, CC, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-2006), 3:260-1, 3:266-7 [3:203-325]. The stated date range of c. 1140-1214 reflects the date of Aelred's first major (spiritual) work at one end and the death of John at the other, though it may be noted that the three writers' (somewhat loosely dated) historical and hagiographical output more specifically might be placed within the period of c. 1153-1185.

² On the general development of the order, their coming to Britain, and their literary impact, see M.G. Newman, 'Foundation and twelfth century', in *CCCO*, 27-35 [25-37]; J.E. Burton, *Monastic and religious orders in Britain, 1000-1300*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 69-77, 187-8; idem, *The monastic order in Yorkshire, 1069-1215*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4, 40 (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 98-124.

³ See eg. M.G. Newman, *The boundaries of charity: Cistercian culture and ecclesiastical reform, 1098-1180* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 3-5, 9-10, 18-9, 125-7; E. Freeman, *Narratives of a new order: Cistercian historical writing in England, 1150-1220*, Medieval Church Studies 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 19; A. Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: a study* (London: SPCK, 1969), 147, 149; and B. Stock, *The implications of literacy: written language and models of interpretation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 405, whose quote on textual community referred to a group of writers gathered around an important set of shared texts.

⁴ C.H. Berman, *The Cistercian evolution: the invention of a religious order in twelfth-century Europe*, The Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), xi-vii, 93-4. Cf. Freeman, *Narratives of a new order*, 19-21.

accepted by both sides of that debate: notably for present purposes a particular rhetorical emphasis on the Rule and a theological preoccupation with the monastic theme of *caritas*.⁵ In comparison with their Benedictine colleagues, the English Cistercians, whose libraries were still in a state of formation in the mid-twelfth century and whose General Chapter later placed official restrictions on writing activity, produced fewer hagiographers or historians.⁶ Those who did write however were possessed of a strong historical consciousness and were arguably no less important than the Benedictines when it came to their individual literary and intellectual achievements, justifying their place in the present study.⁷ Particular issues bearing on the present study include the early prominence and personal influence of Aelred, the output and openness of Rievaulx and Forde as major intellectual centres, the diachronic order of the three hagiographers, and the similarity of their social and intellectual milieu.⁸ More so than the Benedictines then, the present writers can thus be said to be bound by a subtle degree of coherence and individual influence, as among a cluster of important texts and authors shaped by a set of similar backgrounds, audiences and contexts.

As in Chapter I, I will begin with the backgrounds and corpora of these individual authors, establishing their individual importance along with their interrelationship and general lines of comparison (I). The figure of Aelred dominates for his range of output and thus overall accessibility, though the lone but important hagiographical contributions of Walter and John will also be given due attention. After introducing the sources, I will then elaborate the Aelredian theological outlook of suffering and hardship (II), as subtly distinct from the theological frameworks of the Benedictines hitherto discussed. This will be done principally through Aelred himself, though it will be seen that the factors which motivate the

⁵ Berman, *Cistercian evolution*, 97-9; Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 56-9, 125; J. France, 'The Cistercian community', in *CCCO*, 80, 84 [80-6]; B. McGinn, 'The spiritual teaching of the early Cistercians', in *CCCO*, 221, 227-30 [218-32]; D.M. La Corte, 'Aelred on abbatial responsibilities', in *Companion to Aelred*, 51 [48-69].

⁶ E. Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian among historians', in *Companion to Aelred*, 113, 137 [113-46]; idem, *Narratives of a new order*, 91-4; idem, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's "De bello standardii": Cistercian historiography and the creation of community memories', *Cîteaux* 49 (1998), 5-6 [5-28]; H. Birkett, *The saints' lives of Jocelin of Furness: hagiography, patronage and ecclesiastical politics* (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2010), 15-6, 282-3; see also A. Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 200-16.

⁷ A strong sense of historical consciousness grounded in the Cistercian endorsement of human experience and emphasis on community life is notably argued by Freeman, *Narratives of a new order*, 23; and idem, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's "De bello standardii"', 6-8. See also Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria*, 240-1, 243-51.

⁸ On Rievaulx and Forde as intellectual centres and their interactions within a broader network with its neighbours, see Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 135-40, 142; C.J. Holdsworth, 'John of Forde, 1191-1991', in *A gathering of friends: the learning and spirituality of John of Forde*, ed. H. Costello and C.J. Holdsworth, Cistercian Studies Series 161 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1996), 29-36 [17-42]; E. Jamroziak, 'Considerate brothers or predatory neighbours? Rievaulx abbey and other monastic houses in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 73 (2001), 29-40 (passim); and Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria*, 243-4.

theme in his writing can also be identified to an extent in Walter and John. Next, I will proceed to outline cultural and social factors which placed this theology under pressure in particular local and regional contexts (III). Here the comparative control of the southwest in its time and place will allow comparison and contrast between Aelred and John. Thus elaborated, this backdrop of theological outlook toward the punitive miracle sets the foundation for a more broadly contextualised direct treatment of episodes of imprecation and malediction per se across the three hagiographers (IV). Here the episodes relevant to malediction and imprecation are confined to one for Aelred, two for Walter, and two for John. The focus will thus be on a close textual reading of each of the three authors' episodes with respect to their theological and literary source influences, in order to bring out their broader points of comparison. Finally, careful attention will be given to the narrative skeins of one additional and striking coercive miracle as reported by Walter (V). From these will emerge an essentially redemptive theology shaped by personal experience and contemporary concern, occasionally turning fatal in particular contexts.

I

Aelred of Rievaulx (c. 1110-1167) stands at the head of the English Cistercians for having the most impressive and complete portrait in terms of known biographical detail, theological outlook, and literary output, making him in many respects the most concrete and accessible object for the present study. As one of the most widely travelled, literarily active, and politically engaged Cistercian abbots of twelfth-century England, his work has been seen as the product of a closely integrated cultural, psychological and spiritual outlook.⁹ A son of the last of the hereditary priests of Hexham, he was a self-conscious writer of history with a strong awareness of living in a time of political and religious change, and has been seen as representing a conscious dialogue between the living traditions of the Northumbrian past and the new religion and politics of the reform era.¹⁰ Having served as the steward of David of Scotland before entering Rievaulx, he had longstanding ties with the royal courts of England and Scotland and the episcopal courts of Durham and York, and maintained close correspondence with Continental figures

⁹ Squire, *Aelred*, 3, 76. This key insight as to the necessity of reading Aelred's historical and spiritual works in tandem has however not always been sufficiently recognised, and is only more recently being developed: see Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 121, 145-6; D. Pezzini, 'Introduction', in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Opera omnia VI: opera historica et hagiographica*, ed. D. Pezzini, CCCM 3 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2017), 8*-15* [7*-269*].

¹⁰ F.M. Powicke, 'Introduction', in Walter Daniel, *Vita Aelredi*, xxxiv-xxxix, xlii-li [ix-lxxxix]; Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 127, 132-4, 137-8. Powicke, op. cit., xlii-i, and Squire, *Aelred*, 3-4, saw this as 'an amicable dialogue'; M.L. Dutton, 'Aelred's historical works: a mirror for twelfth-century England', in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Historical works*, 8, 18-9 [1-38], saw Aelred's psychology as that of a displaced exile and his historical project as preoccupied with ironing out the discontinuities of recent political history following the Norman conquest. See also Dutton, *ibid.*, 9-10; idem, 'A mirror for Christian England', in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Northern saints*, 1-3 [1-32]; Freeman, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's "De bello standardii"', 10-22; idem, 'The many functions of Cistercian histories, using Aelred of Rievaulx's "Relatio de standardo" as a case study', *TMC* 1 (1999), 124 [124-32]; idem, *Narratives of a new order*, 1-87.

such as Bernard of Clairvaux who commissioned him to write his *Speculum caritatis* (c. 1142) for the instruction of Cistercian novices.¹¹ His contribution as a theologian, pastor, historian and hagiographer was significant and has been widely studied.¹² Even before entering the cloister, he was raised by his family with a strong interest in the saints of Northumbria and in hagiography in general, as testified by the dedication to him of a Life of Brigit by Laurence of Durham while he was still a member of David's court, and his encouragement for hagiographical works by others such as Reginald of Durham.¹³

Of Aelred's seven historical and hagiographical works, produced in the decade-long period of 1153-63 – and all published in critical editions for the first time in 2017 – four have saintly figures as their subjects, while two concern specific miraculous intercessions.¹⁴ His *Lament* or Life of David (c. 1153), which circulated with his *Genealogy of the kings of the English* (1153x4), was his earliest exercise in direct hagiography and the beginning of his career as a historical writer and political advisor, being addressed in part to King Henry of England and presenting the Scottish king as a model of faith and virtue for emulation.¹⁵ The *Relatio de standardo* (1153x57) is the most widely disputed in terms of date, audience and purpose, but may be roughly contemporary with the *Lament* and *Genealogy*: it is also his most self-consciously historical work, being concerned more with the meaning of history and the ambiguity of good men on either side of the battle than with the battle itself.¹⁶ The text has drawn particular scholarly attention for the rhetorical complexity and originality of the battle speeches which dominate the narrative, and for the powerful expression of the Norman myth and assurance of divine assistance put into the

¹¹ Powicke, 'Introduction', xxxiv-vi, xxxix-li, lvi-ix; Squire, *Aelred*, 12-21; Dutton, 'Introduction to Aelred's "Spiritual friendship"', in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual friendship*, trans. C.L. Braceland, ed. M.L. Dutton, CFS 5 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2010), 14-6 [13-50].

¹² In addition to the important biographical monograph by Squire and the recent companion edited by Dutton already cited, studies concerning Aelred or his biographer Walter represent a discrete specialisation within Cistercian scholarship so large that the *Bibliotheca aelrediana* comprises two volumes and one supplement: see A. Hoste, *Bibliotheca aelrediana: a survey of the manuscripts, old catalogues, editions and studies concerning St. Aelred of Rievaulx*, Instrumenta Patristica 2 (Steenbrugge: In Abbatia Sancti Petri, 1962); P.-A. Burton, *Bibliotheca aelrediana secunda: une bibliographie cumulative (1962-1996)*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 7 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 1997); idem, 'Bibliotheca aelrediana secunda: supplementa', in *Companion to Aelred*, 295-324.

¹³ Powicke, 'Introduction', xxxvii-i; Squire, *Aelred*, 4, 14; Lapidge and Love, 'England and Wales', 261.

¹⁴ The incompleteness and limitations of the previous editions, along with the dampening effect which these and the lack of available translations until ten years ago imposed on scholarship, has been reviewed by Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 118-20.

¹⁵ Dutton, 'Mirror for twelfth-century England', 10-20; Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 115-7, 128-9.

¹⁶ Dutton, 'Mirror for twelfth-century England', 24-31; Freeman, *Narratives of a new order*, 31-37; idem, 'Aelred as a historian', 114-5; Pezzini, 'Introduction', 151*, 153*-5*; Powicke, 'Introduction', xcix.

mouth of the English leader, Walter Espec.¹⁷ Aelred's *Life of Edward the Confessor* was composed at the behest of Laurence of Westminster around the time of the 1161 canonisation and 1163 translation of the saint, again addressing King Henry with a model of royal sanctity, and adapting the anonymous eleventh-century *Life of the saint* along with the later *Life* by Osbert of Clare.¹⁸

The remaining works – which have hitherto received less scholarly attention than their due – are less explicit or precise about their intended audiences, but have been said to be ‘addressing bishops or canons while implicitly reaching out to all who struggle to live in faith and love.’¹⁹ His *Life of Ninian* (c. 1154x60) took as its sources Bede and an unidentified work in a ‘barbarous’ style, and was written for the bishop of Whithorn and the people of Galloway as a model for the ideal Christian life, presenting its subject as a perfect union of active and contemplative life.²⁰ His *Lives of the Hexham saints* represent a sermon preached at the translation of the saints in 1155 at the Augustinian canonry of Hexham, with reminiscences of the stories of his boyhood and animadversions to Cuthbert and Wilfrid, neither officially at Hexham but nonetheless objects of family devotion for Aelred.²¹ The sermon serves the needs of a local cult: vengeance and healing miracles position the canons of Hexham as mediating access to the divine through the relics, as sources of healing, protection, and punishment of transgressors in the community. This function is evident from a number of healing miracles in which a canon is ancillary to the protagonist, or even serves as a dual-protagonist with the recipient of the miracle in terms of the narrative attention and agency ascribed.²² The operation of the cult places the saint at the centre of the community, reinforcing ties within the community to the saint, the canons, and to fellow members of the community through

¹⁷ See D. Baker, ‘Ailred of Rievaulx and Walter Espec’, *HSJ* 1 (1989), 93-8 [91-8]; J.R.E. Bliese, ‘The battle rhetoric of Aelred of Rievaulx’, *HSJ* 1 (1989), 99-102, 106-7 [99-107]; idem, ‘The courage of the Normans. A comparative study of battle rhetoric’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 35 (1991), 5, 8-9, 11 [1-26]; idem, ‘Aelred of Rievaulx’s rhetoric and morale at the Battle of the Standard, 1138’, *Albion* 20.4 (1988), 545-55 [543-56]; Freeman, *Narratives of a new order*, 41-7; Pezzini, ‘Introduction’, 16*-7* 150*-3*.

¹⁸ Dutton, ‘Mirror for twelfth-century England’, 20-24; Powicke, ‘Introduction’, xlvii-i; Lapidge and Love, ‘England and Wales’, 261; Freeman, ‘Aelred as a historian’, 117, 130.

¹⁹ Dutton, ‘Mirror for Christian England’, 9. That these works have received ‘less attention than one might have expected’, especially in comparison with his ‘political’ and spiritual works, is noted by Freeman, ‘Aelred as a historian’, 121, 130-4.

²⁰ Dutton, ‘Mirror for Christian England’, 10-14; idem, ‘Introduction to Walter Daniel’s “Vita Aelredi”’, in Walter Daniel, *The life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, trans. F.M. Powicke, ed. M.L. Dutton, CFS 57 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 42 [1-88]; Freeman, ‘Aelred as a historian’, 131-3; Powicke, ‘Introduction’, xcvi. On contemporary developments in Galloway and Aelred’s involvement, see W.M. Aird, ‘“Sweet civility and barbarous rudeness”: a view from the frontier. Abbot Ailred of Rievaulx and the Scots’, in *Imagining frontiers, contesting identities*, ed. S.G. Ellis and L. Klusáková, Thematic Work Group 5, (Pisa: Pisa University Press), 65-7 [59-75].

²¹ Dutton, ‘Mirror for Christian England’, 14-6; Freeman, ‘Aelred as a historian’, 118, 125-6, 131.

²² Aelred, *Hexham*, 11.46-12.19 [2.8-9] (Pezzini, 90-2; trans. Freeland, 83-5).

their shared patron and collective identity, while dissuading transgressors of the community.²³ The work importantly contains the most extended episode of imprecation of the three hagiographers, making it an important object of attention.²⁴ Finally, Aelred's *De quodam miraculo miraculi* (c. 1160, also known by its modern title, *De santimoniali de Watton*) is not the Life of a saint per se but an account of a single miracle, in which a pregnant nun is relieved of her child and of the physical fetters punishing her sin by a vision of the Cistercian saint Henry Murdac. The text is said to have been written from contemporary oral report and investigation undertaken at Watton in person by Aelred, with the dual homiletic purposes of telling of the continuation of miracles in the present day as consolation to the sinner while warning of the dangers of the mixed communities of the Gilbertine order.²⁵

Along with Aelred, Walter Daniel (fl. c. 1150-67) and John of Forde (c. 1140/1150-1214) can be seen to form a natural triptych of hagiographers that can each be readily compared. On the one hand, Walter Daniel can be seen as a mirror of Aelred: a monk under his charge who shared in his broad theological outlook as companion and conversant at Rievaulx.²⁶ Walter spent seventeen years at that abbey, during the latter portion of which he served in Aelred's constant presence as scribe and physician,²⁷ collaborating in many of his written works even to point of appearing as interlocutor in one of his dialogues.²⁸ He was intimately familiar with both sides of his master's written corpus, theological and historical, which he drew on not only as a source for his work but as a model for his own narrative.²⁹ Beyond their shared monastic experience, Walter can therefore be seen as influenced by Aelred in many of the same ways Eadmer was influenced by Anselm, and read in terms of his shared theology and outlook; even if Walter comes across in his works as a less disciplined or measured writer than Aelred, with a narrower base of interests and experience (confined to theology and the monastic life with a distaste for secular affairs), a more prolix style, and a more readily combative tone.³⁰

²³ For some suggestive remarks on the importance of the cult in Aelred's writing and in a wider twelfth-century context, see Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 144.

²⁴ Aelred, *Hexham*, 13 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92-3; trans. Freeland, 85-7).

²⁵ Dutton, 'Mirror for Christian England', 20-23; Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 115, 124, 144-5; G. Constable, 'Aelred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton: an episode in the early history of the Gilbertine order', in *Medieval women*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 205-26; Powicke, 'Introduction', xcix; Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 43 (which suggests 1158x65 as the date of composition).

²⁶ Powicke, 'Introduction', xi-xxvii, does much to fill in the details of the life of Walter.

²⁷ Dutton, 'Introduction to Walter Daniel's Vita Aelredi', 9-10, 13-4, 47-8, which supposes he may have taken over as his scribe and constant companion from 'about 1155', and as closest to him in his last four years.

²⁸ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 13-5; Powicke, 'Introduction', xv-xvi.

²⁹ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 13-4, 47-8, 55-8.

³⁰ Powicke, 'Introduction', xv-xvii, xviii-xix, xxvi-xxvii, lii-liv, lxxxiii-lxxxvii; Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 11-15, 80-84, 87-8.

On the other hand, as hagiographers, both Walter and John each produced a single Life, which were in some respects similar to each other yet markedly different from most of those written by Aelred. These were respectively a Life of Aelred and a Life of Wulfric, the recently departed anchorite of Haselbury in the southwest: both instances of intimate sacred biography designed to commemorate a contemporary saint, quite unlike the hagiographical works with more ancient subjects.³¹ Commissioned by one Abbot H. and produced almost immediately after Aelred's death, Walter's Life of Aelred served to eulogise and defend its subject's memory from his critics and detractors, being directed toward the religious communities of Rievaulx and its neighbours – both environments which knew or harboured hostility toward him on account of personal grudges or his perceived excessive ambition and worldliness.³² Apart from Aelred himself, the Life presents its chief sources in terms of personal authorial witness with only occasional secondhand oral report, and seems to have been begun during the last several years of Aelred's illness.³³ As such, a conscious sense of verisimilitude was important for hagiographer and audience alike.³⁴ John's Life had not the benefit of such close firsthand witness and was wider in its intended audiences, but secondhand oral report and a similar concern for social realities recognisable to its audience underlie it nonetheless, as in its scrupulous attestation of witnesses and concern for those who knew its subject.³⁵ Attention has also been drawn to the similarity of two key cursing episodes in the two Lives, though these have yet to be subjected to a systematic comparison in terms of either direct or common formal influences.³⁶ Perhaps most importantly however, Walter and John were moreover shaped by a similar set of typological conventions and hagiographical models: both displaying in particular the key influence of

³¹ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 7-8, 14, 18, 49-50, 75-76, 84-6; P. Matarasso, 'Introduction', in John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, anchorite*, trans. P. Matarasso, CFS 79 (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2011), 47-51 [1-80]. See also T.J. Heffernan, *Sacred biography: saints and their biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 15, on the application of the term; his study of Walter's Life of Aelred in *ibid.*, 72-122; and I. van't Spijker, 'Saints and despair: twelfth-century hagiography as "intimate biography"', in *The invention of saintliness*, ed. A.B. Mulder-Bakker, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture (London: Routledge, 2002), 185-8 [185-205].

³² Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 49-50, 30-1, 66-7, 72-3, 75-79, 82-3; Powicke, 'Introduction', xxx.

³³ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 17-8, 46-9, 76.

³⁴ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 73-4, calls the text 'a curious blend of panegyric and narrative realism', whose concrete imagery and prose give 'a very vivid portrait' that is 'richly evocative of the physical world.' See also Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 61, 77-8; P. Matarasso, 'John of Forde as portrait painter in the "Vita beati Wulfrici"', in *A gathering of friends*, 46 [43-63].

³⁵ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 69, 77. On the need for verisimilitude and recognisable social realities, see also S. Yarrow, *Saints and their communities: miracle stories in twelfth century England*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 16-17; A.M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own country: living saints and the making of sainthood in the later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2, 16.

³⁶ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 63; P. Matarasso, 'Notes', in John of Forde, *The life of Wulfric*, 231 [219-44].

the Gregorian *Dialogues*. This is an aspect which has not hitherto been much drawn out by the existing scholarship, but is crucial in any discussion of the texts individually and in comparison with each other.³⁷

In other respects, John can be more readily compared with Aelred in terms of his active and worldly range of interests and confident and skilful literary achievement;³⁸ compared with Aelred and Walter in terms of a theological outlook which likely included exposure to the work of both;³⁹ and compared (or contrasted) with both again in representing the social and intellectual climate of the southwest and an abbey that has been aptly called ‘the Rievaulx of the south’.⁴⁰ The elevation of John’s achievement specifically in relation to the Rievaulx writers has been previously recognised. C.J. Holdsworth wrote that for his theological and hagiographical contribution, ‘no single writer’ among the English Cistercians of his day ‘comes up to him in both quality and breadth of achievement’, adding that ‘there was no Cistercian house so rich in writers as Forde, with the possible exception of Rievaulx’.⁴¹ Though his early background remains obscure, John was ‘almost certainly’ from Devon and remained rooted in Wessex all his life, being most likely of English but possibly of mixed Anglo-Norman parentage.⁴² The most recent biographical outline suggests that he was educated at the Exeter cathedral school, before becoming a monk of Forde by 1165, abbot of Bindon in 1187, and abbot of Forde in 1191.⁴³ He was a man of a solid

³⁷ On the conscious and careful use of typological conventions and hagiographical models, see in particular the study of Walter’s *Life of Aelred* by Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 78-9, 118-22. The influence of the Gregorian *Dialogues* on John of Forde has been noted by H. Mayr-Harting, ‘Functions of a twelfth-century recluse’, *History* 60 (1975), 339 [337-52]; and additional Gregorian influences by C.J. Holdsworth, ‘John of Ford and English Cistercian writing, 1167-1214’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (1961), 124 [117-36]. For Walter, identified Gregorian influence has been hitherto confined to a single verbal allusion noted in Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 15 (Powicke, 24 fn. 2). The influence of the *Dialogues* in both texts however is a much deeper structural feature, which will become relevant in the discussion below of direct imprecations in particular.

³⁸ For a short survey of his range of achievement, see C.J. Holdsworth, ‘Forde, John of (c.1150–1214)’, in *ODNB*, 20:350; and *idem*, ‘John of Forde, 1191-1991’, 36-8, 41-2.

³⁹ The suggestion that John knew Walter’s *Life* has been proposed by Matarasso, ‘Appendix’, 231. Aelred and Walter’s works have not been found in the surviving monastic library records of the houses of the southwest, but some of Aelred’s works are known to have been held in the library of Winchcomb within the nearby Worcester diocese of John’s patron Baldwin of Forde, and would otherwise have been widely available through a broad network of Cistercian houses. See D.N. Bell, *An index of Cistercian authors and works in medieval library catalogues in Great Britain*, Cistercian Studies Series 132 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 145, 155-8.

⁴⁰ For the social and intellectual context around Forde, see Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 3-5; Holdsworth, ‘John of Forde, 1191-1991’, 29-36, quoted at 36; and for the wider context of the southwest, see J.H. Bethey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, A Regional History of England (London: Longman, 1986), 29-33, 64-72, 75-7, 80-1.

⁴¹ Holdsworth, ‘John of Ford and English Cistercian writing’, 130, 132.

⁴² Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3; this sketch builds implicitly on the outline in Holdsworth, ‘John of Ford’, 118; and *idem*, ‘Forde, John of’, 350, which alternatively places his entrance to Cistercian life c. 1170.

education and literary ability, living in a community which held a good library and fostered intellectual activity in both poetry and prose, particularly under the influence of the prolific Baldwin of Forde.⁴⁴ His surviving theological magnum opus, his sermons on the Song of Songs, completed the incomplete commentary by Bernard of Clairvaux and Gilbert of Hoyland and developed themes of the contemplative life from his earlier hagiographical work, but may have been considered old-fashioned in its approach and did not disseminate widely.⁴⁵ Finally, John's legal knowledge and competence in mediating disputes brought him a wide-ranging career from the 1190s on, including service as a papal judge-delegate, as sometime delegate for Canterbury and the Cistercian General Chapter, and finally as confessor to King John from 1204-1207 and advocate for his own abbey during the Interdict.⁴⁶

John's *Life of Wulfric* can be dated from its accompanying letters to 1180x1184, with some of its stories most likely collected in the previous years and a final 'fair and definitive copy' made during 1185.⁴⁷ The *Life* was written under the direction of Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter and directed to the bishops of Bath and Worcester, with the latter, Baldwin of Forde, assuming the role of patron following the death of Bartholomew and his own elevation to the see of Canterbury.⁴⁸ Importantly, it appears to have been written as a text structured for papal canonisation, fulfilling the contemporary papal requirements of having secured broad episcopal backing, collected miracles, and attested witnesses.⁴⁹ In this respect it differs from Walter's *Life of Aelred*, which lacks any collection of posthumous miracles as well as any evidence that it was ever intended to promote a formal canonisation.⁵⁰ The special attention in the *Life of Wulfric* coincides neatly with the juridical turn in canonisation procedure during the pontificate of Alexander III (r. 1159-1181), and with the interrogation of twenty sworn witnesses attested from the earliest canonisation process whose *acta* have survived (that of Saint Galgano in 1185).⁵¹ It would also align with an 'awareness of pontifical prerogatives' and procedure in the sphere of canonisation which

⁴⁴ Holdsworth, 'John of Ford', 124-127; Matarasso, 'Introduction', 68; K. Day, 'John of Forde's *Life of Wulfric of Haselbury* and the identity of "The Lord Abbot pie memorie"', *Cîteaux* 49 (1998), 222-3 [221-32].

⁴⁵ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 77-79; Holdsworth, 'John of Ford', 120-124; 'Forde, John of', 350.

⁴⁶ Holdsworth, 'John of Ford', 118-120; idem, 'Forde, John of', 350.

⁴⁷ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 10-18.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11; Holdsworth, 'John of Ford', 123.

⁴⁹ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 62-4; R. Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?: saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 61-64.

⁵⁰ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's *Vita*', 40, 75-76

⁵¹ A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 25-6, 35; citing also P. Grosjean, 'Review: E.W. Kemp, Pope Alexander III and the canonisation of saints', *Analecta Bollandiana* 63 (1945), 273-5; E.W. Kemp, *Canonization and authority in the Western Church*, Oxford Historical Series: New Series 1 (London: OUP, 1948), 53-65. See also Matarasso, 'Introduction', 63. This is coincidentally the same number of witnesses cited by John; for these, see Matarasso, *ibid.*, 63, 245.

‘seems to have been most marked’ in England,⁵² and of which Bartholomew and Baldwin would have been particularly aware as trained canonists and active papal judges-delegate.⁵³ In its extant form the text was likely amended by Bishop Bartholomew with the ‘juridical niceties’ of canon law and canonisation procedure, though in the final event it was unsuccessful and its new patron Baldwin may indeed never have had the chance to promote it.⁵⁴ Like the Life of Aelred however, the Life of Wulfric seems not to have attempted to establish a cult at a particular shrine, as shown by the relative dearth of conventional shrine miracles.⁵⁵ This may suggest that Wulfric as anchoritic saint was intended to serve as a broader cultural reference point for ideals of belief and practice,⁵⁶ and in particular as a mascot for the primitive ideals of Cistercian and religious life in general⁵⁷ – a point which may explain the particular emphasis on homiletic and pastoral content, though this was also a feature otherwise important to the canonisation process in general.⁵⁸

II

Having introduced the relationships of the three hagiographers, the natural starting point is the Aelredian theology which forms the underlying paradigm of Aelred’s representation of episodes of vengeance and cursing. In Aelred’s writings, accounts of direct imprecations are infrequent, being as noted confined to a single episode in the Hexham Lives. Instead, with some exceptions, episodes of vengeance chiefly operate independently of an earthly agent and are generally directed toward the sinner’s redemption. The first point is common with the three Benedictine hagiographers, though the direction toward redemption is

⁵² Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 28; Kemp, *Canonization and authority*, 102. The see of Worcester in particular was attentive to collecting decretals, on which, see M.G. Cheney et al. (eds.), *Worcester 1062-1185*, English Episcopal Acta 33 (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 1-li.

⁵³ See F. Barlow (ed.), *Exeter 1046-1184*, English Episcopal Acta 11 (Oxford: OUP, 1996), xl; Cheney (ed.), *Worcester 1062-1185*, lv; C.J. Holdsworth, ‘Baldwin (c.1125–1190)’, in *ODNB*, 3:443 [3:442-5]; F. Barlow, ‘Bartholomew (d. 1184)’, in *ODNB*, 4:163 [4:162-3]; Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 64. Bishop Reginald of Bath also served as judge-delegate, though the degree of his involvement in the Life is unclear; see F.M.R. Ramsey (ed.), *Bath and Wells, 1061-2015* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), xxii.

⁵⁴ Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 64-6, quoted at 64; Dutton, ‘Walter Daniel’s Vita’, 49.

⁵⁵ Mayr-Harting, ‘Functions’, 338; Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 59-62.

⁵⁶ Mayr-Harting, ‘Functions’, 338; see also more recently the comments of T. Licence, *Hermits and recluses in English society, 950-1200* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 22, on the anchorite as ‘a type of imagined persona by which society gave form and substance to notions of virtue, holiness, and renunciation’.

⁵⁷ Mayr-Harting, ‘Functions’, 339-340, 345. Wulfric’s status for John as an exemplary archetype and co-opted mascot for the Cistercian contemplative is illustrated by his homiletic adversions to the words and deeds of Wulfric occasionally serving as lessons for the conduct of John’s own order: see eg. John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 8, 48 [1.8, 2.18] (Bell, 21-2, 66; trans. Matarasso, 107, 152).

⁵⁸ See also Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 34-5.

much more explicit. In some ways, this paradigm of vengeance approaches the problem from the opposite direction to Goscelin's 'literalisation' pattern, in that here the miraculous punishment is an external imposition used to correct and purify sin, rather than arising from the interior character of the sin in question. The basis for this is a theology of virtue perfected through degrees of patient suffering and inflicted hardship, which Aelred elaborated as one of his major themes through his spiritual and historical work over his three decades as a monk and abbot of Revesby and Rievaulx.⁵⁹ In operation, such vengeance miracles can take place through abstracted divine justice; or, as in the case of John of Forde in particular, through intermediate demonic agents.⁶⁰ Other thematic paradigms such as vindication are also present, but these come as secondary to perfecting suffering. In so far as these theological outlooks shape the narrative form and 'content' of the miracles for the three Cistercians, the paradigm will be laid out below.

In his historical narratives of both royal and non-royal subjects, Aelred used the lives of the saints and of secular figures to show God's unending love as mediated through the saints and the miraculous.⁶¹ In this, Aelred represents punishments and hardships primarily as occasions to manifest divine love, bringing out opportunities for charity, grace and mercy for the deserving and undeserving alike.⁶² The theme is most fully expanded in a chapter of his *Lament* for David, where Aelred introduces the sins of the Scottish king – which he saw as taking advantage of the native cruelty of those in his army and as failing to do more to restrain them in his attack on the north of England during the reign of Stephen.⁶³ The result of this royal sin was punishment from the Father's rod by the God of vengeance ('Deus ultionum'), carried out through the revolt of Wimund in the Isles and through the death of David's son Henry of Scotland.⁶⁴ The chapter serves two rhetorical functions within the text as a whole. In part it is an admonition by negative example for the newly acceded Henry of England. In the prefatory Epistle to Henry, Aelred praises the restraint in battle shown by the young king, who 'abstains from rapine, spares the fallen, guards against conflagrations, imposes no hardship on the poor, and maintains peace and reverence toward churches and priests.'⁶⁵ The shortcomings of his grand-uncle in the *Lament* serve as a close parallel and admonitory antitype of each of these virtues. Their punishment warns that should he fall into sin, even an invincible king who subdued many peoples can be scourged by such an unassuming avenger as Wimund: a lying

⁵⁹ A. Hallier, *The monastic theology of Aelred of Rievaulx: an experiential theology*, trans. C. Heaney and H. McCaffery, Cistercian Studies Series 2 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 44-9, Squire, *Aelred*, 28, 33-6, 55-7.

⁶⁰ This is particularly true of the first book of the *Vita Wulfriki*, for which see Matarasso, 'Introduction', 70-2.

⁶¹ Dutton, 'Mirror for Christian England', 12, 19-20, 22-6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 12, 18, 22, 24.

⁶³ Aelred, *Lamentatio*, 6.12-21 (Pezzini, 10-1; trans. Freeland, 53-4); Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 115-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.26-32, 7.40-3, quoted at 7.40 (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 56-7).

⁶⁵ Aelred, *Epistola*, ll. 21-3 (Pezzini, 3; trans. Freeland, 42): '...abstinere rapinis, cedibus parcere, cauere incendia, nullum grauamen inferre pauperibus, pacem et reuerentiam ecclesiis et sacerdotibus conseruare.'

monk at the head of those islanders over whom the Scottish king had previously easily triumphed.⁶⁶ As a reinforcing example to inspire Henry to recognise and shun David's shortcomings and to emulate instead his virtuous acts, the account can be read in light of the *Speculum* of a decade earlier, in which Aelred wrote of the three progressive graces of fear, consolation, and love.⁶⁷ In the Epistle, Aelred praises the youthful wisdom of the king and expresses the hope that through his grand-uncle, Christ's grace may pour into him the virtue of loving-kindness.⁶⁸ In the *Speculum*, Aelred observes that wisdom has its beginning in fear, and its perfection in loving-kindness.⁶⁹ It is that goal of fear as a spur to wisdom and at last to greater love which the *Lament* reinforces.

A second rhetorical function with a more general audience of the elegiac *Lament* in mind is that the chapter serves a strategy of prolepsis, allowing Aelred to anticipate and refute possible objections to David's sanctity. The *Lament* notes that the biblical figures Aaron, Moses, Miriam and David of Israel all committed grave sins, as scripture saw fit to record.⁷⁰ Against their much graver offences the Scottish king's sin stood more as one of omission than of commission,⁷¹ and could also be set alongside his longstanding religious devotions and other political excuses that might be made for him, which Aelred outlines paraleptically in two discrete sections.⁷² Most important to Aelred however was David's recognition of his punishment and his response to it.⁷³ The king bore his punishment with patience and fortitude: humbly confessing his faults, atoning for his sins through almsgiving in accordance with the advice of the Prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, and continuing in his royal office with daily contrition.⁷⁴ Aelred uses the chapter then not as a mark of David's deficiency but rather as a confirming sign of his sanctity, as revealed in the passages which bookend the episode: 'Not only is the righteousness of good men to be praised, but their repentance if perhaps they have done wrong is also to be declared... Let no one then impute to him the sin that divine justice punished in the present, which he himself condemned by the confession of his lips, which he washed away with tears, which he redeemed by almsgiving, which he purged by daily contrition of heart.'⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Aelred, *Lamentatio*, 7.32-7 [6] (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 56).

⁶⁷ Aelred, *Speculum*, 2.11.26 (Talbot, 77-8; trans. Connor, 180).

⁶⁸ Aelred, *Epistola*, ll. 28-34 (Pezzini, 4; trans. Freeland, 42-3).

⁶⁹ Aelred, *Speculum*, 2.12.29 (Talbot, 79; trans. Connor, 182-3).

⁷⁰ Aelred, *Lamentatio*, 6.4-11 [5] (Pezzini, 10; trans. Freeland, 53).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.12-21 (Pezzini, 10-1; trans. Freeland, 53).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 6.21-7.18 (Pezzini, 11; trans. Freeland, 54-55).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.23-6 (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 56).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.11-8, 7.52-7 (Pezzini, 11, 13; trans. Freeland, 54, 57).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.2-4, 7.52-7 (Pezzini, 10, ; trans. Freeland, 53, 57): '...non solum bonorum uirorum sit laudanda iustitia, uerum etiam si forte deliquerint penitentia predicanda. [...] Absit igitur ut hoc illi imputetur peccatum quod in presenti diuina puniuit iustitia, quod ipse proprii oris confessione damnauit, quod lauit lacrimis, quod redemit elemosinis, quod cotidiana cordis contritione purgauit...'

The image of divine vengeance which emerges is that of a merciful father favourably disposed even to sons convicted of wrongdoing, and all the more toward those who self-accuse for their faults and embrace their justly inflicted hardships in thanksgiving.⁷⁶ ‘You disciplined him, Lord... as a father disciplines his son, but yet in mercy, for you did not in your wrath shut out mercy’;⁷⁷ ‘you poured out your wrath upon him so that his patience should become known to everyone’.⁷⁸ The theme appears similarly in the *Genealogy*, in which Aelred describes the Danish invasions under Alfred’s reign as a providential means to test and purify the patient king and his subjects in the manner of Job.⁷⁹ In the speech attributed to Alfred he invokes Psalm 117:18: ‘Heretofore our chastening God has chastised us for our sins, but he has not handed us over to death.’⁸⁰ The purpose of the chastisement is explained as one of purification: ‘For it is not by their own strength or by the power of their own hands that they have prevailed over us, but by the right hand of God and the rod of his fury, raging not so much against us as against our sins. The cruelty of the pagans has been used for our purification and not for our destruction.’⁸¹ It is by receiving ‘from the hand of God double for all our sins’ (Isaiah 40:2) that Alfred and the English are strengthened in faith and prepared for their eventual victory.⁸² That same providential care can be seen at work even for the most unworthy of the line. In Aelred’s treatment of King Eadwig (whom he names as ‘Edwin’), known for his tryst with Ælfgifu and his exile of Saint Dunstan, the king is represented as having broken with his fathers’ ways and having set himself up as a new Herod: given over to a new Herodias, and set against the new Elijah and John the Baptist figured by Saint Dunstan.⁸³ Nonetheless, Aelred observes that ‘the Lord remembered the Christian kings his fathers, and lest anyone of that sacred line should perish, found a means by which he might be saved.’⁸⁴ By being stripped of a great part of his kingdom by his brother Edgar, Eadwig is forced successively into remorse, renunciation

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.19-26 (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 55-6).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 7.20-3 (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 55-6): ‘Corripuisti eum Domine... ut pater filium, uerumtamen in misericordia, quoniam non continuisti in ira tua misericordiam tuam.’

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.40-1 (Pezzini, 12; trans. Freeland, 56-7): ‘...ut patientia illius omnibus innotesceret, effudisti super eum iram tuam et omnem iram furoris tui.’

⁷⁹ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 2.54-73 [7] (Pezzini, 27-8; trans. Freeland, 79).

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.6-7 (Pezzini, 29; trans. Freeland, 82): ‘Hactenus pro peccatis nostris flagellans flagelauit nos Deus, sed morti non tradidit nos.’

⁸¹ Ibid., 3.14-8 (Pezzini, 30; trans. Freeland, 82): ‘Non enim in uirtute sua aut fortitudine manuum suarum preualuerunt super nos, sed dextera Dei et uirga furoris eius non tam in nos quam in nostra peccata deseuiens, paganorum usa est crudelitate, in purgationem et non in destructionem nostram.’

⁸² Ibid., 3.38-9 (Pezzini, 30; trans. Freeland, 83): ‘...suscepimus de manu Domini duplicia pro omnibus peccatis nostris...’

⁸³ Ibid., 7.11-21 (Pezzini, 37-8; trans. Freeland, 94-5).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 7.25-8 (Pezzini, 38; trans. Freeland, 95): ‘Recordatus enim est Dominus patrum suorum, regum scilicet christianorum, et ne quis de sacra illa stirpe periret, occasionem qua saluaretur inuenit.’

of his mistress, and wiser counsel.⁸⁵ In the final event, the king's death and threatened damnation is providentially revealed to Dunstan in a vision, allowing the saint to intercede for him so that the late king could obtain pardon and salvation.⁸⁶ In the *Speculum*, the grace of mercy is that by which the soul is awakened to repentance and by which the prostrate is raised up.⁸⁷ The pattern of mercy as the operative spirit of vengeance, and the progressive reform and perfection by degrees of the sinner alike, is one which reoccurs in Aelred's Lives.

The model can be tested beyond that of a member of the royal house of Wessex to whom Aelred was conveniently well-disposed. Aelred was willing for instance to admit in his Life of Edward the Confessor the possibility that God may have spared Harold Godwinson death at the Battle of Hastings to preserve him for repentance;⁸⁸ while in his Life of Ninian, a more explicit pattern of chastisement and reconciliation characterises the treatment of the proud king Tuduvallus, who is struck with blindness for rejecting the teachings of the saint.⁸⁹ Aelred writes that the punishment was 'neither in vain nor to his foolishness', but instead brought him inward enlightenment even as it brought outer darkness.⁹⁰ Calling upon the saint to forgive and cure him, the saint prayed for his deliverance, gently chided him (perhaps suggesting penances similar to those prescribed in *De quodam miraculo*), and at last healed him, so that the king came to greater devotion of God and the saint. Aelred concludes with satisfaction: 'If then by the grace of humility and penitence this disdainful and haughty man deserved to be thus healed by the holy man, who can doubt that someone who with sure faith and a sincere and humble heart asks the help of such a man in healing the wounds of the inner self will obtain a quick remedy through his holy merits?'⁹¹ This conclusion brings the theme of redemption beyond that confined to the providential care of kings or to the historical setting of the conversion period. Thus in a terminal vengeance which befalls some cattle-rustlers of Ninian's herd slightly later in the narrative, the saint raises his transgressors back to life and

⁸⁵ Ibid., 7.22-5 (Pezzini, 38; trans. Freeland, 94-5).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.28-33 (Pezzini, 38; trans. Freeland, 95).

⁸⁷ Aelred, *Speculum*, 2.11.26.443-8 (Talbot, 77-8; trans. Connor, 180).

⁸⁸ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 24.27-9 [1.24] (Marzella, 140; trans. Freeland, 190). Harold of course was linked to the earlier ruling line by his sister Edith, but this admission of redemption is notable because in Aelred, *Genealogia*, he is identified first as 'an earl of the race of traitors' ('comes de genere proditorum') and of evil omen (12.36-8 [20] [Pezzini, 52; trans. Freeland, 115]), while in the *Vita* he is censured for his malice (24.13-9 [1.24] [Marzella, 140; trans. Freeland, 189]) and for his oath-breaking which hasten vengeance upon himself and the kingdom (34 [2.34] [Pezzini, 34.1-5; trans. Freeland, 216]).

⁸⁹ Aelred, *Vita Niniani*, 4.15-20 (Pezzini, 120; trans. Freeland, 44-6).

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.20-1 (Pezzini, 120; trans. Freeland, 45): 'Nec frustra, neque ad insipientiam ei.'

⁹¹ Ibid., 4.44-8 (Pezzini, 121; trans. Freeland, 46): 'Si igitur contemptor iste et superbus, gratia humilitatis et penitentie, a sanctissimo uiro meruit sic sanari, quis dubitet eum qui certa fide, sincero et humili corde, ad interioris hominis sui uulnera sananda auxilium tanti uiri poposcerit, citum remedium eius sanctis meritis promereri?'

induces them to repent.⁹² As with the God in Alfred's speech who 'strikes and heals, kills and brings to life, makes poor and makes rich, brings to the depths and raises up', the aim of chastisement is repentance and redemption, here seen even from the most undeserving.⁹³

Perhaps the fullest narrative of punishment and redemption can be found in *De quodam miraculo*, which brings together the themes above in a non-royal and initially most unworthy protagonist. When the pregnant nun is discovered, she confesses and endures her physical punishment by her superiors while patiently calling out for further punishment.⁹⁴ After zeal in punishment from both sides, the nun and her community pray for deliverance, which is finally promised to her by the heavenly Henry Murdac in return for daily recitation of the penitential psalms.⁹⁵ Aelred praises the zealous intention of the punishment while expressing discomfort with its particularly violent and graphic nature, revealing that his approving interest is in its penitential and redemptive end rather than in its means. For Aelred, the goal of inflicted and self-inflicted hardship is to serve as a conduit for grace, as revealed in his citation of Romans 5:20: that 'where sin abounded, grace did more abound.'⁹⁶ Such goals accorded with the properly compassionate spirit of monastic correction as an act of fraternal charity.⁹⁷ It is when the last of the nun's physical fetters is miraculously removed that Aelred pronounces her sin forgiven and the need for further punishment removed by her correction, counselling: 'what God has cleansed you must not call common, and her whom he loosed you must not bind.'⁹⁸ Punishment perpetuated beyond the point of forgiveness is deemed 'unsuitable and indicative of a lack of faith.'⁹⁹ Taken as a narrative whole, the nun thus travels from a spirit of wantonness at the start of the narrative, to inflicted hardship, to embrace of further hardship – and ultimately to repentance, deliverance, devotion and renewal as the final end of hardship.

The theme of hardship as prelude to mercy and grace can be similarly found in the Hexham Lives, though the focused pattern elaborated fully in *De quodam miraculo* is there treated more episodically. A wrongfully sentenced youth's fear of death causes him to call out for aid from Saint Wilfrid;¹⁰⁰ the fear of Malcolm of Scotland's army forces the people of Hexham to call on their saints for deliverance;¹⁰¹ a lay brother who

⁹² Ibid., 8.31-9 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 50-2).

⁹³ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 3.3-4 [8] (Pezzini, 29; trans. Freeland, 82): '...percutit et sanat, mortificat et uiuificat, pauperem facit et ditat, humiliat et subleuat.' Cf. idem, *Vita Niniani*, 8.37-9 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 52).

⁹⁴ Aelred, *De quodam miraculo*, 5.1-11, 5.22-3 [6] (Pezzini, 140-1; trans. Freeland, 114-6).

⁹⁵ Ibid., 8.6-12, 10.7-33 [8, 9] (Pezzini, 143-4; trans. Freeland, 117-9).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 8.5-6 [8] (Pezzini, 143; trans. Freeland, 117): 'Vbi enim abundauit peccatum superabundauit gratia.'

⁹⁷ Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 60-1.

⁹⁸ Aelred, *De quodam miraculo*, 13.13-4 [11] (Pezzini, 146; trans. Freeland, 122): 'Quod Deus mundauit tu ne commune dixeris; et quam ipse absoluit, tu ne ligaueris.'

⁹⁹ Ibid., 12.16 [11] (Pezzini, 145; trans. Freeland, 121): '...importunum hoc... et quoddam infidelitatis indicium.'

¹⁰⁰ Aelred, *Hexham*, 3.15-6 [1.1] (Pezzini, 79; trans. Freeland, 68).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 4.33-7 (Pezzini, 81; trans. Freeland, 70-2).

bursts himself open in over-exertion is restored to health by prayer;¹⁰² the fear of drowning leads a group of onlookers to call on Saint Alchmund;¹⁰³ those who mock Saint Acca are corrected;¹⁰⁴ while those who violate the saint's relics for their own presumptuous gain are corrected and deterred.¹⁰⁵ The sequence in each case is one of fear or punishment leading to desperate prayer, saintly deliverance, and thanksgiving and higher devotion. A similar pattern can be seen in some of the embedded miracles of saintly vengeance in the Life of Edward the Confessor. A fisherman who deceptively withheld tithe from the abbey of St. Peter at Westminster is deprived of fish until he confesses, makes restitution, and promises to amend his ways.¹⁰⁶ The basic elements of the brief episode seem to allude both to the former occupation of the abbey's patron as a fisherman, now able to dictate dearth or plenty from heaven, and to his punishment of Ananias and Sapphira's withholding of tithe in Acts 5:1-5. Notably however in Acts the punishment is fatal, and Aelred is thus editorialising in representing a more merciful side to the saint. In a longer episode in the second book of the same Life, a dyer who blasphemed Edward by intending to work on his feast is struck with a deforming paralysis and insensibility by God's just judgement, before being brought to the saint's shrine by her intercessors.¹⁰⁷ On being restored to health and sanity by their intercession, she confesses her fault, repents, gives thanks, and learns to fear the saint thenceforth.¹⁰⁸ Aelred attributes the events in terms of Job 5:8 and 1 Samuel 2:6, to 'the Lord who strikes and heals, who kills and brings to life, who leads down to the depths and leads back.'¹⁰⁹ These are the same terms which he applies to God's chastisement and redemptive justice toward the English in Alfred's speech in the *Genealogy*¹¹⁰ and in Edward's speech on the warding off of Danish invasions in the Life.¹¹¹

The inclusive theme of ordinary and miraculous hardships as primarily a road to eventual redemption, rather than to terminal vengeance, is thus a prominent and reoccurring feature of both sets of Lives (royal and non-royal) composed by Aelred, and additionally, as we shall see in the discussion which follows, in the Lives by Walter and John. It is also one which can be moreover shown to be congruent with the hagiographers' historical and theological outlooks in evidence from their work more broadly. Three formative positions can be sketched in support of this interpretation of this hagiographical outlook. The first is one of family memory and historical outlook, exemplified in Aelred's emotive sense both of the

¹⁰² Ibid., 8.14-33 (Pezzini, 85; trans. Freeland, 75-7).

¹⁰³ Ibid., 16.19-22 (Pezzini, 104; trans. Freeland, 100-1).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 13.24-6, 13.44-50 (Pezzini, 92-3; trans. Freeland, 86-7).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 14.67-84, 15.55-113, 18.23-46 (Pezzini, 96, 101-3, 108; trans. Freeland, 90-1, 97-9, 106-7*).

¹⁰⁶ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 14.74-6 [1.14] (Marzella, 124; trans. Freeland, 169*).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 34.27-71 [2.38] (Pezzini, 172-3; trans. Freeland, 230-2).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 34.71-80 [2.38] (Pezzini, 173; trans. Freeland, 232).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 34.75-6 [2.38] (Pezzini, 173; trans. Freeland, 232): '...Domino, qui percutit et sanat, mortificat et uiuificat, deducit ad inferos et reducit.'

¹¹⁰ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 3.3-4 [8] (Pezzini, 29; trans. Freeland, 82).

¹¹¹ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 9.31-2 [1.9] (Marzella, 110; trans. Freeland, 150).

Viking devastation of the church of Hexham, and of the rebuilding of that same church by his grandfather.¹¹² Though he does not cite the biblical passage directly, that sense of inflicted hardship as precursor to renewal might be conceived in similar terms to the citation of Romans 5:20 in *De quodam miraculo*.

The second position is one of a more general theological outlook. Amédée Hallier discerned in Aelred's theology an emphasis on the spiritual life 'not as a pure and simple ascent to God', but as a rocky path consisting in a process of failure and restoration to the likeness of God.¹¹³ It is by bitter experience that the individual is forced to retrace the long journey of the prodigal son, and while on that path he is set in order by degrees through divine charity.¹¹⁴ The general theological outlook, drawn from the writings of Augustine of Hippo and seen as integral in its experiential emphasis to Cistercian spirituality more broadly, is shared with the other two hagiographers.¹¹⁵ The theme of miraculous chastisement directed toward the obstinate sinner's stumbling redemption is integral to the running episodes of the 'unstable monk' in Walter's *Life of Aelred*, in which a secular clerk who had withdrawn first from the world made three frustrated attempts to leave the monastic community, before ultimately dying a holy death at Rievaulx.¹¹⁶ The running episode is one which could doubtless have stood for numerous other real life figures known to the hagiographer.¹¹⁷ It was also noted by Walter that Aelred himself suffered more severely toward the end of his life on account of long-ago committed sins, and thus the theme of hardship directed toward the individual's purgation by divine charity is implicitly uneven, even for a man of progressive sanctity.¹¹⁸ The theme of stumbling conversion can be seen even more thoroughly at work in John's *Life of Wulfric*, whose sensitivity to the homiletic dimension of his material in view of the canonisation process has already been noted.¹¹⁹ On the one hand, the first book of the *Life* displays a structurally patterned narrative progression of demonically-inflicted hardships which serve to test and perfect Wulfric's virtues of power and devotion, developing them by degrees.¹²⁰ On the other hand, each book features a key figure of stumbling conversion. In the first book that stumbling convert is Wulfric himself, who even as the consummate spiritual warrior sins with his genitals for eighteen years as an

¹¹² Aelred, *Hexham*, 14.1-27 [2.11] (Pezzini, 93-4; trans. Freeland, 87-8); Dutton, 'Mirror for Christian England', 1-3.

¹¹³ Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 10-2, 44-7, quoted at 10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10, 15-8, 48-9.

¹¹⁵ On the context of the theology of image and likeness, elaborated in terms of a faltering humanity within the thought of prominent Cistercian spiritual writers more broadly, see Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 54-6, 66.

¹¹⁶ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 15, 22, 28 (Powicke, 24-5, 30-2, 35-6). This sequence of episodes will be returned to later below.

¹¹⁷ Squire, *Aelred*, 53-5.

¹¹⁸ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 48-9; see also Dutton, 'Walter's *Vita Aelredi*', 64-6.

¹¹⁹ On the importance of establishing homiletic to the canonisation process, see again Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 34-5.

¹²⁰ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 70-2.

anchorite, but whose weakness serves ultimately as a consolation to others.¹²¹ In the second book the key convert is Henry of Waverley, whose account is told exceptionally in the first person.¹²² The account is one of falling into the land of unlikeness, and of stumbling even in the process of being called back.¹²³ His story begins as a soldier in Wessex, inflicting hardship and disorder during Stephen's reign, and whose future greatness of conversion is prophesied by Wulfric, yet who falls even further into darkness in his attempt to return.¹²⁴ He later becomes a Cistercian monk and abbot of Tintern, yet in fulfilling Wulfric's prophecy is taken with the pride of presumption and must be reprimanded by the saint before perfecting his ways and finally concluding as abbot of Waverley.¹²⁵ In the third book, a similar pattern is applied to Walter of Glastonbury, son of the lord of Haselbury. Wulfric prophesied that Walter would be the best provided of the lord's sons, which he took in human terms, causing him to behave more haughtily and self-indulgently as a worldly heir. When a second prophecy told that Walter would not long be detained by his life of sin, Walter took this as pronouncement of his imminent death and resolved to renounce the world, but postponed his profession longer than prudence required. It was only later, becoming at last a monk sooner than expected through the pressure from Bishop Henry of Winchester, that Walter finally fulfilled his preordained religious life and lived out his time in Glastonbury into old age and high reputation.¹²⁶ For the hagiographers Aelred, Walter and John therefore, the ultimate goal of hardship is redemption and spiritual perfection, and terminal punishment before the sinner had rejected the divine love would be to foreclose a path that is of its nature uneven and prone to stumbling.¹²⁷

The third position is one of more contemporary historical and political outlook. As already noted, a major theme of Aelred's *Relatio* is of the ambiguity of war and politics, of 'the way men and women of virtue and clarity of understanding may stand in opposition to one another', and of how even such a good and saintly man as David of Scotland may momentarily succumb to evil and ill-counsel.¹²⁸ As Elias Dietz has recently argued, 'there is no room in Ælred's narratives for faultless heroes or unredeemable villains.'¹²⁹

¹²¹ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 21 [1.21] (Bell, 41; trans. Matarasso, 127); on this value of weakness as a support to others, cf. Squire, *Aelred*, 150.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 50-3 [2.20-2.23] (Bell, 68-77; trans. Matarasso, 154-62); on Henry, see also M. Bell, 'Introduction', in John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury, by John, Abbott of Ford*, ed. M. Bell, Somerset Record Society 47 (London: Butler and Tanner, 1933), xxxiii-vii [ix-lxxxii]; Matarasso, 'Introduction', 25-8.

¹²³ On the land of unlikeness, see Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 6, 10-2; Squire, *Aelred*, 68.

¹²⁴ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 50 [2.20] (Bell, 68-72; trans. Matarasso, 154-7).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50 [2.20] (Bell, 71-2; trans. Matarasso, 156-7).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96 [3.38] (Bell, 120-2; trans. Matarasso, 204-6); on Walter of Glastonbury, see also Bell, 'Introduction', xx-ii; Matarasso, 'Introduction', 23-4.

¹²⁷ Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 64.

¹²⁸ Dutton, 'Mirror for Christian England', 27-8, 34, quoted at 27; Pezzini, 'Introduction', 153*-5*; Squire, *Aelred*, 80.

¹²⁹ E. Dietz, 'Ambivalence well considered: an interpretive key to the whole of Ælred's works', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 47.1 (2012), 74-9 [71-85], quoted at 75.

That representation of historical events can be seen as a natural product of Aelred's personal and affectionate ties with personages on either side of the battle, and is essentially complementary with the theological outlook identified by Hallier.¹³⁰ Social experience and theological outlook are similarly of a piece for John of Forde, whose informant Henry of Waverley was also participant in the disorder of Stephen's reign.¹³¹ It is notable then in that discussion on the human condition that John holds that man in such a state still retains the image of God, which makes the uncovering of sins and the passing of judgement on another an illicit curiosity, a sin against God, and a condemnation that ultimately leads only to the condemnation of oneself.¹³² If, as Lester Little has argued, the culture of cursing is dependent on a dualistic worldview in which it is possible to draw a clear and sharp binary distinction between the earthly agents of good and evil, such an active and politically-engaged worldview as Aelred and John's might explain the nuanced character of vengeance miracles as primarily redemptive and the comparative infrequency (or as we shall see, careful sensitivity) with which explicit curses are represented in their works.¹³³ Such theological sensitivities lead to a more general hagiographical sensitivity toward vengeance and cursing episodes, with an emphasis on redemption and a reluctance to pronounce judgement on the spiritual state even of those who physically perish on account of their sins.¹³⁴

III

This general picture, in which punitive miracles and divine vengeance are chiefly represented as chastising but redemptive, can be further nuanced through attention to shared social imperatives and cultural assumptions in those key cases where vengeance episodes are represented as fatal. For Aelred, fatal vengeance is typically recorded befalling two categories of persons. The first are foreign invaders, such as the Danes and Scots: these figure prominently in the *Genealogy* and in the Hexham Lives. An explicit example concerns a soldier from Galloway in David's army who broke the Scottish king's peace and protection of Hexham by attempting to steal from the Church of St. Mary.¹³⁵ His attempt was frustrated at point of entry, when he was driven mad by a demon, hauled out of town by the townsfolk, and placed beside a river 'for as long as the evil spirit harried him, until he should yield his expelled soul to the

¹³⁰ J.A. Truax, 'A time for peace: Ælred of Rievaulx and the end of the Anglo-Norman civil war', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46.2 (2011), 174-6 [171-88]; Pezzini, 'Introduction', 154*-5*; Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 127; Squire, *Aelred*, 75-6, 80; Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria*, 248-9.

¹³¹ On Henry's participation in the conflict, see again Matarasso, 'Introduction', 26.

¹³² John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 50 [2.21] (Bell, 73; trans. Matarasso, 158-9).

¹³³ L.K. Little, 'The separation of religious curses from blessings in the Latin West', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006/2007), 34 [29-40]. On the concreteness of Aelred's experience and outlook see again Dutton, 'Mirror for Christian England', 34-5.

¹³⁴ See especially John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 45 [2.15] (Bell, 62-3; trans. Matarasso, 148-9).

¹³⁵ Aelred, *Hexham*, 9.1-28 [1.5] (Pezzini, 86-7; trans. Freeland, 77-8).

depths and give his body to the beasts and birds.¹³⁶ Aelred reports the death and damnation of the Galwegian as ‘the wholly just penalty for his presumption.’¹³⁷ The second are unchecked lawless men: such as the murderous Earl Godwin of Wessex in the *Life of Edward*;¹³⁸ or a murderous defiler of chastity in the *Hexham Lives*.¹³⁹ In the latter episode, a local nobleman of great power and wealth forcibly abducted a local girl and killed her brother with his spear when he tried to resist. Aelred comments that the death of the girl’s brother was the punishment that the nobleman deserved himself for his impurity.¹⁴⁰ Suddenly, ‘the avenging wrath of wounded chastity and murder was at hand and forced the proud man to return to himself’: his hand stiffened and withered, he was bereft of sight and hearing, and he ‘ended his wretched life with a more wretched death’.¹⁴¹ The sociological imperatives thus are twofold: to circumvent the perceived breakdown of justice during times of invasion from without, and the failure of justice in the face of those from within who may be above the law. The source material thus accords well with Little’s functional explanation of medieval cursing, and with the now classic functional explanation of the holy man of late antiquity in terms of the erosion of institutions by Peter Brown before him.¹⁴² In both respects, the divine agency is represented as filling the gap to fulfil the theological needs of justice and to deter others from similar crimes.

A similar logic can be seen as emerging independently but for similar reasons in the writings of John of Forde. John’s fatal episodes include the drowning of the Angevin mercenaries who plundered Wessex under Henry II,¹⁴³ and the punishment of men who slandered Wulfric¹⁴⁴ – men against whom Wulfric would have had no immediate legal redress. For the three hagiographers who dealt with the secular arena then, the operation of fatal vengeance serves to complement and reinforce secular justice, particularly by filling gaps in its provision. Fatal vengeance is arguably even more prevalent for those authors than among the English Benedictines, given the concern with political instability in Stephen’s reign and its

¹³⁶ Ibid., 9.28-38 [1.5] (Pezzini, 86-7; trans. Freeland, 78-9), quoted at 9.37-8: ‘...tamdiu nequam spiritus uexauit, donec excussam animam traderet inferis, corpus bestiis et auibus destinaret.’

¹³⁷ Ibid., 9.29-30 [1.5] (Pezzini, 87; trans. Freeland, 78): ‘...presumptionis sue penas iustissimas soluit.’

¹³⁸ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 25.1-17, 25.36-41 [1.25] (Marzella, 140-2, trans. Freeland, 190-2).

¹³⁹ Aelred, *Hexham*, 7 [1.3] (Pezzini, 84; trans. Freeland, 74-5).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.23-5 [1.3] (Pezzini, 84; trans. Freeland, 75): ‘...sequentem auersa hasta transfodiens, in defensorem pudicitie penam quam ipse meruerat impudicus retorquens.’ (‘...running through his pursuer with his hostile spear, turning against the defender of purity the punishment he himself deserved for his impurity.’)

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 7.26-30 [1.3] (Pezzini, 84; trans. Freeland, 75): ‘...lese castitatis et homicidii ira ultrix affuit, et superbum in semet redire coegit. ...miseram uitam miseriori fine conclusit.’

¹⁴² Little, ‘Separation’, 32-3; idem, *Benedictine maledictions: liturgical cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 224-29; P. Brown, ‘The rise and function of the holy man in late antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 99-100 [80-101].

¹⁴³ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 76 [3.18] (Bell, 104-5; trans. Matarasso, 189-90).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 88, 92 [3.30, 3.34] (Bell, 113-5, 118-9; trans. Matarasso, 197-9, 201-2).

effect on later twelfth-century historical imagination.¹⁴⁵ This should not amount to a claim that concerns with unchecked powerful men were ones which the English Benedictines did not also have to ponder, but among the English Cistercians under present consideration, the concern does seem more pronounced.¹⁴⁶ There is however an added cultural layer to this sociological imperative, with the severity of punishment affected by the perceived imminence of the threat and by the ethnicity – and thus perceived alienness – of the participants.¹⁴⁷ For Aelred, the disorder in the North during Stephen's reign and the Scottish invasions preceding it were a recent memory in which the Scots represent the barbarism of an irredeemable other, and are thus most severely punished.¹⁴⁸ This outlook drawn from the experience of Aelred's community shapes Aelred's historical sensibility and is projected back onto the Danes in earlier generations. For John of Forde, the disorder in the southwest under Stephen was a memory more of the previous generation, and the participants were predominantly Englishmen. Thus, with the exception of the Angevin mercenaries, those party to the conflict and disorder are largely saved for redemption.

These cultural and social pressures had theological implications and would have required underlying rationalisation. The Hexham episode is a case in point. The dying murderer's 'return to himself' ('in semet redire') suggests in Augustinian theological terms a turn from pride to repentance, in which by the divine mercy, the senses of the sinner blunted by lust are made forcibly able to recognise the divine not only by its intangible precepts but through tangible divine acts.¹⁴⁹ Without losing any of the imaginative terrors of

¹⁴⁵ On the impact of the disorder on historical-literary form and imagination, see C.A.M. Clarke, 'Writing civil war in Henry of Huntingdon "Historia Anglorum"', *ANS* 31 (2008), 31 [31-48]. The extent of the violence of Stephen's reign in real terms has been much debated, though what is important here is its imaginative impact; for the wider debate however, see in particular G.J. White, 'The myth of the Anarchy', *ANS* 22 (1999), *passim* [323-37]; H.M. Thomas, 'Miracle stories and the violence of Stephen's reign', *HSJ* 13 (1999), 117-24 [111-24]; *idem*, 'Violent disorder in King Stephen's reign: a maximum argument', in *King Stephen's reign (1135-54)*, ed. P. Dalton and G.J. White (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 139-58 [139-70].

¹⁴⁶ For the impact of the conflict on Aelred in particular, see Squire, *Aelred*, 74-82.

¹⁴⁷ In this I follow important scholarly work on the impact of the twelfth-century construction of the barbarian other on English identity: see in particular J. Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 5.4 (1992), 392-409; repr. in *ETC*, 7-11 [3-18]; *idem*, 'The context and purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's "History of the kings of Britain"', *ANS* 13 (1992), 99-118; repr. in *ETC*, 27-9 [19-40]; *idem*, 'Conquering the barbarians: war and chivalry in twelfth century Britain', *HSJ* 4 (1992), 67-84; repr. in *ETC*, 43-8, 57-8 [41-58]; R.R. Davies, *The first English empire: power and identities in the British Isles, 1093-1343* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 114-34.

¹⁴⁸ Aird, 'Sweet civility', 59-61, 64-5; cf. M.J. Strickland, *War and chivalry: the conduct and perception of war in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 302-7; Thomas, 'Violent disorder in King Stephen's reign', 151.

¹⁴⁹ See the use of the phrase 'redire in semet' in Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.11.30.5 (Green, 124); *idem*, *Contra academicos*, 3.19.42.17-8 (Green, 60; trans. O'Meara, 149); with discussion of the theme in S. Heßbrüggen-Walter, 'Augustine's critique of dialectic: between Ambrose and the Arians', in *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confessions*, ed. K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 186-9 [185-207]; G.P. Boersma, *Augustine's early theology of*

a physically terminal punishment, the man's final spiritual state is thus preserved in line with Aelred's general redemptive outlook, while the sin is expiated in Pauline terms through the destruction of the flesh. Through careful rhetorical framing, theological considerations are satisfied while the sociological function of the narrative is fulfilled. At the same time, Aelred is clear in his *Speculum caritatis* that God performs no injustice in neglecting to save some through no great fault of their own, for God is bound to none by justice.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, even when ultimately granted in hagiographical episodes, God's mercy does not always appear as a foregone conclusion. In the Miracles of Edward, Aelred describes the intercession at the saint's shrine which freed the dyer-woman who had blasphemed the saint from her afflicted paralysis and insensibility. 'Prayer and litanies, the wickedness of the sinful servant and the faith of the compassionate mistress, the greatness of the crime and the amount of pain battled in the presence of the most devout king. At length, by the blessed king's merits, Jesus was overcome by mercy by which he is wont to be overcome, and immediately, setting aside truth (obuians ueritati) in the suffering woman, he tempered by its gentleness the sentence he had dictated.'¹⁵¹ The image is of a trial weighing up her mistress' faith against the sinner's wickedness, and the purgative contribution of her punishment against the crime to be punished. Christ tempers his sentence in mercy, but in so doing 'sets aside truth'. It is only by the intercession of the petitioned saint and by his merits that he does so.

This recognition has immediate relevance in that, although the causative offences of the fatal episodes are varied, ostensibly concerning violations of property, life, chastity, and peace, virtually all are more specifically offences against saints – against Edmund, Edward, and the saints of Hexham – as opposed to the more generic transgressions that make up the majority of the forgiven sins. In the first punitive Hexham miracle, concerning the ravaging nobleman, the offended party is Mary, given that the offence takes place between the church of Hexham and the Church of St. Mary, and that Mary serves as the implicit avenger of wounded chastity.¹⁵² In the Miracles of Edward, Aelred identifies the insult or rejection of the saints as a rejection of Christ, and notes the severity with which God punishes those who insult his saints: as in Elisha's curse on the forty boys to be torn apart by beasts (2 Kings 2:23-4) and

image: a study in the development of pro-Nicene theology (New York: OUP, 2016), 183-8; and P.J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), 56. The more general terms of this theology will be returned to in Chapter IV. For the importance of Augustine to the whole of Aelred's thought more generally, see A. Rydstrom-Poulsen, 'Recent research on Ælred of Rievaulx's Augustinianism – and Ælred's use of Augustine in his "De Anima"', *Analecta Cisterciensia* 60 (2010), 263-7 [263-74].

¹⁵⁰ Aelred, *Speculum*, 1.15.43-7 (Talbot, 30-1; trans. Connor, 110-3).

¹⁵¹ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 38.60-5 [2.38] (Marzella, 173; trans. Freeland, 232): 'Pugnabant in conspectu piissimi regis oratio et aegritudo, iniquitas famulae peccatricis et fides dominae miserantis, magnitudo criminis et multitudo doloris. Vicit tandem Iesum meritis beati regis illa a qua uinci solet misericordia, quae mox in languida obuians ueritati sententiam quam illa dictauerat sua lenitate temperauit.'

¹⁵² Aelred, *Hexham*, 7.15-25 [1.3] (Pezzini, 84; trans. Freeland, 74-5).

Paul's curse of blindness upon the magician Elymas (Acts 13:6-11).¹⁵³ In the case of the dyer-woman, the miracle was designed to 'punish with great severity those who disparaged his sanctity and reward those who revered him with a concentration of favours'.¹⁵⁴

The theme of wounded sanctity ties in especially with the place and moment of the Hexham Lives, which affords a particularly ready sociological explanation for the occasional theme of terminal vengeance in Aelred's writing. Lying to the north of Durham and the River Tees, Hexham was dangerously exposed to the Scottish border and stood in what had been one of the most disturbed parts of the kingdom during Stephen's reign.¹⁵⁵ Church sanctuary was technically protected but in practice was often violated.¹⁵⁶ It was in precisely that context that the chroniclers Richard and John of Hexham latched on to the cult of the Hexham saints from the 1140s and 1150s onwards as a means of protecting against the danger from the north. Richard of Hexham provides a particularly detailed set of graded penalties for those who breached sanctuary at Hexham, with increasing fines according to whether the breach was committed within a mile of the church, or within the town, church grounds, church, or choir; while a breach at the shrine of the saints was an unforgiveable offence.¹⁵⁷ Robert Bartlett has described this deliberately created protective power and supernatural aura as displaying 'a hot core and a cooler periphery'.¹⁵⁸ Such an understanding of the supernatural significance of sanctuary may underlie the unusual episode in the Life of Ninian in which the living saint protects his field of cattle by marking a ring around them with his staff, much as the outer mile-limit of the sanctuary at Hexham was recorded by Richard as marked by four crosses; and the story is explicitly directed to the punishment of marauders.¹⁵⁹ The extended protection of sanctuary may also

¹⁵³ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 38.1-6 [2.38] (Marzella, 171; trans. Freeland, 228-9).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.6-9 (Marzella, 171; trans. Freeland, 229): '...eius detrahentes sanctitati cum magna seueritate puniens, obsequentes ei beneficiorum collatione remunerans.'

¹⁵⁵ Aird, 'Sweet civility', 60-1; M.J. Strickland, 'Securing the North: invasion and strategy of defence in twelfth-century Anglo-Scottish warfare', in *Anglo-Norman warfare: studies in late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman military organization and warfare*, ed. idem (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1994), 208-9, 212, 214-7, 220-1 [208-29]; idem, *War and chivalry*, 302-7; Thomas, 'Violent disorder in King Stephen's reign', 151-2, 159, 163-5, 168-70. For the fluidity and permeability of the border and Scottish claims north of Durham and the Tees, see G.S.W. Barrow, 'The Scots and the North of England', in *The anarchy of King Stephen's reign*, ed. E. King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 238-41, 244-5 [231-53]; W.M. Aird, 'Northern England or southern Scotland? The Anglo-Scottish border in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the problem of perspective', in *Government, religion and society in Northern England, 1000-1700*, ed. J.C. Appleby and P. Dalton (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 29-34 [27-39].

¹⁵⁶ Thomas, 'Violent disorder in King Stephen's reign', 154; Strickland, *War and chivalry*, 78-83, 86-97, 317-20.

¹⁵⁷ Richard of Hexham, *Historia hangustaldensis*, 14 (Raine, 1:61-2).

¹⁵⁸ R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings, 1075-1225*, New Oxford History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 445.

¹⁵⁹ Aelred, *Vita Niniani*, 8.6-9 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 50-1); cf. Richard of Hexham, *Historia hangustaldensis*, 14 (Raine, 1:61); Bartlett, *Angevin kings*, 445.

be seen as the root of the miraculous protective mists that envelop Hexham and prevent it being entered by the army of Malcolm of Scotland.¹⁶⁰

The supernatural defence of Hexham in the Hexham Lives can be seen as a window into Aelred's other historical writings, with the Danes and Scots seen as the past and present manifestations of a continuum of enemies threatening Hexham and the north more generally. The contemporary threat of the Scots could thus be projected back onto the figures of the Danes in the historic past, and the Danes used as historic foils of the saint to speak to contemporary needs. Thus the destruction of the Danes, Scots and other enemies promised in the visions and miraculous protection of various departed saints, as through Cuthbert's protection of Alfred at Edington,¹⁶¹ John of Beverley's protection of Æthelstan at Brunanburh,¹⁶² and Edward the Confessor's protection of Harold at Stamford Bridge.¹⁶³ The proven effectiveness of Cuthbert as protector of Alfred may explain his prominent positioning as an intercessor in the Hexham Lives, despite the fact that he was not, as has been noted, a Hexham saint.¹⁶⁴ The need for such intercessors was necessary to punish those who threatened to 'disturb the quiet that divine generosity has bestowed upon us.'¹⁶⁵

One more general context for the Cistercians' narrative framing of fatal episodes of vengeance may be found in Aelred's theology of the soul. According to this view, the individual made in the natural image of God moves away from his created direct knowledge and impression of divine likeness, by freely choosing lesser created goods over the supreme good through disordered self-love, and in so doing falls into the land of unlikeness.¹⁶⁶ In such a state, the individual more closely approximates the likeness of beasts ('iumentorum') than of God and thus has to share in their condition.¹⁶⁷ Broadly speaking, this condition is metaphorical and refers more to an internal than an external state. Hallier saw the destruction of the image of God as impossible and thus saw the redemption of the prodigal son as always possible in Aelred's theology;¹⁶⁸ but of course in terms of the theology of Augustine of Hippo on which it was based,

¹⁶⁰ Aelred, *Hexham*, 6.1-24 [1.2] (Pezzini, 83; trans. Freeland, 73).

¹⁶¹ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 2.96-118, 3.44-52 [7-8] (Pezzini, 28-9, 31; trans. Freeland, 81-2, 84).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.34-47 [12] (Pezzini, 36; trans. Freeland, 91-2).

¹⁶³ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 34 [2.34] (Marzella, 161-2; trans. Freeland, 216-8).

¹⁶⁴ For episodes in which Cuthbert figures prominently, see Aelred, *Hexham*, 4-5, 15 [1.2, 2.15] (Pezzini, 81-2, 106-8; trans. Freeland, 71-2, 104-5).

¹⁶⁵ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 9.24-5 [1.9] (Marzella, 110; trans. Freeland, 150): '...quam nobis propitia diuinitas largita est infestare quietem.'

¹⁶⁶ Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 6, 10-2, 40-3.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-4; Aelred, *Speculum*, 1.4.11.154-7 (Talbot, 17; trans. Connor, 93), alluding to Psalm 48:21 (49:20).

¹⁶⁸ Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 12-4, 43, whose view is still held within current scholarship: see Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 54; J.R. Sommerfeldt, 'Anthropology and cosmology: the foundational principles of Aelred's spirituality', in *Companion to Aelred*, 105-8 [98-112].

the ultimate end of straying into unlikeness of God on whom all things depend of course means straying into nothingness.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, in Aelred's words in the *Speculum caritatis*, 'those who withdraw from You will perish.'¹⁷⁰ This schema, in concert with Aelred and Walter Daniel's writings on Galloway elsewhere, can taken as particularly elucidative of Aelred's Hexham episodes. In Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred*, the hagiographer characterises Galloway as that wild country ('terra illa fera') whose inhabitants are like beasts ('homines bestiales'), where faith and chastity founder and truth and wisdom cannot take root.¹⁷¹ It is, in as near absolute terms as could be possible, the land of unlikeness.¹⁷² This is a view which Walter likely took from Aelred himself, whose *Relatio* characterises the people of Galloway similarly as inhuman and irrational beasts in the speech attributed to Walter Espec.¹⁷³ The Galwegian in the Hexham episode thus moves from an extreme land of unlikeness in which the image of God contained in his soul is severely damaged, to an offence which damages it irreparably. He is hence reduced to the literal condition of bestial irrationality (internal) and exile among beasts (external), at which point, without the disciplined reason to make sense of his hardship and to return to God, he finally and inevitably gives up his soul to nothingness.¹⁷⁴

This paradigm may be applied to other targets of fatal vengeance. In the *Life of Ninian*, the thieves who enter the protective circle marked around the saint's cattle are similarly compared with 'brute animals' who 'considered not their minds but their bellies.'¹⁷⁵ Having disregarded their rational minds ('mentem') the men find themselves trapped within the enclosure by a kind of irrational madness ('amentia'), and spend the night running around the enclosure unable to discern any method of escape.¹⁷⁶ Most strikingly, the divine force employs against such brutish men a brutish instrument of punishment ('instrumento bruto'), in the form of the bull of the herd which, turned to fury, charges and gores the leader of the robbers.¹⁷⁷ The transgressed boundary-enclosure thus serves as a double narrative marker in the text. It

¹⁶⁹ See Rydstrom-Poulsen, 'Ælred of Rievaulx's Augustinianism', 270; Griffiths, *Lying*, 53-4, 57-61.

¹⁷⁰ Aelred, *Speculum*, 1.4.11.153-4 (Talbot, 17; trans. Connor, 93), alluding to Psalm 48:21 (29:20).

¹⁷¹ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 38 (Powicke, 38).

¹⁷² Compare especially the terms of cupidity and unchastity in Walter's Galwegians with the Aelredian theology of cupidity as outlined in Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 40-2.

¹⁷³ Aelred, *Relatio*, 3.88-93 (Pezzini, 64; trans. Freeland, 255); see also Aird, 'Sweet civility', 65.

¹⁷⁴ Aelred, *Hexham*, 9.30-38 [1.5] (Pezzini, 86-7; trans. Freeland, 78-9).

¹⁷⁵ Aelred, *Vita Niniani*, 8.20-1 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 51): '...uelut bruta animalia mentem non colebant, sed uentrem...'

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.39-41 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 52): 'Interea ceteri, quos intra septum quod pater formauerat tota nocte discurrentes amentia quedam concluderat...' ('Meanwhile the other men, whom a kind of madness had trapped within the enclosure that the father had drawn, had been running around all night.')

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.19-21 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 51): 'Sed affuit uis diuina resistens impiis, immo obruens impios, contra eos qui uelut bruta animalia mentem non colebant, sed ventrem, pro instrumento bruto utens iumento.'

represents both the causative offence (the violation of sanctuary by the thieves) and the simultaneous crossing over of the thieves from rational and civilised human society to the world of beasts. This transition to an irrational, bestial condition from which one can no longer rationally, voluntarily return without external help is literalised within the text by the thieves' madness and inescapable confinement alongside beasts; one is reminded of the paradigm which we have seen earlier in Goscelin. That one of the thieves should perish while under this brief but self-inflicted condition is precisely the expected outcome from the theological schema outlined above. It is only when the saint pities and intercedes for the men, raising their former leader to life, that the remaining thieves show the first return of reason, recognising the saint as the conduit of their release and tremblingly pleading with him for mercy and forgiveness. The theme is the same as with the dyer-woman in the Life of Edward, who is insensible throughout her affliction and only restored to reason and health (the precursors to repentance) by the actions of those external agents (friends, clergy, and offended saint) who intercede on her behalf.¹⁷⁸

Such an outlook could be readily applied without need for direct explanation to peoples seen as barbarian and hence irrational (such as the Danes in the Life of Edward),¹⁷⁹ on the back of the re-emergence of the barbarian stereotype promoted in the twelfth-century by English writers such as William of Malmesbury and Cistercians such as Bernard of Clairvaux.¹⁸⁰ One striking passage from the speech in the *Relatio* attributed to Walter Espec seems to assign to Christians the duty of punishing them lest they themselves be punished: 'What are you doing o brave men? You are fighting not against men but against beasts! There is no humanity in them, no reverence; heaven shudders at them, earth loathes them, the seas curse them, and the very lights of the world abhor them. Earth has not devoured them, heaven has not blasted them, the seas have not overwhelmed them for any reason than to save them... so that they may die at your hands... Bury them with the dead, least if they live longer the sun should hide its light, the sky deny its rain, the crops wilt as if in a drought.'¹⁸¹ But it is also a condition to which a people can return, if in their sins they become so hardened and irrational that neither good nor evil can redeem them. Aelred

(‘Against those who, like brute animals, considered not their minds but their bellies, it employed a brute beast as its instrument.’)

¹⁷⁸ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 38.65-74 [2.38] (Marzella, 173; trans. Freeland, 232).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.3-5, 10.13-5, 34.28-31 [1.3, 1.10, 2.34] (Marzella, 97, 112, 162; trans. Freeland, 134, 152, 217-8).

¹⁸⁰ Gillingham, ‘Beginnings of English imperialism’, 9-10; *idem*, ‘The context and purposes of Geoffrey’, 27-9; *idem*, ‘Conquering the barbarians’, 43, 57-8; Davies, *First English empire*, 117; D. Scully, ‘Ireland and the Irish in Bernard of Clairvaux’s “Life of Malachy”’: representation and context’, in *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 241-3, 245-55 [239-56].

¹⁸¹ Aelred, *Relatio*, 3.88-93, 3.96-8 (Pezzini, 64; trans. Freeland, 225-6): ‘Quid agitis, o uiri fortissimi? Non aduersus homines dimicatis, sed aduersus bestias, quibus nichil humanitatis, nichil inest pietatis, quos celum horret, quos abominatur terra, quos execrantur maria, quos ipsa mundi lumina detestantur, quos non ob aliud terra non absorbit, non fulminauit celum, non maria submerserunt, nisi ut... uestris manibus interirent. ...inferis sepelire, ne si diutius uixerint, sol lumen abscondat, celum neget pluuias, fruges quadam ariditate marcescant.’

elaborates this in the vision of Edward: ‘The heart of this people has been hardened, their eyes have become blind, and their ears have become dull. They cannot hear the one who is reproaching them or understand the one admonishing them. They are neither frightened by threats nor roused by favours.’¹⁸² The theme of the reprobate sinner is similarly elaborated with increasing insistence in the Life of Wulfric. John warned in particular of those who sacrilegiously take that which is owed to God, and who in the words of Isaiah 9:13, ‘are far from salvation and heedless of the Lord that even at this late stage they fail to repent of their expensive ambitions and return to the one who smites them.’¹⁸³ The theme is grounded in a concrete, striking, and scripturally rich episode which heads the beginning of the third book, in which Wulfric unbendingly refuses an urgent petitioner the right to cross the bridge to Haselbury and seek mercy from him. Wulfric passes dire sentence upon the man: ‘I will not spare nor take pity... I neither wish nor am able to take pity.’¹⁸⁴ John reflects with fear upon the meaning of the sentence, on the weight of the unnamed act which barred the very approach to the foreclosed bridge of mercy, and on the wretch’s failure to find an opportunity for repentance despite his tears, ‘being judged already and condemned beforehand.’¹⁸⁵ Penance may forestall or avert the affliction of vengeance, but when the sin has become consummate and irrepentable, then there is no choice but the full and fatal vengeance of heaven. It is then, to return to Aelred’s commentary, that men are handed over to the evil angels to be ‘punished by fire and sword’ in carrying out the Lord’s wrath and indignation.¹⁸⁶

Such social pressures and available theological avenues could thus temper the generally forgiving overall outlook which stood primarily for redemptive justice in its treatment of both imprecations and passive vengeance. The status of the wronged saint, an elaborated theology concerning the bestial and reprobate condition of the wrongdoer, and the perceived immediacy of the threat along with the absence of social mechanisms of recourse might all weigh in favour of miraculous punishments that were more explicitly vengeful and indeed fatal. It may however also be the case that the terminal miracles, as outliers, are contingent on other factors such as the vitiating effects of sin and the explicit sentence of the saint in order to be truly fatal, rather than on the principal operation of vindication by external protective agents.

¹⁸² Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 29.53-6 [1.29] (Marzella, 152; trans. Freeland, 205): ‘...induratum est cor populi huius et excaecati oculi et aures aggrauatae, ut nec audiant corripientem, nec intelligant commonentem, nec terreantur minis, nec beneficiis prouocentur.’

¹⁸³ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 51 [2.22] (Bell, 75; trans. Matarasso, 161): ‘...immo quod a salutare longius est nec sic recordantur Domini ut ambitionis hujus sumptuose vel sero paenitentiam agant et revertantur ad percutientem se.’

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 59 [3.1] (Bell, 89; trans. Matarasso, 174): ‘Non parcam... et non miserebor. [...] Nec volo... nec possum misereri.’

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* (Bell, 89; trans. Matarasso, 175): ‘...judicatus jam et praedamnatus.’

¹⁸⁶ Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 29.41-3 [1.29] (Marzella, 152; trans. Freeland, 204): ‘Ostendet deinceps populo huic iram et indignationem, immissiones insuper per angelos malos, quibus traditi sunt anno uno et die uno, igne simul et gladio puniendi.’ (‘He will show to this people his wrath and indignation, brought by the evil angels to whom they have been handed over for a year and a day to be punished by fire and sword.’)

Nonetheless, with this modification of the overall picture in mind, it is possible to move onto the implications for direct treatments of imprecation per se.

IV

In turning to the treatment of cursing per se, an immediate point to be reminded of is that direct imprecations – the spoken curse of a living saint – are much less frequent than indirect miracles of vengeance performed by a departed saint or the uninvoked divine agency. They occur only once in each of Aelred and Walter, though Walter has two other stories of relevance, while John has at least two particularly striking instances. All however concern offences to the saint's dignity, either directly or obliquely. Because of the refined theological framework of vengeance and suffering above, these few outright episodes of cursing warrant close textual reading in their turn in terms of their narrative elements, rhetorical functions, theological meanings, and formal biblical or hagiographical influences, before broader implications can be extracted. Beginning in order of writing, the sole extended representation in Aelred's corpus occurs in a single episode in the *Hexham Lives* – a work which has received comparatively little scholarly attention.¹⁸⁷ The episode concerns a multinational group of pilgrims who 'rejected and mocked' the daily devotions of two young men of Hexham, brothers from a rich family and apparently lay, to their unfamiliar patron Acca while on their journey to the Holy Land.¹⁸⁸ Prominent among the doubters was a certain cleric who had neither heard of Acca's powers nor found him catalogued among the saints.¹⁸⁹ This cleric thus accused the men of rusticity and ignorance, laughing at their devotions and 'adding blasphemy to blasphemy'.¹⁹⁰ The response of the brothers was to separate from the man and curse him:

Not bearing further slander ['maledicum'], the men expressed their indignation with righteous imprecations ['justis imprecationibus']. The whole crowd cursed ['detestatur'] the blasphemer, and judging him unworthy of their company, they forced him to separate from them. As they advanced toward him the slanderer ['maledicus'] stood still, and suddenly struck down with a terrible faintness, fell to the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Aelred, *Hexham*, 13 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92-3; trans. Freeland, 85-7). The episode receives only cursory reference in Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 121; and Pezzini, 'Introduction', 185*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.1-16 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92; trans. Freeland, 85), quoted at 13.16: 'Spemunt et subsannant...'

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.16-21 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92; trans. Freeland, 85).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.24-7 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92; trans. Freeland, 86): 'Ridebat, et illorum inscientiam, qui simplicibus eorum uerbis fidem simpliciter adhibentes, cum eis beatissimum Accam sibi adesse precabantur. Blasphemiis ergo blasphemias addens, in sanctum Domini ridens inuehitur.' ('He laughed at the inexperience of those who in their simplicity revealed their faith by their simple words and who prayed that the most blessed Acca would be with them. Adding blasphemy to blasphemy, he became carried away in laughter at the saint of the Lord.')

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.27-32 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92-3; trans. Freeland, 86): 'Illi ulterius maledicum non ferentes, indignationem suam iustis imprecationibus prodiderunt. Detestatur tota illa multitudo blasphemum, et sua eum societate iudicantes

Once the cleric had been struck down in the terms of demonic possession taken from the Gospel (Mark 9:20), his sister interceded for him before the group of pilgrims – at first reluctantly out of fear, but then driven by grief and necessity. With the exception of one of the brothers, the pilgrims refused to take pity on the cleric. The sole sympathetic brother approached the possessed man, and received his assent of faith in Acca's ability to help him: 'I believe, I believe, truly and from the heart I believe, and I give you the pledge of my faith: only pray for me.'¹⁹² When the young man rose from his prayer, the cleric rose from the ground also and was placed upon an animal. 'He came to his companions no longer a blasphemer but a devoted advocate of Acca's sanctity. From then on no one was more fervent in his praise of blessed Acca, no one surer in faith in his power.'¹⁹³ The young men return to Hexham from their pilgrimage with proper gifts for the saint and with the report of the miracle.

Claiming to be built upon contemporary witness, the story follows closely the spirit of several key texts on excommunication in its content and structure and repays close deconstruction. The most notable correspondence is with Matthew 18:15-20 in its overall narrative structure and sense of juridical process. This biblical passage was a foundational text for excommunication in general and was also invoked in Chapter 23 of the Rule of Benedict concerning excommunication for faults in a monastic setting.¹⁹⁴ In the case of the pilgrim company, the cleric represents one who has offended and is worthy of rebuke (Matthew 18:15), and who persists in the face of mounting correction (18:16). The positioning of two brothers as dual-protagonists allows the pair to fulfil the minimum requirement that 'if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more' (18:16), while the command of 'rebuke' ('corripe') in the Gospel takes the form of 'righteous imprecation' for the brothers. After the witness of the brothers, the remainder of the pilgrim company step in as ancillary characters, as the figure of the Ecclesia in miniature (18:17). The term 'detestatur' as used for their action is ambiguous – the verb can convey a dislike, curse, or aversion, with Jane Patricia Freeland favouring the first in her translation. Either way, the pilgrims'

indignum, ab illis diuertere compulerunt. Illis procedentibus maledicus subsistit, et statim pessima passione percussus, cadens in terram volutabatur spumans.'

¹⁹² Ibid., 13.43-4 [2.10] (Pezzini, 93; trans. Freeland, 86): 'Credo, ait, credo, et uere et ex corde credo, et te illi fidei mee obsidem trado, tantum ora pro me.'

¹⁹³ Ibid., 13.45-8 [2.10] (Pezzini, 93; trans. Freeland, 87): 'Postremo impositus iumento uenit ad socios, non iam blasphemus, sed experte sanctitatis deuotus assertor. Nullus deinceps in beati Acce laude feruentior, nullus in fide uirtutis eius certior...'

¹⁹⁴ On the use of this text for excommunication: see E. Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 5-6; C. Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens: rituelle und zeremonielle Exkommunikationsformen im Mittelalter*, Spätmittelalter Humanismus Reformation 75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 36-7. For Chapter 23 of the Rule, see Benedict (attrib.), *Regula Benedicti*, 23 (McCann, 72-3). On the overlap of monastic excommunication with more general categories, see also S. Hamilton, *The practice of penance, 900-1050*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2001), 82-3.

action takes its cue from the more explicit imprecations of the brothers, and all three senses are probably in play. What is important among those layered senses is that it follows the Christian command of communal action and separation of transgressors from their company ('societate') as the final stage in the process of rebuke. The Rule of Benedict further provided that for excommunicants who were obdurate or committed grave fault, one could proceed to physical punishment in terms of 1 Corinthians 5:5 – of which the cleric's stubborn foolishness ('socordia') thus permits miraculous enactment.¹⁹⁵ In those general terms one finds the overall narrative frame of the miracle.

The process described by Aelred is thus essentially a communal excommunication on the terms of the Gospel and the Rule of Benedict. Its miraculous effects fulfil the promise that what two or more shall consent to on earth in Christ's name shall be done by God in heaven (18:19-20), while demonstrating the powers of binding and loosing (18:20) in defining the Christian community and deciding the protection or punishment of those on either side.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, the final end of that communal excommunication is directed toward the sinner's forgiveness and reintegration. The episode's illustration of the Matthean theme of two or more gathered in Christ's name alludes in particular to a central passage in Aelred's theology of spiritual friendship as the basis of community: according to which human friendships begin on an interpersonal level between two or three individuals, whereupon Christ's presence opens the possibility of expanding that community built on a shared love for the divine.¹⁹⁷ Thus in the Hexham episode, the gathering of the two brothers in Acca's name and their miraculous demonstration invites the gathering of the rest of the company in shared love for Acca, separating from their midst those who do not share that love. Similarly, the gathering of the sister, brother and cleric in lifting the curse invites both the cleric and his sister into their expanded pilgrim company. The Matthean theme thus underlies the chiefly redemptive end of proper imprecation. The episode can also be seen in part as a dialogue on both interpretations of imprecation – the vengeful and the redemptive– standing ultimately in favour of the latter. At first the sister begs the company of pilgrims to intercede for the cleric, but 'all refused, gratified that the blasphemer had been struck down.'¹⁹⁸ Only one of the Hexham brothers stands

¹⁹⁵ Benedict (attrib.), *Regula Benedicti*, 23 (McCann, 72-3): 'Sin autem improbus est, vindictae corporali subdatur' ('If however he is obdurate, let him undergo physical punishment'); *ibid.*, 25 (McCann, 74-5): '...sciens illam terribilem apostoli sententiam dicentis: Traditum ejusmodi hominem in iteritum carnis, ut spiritus salvu sit in diem Domini' ('...knowing that terrible sentence of the apostle saying: "Such a man is handed over for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord"). Cf. Aelred, *Hexham*, 13.21-3 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92; trans. Freeland, 86): 'Infelicissimus, qui secundum suam socordiam de sancti meritis disputabat...' ('This most unhappy soul who according to his own foolishness disputed the merits of the saint...')

¹⁹⁶ On the apostolic commission of binding and loosing and its importance in undergirding the power of excommunication, see again Chapter I, 57.

¹⁹⁷ Dutton, 'Aelred's "Spiritual friendship"', 32; Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 38-40; Squire, *Aelred*, 110-1.

¹⁹⁸ Aelred, *Hexham*, 13.39-40 [2.10] (Pezzini, 93; trans. Freeland, 86): 'Negant omnes et blasphemum iuste percussum gratulantur.'

against the general opinion in the name of pity and mercy, and through the gathering of the sister and the assent of the cleric is successful in restoring the latter. The compassionate brother's disposition and actions were the only correct course, because the spirit of fraternal correction integral to the Rule was supposed to be directed in humility toward the sinner's redemption, and because the spirit of compassion was itself essential to the proper ordering of communal love – thus mandating extending love even to one's enemies for as long as they remained open to the divine love.¹⁹⁹ As a subtle dialogue and moral exemplar on two positions of cursing and correction, the narrative stands ultimately in favour of the redemptive position. It does so in particular through close attention to the conclusion of Matthew 18:15-20, because it restores and expands the community of the faithful.

There is an additional scriptural support also just beneath the surface. The specific offence and punishment are the same as those known in Pauline terms from 1 Timothy 1:18-20: of true faith rejected and blasphemed, in which the offending parties Hymeneus and Alexander are 'delivered up to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.'²⁰⁰ The fitting relationship of the offence and its punishment in the biblical context is even more tightly interwoven and subtly reinforced in two of the three twelfth-century manuscript witnesses to the episode, in which the second appearance of 'maledicus' is rendered as 'maledictus' – thus the reaction of the cleric's companions elides him from a slandering and abusive 'maledicus' into a fittingly accursed 'maledictus'.²⁰¹ Under this condition of having been cursed, the cleric learns his lesson and is able to gain mercy from God, in implicitly Pauline terms as a blasphemer who acted ignorantly in unbelief (cf. Timothy 1:13: 'quia ignorans feci in incredulitate'). His ignorant unbelief is underlined by his foolishness in assuming 'that nothing had been written that he had not read and that no blessed man abounded in virtues of whom he had not heard.'²⁰² Thus the outward offence of the cleric was great and worthy of demonic chastisement on biblical precedent, but his misguided inner motivations meant in similarly biblical terms that his was an ultimately forgivable offence.

In intellectual grounding the episode is thus ultimately traditional in being rooted in the spirit of monastic excommunication outlined in the Rule, but at the same time original in its application of a theology of friendship, its creative layering of the key Matthean and Pauline themes, and in expanding that monastic

¹⁹⁹ Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 60-4.

²⁰⁰ 1 Timothy 20: '...quos tradidi Satanae ut discant non blasphemare.'

²⁰¹ Of the three extant manuscript witnesses, all twelfth-century and derived from a common intermediate archetype, Pezzini favours that which renders 'maledicus' both times as that which serves most faithfully as the base text suggesting that it may even have been supervised and corrected by Aelred himself. The alternative reading here identified ('maledictus') however gives a clearer and more satisfying sense to what already seems to have been at least implicit in the overall episode, and thus cannot be excluded *prima facie* with two witnesses in its favour. For the relation of the texts in the manuscripts, see Pezzini, 'Introduction', 30*-32*, 52*-56*.

²⁰² Aelred, *Hexham*, 13.22-3 [2.10] (Pezzini, 92; trans. Freeland, 86): '...putans scriptum non esse quod ipse non legerat, nec uirtutibus floruisse beatum, quia ipse non audierat.'

sense of community and model of communal action to apply to a pilgrim company in which lay pilgrims hold the decisive leadership roles. This recognition of the positive role of the layman beyond the cloister and his capacity for forming a Christian community founded in love and fertile in miracles is a feature of Aelred's theological outlook and his engagement with the lay and secular world more generally,²⁰³ though the feature might also more specifically allude to the role of the surrounding lay community in the traditional liturgies of malediction known from those formularies which survive in a Frankish context.²⁰⁴ The leadership role given to the two brothers – men with special knowledge and access to the saint – may be taken in terms of the context in which the Hexham Lives were first delivered, as a Latin sermon, as a figurative role for the Hexham canons as leaders within their own wider community. Aelred understood the monastic and Christian life in general as itself a form of 'peregrinatio', and in that sense, any community could be figured as a company of pilgrims.²⁰⁵ The role of the canons was to direct their lay charges in the veneration due to the saints, to mediate and commemorate the saints' miraculous power, to correct doubters and blasphemers, and to adjudicate forgiveness.

A similar narrative function in which the curse of the saint is invoked to deter would-be detractors can also be found in Walter's Life of Aelred, albeit with a different framework conspicuously lacking the same forgiving outlook or outcome. Walter's Life includes three episodes relevant to a consideration of cursing: two closely related episodes of abusive and imprecatory cursing, and a coercive miracle which will be returned to later. The first episode of interest concerns the death of one 'vituperative abbot' at Aelred's curse.²⁰⁶ The episode comes fourth in the list of six miracles placed during Aelred's abbacy at Rievaulx.²⁰⁷ As it immediately precedes an account of the saint coping with disputes in Galloway, it can be taken as an instance of 'miraculous dispute resolution', thus connecting with current scholarship on cursing as a dispute-resolution mechanism and overlapping with the category of vindication identified in Chapter I.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ See eg. J.R. Sommerfeldt, *Aelred of Rievaulx: on love and order in the world and the Church* (New York: Newman Press, 2006), 31-7; Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 127, 129-30, 144; K.T. Yohe, 'Working out one's salvation in the world: Aelred and lay spirituality', in *Companion to Aelred*, 268-9, 272-7, 291 [268-94].

²⁰⁴ Little, 'Separation', 30-1; idem, *Benedictine maledictions*, 20.

²⁰⁵ Sommerfeldt, *Aelred of Rievaulx: on love and order*, 12, 29-2; idem, *Aelred of Rievaulx: pursuing perfect happiness* (New York: Newman Press, 2006), 35; idem, 'Anthropology and cosmology', 108; Hallier, *Monastic theology*, 152-160.

²⁰⁶ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44-5). The title given by Powicke was 'the mysterious death of the vituperative abbot of a daughter-house', which is retained by Dutton, though in the original text itself the sense of cause and effect was much more explicitly directed and clearly understood. For Powicke's positivistic (and consequently now dated) attitude toward stories of miracles in general, see idem, 'Introduction', lxxix-lxxxii.

²⁰⁷ The two dedicated lists of miracles introduced as such in the Life are those which take place during his first abbacy at Revesby, in Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 21-23 (Powicke, 29-32), and his second at Rievaulx, in *ibid.*, 33-39 (Powicke, 42-8).

²⁰⁸ The other four episodes concern miracles of healing, with the fourth healing miracle (sixth overall) logically positioned after the Galloway episode as an account of an incident that took place on Aelred's return journey.

The episode concerns the visit to Rievaulx of a cunning but ill-natured abbot, ‘greatly inclined toward planting abuse’ (*promptulus ualde ad conserendas contumelias*).²⁰⁹ This abbot burst out upon Aelred, ‘violently attacking him with darts of cursing (*iaculis malediccionum*) and cruelly pursuing him with the arrows of many blasphemies (*multarum blasphemiarum spiculis*)’.²¹⁰ The verbal assault moved the spirit of the saint ‘to indignation against him and deservedly provoked anger upon himself’.²¹¹ Aelred responded as ‘a lover of truth, bearing gravely the malice of the man’, and lifting his eyes and hands to heaven, he pronounced the terrible sentence against his attacker’s cruel tongue: ‘Lord King of eternal glory, may this man I beg speedily feel an end of his malice, for you know to be false the things which he is vexed to ascribe to my name.’²¹² The abbot left Aelred without his blessing and ‘with the great indignation also of all the brothers of Rievaulx.’²¹³ From the moment he crossed the threshold of his house he was forced to his bed, and on the seventh day after the incident ‘he reached the end of his wicked life with great suffering.’²¹⁴

The episode performs a number of rhetorical functions within the *Life* and displays several important intratextual and intertextual relationships with other hagiographical episodes. Intratextually, it extends in particular the theme from the story of one ‘scurrilous knight’ earlier in the *Life*, which is the next key episode of interest.²¹⁵ In that lengthy episode, a stern knight envious of the young Aelred’s success at the court of David of Scotland spread scandalous rumours concerning him. These rumours are presented as a figurative type of poison, preceding a violent, abusive outburst, cursing (*maledicens*) and blaspheming the saint in the king’s presence.²¹⁶ Aelred bore all of these in gentle patience and confident humility, until the knight was converted from his wicked antagonism to intimate friendship by his striking example. The characters of both episodes at the outset are broadly analogous, with the antagonists setting the action in motion as blasphemers hurling mendacious abuses and curses upon the saint, and the saint responding fittingly as a lover of truth.²¹⁷ In both episodes the excessive abuses of the antagonists are initially

²⁰⁹ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44). The abbot is not named, but Powicke, ‘Introduction’, lxx, identifies him as Philip of Revesby.

²¹⁰ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44): ‘...irruit eciam in patrem nostrum et impetens illum iaculis malediccionum uehementer, et multarum blasphemiarum spiculis persequens crudeliter.’

²¹¹ Ibid.: ‘...commouit spiritum eius ad indignacionem contra se et merito in se prouocauit iratum.’

²¹² Ibid.: ‘Quam uiri maliciam grauitur ferens, ueritatis amator... “Domine rex eterne glorie, senciatur, queso, cito iste finem malicie sue, quia tu scis falsa esse que nomini meo stomachatur ascribere.”’

²¹³ Ibid.: ‘...cum magna eciam indignacione omnium fratrum Rieuall.’

²¹⁴ Ibid. (Powicke, 45): ‘...mali uite finem cum magnis cruciatibus terminauit.’

²¹⁵ Ibid., 3 (Powicke, 5-9).

²¹⁶ Ibid. (Powicke, 5-7, quoted at 7): ‘maledicentis... confusionem’ (‘the confusion of cursing’); *ibid.*: ‘in os blasphemii’ (‘in the mouth of blasphemy’).

²¹⁷ Ibid. (Powicke, 7): ‘purissima uerba tam uera’ (‘with words of pure truth’); *ibid.*, 37 (Powicke, 44): ‘ueritatis amator’ (‘the lover of truth’).

frustrated and unsuccessful, except in turning the ancillary characters (whether the men of the court or the monks of the cloister) to the defence or implicit support of the saint. The narrative positioning of these characters thus offers a living self-defence in counterpoint to the pilgrims' defence of the departed saint from blasphemy in the Hexham Lives, an episode with which Walter was likely directly familiar and on which he may have partly modelled his account.²¹⁸

Both episodes in Walter's Life claim at least implicitly the oral report of unspecified witnesses as the basis of their content, but their narrative framing in each case draws formally on a variety of episodes from the Gregorian *Dialogues*.²¹⁹ Walter would have known this text (which contained the Life of Benedict) from his formation as a monk²²⁰ and in his capacity as infirmarian and secretary to Aelred during the latter's use of it in his final illness in preparing his *De anima*.²²¹ The *Dialogues* would thus have been firmly in his mind at the same time as he was preparing his Life of Aelred shortly before his abbot's death.²²² Recognising this formal influence allows one to engage with a widening matrix of intertextual associations which would have been recognisable to a monastic audience trained in meditative 'lectio divina' and would have deepened the episodes' meanings.²²³ The knight's jealousy at Aelred's success and his figurative attempted poisoning of the saint is similar to the *Dialogues*' account of the jealousy of the wicked priest Florentius at Saint Benedict's success, and his actual attempt at poisoning him.²²⁴ Aelred's humbly accepting response to the knight is analogous to the holy sacristan Constantius of Ancona's response to derision: a set-piece in humility which similarly converted his accuser, and whose commentary may directly underlie Walter's

²¹⁸ Freeman, 'Aelred as a historian', 114 notes that the fact that Walter does not list the Hexham Lives (which are listed as of Aelredian authorship in a catalogue at Rievaulx possibly dating from the 1190s) as one of Aelred's works might mean only that he did not regard the sermon as one of his major works.

²¹⁹ For the scurrilous knight, the reliance on oral report is implicit from the prologue of the Life. For the vituperative abbot, it is stated explicitly in the later *Epistola ad Mauricium*, Prologue (Powicke, 68).

²²⁰ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 1 (Powicke, 2) saw the monastic experience under Aelred as being begotten by the Gospel of God 'into the life of the holy Benedict' ('me genuit per euangelium Dei ad uitam sancti Benedicti'), which could alternatively be rendered as the 'Life' of Benedict in terms of his conscious allusions elsewhere to the Gregorian text.

²²¹ See the nine appearances in Aelred, *De anima*, 1.19.232, 2.15.193, 2.62.977, 3.31.492, 3.35.562, 3.35.568, 3.38.638, 3.42.745, 3.49.870 (Talbot, 690, 711, 731, 744-7, 750, 753; trans. idem, 44, 110, 131, 138, 142-3, 148), with particular dependence on the fourth Gregorian book but also two allusions to the second. For the date of *De anima*, see Walter's view in *Vita Aelredi*, 32 (Powicke, 42), that the work was yet unfinished when Aelred died, along with more general comments by Powicke, 'Introduction', xcvi, ci-cii, and reservations by Talbot, *De anima*, 8.

²²² On the Dialogue's availability at Rievaulx, see Bell, *An index of authors and works in Cistercian libraries in Great Britain*, Cistercian Studies Series 130 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 68, 251; A. Hoste, 'Catalogue of Rievaulx', R64, in *ibid.*, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, 154 [149-70].

²²³ Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 78-9, 118-22. That Walter expected his readers to be familiar with this is also shown by his rhetorical insinuations in his *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 77); see also Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 49.

²²⁴ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.8 (Morica, 90-2; trans. Zimmerman, 70-1).

familiar claim that charity and humility were greater than miracles.²²⁵ Aelred's withdrawal to the cloister in the chapter immediately following the figurative attempted poisoning is the same as Benedict's immediate withdrawal to the wilderness following another, actual attempted poisoning.²²⁶ The railings and dissensions of the vituperative abbot have a less direct or obvious dependence on a particular episode of the *Dialogues*, but are analogous in broad terms with the (uninvoked) divine vengeance and death brought upon the wicked priest Florentius,²²⁷ and with the explicitly invoked curse and death of the group of malicious monks of Saint Eutychius who killed the domesticated bear of a rival saint, also named Florentius.²²⁸ Similarly a comment of Walter on the abbot's fate as an example of how the saint spoke nothing idly and his words never failed to take effect could allude to Gregorian comments to that effect in the *Dialogues*,²²⁹ while evoking the spirit of cursing episodes in the *Dialogues* more broadly.²³⁰ As Dutton has argued that the episode seems inconsistent with everything known of the historical Aelred from his contemporaries, it seems plausible that Walter could have taken his framing of events from there.²³¹ In drawing on the *Dialogues*, the episodes of the scurrilous knight and the vituperative abbot share two implicit but important assumptions. The first is that lies and persecution against a saint are a telling sign

²²⁵ Ibid., 1.5 (Morica, 40-1; trans. Zimmerman, 26-7): 'Ut agnosco vir iste magnus foris fuit in miraculis, sed maior intus in humilitate' ('I recognise that this man was great outside in miracles, but greater inside in humility'); cf. ibid. 1.2 (Morica, 23; trans. Zimmerman, 13): '...ego enim virtutem patientiae signis et miraculis maiorem credo' ('I however believe the virtue of patience greater than signs and miracles'); Walter, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 78): '...ego caritatem Alredi plus miror quam mirarer si iiii^{or} fuisset suscitator mortuorum' ('I marvel at the charity of Aelred more than I should marvel if he raised four men from the dead'). For further praise of Aelred's charity, humility and patience see idem, *Vita Aelredi*, 2-3, 8 (Powicke, 5-9, 17); Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 51, 62, 64. Powicke, 'Introduction', lxxix-lxxxii, attributed this to an implicitly Cistercian mentality under the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, but overlooked the Gregorian influence that was more likely a common influence for both authors.

²²⁶ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.3 (Morica, 80-1; trans. Zimmerman, 62).

²²⁷ Ibid., 2.8 (Morica, 92-3; trans. Zimmerman, 72).

²²⁸ Ibid., 3.15 (Morica, 171-2; trans. Zimmerman, 135-6).

²²⁹ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44-5): 'At quoniam sanctorum uerba non pereunt, quorum non unum iotha sine causa prolatum cognoscitur...' ('But since the words of the saints do not perish, as is known, not one iota of them is spoken without cause...'). Cf. Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.23 (Morica, 114; trans. Zimmerman, 91): 'Vix ipsa... communis eius locutio a virtutis erat pondere vacua; quia cuius cor sese in alta suspenderat, nequaquam verba de ore illius incassum cadebant. Si quid viro umquam non iam decernendo, sed minando diceret, tantas vires sermo illius habebat, ac sit hoc non dubiae atque suspense, sed iam per sententiam protulisset.' ('Scarcely... was his common speech empty with the weight of power; since his heart lifted itself on high matters, by no means did the word of his mouth fall empty. If ever he spoke as a threat that was not yet decided by him, his word had such great power, and would not be to that vacillation and suspense, but would already have shown through its sentence.')

²³⁰ Ibid., 1.4, 1.9, 1.10, 2.23, 2.30, 3.15 (Morica, 38-9, 53-7, 63-4, 114-5, 121-2, 172; trans. Zimmerman, 25, 37-41, 46-7, 91-3, 98-9, 137).

²³¹ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 63.

of sanctity that should be naturally evident both to disinterested bystanders within the narrative and to the audience beyond the text,²³² following both the promise of the eighth beatitude in Matthew 5:10-11 and the paradigmatic example of Benedict in the Gregorian *Dialogues*.²³³ The second is that false speech and slander are moreover a type of poison that can be confidently borne and resisted by the saints as another confirming mark of sanctity, on the example of the promises against literal poison given in Mark 16:18 and regularly affirmed in the Life of Benedict in the *Dialogues*.²³⁴ Combined with Walter's self-assurance of his subject's sanctity from personal experience, these models are creatively invoked to show different aspects of that paradigmatic monastic sanctity as the determinative explanatory factor in the episodes' respective outcomes.²³⁵

In both episodes, the frustration or punishment of the antagonists is presented in figurative terms as a self-fulfilling outcome of their actions. The knight's anger and frustration is intensified to his own displeasure as the offending cup of lies he offered to others returns to him unimbibed.²³⁶ The abusive abbot became entangled in his own net of deceit and destruction (Proverbs 1:17-9) and his rebellion against the light heaps only upon himself thick clay (Habakkuk 2:6).²³⁷ The key difference in the two episodes is the saint's respectively patient and maledictive tones with respect to those outcomes: both antagonists are cursers, but only in the latter episode does the antagonist slide from 'curser' to 'cursed' in a similar manner as in the Hexham episode. This difference can nonetheless be accounted for by the two episodes' different functions and respective positioning within the lifetime of the saint, as well as the

²³² Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 25 (Powicke, 33): 'Quid enim mirum si uirtus uiri emulos ad falsum prouocauit? Res est uirtus que nunquam caret inuidia.' ('For what wonder is it if the virtue of a man provoked the envious to falsehood? Virtue is a thing that never lacks envy.') This same psychological interpretation is followed by Aelred's later biographers who take the opposition to Aelred as a confirming mark of his sanctity, or at the very least no impediment to it. See Powicke, 'Introduction', lxxv: 'a man of this kind, who... has more to forgive than be forgiven, provokes unreasoning exasperation in envious or unbalanced minds'; Squire, *Aelred*, 61-2; Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 79.

²³³ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.3 (Morica, 80-1; trans. Zimmerman, 62) cites the frustrated attempt by Saint Benedict's lax monks to poison their abbot is cited as proving that 'the life of the good is always a burden to the wicked' ('pravis moribus semper gravis est vita bonorum'), which has a clear resonance in the Life of Aelred.

²³⁴ Ibid., 2.3, 2.8, 2.18, 2.27 (Morica, 80-1, 92-3, 108-9, 118-9; trans. Zimmerman, 62, 72, 86, 96).

²³⁵ On Walter's mentality and personal predilection toward finding miraculous confirmation for Aelred's sanctity, see Powicke, 'Introduction', lxxviii-lxxxiii.

²³⁶ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 3 (Powicke, 6): 'Set miser tociens bibit quod propinat quociens effundit quod noceat. ...ad pincernam relabitur, et male inebriat frustratum furorem et fraudem nocere uolentis proximum innocentem; dum magis ac magis accenditur in deterius ira indurate nequicie...'

²³⁷ Ibid., 37 (Powicke, 44): 'male astutus ad tendenda retia ante oculos pennatorum' (cf. Proverbs 1:17-9); *ibid.*: 'Nam lis eius iniusta controuersiam confecerat contrariam sibi, quam dum nititur excedere, ruit ipse in malum et luminis rebellio super se congerit densum lutum' (Habakkuk 2:6).

different statuses of their key antagonists. In terms of function, the earlier episode is designed to display Aelred's spiritual virtues (notably patience, humility, kindness and charity), as were the episodes in the *Dialogues* which it followed. The latter on the other hand is designed to illustrate the more miraculous virtues of the saint, proving the implicitly Gregorian claim that the words of the saints do not perish and that not one iota is spoken by them without cause.²³⁸ Moreover, Walter reveals in the *Life* a clear sense of narrative progression and of what he and his audience should expect as appropriate actions relative to the stages of monastic and saintly life-cycle.²³⁹ Aelred may have been (like Martin of Tours) more like a monk than a man in the world,²⁴⁰ and even already more perfected in the world than some monks in the cloister,²⁴¹ but in the earlier episode he is yet only the 'heir of future felicity'²⁴² and remains crucially short of certain graces and perfection to be experienced more fully in the monastery.²⁴³ Indeed, the encounter with the knight is even presented as having been explicitly recognised by Aelred as a test toward his greater perfection in charity toward God and man,²⁴⁴ and immediately precedes the chapter concerning his desire for the monastic life.²⁴⁵ In narrative terms, Aelred thus has to show his perfected spiritual virtues of 'humility and other graces'²⁴⁶ in precursor to his direct performance of miraculous virtues, and his miraculous power can only be truly manifest once he has embraced the more fully perfecting religious life of the cloister.²⁴⁷ There is thus no tone of contradiction between the two episodes, as the 'patient' and 'maledictive' responses to persecution simply illustrate different aspects of sanctity within the Gregorian paradigm and different stages of the saint's career.

A further key difference concerns the respective characters of the two antagonists. The knight is presented at the outset as a man of foolish heart ('stolidique cordis') and irrationally hostile ('insaniens'),²⁴⁸

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 37 (Powicke, 44-5): 'At quoniam sanctorum uerba non pereunt, quorum non unum quoque iotha sine causa prolatum cognoscitur.'

²³⁹ For narrative progression, see Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 9 (Powicke, 18): 'Itaque hic iam eum monachum faciamus'; cf. *idem*, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 76). For life-stages, see *Vita Aelredi*, 2 (Powicke, 2), fn. 1; Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 11, 51, 58-60.

²⁴⁰ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 2, (Powicke, 4): 'magis monachus putaretur quam secularis potentie... discipulus'; cf. *idem*, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 76).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3 (Powicke, 7): 'Quis autem illorum quos xx. seu annis xl. claustralis custodia paciencia instruxit tam pacienter tam benigne tam humiliter socio suo, si ab eo corripri contingeret, responderet?'

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 3 (Powicke, 6): 'future felicitatis heredem'.

²⁴³ On the limitations of Aelred's worldly grace and the remaining perfection of the monastery, notably in terms of chastity, see Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 47 (Powicke, 52-4); *idem*, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 76).

²⁴⁴ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 3 (Powicke, 8).

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 (Powicke, 9-10).

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 (Powicke, 7-8).

²⁴⁷ Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 11, 51, 58-60.

²⁴⁸ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 3 (Powicke, 5).

who is nonetheless led to reflexion and remorse by Aelred's example, and to forgiveness by his mercy.²⁴⁹ In those respects his guilt is diminished and his receptiveness to mercy is increased, on the same pattern as in the Hexham Lives and the forgivable ignorance of Paul in Timothy 1:13, with the same laudable outcome of an expansion in the community of friendship and of religious devotion. The abbot however is one who from the outset certainly should have known better in his actions as a monk and prelate, and who moreover had a direct duty of charity and obedience toward Aelred as abbot of a daughter-house of Rievaulx – an aggravating circumstance which the knight lacked. In this sense the abusive abbot's actions were more severely a rebellion ('rebellio') whereas the knight's reflected lack of charity toward a colleague. It should be noted that this is not a claim drawn from the *Dialogues*: the monks who attempted to poison Benedict and certainly did owe a duty of obedience to him avert punishment of any sort, while the priest Florentius and the monks of Eutychius, who owed no direct duty to the persecuted abbots except those of charity, are struck down.²⁵⁰ Part of the explanation of course lies in the demands of writing contemporary sacred biography, in that Walter is ostensibly trying to craft an interpretation of actual events that have been witnessed or reported to him, but what is ultimately important is the way in which Walter sought to resolve the inconsistencies. In terms of the Aelredian theology outlined, the differing treatments could be said to align well with the path of an imperfect man redeemed from a land of unlikeness, contrasted with a selfish abbot whose free rebellion led him to unreason and destruction. It may not have been entirely successful however, as the episode was opened up to criticism which Walter responded to in a letter later appended to the Life. This will be returned to after considering John of Forde.

A similar example, with a more protracted sense of procedure and added sense of regret, can be found in John's Life of Wulfric. This is an episode in which the cellarer of the Cluniac monks of Montacute had broken the monks' agreement to furnish the saintly anchorite with food, and Wulfric's servant was variously received by him with insults, short measure, or nothing.²⁵¹ On later visiting Wulfric, the saint set out a meal for him as hospitality required, but concluded with a cry on the cellarer's departure: 'Up till now you have crossed me and made my spirit bitter [Psalm 105:33]; let God now judge between you and me.'²⁵² Judged and condemned, the cellarer went out and carried his judgement with him, 'paying scant heed to his own temerity or to the sentence pronounced by heaven.'²⁵³ He became instead proud and obstinate by his sin, and sinning more greatly by contempt, he later sent the servant back to Wulfric

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 3 (Powicke, 8).

²⁵⁰ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.3, 2.8, 3.15 (Morica, 80-1, 92-3, 172; trans. Zimmerman, 62, 72, 137).

²⁵¹ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 45 [2.15] (Bell, 61-3; trans. Matarasso, 147-9).

²⁵² Ibid. (Bell, 62; trans. Matarasso, 148): 'Tu... hactenus ambulasti mihi ex adverso et exacerbasti spiritum meum; et nunc iudicet Deus inter me et te.'

²⁵³ Ibid. (Bell, 62; trans. Matarasso, 148): '...parvipendit vel temeritatem suam vel caelitus dictatam sententiam.'

‘carrying with him nothing but blasphemies and curses.’²⁵⁴ Thence Wulfric ‘loosed a lethal word: “May God this day take that man’s food away who has taken mine from me!”’²⁵⁵ As in Walter’s account, the fatal offence is one of direct confrontation and blasphemy of the saint. Much as in the Hexham Lives however, the episode follows a clear narrative pattern of offence, warning, and obstinate refusal, with a much clearer sense of saintly patience and ‘due process’ than in Walter’s account. Only the final fatal sentence concludes with the cellarer at last swept away in a sudden flood. Though the narrative outline again seems to have followed in several respects the spirit of Matthew 18, the time passed between each repeated offence and warning is nonetheless much more protracted than in Aelred’s account.²⁵⁶ This suggests that John may have additionally intended the more specific canonistic requirement of giving notice and at least three warnings before pronouncing a sentence of excommunication. These requirements became more prominent, at least rhetorically, over the course of the latter half of the twelfth century, which saw an increase in appeals brought before the papal curia concerning ex tempore excommunications issued without the necessary warnings.²⁵⁷ Nearly two decades earlier, John’s soon-to-be abbot and later patron Baldwin had been especially critical of such perceived abuses of procedure when he weighed in on the then-ongoing Becket Controversy.²⁵⁸ As a writer with a legal background addressing a number of canonically literate audiences, including the same papal curia, John would have known all of this and thus found it prudent to minimise such concerns.

Arguably the most memorable example however is that of Wulfric’s fatal curse upon a mouse which nibbled his cape, in which the key witness is the parish priest to whom he later confessed his fault.²⁵⁹ Though unnamed, the informant is most probably Osbern of Haselbury, whose character also provides a probable motive for the story’s original telling and oral narrative function.²⁶⁰ The telling of Osbern’s stories to John would have come in the aftermath of the dramatic use of force on the parish grounds by the monks of Montacute and the villagers of Haselbury in 1154, which came with much injury and bloodshed which Osbern had struggled hard to prevent.²⁶¹ It was only by the late arrival of a force from Crewkerne and the intervention of the bishop that Wulfric’s body was allowed rest at Haselbury, and Osbern was sufficiently concerned by a possible second attempt that he was purported to have translated

²⁵⁴ Ibid. (Bell, 62; trans. Matarasso, 148): ‘...nihil secum nisi blasphemias et maledicta portantem.’

²⁵⁵ Ibid. (Bell, 62, ; trans. Matarasso, 148): ‘Auferat... ei Deus hodie victum suum qui meum abstulit mihi.’

²⁵⁶ Matarasso, ‘Appendix’, 231, has noted that the episode’s homiletic frame alludes implicitly to Chapter 31 of the Rule of Saint Benedict on the person and role of the cellarer, and that both texts (the Rule and the Life) additionally made key reference to Matthew 18:4-7.

²⁵⁷ R.H. Helmholz, ‘Excommunication in twelfth-century England’, *Journal of Law and Religion* 11.1 (1994-5), 236, 241-4 [235-53].

²⁵⁸ F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 184.

²⁵⁹ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 30 [1.30] (Bell, 46-7; trans. Matarasso, 132-3).

²⁶⁰ On the person of Osbern of Haselbury, see Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 21, 28-9.

²⁶¹ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 101 [3.43] (Bell, 127-9; trans. Matarasso, 211-2).

Wulfric's body on two separate occasions, leaving the saint's final resting spot unknown.²⁶² The account of the removal of Wulfric's personal effects, in denying that anything of value remained at Haselbury, can be similarly seen as an oral strategy to discourage would-be relic-thieves who might disturb the parish church.²⁶³ In the account of the mouse, the cape represented Wulfric's personal effects being nibbled at by an intruder, in much the same way as the effects of his office – the parish and its priest – were later compromised by intruders after his death. The willingness of Wulfric to punish those who failed to follow his will and instruction is particularly apparent in the revelation of a cure to a widow in a second dream, in which the saint kicked at the woman for failing to heed his first instruction.²⁶⁴ The story of the mouse may have reminded of Wulfric's humility in life, but it was also a reminder of his awesome power on behalf of those things which were attached to his dignity, and of an awesome power which lingered over Haselbury with fewer practical or principled limitations after his death than during his life. It was a case of Wulfric's will and power being evoked in maledictive terms to protect a vulnerable parish church and priest which he had left behind.

From these four miraculous stories, one can see the narratives of imprecation forming different functions through their key figures: deterring would-be doubters or detractors of the departed saint's memory (through the figures of the Hexham pilgrims, the vituperative abbot, the Montacute cellarer) or prospective violators of his personal effects (through the figure of the nibbling mouse). Drawing attention to the avenging disposition and manifest punitive power of the saint in life could only have underscored his much greater power in death. Nonetheless, such functions were not without the restraints of theological and moralistic considerations, as the sensitivities to biblical and canonistic procedures in Aelred and John's writings have already shown. Moreover, the original function of an orally reported story might be different from the principal rhetorical force of the story in its written setting, in particular in Lives recast with particular homiletic intent. This can be seen in John of Forde's careful theological sensitivity in underlining the saint's regret at killing a living creature by a thoughtless curse and his lament that he could not – or should not – undo the divine will.²⁶⁵ The two episodes in the Life of Wulfric stand in dialogue with a number of earlier hagiographical precedents. The *Dialogues* contained an account of the hermit Florentius calling down a thunderbolt to kill snakes in his cell.²⁶⁶ The Life of Bernard of Clairvaux by William of Saint-Thierry contained an updated version of the story, in which the saint memorably struck dead a bothersome swarm of flies at Foigny with the *ex tempore* pronouncement, 'Excommunicas eas!' ('I excommunicate them!'), thereafter commemorated as 'the curse of the flies of

²⁶² Ibid., (Bell, 129; trans. Matarasso, 212).

²⁶³ Matarasso, 'Introduction', 60 has seen the removal as a psychological manifestation of Osbern coming to terms with grief and loss, though this could merely have had a more practical purpose.

²⁶⁴ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 105 [3.47] (Bell, 133; trans. Matarasso, 215-6).

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 30 [1.30] (Bell, 46-7; trans. Matarasso, 132-3).

²⁶⁶ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 3.15 (Morica, 173; trans. Zimmerman, 138-9).

Foigny' ('muscarum Fusniacensium maledictio').²⁶⁷ The theme in both earlier stories was the saint's miraculous power. This same theme is present for John, though for him the greater theme is the selflessness and humility of his subjects even toward the humblest of living things. This is an important shift in emphasis which can be read in light of certain Gregorian themes. A number of episodes in the *Dialogues* reveal discomfort with the terminality of vengeance miracles and with curses which are not to be embarked upon lightly. Benedict laments the unwished-for death of his wicked adversary Florentius (again, not to be confused with the hermit)²⁶⁸ and is forced to undo the unintended effects of curses he had threatened upon another group but not fully pronounced.²⁶⁹ Perhaps most strikingly, the curse by the hermit Florentius against a group of monks who killed his bear is presented as an idle and condemnable curse in anger.²⁷⁰ Though Gregory is clear that the curse was produced by a distracting grief which responded more to the malice of the monks than to any selfish regard of the saint for his bear,²⁷¹ the fatal consequences of the imprecation were lamented by the saint for the rest of his life.²⁷² That John had this precedent in mind is shown in the episode of the cellarer, whose death leads to the moralising conclusion that the penitent saint learned to be more careful with his power in future. This is the same moral that Gregory the Great extracted from his narrative. The saint saw himself as a murderer, and Gregory himself took a firm stand on the Pauline view that 'cursers ('maledici') will not inherit the kingdom of God'.²⁷³ The question of acceptability was a chiefly moral question, with the *Dialogues* noting: 'We may believe on this account that the almighty God did that lest a man of such simplicity should presume to hurl the weapon of cursing ('iaculum maledictionis') in a state of grief and anger.'²⁷⁴

It must be at least partly for this reason that as much as John sanitises Wulfric's curse upon the cellarer, emphasising fault and process, he is unable to entirely satisfy his sense that Wulfric's action was nonetheless a fault, if an awesome one: that 'when God's servant heard all this, he began to be eaten away with bitter self-reproach, persuaded that the breath of his lips had killed the man.'²⁷⁵ The saint shouldered the blood guilt with lamentations battering the ears of God and friends alike, pricked by repentance. Such

²⁶⁷ William of Saint-Thierry, *Vita Bernardi*, 1.52 (Verdeyen, 71; trans. Costello, 56), quoted at 1.52.1374, 1.52.1379.

²⁶⁸ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.8 (Morica, 93; trans. Zimmerman, 72).

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.23 (Morica, 114-5; trans. Zimmerman, 91-3).

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.15 (Morica, 172-3; trans. Zimmerman, 137-8).

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* (Morica, 172; trans. Zimmerman, 137): 'Tunc sese in lamentis dedit, fratrum magis malitiam quam mortem ursi deplorans. ...sed isdem vir Domini coram eo, doloris magni stimulis accensu, inpraecatus est.'

²⁷² *Ibid.*: 'Quod factum vir Dei Florentius vehementer expavit, seque ita fratribus maledixisse pertimuit.'

²⁷³ *Ibid.*: '...se crudelem, se in eorum morte clamabat homicidam. [...] cum Paulus dicat, "neque maledici regnum Dei possidebunt",' citing 1 Corinthians 6:10.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 'Quod idcirco omnipotentem Deum fecisse credimus, ne vir tantae simplicitatis, quantolibet dolore commotus, intorquere ultra praesumeret iaculum maledictionis.'

²⁷⁵ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 45 [2.15] (Bell, 63; trans. Matarasso, 149): 'At vir Dei hoc audiens multa amaritudine coepit intra se contabescere, eo quod spiritum labiorum suorum sibi eum interfecisse videretur.'

a presentation recognises the literal miracle but makes the greater miracle out as Wulfric's humility – a Gregorian and Bernardine theme of which his audience would have approved, and which he later states explicitly of Bernard himself in praising his humility as greater than a thousand miracles.²⁷⁶ The potential illicitness of the curse is thus acknowledged, minimised, and sidestepped, in such a way as to conform with a hagiographical audience. John also finds a way to redeem both participants of the story. He puns on the manner of the cellarer's death that this is slippery ground and warns against stumbling, saying that all that was certain of the punishment was the destruction of the body, and that the spiritual fate lay with God alone, which no man could judge or infer without blind presumption and temptation beyond human strength. He additionally suggests it was better for the man to be drowned in the sea with the weight of his judgement to deter those with no understanding to avoid his example. Most interestingly, he adds 'perhaps there was no better way for the cellarer to heal the soul of the holy man he had so gravely wounded than by teaching him, already contrite over his fault, also to lament the death of an enemy, while arming him with the virtue of charity against any like occasion in the future.'²⁷⁷ The curse upon the mouse was a more straightforward case. There one seems to find an instance of a familiar episode discharging old and new functions. In one obvious respect, flies and mice don't matter, and a saint can be exonerated of any lasting moral culpability for their deaths. Precisely because they don't matter, they can be used to prove miraculous power without complicity in illicit practices. Where they make the jump for John is with the addition of regret and humility. Both themes were present in the Gregorian *Dialogues*, but the uniting of the two allows John to argue for restricting excommunication and cursing to all but the most extreme and necessary of circumstances.

In the light of the episodes thus examined, it is worth returning to the vituperative abbot in the Life of Aelred. This imprecation episode is unique among the cursing episodes in providing an important clue to how it was actually received by a part of its audience, though this much may be a simple accident of the sources. That clue is found in the appended Letter to Maurice, written in response to two unnamed prelates who had criticised Walter's work, in particular his account of the miracles.²⁷⁸ Walter responded by providing witnesses for each of the miracles or offering hagiographical or rhetorical precedents to defend his occasional exaggerations as acceptable convention. Notably the imprecation episode is the only feature of his work he almost entirely concedes: he refuses to name witnesses 'for it is not expedient to do so', asserting that the events happened as described but admitting that he may have misconstrued their cause and effect. 'It is possible that the abbot about whom that story is told did not die for the reason for

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 55 [2.26] (Bell, 79-81; trans. Matarasso, 166-7).

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 45 [2.15] (Bell, 63; trans. Matarasso, 149): 'Sed et animam viri sancti cui grave vulnus inflixerat non alias forte commodius sanare poterat, quam ut de lapsu suo paenitentem etiam de morte inimici jam plangere doceret; et in omnem deinceps similem casum virtute caritatis armaret.'

²⁷⁸ Powicke, 'Introduction', xxx, lxxx. The addressee was probably Prior Maurice of Kirkham, or less likely, Aelred's retired predecessor Maurice of Rievaulx; see Dutton, 'Walter Daniel's Vita', 66-7; Powicke, xxix-xxxi.

which it seems he died.²⁷⁹ The Letter does not report the precise objection of the prelates. It has been suggested that the criticism concerned a perceived abuse of the miraculous or a vengefulness that did not accord well with Cistercian virtues, ‘though it would have been perfectly acceptable at any older shrine where vengeance from saints was expected’;²⁸⁰ or alternatively that the revision stemmed from Walter’s own belated recognition of the inconsistency of the hostile hagiographical figure with the patient historical figure.²⁸¹ The criticism likely did not concern the plausibility of the miracle per se, as Walter could have cited the Gregorian precedents much as he explicitly cites hagiographical models elsewhere for his other miracles. Broader comparison of the episodes reveals a number of problems with the episode as a narrative and moral exemplar. One possible concern, as we have seen with the Benedictines, is with the damnatory element of the curse and with the need to prolong the sanction with multiple opportunities for repentance. The concern with damnation and regret lingered even for Wulfric, and John’s account served both to minimise the fault through procedural adherence and to deflect scrutiny onto the virtue of humility. The Hexham Lives sidestepped the problem by attributing their imprecations to laymen, whereas those against the vituperative abbot and the cellarer were attributed to men their hagiographers were arguing were saints. They were thus exposed to harsher criticisms stemming from the higher standards imposed by the Gregorian *Dialogues* on saintly cursing. Moreover, the saintly agency invoked in the Hexham Lives was that of a departed saint, not a living one; it was reasonable to reserve the full vengeful power of the saint to the court of heaven. Perhaps most tempting in terms of contemporary context is that unlike the ad hoc excommunicatory curses of the Hexham pilgrims or that of Wulfric upon the cellarer of Montacute, Walter’s narrative lacks the clear adherence to the admonitory procedures of Matthew 18:15-20 or of canon law, jumping instead immediately to imprecatory sentence. The year in which Walter promulgated his Life of Aelred, 1167, was the height of the Becket Controversy, with the exiled archbishop’s excommunication of his opponents without warning at Vézelay the previous year prompting a spate of complaints by English prelates and canon lawyers to the Curia of Pope Alexander III.²⁸² Here Walter’s professed uninterest in worldly affairs may have been his downfall. The prelates who criticised Walter’s Aelred may have been attuned to their colleagues’ criticisms of Becket and raised similar concern. At the same time, Aelred’s posthumous critics may have been looking to find fault. Such episodes would be especially sensitive in the partisan environment in which charges of Aelred’s pride were a lingering concern. Ultimately, Walter’s concession would have been an appropriate tactical

²⁷⁹ Walter, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 68).

²⁸⁰ Powicke, ‘Introduction’, lxxix-lxxx; B. Ward, *Miracles and the medieval mind: theory, record and event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Wildwood, 1987), 174.

²⁸¹ Dutton, ‘Walter Daniel’s Vita’, 63: ‘Walter’s tardy second thoughts suggest that the version in the Vita may have emerged more from his own anger at the discourtesy of the visiting abbot and his own satisfied judgement of the appropriateness of his subsequent death than from any words of Aelred.’

²⁸² Helmholz, ‘Excommunication in twelfth-century England’, 242-3; Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 184.

response, allowing him to draw the focus back to his subject's humility where the real test of sanctity would be won or lost.

V

Additionally relevant to consideration of the curse is the theme of 'coercive fasting', both in terms of the operation of the miraculous ritual speech-act and in terms of its underlying redemptive theological emphasis. Here it is useful to return to the episode of the 'unstable monk' in Walter's *Life of Aelred*. This episode, actually a three-part narrative interspersed in the *Life*, concerns a pair of coercive miracles toward the celebrated 'unstable monk'.²⁸³ The figure is a secular clerk of changeable will who found the monastic life too difficult and thus embarked on reoccurring attempts to leave Rievaulx for the secular world. In his first narrative appearance at Rievaulx, the clerk conceived a desire to return to the world and left the outer enclosures of the monastery, but through Aelred's prayers and intercessions, was only able to wander the woods aimlessly before finding himself miraculously returned to the walls of the monastery.²⁸⁴ In a later incident at Revesby, where the monk had seemingly transferred, he threatened again to leave.²⁸⁵ Aelred, this time as abbot, responded that he would himself taste no food 'until the Lord brings you back, willing or unwilling.'²⁸⁶ On reaching the open gate of the monastery, the monk found the empty air bound against him as though an invisible wall of iron, and despite sustained effort was unable to break through. The bystanders cursed ('detestantur') his ingratitude and praised and magnified the love of Aelred, 'who though the gates were open had shut the air against him, and would not allow him to fall into the pit of iniquity.'²⁸⁷ The incident moved the monk to contrition and reconciliation. In the final incident in the story, Aelred as abbot of Rievaulx has a prophetic vision of the impending death of the monk, whom he convinces providentially to remain within the cloister long enough to die a holy death a week later.²⁸⁸

Of present interest are three key features of the second narrative incident (the invisible wall): as a process of shame, as a compelled miracle, and as a miraculous chastisement and correction of the departing monk.²⁸⁹ As a process of shame, Aelred foregoes food indefinitely and refuses to be consoled or dissuaded from his tearful prayers. Unlike the first attempted departure, whose details are known only to

²⁸³ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 15, 22, 28 (Powicke, 24-5, 30-2, 35-6).

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 15 (Powicke, 24-5).

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 (Powicke, 30-2).

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* (Powicke, 31): 'Nec ego gusto cibum, donec inuitum aut uolentem te reducat Dominus.'

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* (Powicke, 31): '...qui oracione sua ianuis apertis contra illum aerem clauserat et uolentem in baratrum iniquitatis cadere non permittebat.'

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 (Powicke, 35-6).

²⁸⁹ This tripartite episode has a number of further Gregorian features which will be alluded to in Chapter V.

Aelred and the monk, Aelred's actions in this instance appear to be public: he states his intention before retiring to his chamber to pray, and his actions are explicitly known to his nearest kinsman, the sub-cellarer of the monastery. The actions additionally appear to be known to the monks of the monastery as they execrate the frustrated monk for his ingratitude, thus magnifying Aelred's implicit shaming of him at the same time as magnifying his protective love. As a process of shame, the episode bears comparison with the episode in the *Life of Wulfstan*. There the saint's literal self-abasement in an attempt to reconcile the parties of a blood-feud, by rolling on the ground in his episcopal robes, is construed as a process of shaming; and it too yields to the cursing and thence miraculous abasement of one of the feuding parties by the gathered crowd. It is not clear whether Aelred was familiar with the *Life of Wulfstan* or with the saint's appearance in William of Malmesbury's other works,²⁹⁰ but a similar logic of self-abasement directed toward compelling reconciliation through outward shaming appears in his *Lament for David*.²⁹¹ There Aelred reported how the king would keep the priests and religious of his realm from public discord. 'As often as discord did arise among them – such is human wretchedness – his spirit would not rest nor his body sleep, until he had recalled them to their former peace by his prayers, tears, and sometimes blandishments, but rarely threats. For such a cause he did not disdain to incline his royal head humbly to his knees (perhaps in that part he seemed harder) with humble words, so that one who could not be won over by benevolence might be won over by shame.'²⁹² It is a form of self-abasement as self-assertion, a humbling of oneself in the expectation of reward. In biblical terms, this means placing oneself at the end of the table to be moved to the top (Luke 14:10), that the first shall be last and the last shall be first (Matthew 19:30, 20:16). In Walter's terms elsewhere, 'the humbler a man is the greater he is among them, the more lowly in his own esteem the more pleasing in the opinion and judgement of the rest'.²⁹³ Such actions can thus be taken as part of a culture of shaming as common or at least as intelligible to lay and religious in the Northumbrian north as in Anglo-Saxon Worcester, and as a logic common to Aelred and Walter which directly explains the attributed actions of Aelred in the episode. While it might initially be tempting to attribute those to the spiritual aggressiveness often ascribed to the Cistercians as distinctive by their twelfth-century critics, the Benedictine and lay contexts provided by William and

²⁹⁰ Freeland includes the *Life* in her list of non-scriptural citations in *Historical works*, 289, but the reference to Wulfstan in Aelred, *Vita Edwardi*, 35-6 [2.36] (Marzella, 163-4; trans. Freeland, 220-5) is not particularly suggestive (cf. in particular *Historical works*, 220 fn. 72). The *Life of Wulfstan* and *GP* do not appear in the index of sources in Marzella's edition of *Vita Edwardi*.

²⁹¹ Aelred, *Lamentatio*, 5.26-35 [4] (Pezzini, 9; trans. Freeland, 52).

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 5.28-35 (Pezzini, 9; trans. Freeland, 52): 'Inter quos quotienscumque, sicut est humana miseria, discordia oriebatur, non requiescebat spiritus eius, non caro quiescebat, donec precibus, lacrimis, aliquando blanditiis, raro autem minis, eos in pacem pristinam reuocaret. Nec dedignabatur pro tali causa, regium illud caput ad eius genua qui forte in hac parte durior appareret cum uerbis humilibus humiliter inclinare, ut uinceretur uerecundia, qui uinci non poterat beniuolentia.'

²⁹³ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 5 (Powicke, 12).

David suggest that what is more likely at work is a case of ingrained ideas and customs that both authors drew from the surrounding society which produced them.²⁹⁴

As a compelled miracle, Aelred's actions of self-inflicted suffering have the result not only of shaming their target socially but of enacting a divine miracle. This is in part because his tearful lamentations cannot be separated from the performance of affective prayer, the product of the contemplative life which Aelred believed found most perfect expression wordlessly and with tears.²⁹⁵ Additionally, his threatened fast until the return of the resolute monk – a case of an unstoppable saintly force running into a seemingly immovable sinful object – can be seen as in effect a threatened fast unto the death. The attributed claim that 'unless help comes to my son I die' accordingly evokes the theme of John 15:13, of laying down one's life for one's friends, as the ultimate Aelredian standard of spiritual friendship.²⁹⁶ Because the saint's impromptu but ritualised performance moreover invokes the Lord to deliver the monk to the monastery and his salvation irrespective of his will ('Nor will I taste food until the Lord leads you back willing or unwilling'), God is significantly implicated in the final outcome.²⁹⁷ It has been noted in previous discussion that the performance of ritual humiliation by monks and clerics could serve theologically to implicate God in the justice of the conditions which the afflicted and self-afflicted performers suffered, thereby compelling God through shame to act in favour of their restitution as much as it compelled the aggrieving party in the same way.²⁹⁸ In this respect Aelred's performance is a 'coerced' miracle, a threatened curse against God, though the fact that it is selflessly and outwardly directed toward its target's salvation is what would ultimately have made it theologically acceptable to Aelred, Walter and their critics.²⁹⁹

Finally, as a miraculous chastisement and correction, the punitive miracle operates figuratively within the logic of Jeremiah 31, concerned with the chastisement and salvation of Israel in the desert. Building on the theme of the monastic life as one of salvation in the desert, the images of the miracle accord allusively with the various individual parts of Jeremiah 31, again revealing the close integration of scriptural

²⁹⁴ Newman, *Boundaries of charity*, 5-6, 13.

²⁹⁵ A. Hoste, *For Christ love: prayers of Saint Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx*, trans. R. de Lima (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), xvi-xvii.

²⁹⁶ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31): '...morior nisi subueniatur filio meo.' The Johannine passage of laying down one's life is directly invoked in Aelred, *De spiritali*, 1.30.178-80, 2.33.238-9 (Hoste, 294, 309; trans., Braceland, 61, 78); and Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 8 (Powicke, 17); while a similar spirit of being 'utterly spent' in the service of one's community can be found in Aelred, *Oratio pastoralis*, 7 (Dutton, 48-9).

²⁹⁷ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31): 'Nec ego gusto cibum, donec inuitum aut uolentem te reducat Dominus.'

²⁹⁸ P. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 105, 111; cf. W. Brueggemann and W.H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: CUP, 2014), 114-5.

²⁹⁹ The episode, notably, does not seem to have drawn any more than generic criticism to judge by the episodes defended in Walter, *Epistola ad Mauricium* (Powicke, 67-70, with the episode's witnesses attested at 67).

passages in Walter's writing. Aelred's intestines are troubled in pity (Jeremiah 31:20) and in hope of the promise that his spiritual son would return within his own borders (Jeremiah 31:16-17), both actions attributed in Jeremiah to the Lord of Israel. By providing such a typological association, Aelred is thereby established as a vessel of divine power and agency.³⁰⁰ The narrative moves from the love of Aelred refusing to be consoled for his son (Jeremiah 31:15) to the corrective justice by which God humbles and forgives Israel (Jeremiah 31:18-19). The biblical figure of Israel cries out: 'You chastised me while I wandered and I was instructed; I was like an untamed youth. Turn me back, and I shall turn back, for you are the Lord my God. For after you turned me back I did penance, and after you showed me, I struck my thigh (*femur*). I am confounded and ashamed, because I have born the shame of my youth.'³⁰¹ The unstable monk in similar terms is turned back in the first incident, but makes another attempt in the second, at which point he too, to his frustration and embarrassment, strikes his thigh (or leg), this time literally against the invisible iron wall: 'More and more he tries to go out and again and again attempts to break outside... stretching his leg he tries to put one foot forward, but in no way did he succeed to steer himself even to the middle-boundary.'³⁰² The physical chastisement and confounding social shame of the episode turn him back to himself in compunction and return him to his protector seeking forgiveness, tying up the incident in a miracle that stands ultimately as both punitive and redemptive.³⁰³

VI

The foregoing discussion reveals an essentially redemptive theological outlook toward ordinary hardship and punitive miracle, shaped by personal experience, historical perspective, and broader intellectual context. As a basic paradigm, there is a comparative underlying unity of outlook shared by Aelred, Walter and John, which may have been shaped partly by the similarity of their contexts and perhaps partly also by the cumulative influence of the writings of each on those of the successive generation. That redemptive paradigm was then tempered by the contemporary social need for Aelred and John to

³⁰⁰ The typological identification of Aelred with the Lord and Saviour of Israel through scriptural allusion is a feature elsewhere recognised by Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 121, in his analysis of other episodes in the Life, noting importantly that such an interpretation 'is one that a devout Cistercian would not or could not venture to proclaim with less circumlocution, because it moves perilously close to deifying Aelred, moving outside the bounds of latria into the area of dulia.'

³⁰¹ Jeremiah 31:18: 'Audiens audivi Ephraim transmigrantem castigasti me et eruditus sum quasi iuenculus indomitus converte me et revertar quia tu Dominus Deus meus. Postquam enim convertisti me egi paenitentiam et postquam ostendisti mihi percussi femur meum confusus sum et erubui quoniam sustinui obprobrium adolescentiae meae.'

³⁰² Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31): 'Conatur magis ac magis egredi et sepius attemptat foras erumpere... et pedem unum producta tibia extendens in longum nullo modo illum uel ad medium limitis dirigere preualebat.'

³⁰³ Ibid.: 'Set et ille compunctus et reuersus in sese quamtocius redit ad piissimum prouisorem, petit remissionem, stabilitatem promittit.'

demonstrate the manifest vengeful power of the saints in the face of political disorder, ethnic hostilities, and men unchecked by justice, and for all three hagiographers to check prospective doubters or detractors toward their saintly subjects. At the same time, the theological framework contained the necessary avenues to admit such imperatives: maintaining that while man retained the image of God, the damage of that image through wilful withdrawal or bestial condition could make man ripe for vengeance without God necessarily performing any injustice. The overall paradigm was comparable then with those of Chapter I which emphasised the reform of the individual (Goscelin, William) or the transgression of the saints owed veneration or vindication (Eadmer, William), though it was distinctively refracted by the theological considerations of the later twelfth century and of the English Cistercian tradition, by a different set of narrative influences, and by the immediate pressures of local and ethnic circumstances.

Much as in Chapter I, this broader theology and social context of the punitive miracle provides the necessary context for the shape and anxieties affecting the much less frequent representations of imprecations per se. It shows that the direct and indeed fatal imprecations by their subjects could be admitted within particular constraints. At the same time, it provided a theological imperative for the hagiographer to emphasise in the narrative the ample opportunities given for repentance, even if such opportunities were not ultimately taken, or else face contemporary criticism regarding the licitness of the curse. In that sense, the later twelfth century hagiographers shared a similar general sensitivity to the writers of Chapter I but had to operate within a tightening set of contemporary intellectual pressures. Nonetheless, the episodes also show the individuality of these authors and their concerns and the ways they might engage with those same issues. This can be seen for instance in their overlapping sensitivities to biblical, patristic and hagiographical models in framing and justifying their subjects' actions: whether Matthew 18 and the Rule of Benedict (Aelred, John), the Gregorian *Dialogues* (Walter, John), or the Book of Jeremiah (Walter). These framings were important in allowing the hagiographers to go further in reworking or subverting earlier established tropes of cursing to varied rhetorical ends, and these too display a distinctive set of literary influences and emphases from those seen in Chapter I.

For all three hagiographers, those frameworks allowed the hagiographer to show the acceptability of the protagonist's actions and to tie them in with the universal markers of sanctity. For Aelred and Walter, they showed ways in which a miracle could be enacted toward redemptive ends (as with the Hexham pilgrims and the unstable monk) or fatal ones (as with the vituperative abbot). For Walter and John, they could also be used to rework the trope to admit the saint's manifest power while underscoring his signal humility (as with the unstable monk, the cellarer of Montacute, and the nibbling mouse). This literary reworking is especially complex for John, through whom the original oral function of his informants' imprecatory episodes as simple vengeful deterrents is notably reshaped, according to both the canonistic sensitivities of affording opportunities for repentance and the homiletic needs of underscoring the saint's humility, compunction, and the general unacceptability of the curse. Creative reworking meant that the

stories of cursing could continue to discharge an array of functions that might otherwise be in tension with each other and with the accepted model of sanctity. This activity might not always have been successful however, as for Walter, who was forced to backtrack on an episode that was more tightly interwoven into his narrative than scholars have hitherto realised. What ultimately emerges once again is the degree of individual creative engagement shown by each of the three writers, within a broadly similar mid- to late twelfth-century landscape of theological, social, and cultural contexts. That theme is one we will see again in Chapter III, in which the individual and varied writings of Jocelin of Furness artfully unite many of the themes and interests of the foregoing Benedictine and Cistercian hagiographers.

Chapter III: Amidst worlds: Jocelin of Furness, c. 1175-1214

Extending the Cistercian case study while introducing an important case study in its own right, the present chapter forms a bridge between the interests of the two groups of hagiographers discussed in Chapters I-II, while broadening the geographical and cultural boundaries by taking a first step into the hagiography of the Irish world. The focus is on Jocelin of Furness (fl. c. 1175-1214), who stands out as a well-connected hagiographer of the late twelfth-century Irish Sea world: a reworker of texts drawn from the English and Gaelic cultural zones, connected with ecclesiastical and lay patrons and audiences in Ireland, England, Scotland and the Isle of Mann, and conscious both of the practical needs of his patrons and of the ideals of the twelfth-century monastic reform movement in a series of high-profile hagiographical commissions.¹ Long a shadowy figure in modern scholarship, his work has only begun to be truly appreciated in its proper context in the last decade or so.² A Cistercian monk and priest of Furness near the coast of Lancashire, sometimes though not conclusively identified with the homonymous abbots of Furness and Rushen, he has been described as ‘extremely familiar’ with broader Cistercian life and thought.³ He was familiar too with the work of William of Malmesbury and Aelred of Rievaulx, whose historical writings he admired and used as sources;⁴ while the libraries of Furness’ Cistercian neighbours at Holme Cultram in Cumberland, Sawley in Lancashire, and Stanlow in Cheshire might additionally have provided ready access to works by Eadmer of Canterbury and by his own

¹ C. Downham, ‘Introduction’, in *Jocelin proceedings*, 1-2, 6 [1-6]; H. Birkett, *The saints’ Lives of Jocelin of Furness: hagiography, patronage and ecclesiastical politics* (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2010), 6-16; R. Bartlett, ‘Furness, Jocelin of (fl. 1199–1214)’, in *ODNB*, 21:190-1; idem, ‘Cults of Irish, Scottish and Welsh saints in twelfth-century England’, in *Britain and Ireland 900-1300: insular responses to medieval European change*, ed. B. Smith (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 76, 81-3 [67-86]; A. Harbus, *Helena of Britain in medieval legend* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 98-9.

² As noted by Birkett, *Jocelin*, 1-6, 279-80, 283-5; Downham, ‘Introduction’, 1-3, 6; F. Edmonds, ‘Norse influence in north-west England: Jocelin of Furness’ interpretation of the name “Waltheoƿ”’, *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 9 (2015), 43, 56 [43-62]; Harbus, *Helena of Britain*, 98-9. For the recent increase in scholarly interest and attention, see in particular Birkett’s monograph and the papers in *Jocelin proceedings* more broadly.

³ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 14; E. Freeman, ‘Models for Cistercian life in Jocelin of Furness’ “Vita Waldevi”’, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 37 (2002), 109 [107-21].

⁴ Hitherto identified works include William’s *GR* and *Vita Patricii*, Aelred’s *Genealogia*, and perhaps more tentatively Aelred’s *Lamentatio*, for which see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 52, 53, 57, 63-4, 84, 242-3. Explicit admiration for Aelred’s works can be found in Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 32 (MacFadden, 116-7; trans. idem, 237-8), and is also noted by G.J. McFadden, ‘Introduction’, in idem, ‘An edition and translation of the Life of Waldef, Abbot of Melrose by Jocelin of Furness’ (Unpublished Doctoral thesis: Columbia University, 1952), 12 [1-91].

immediate contemporary John of Forde, among others.⁵ His wide-ranging travels in the north and south of Britain evidently brought him further contact with books from other regions and orders.⁶ Across four hagiographical works connected with a diverse range of external patrons and contexts, Jocelin's recounting of miraculous vengeance variously reveals the kinds of dynamic theological outlooks which we have already seen elaborated in the work of Goscelin, the preoccupations with demonic influence in the high ecclesiastical-secular politics seen in Eadmer, the literary models and intimate biography seen in Walter Daniel and John, and finally the familiarities with contemporary canonistic developments seen in John. Moreover, his work is an outstanding example of the cross-cultural and indeed 'amphibious' hagiography seen in the twelfth century concerning saints drawn from either side of the Irish Sea.⁷ Jocelin is thus a fitting base for testing the themes and paradigms which have emerged from within the English material, as well as prelude to a consideration of the themes of Irish hagiography with which he also engaged.

As a Cistercian, Jocelin's work was undertaken at the request of prominent external patrons, as the interruption of regular monastic life and of the statutes prohibiting writing outside of abbey boundaries typically required special dispensation.⁸ The Lives which have been securely attributed to Jocelin comprise a Life of Kentigern (1175x1199), begun as part of the architectural and literary renewal of the see of Glasgow promoted by Bishop Jocelin; a Life of Patrick (c. 1185), begun following the conquest of Ireland at the instigation of Archbishop Tomaltach Ua Conchobair of Armagh, Bishop Malachias III of Down, and the Anglo-Norman lord of Ulster, John de Courcy; a Life of Waltheof of Melrose (1207x14), written at the request of Abbot Patrick of Melrose and dedicated to William the Lion of Scotland, likely with a view towards the formal papal canonisation process; and a Life of Helena (1208x14), written for a female religious community, most likely either Elstow Abbey in Bedfordshire or St. Helena's at Bishopsgate,

⁵ For Holme Cultram, D.M. Bell, *An index of authors and works in Cistercian libraries in Great Britain*, Cistercian Studies Series 130 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 58, 67, 90, 148, 242-3, includes Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi* and John's *Vita Wulftrici*, in addition to Goscelin's *Vita Erkenvaldi* and William's *Vita Wulfstani*. For Sawley, *ibid.*, 18, 148, 253, includes William's *GR* and Aelred's *Relatio*; for Stanlow (later Whalley), *ibid.*, 18, 68, 258, includes Gregory's Dialogues and Aelred's *De quodam miraculo*. On Holme Cultram's position within Jocelin's network and his use of sources from that house, see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 132-4, 162, 192, 240-2; M.T. Flanagan, 'Jocelin of Furness and the cult of St. Patrick in twelfth-century Ulster', in *Jocelin proceedings*, 50 fn 21, 64 [45-66].

⁶ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 242-5.

⁷ On this see Bartlett, 'Irish, Scottish and Welsh saints', 68-77, 81-3, esp. 76. On the linguistic filters on his access to the sources, however, see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 28; F. Edmonds, 'The Furness peninsula and the Irish Sea region: cultural interaction from the seventh century to the twelfth', in *Jocelin proceedings*, 39-42 [17-44].

⁸ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 15-6.

London.⁹ His sources in these diverse texts ranged from oral informants in the case of Waltheof, to non-hagiographical historical narratives in the case of Helena, to the reworking of earlier hagiographical works in the cases of Kentigern and Patrick.¹⁰ Though part of the broader trend of ‘fashion-conscious’ stylistic reworking of earlier texts, Jocelin’s work was additionally framed by contemporary ideals and concerns, and often expanded on his sources with biblical quotation and edifying commentary.¹¹ His Life of Waltheof, especially, has been seen as ‘a distinctly Cistercian product’ written within a broader ‘period of great reassessment of the Cistercian enterprise’.¹² In addition to the specific interests of the patrons and audiences of the individual Lives, all four texts reflect the general preoccupations and outlook of a late twelfth-century reform-minded author, recurring in particular to concerns over heresy, sexual morality and proper ecclesiastical procedure.¹³

Nonetheless, the disparate lengths and nature of Jocelin’s sources and narratives influenced the extent to which he had space for explicit commentary and discursiveness in his Lives, and thus the order in which they can be most easily approached to access his own outlooks. The Life of Patrick for instance has been described as ‘almost overburdened with narrative content’ to the point that there was little space for explicit comment, with Jocelin’s reformist messages and outlooks being instead subtly interwoven within the narrative.¹⁴ The Life of Helena meanwhile made its arguments through sometimes oblique allusion and allegory, while the Lives of Kentigern and Waltheof had the space for more direct discursive commentary. At the same time, it is in his Life of Patrick that curses most abundantly appear. This means that broadly establishing his editorial procedures and outlooks from his other more accessible works will be critical to understanding and properly contextualising his subtler engagements with his curse-abounding sources for the Life of Patrick. The following discussion will first consider the key themes of demonic and self-inflicted suffering as a means of setting up the broader theological frameworks within

⁹ Ibid., 6-12, 236-8, 244-5, 252-5; C. Downham, ‘Appendix: the writings of Jocelin of Furness’, in *Jocelin proceedings*, 121-2; R. Sharpe, *A handlist of the Latin writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540: with additions and corrections*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 198.

¹⁰ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 20. For studies of the earlier hagiographical sources to the Life of Patrick, see additionally L. Bieler, ‘Jocelin von Furness als Hagiograph’, in *Studies on the life and legend of St Patrick*, ed. R. Sharpe, Collected Studies 244 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), 411-14 [XVI 410-15]; and idem, ‘Did Jocelin of Furness know the writings of St. Patrick at first hand?’, in *ibid.*, 161-5 [XV 161-7].

¹¹ Ibid., 18; Downham, ‘Introduction’, 4; Bartlett, ‘Furness, Jocelin of’, 191; McFadden, ‘Introduction’, 50-1; cf. also S.J. Ridyard, *The royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought Fourth Series 9 (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 13; R. Bartlett, ‘Rewriting saints’ Lives: the case of Gerald of Wales’, *Speculum* 58 (1983), 598-9 [598-613].

¹² Freeman, ‘Models for Cistercian life’, 109-11, 119-21, quoted at 109 and 120.

¹³ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 259-278; S. Marshall, ‘Illegitimacy and sanctity in the twelfth-century Lives of St. Kentigern’, in *Jocelin proceedings*, 84-7 [67-90].

¹⁴ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 277; cf. Flanagan, ‘Jocelin and the cult of Patrick’, 58, 65.

which Jocelin's attitudes to cursing sit (I). This discussion will range across the four Lives, but with particular focus on the Life of Helena and Jocelin's reworking of those sources. Once this has been accomplished, more focused claims can be made with regard to his specific attitudes to cursing in his Lives of Patrick, Kentigern and Waltheof (II). As before, close attention will be paid throughout to the scriptural framework of these writings and what it reveals of the writer's broader outlooks, as this represents an important feature of his oeuvre yet remains a crucial desideratum in Jocelin studies.¹⁵

I

In terms of its central themes, the Life of Helena is the most overtly political of Jocelin's works. It was likely written at the time of the papal interdict of 1208-1214, pronounced on England during the investiture dispute between Pope Innocent III and King John, and perhaps more narrowly written following the temporary disbandment of many of the English Cistercian houses, which followed the punitive fines levied on the order by John in 1210 and would have given Jocelin the time and mobility to complete the work.¹⁶ Given the difficulties faced by members of the order at this time, the Life thus stands as 'a potentially subversive document born in a context of extreme religious and political frustration'.¹⁷ Conveying its message through allusions and allegory that an exegetically-sensitive audience could deconstruct, the text presents Helena as a saintly and allegorical figure of Mother Church while her son Constantine stands as the ideal secular ruler, receptive to the guidance and intercessions of his mother.¹⁸ The text's particular focus on the proper relation between the clerical and secular authorities invites immediate comparison with the political themes seen earlier in Eadmer of Canterbury.¹⁹ Both hagiographers display a shared frustration with the perceived secular oppression of the Church and of their patrons, and both deploy a similar theological and polemical framework in response to it: namely, representing the political order in terms of an implicit dualism of divinely-appointed or demonically-inspired political agents. This latter feature can be found in the narrative of the Life of Helena. In terms of secular figures, the persecutors Diocletian, Maxentius, and Licinius are presented explicitly as acting under demonic inspiration: the court of Diocletian is filled with 'machinations of the sons of Belial',²⁰ Maxentius is a 'man of Belial'²¹ given to 'all vices and full of offences against the law of nature',²² and

¹⁵ The importance of this interpretative key has been most recently noted by Birkett, *Jocelin*, 285.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 252-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁸ This point is partly made by *ibid.*, 234-5, 249-52. The stylistic complexity of the *Vita* is more generally noted by Harbus, *Helena of Britain*, 100-1.

¹⁹ This theme will also be seen again in an Irish setting in Chapter IV.

²⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, l. 163 (Harbus, 157): '...machinamenta filii Belial...'

²¹ *Ibid.*, l. 228 (Harbus, 159): '...uir Belial...'. On the biblical figure of the man of Belial, see T.J. Lewis, 'Belial', in *ABD*, 1:654-6.

Licinius is driven to treachery against Constantine by nothing other than demonically-inspired malice and ambition.²³ Explicit contrast is drawn with Constantine who shuns the court of Diocletian and who later acts against Maxentius and Licinius as divinely-appointed avenger of the persecutions of Christians.²⁴ The conscious dualistic presence of unseen demonic and divine instigators in the political arena makes the message of the Life more pertinent in relation to the performance of the proper functions of the Church, whether expressed through specific clerics, the corporate ecclesia, or through the figure of Helena. The expansion of the Church through new converts is a frustration to demons – the same instigators of political rebellion and instability – who wail at their frustration and are thereby more easily banished to the shadowy abyss.²⁵ The intercession of the Church through prayer, signs and relics is an aid to military affairs. Thus the divinely-delivered sign of the Cross on Constantine's shield promises him victory at the Milvian Bridge;²⁶ the discovery of the True Cross is said to provide vital backing in his wars;²⁷ while the inclusion of the nails of the Crucifixion in his bridle, helmet and crown serve to protect him from foreign arms and to deliver peace or victory.²⁸ There is a clear contrast between the sons of Belial as sons of death ripe for vengeance, and Constantine as bearer of the sign of the cross as 'a sign of victory and of life'.²⁹ As Helen Birkett has noted, the sign of the cross would be particularly resonant with the age of crusade and with the image of those who bore it – whether on crusade or on behalf of the kingdom of Jerusalem – thus further delineating the Church Militant from its enemies.³⁰

This inherent dualism in the secular political order is also present in Jocelin's Life of Patrick, as taken over partly from his earlier Patrician sources. The reasons for the theme's prominence in those Irish sources will be discussed in more detail in Chapters IV and V, but for now can be attributed to the prevalent defensive concerns in tenth- and eleventh-century Irish hagiography with jurisdiction and with secular

²² Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 185-7 (Harbus, 157-8), quoted at 186-7: '...omnibus uiciis ac flagiciis plenus eciam nature iura...'

²³ Ibid., ll. 371-4 (Harbus, 162): 'Proinde Licinius ambicione cecatus dyabolice <tote>, actu minatus inuidie <occultis> insidiis amicum Dei Constantinum moliebatur de medio tollere. Si queratur sue prodicionis causa nulla claruit nisi manifesta malicia et ambicio nimia.' ('Then Licinius, blind with wholly diabolical ambition, driven by the act of envy, was spurred from indifference to destroy the friend of God Constantine with hidden tricks. If the cause of his treachery were lamented, nothing was apparent except manifest malice and excessive ambition.')

²⁴ Ibid., ll. 197-9 (Harbus, 158).

²⁵ Ibid., ll. 689-93, 696-8 (Harbus, 171).

²⁶ Ibid., ll. 208-214 (Harbus, 158).

²⁷ Ibid., ll. 717-24 (Harbus, 172).

²⁸ Ibid., ll. 758-69 (Harbus, 173); Birkett, *Jocelin*, 234.

²⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 211 (Harbus, 158): '...signum illud uite atque uictorie...'

³⁰ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 248-9.

encroachment on the clerical estate.³¹ Such concerns did not disappear in the twelfth century, but instead took on a widening range of implications. Notably, by that time the temporal lordship of many important Irish churches and their lands had become invested in hereditary dynasties enjoying clerical privileges, who nonetheless ‘ruled in a manner similar to secular magnates’, were frequently drawn from minor branches of local ruling dynasties, and were often not in higher celibate orders.³² To many contemporary reformers, this distinctive feature of the Irish Church gave the appearance of secular dynasties and a laicised clergy occupying and exploiting the headship of key churches.³³ In the territory of the Ulaid, the Church had thus historically faced the dual pressures of frequent intrusion both by the Mac Duinn Sléibe kings, who ruled prior to John de Courcy’s conquest in 1177, and by the secularised and hereditarily entrenched Uí Shínaich, Uí Chathasaig and Uí Chairill, who with the royal dynasty’s sympathy and support regularly opposed the appointment of outsiders at Armagh and Down.³⁴ Such secular opposition was notably faced by Jocelin’s embattled episcopal patrons, Tomaltach of Armagh and Malachias of Down: the former an outsider whom the entrenched dynasties resisted in 1180, and later sought to depose with the support of Hugh de Lacy I and the Ua Cerbaill king of Airgialla in 1184.³⁵ The latter was also an outsider, who like his immediate predecessors may have faced similar opposition at his election in 1176, along with subsequent difficulties in asserting control over the lands of his see.³⁶ Among other things sought from the new patronal relationship which followed the de Courcy conquest of 1177, the two bishops accordingly sought to confirm a clearer and more favourable separation of the secular and clerical spheres.³⁷ Those concerns with secular opposition find their rhetorical expression in the dualistic

³¹ M. Herbert, ‘Latin and vernacular hagiography of Ireland from the origins to the sixteenth century’, in *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, CC, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-2006), 3:340, 3:342-3 [3:327-60]; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: introduction to the sources*, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 239-41.

³² M.T. Flanagan, *The transformation of the Irish church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, *Studies in Celtic History* 29 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 36-8, quoted at 37.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ M.T. Flanagan, ‘John de Courcy, the first Ulster plantation and Irish church men’, in *Britain and Ireland 900–1300: Insular responses to medieval European change*, ed. B. Smith (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 159-62, 170 [154-78]; A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses, Ireland: with an appendix to early sites* (London: Longmans, 1970), 59, 69.

³⁵ Flanagan, ‘The first Ulster plantation’, 171; A. Gwynn, ‘Tomaltach Ua Conchobair, coarb of Patrick (1181-1201): his life and times’, *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 8.2 (1977), 246, 250-2 [231-274]; *idem*, ‘Armagh and Louth in the twelfth century’, *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 1.1 (1954), 10 [1-11]; *idem*, ‘Armagh and Louth in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’, *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 1.2 (1955), 21, 24 [17-37]; Birkett, *Jocelin*, 143-4.

³⁶ Flanagan, ‘The first Ulster plantation’, 160, 162-4; Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, 69.

³⁷ Flanagan, ‘The first Ulster plantation’, 169-70. For the de Courcy relationship and the expansion and desecularisation of the ecclesiastical estate in Ulster more generally, see *ibid.*, 166-70; Birkett, *Jocelin*, 142-8.

order of Jocelin's Life. Opponents of Patrick are often uncompromisingly called servants of Satan or sons of Belial,³⁸ while reward and punishment is alternately meted out within the same episode to the respective representatives of good and evil.³⁹ One striking dualistic motif in the earlier Patrician material is that of two brothers, one embracing and one shunning the good, with the descendants of the (cursed) wicked brother subordinated to those of the (blessed) good brother as part of their punishment.⁴⁰ This is a feature which Jocelin retains in particular in his account of the brothers of Loegaire: the wicked Coybre and the good Conallus.⁴¹ Like Constantine receiving his shield bearing the Cross, Conallus receives from Patrick a shield bearing an image of the saint's crozier, 'a sign of power and protection' and an outward sign of Conallus' spiritual worth which promises that none of those who carry a shield into battle with that image should be vanquished.⁴² The themes of Jocelin's earliest hagiographical work, drawn from Irish sources and written in a similar environment of secular pressure, thus furnished him with a ready theological and rhetorical hermeneutic, to which he might consciously have returned through the similar themes, preoccupations and imagery of his Life of Helena.

This dualism moreover extended throughout Jocelin's writings and is often so pronounced that saintly agents and their antagonists are presented in uncompromisingly black-and-white terms. This is a marked departure from the more general ambivalence of Aelred of Rievaulx and John of Forde, arising in part from their different political environments and personal associations and loyalties. Of the Life of Helena, Birkett has noted that although the *Vita Silvestri* that Jocelin used as his source saw Constantine's leprosy as a divine punishment for his persecutions of Christians, Jocelin passed over this statement both in his account of the leprosy and later when those same persecutions are cited as the reason for Silvester's self-imposed exile.⁴³ Similarly the heresiarch Arius is presented purely as a diabolical agent, without the shades of grey which characterised him in Jocelin's source Rufinus of Aquileia.⁴⁴ George McFadden in his study of the Life of Waltheof noted too that Jocelin's treatment of the downfall of Earl Waltheof is a 'whitewash' of earlier historical accounts implicating him in conspiracy, being designed to give his homonymous son Saint Waltheof an unimpeachably saintly father.⁴⁵

³⁸ See eg. Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 39, 51, 64, 106 [46, 57, 73, 122] (*AASS*, Cols. 0550B, 0552E-F, 0555E-F, 0565E; trans. O'Leary, 185, 198, 216-8, 272).

³⁹ See eg. *ibid.*, 42, 59, 112 [49, 66, 130] (*AASS*, Cols. 0550F-1A, 0554C-D, 0566F-7A; trans. O'Leary, 188-90, 207-8, 279-80).

⁴⁰ *Vita Tripartita*, 2.110, 2.166-170, 3.176, 3.210-4, 3.220-4, 3.240 (O'Mulchrone, 68-70, 99-101, 107-8, 124-8, 130-5, 142; trans. Stokes, 1:111, 1:167-171, 1:177, 1:211-5, 1:221-5, 1:241).

⁴¹ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 47 [53] (*AASS*, Cols. 0551F-2A; trans. O'Leary, 194).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 120 [138] (*AASS*, Col. 0565C; trans. O'Leary, 286-7).

⁴³ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁴⁵ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.8 fn. 1 (McFadden, 211).

With direct relevance to the themes of vengeance and cursing, there are tantalising hints of a similar ‘whitewashing’ treatment of the youthful Saint Waltheof himself. An early episode in the Life concerning the young Waltheof at the court of David has him accept a ring as a love-token from a girl of the court. Mocked by the men of the court for forsaking his otherworldly pretensions for courtly love, he returns to his senses and renounces his former love by hurling the ring into a fire.⁴⁶ The theme of worldly love to be overcome before the monastic saint can begin his vocation in earnest was an established hagiographical motif, appearing for instance in the various Lives of Dunstan, and the inclusion of the episode in the Life of Waltheof likely reflects Jocelin’s concern with clerical purity.⁴⁷ In the Lives of Dunstan however, the saint is brought to his senses concerning his obstruction of the will of God not by verbal reproach but by the punitive miracle of an illness of swelling blisters: a punishment for obstinacy that beset the Egyptians in Exodus 9:10.⁴⁸ There are hints that Jocelin or his source may have been conscious of a similar chastisement as a narrative possibility, but that he decided to frame the episode differently for the Life of Waltheof. The line of immediate interest in the Life is that which follows the words of the men of the court: ‘When he heard this, the youth came to himself and groaned, and was made as if neither hearing nor opening his mouth.’⁴⁹ McFadden has noted the scriptural allusions to Acts 2:11, which carries associations of deliverance from the Herodian court and from the expectations of the Jews, and Psalm 37:14, in which the loss of speech and hearing is a figure of the shunning of the deceits of one’s enemies.⁵⁰ In terms of scriptural allusions however, Jocelin could alternatively have evoked the punishment of Zechariah in Luke 1:20, in which the father of John the Baptist was more literally struck dumb for going against the divine will. This would have been in keeping with hagiographical precedent of miraculous chastisement, and would moreover have been especially apposite thematically and rhetorically given that the themes and allusions of the immediately preceding episodes are drawn from the narrative of the Nativity in Luke 2.⁵¹ In the case of Saint Dunstan, the miraculous chastisement of the wayward youth in the earliest Life is inflicted by the stern invocation of bishop Ælfeah of Winchester;⁵² in the later Lives by Osbern and Eadmer of Canterbury, the bishop’s curse is removed in favour of a more providential miracle, which may have represented a desire to paint a more heroic portrait of his subject by

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.3.15-7 (McFadden, 103-6; trans. idem, 220-3).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.3.17 fn. 1 (McFadden, 223); Birkett, *Jocelin*, 268. See also B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 7-8 (Lapidge and Winterbottom, 26-9); Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 12 (Stubbs, 82-3); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 10 (Turner and Muir, 62-5).

⁴⁸ B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 7 fn. 78 (Lapidge and Winterbottom, 27).

⁴⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.3.17 (McFadden, 105; trans. idem, 222): ‘Quo audito, adolescens in se reversus & ad se, ingemuit, & factus est quasi non audiens & non aperiens os suum.’

⁵⁰ Ibid. (McFadden, 222), as noted in McFadden’s marginal annotations.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1.3.15-6 (McFadden, 221), again in the marginal annotations.

⁵² B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 7-8 (Lapidge and Winterbottom, 26-9).

diminishing Dunstan's obstinacy and his need for episcopal correction.⁵³ While it is difficult to say with confidence precisely how Jocelin reworked his sources which are now lost to us, it is notable that he forgoes one conventionally and structurally obvious set of allusions in favour of one which represented his subject in arguably less compromised terms.

Taken together, the interplay of these dualistic ideas of good and evil is central to Jocelin's account of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, which is the most extended and carefully constructed vengeance episode in the *Life of Helena* and thus invites deconstruction.⁵⁴ The core narrative recounts how Maxentius had his men construct a collapsible bridge to induce Constantine and his men to cross it to their peril, only to have his own men neglect his stratagem, crossing it themselves and drowning. Jocelin's account of the battle is taken from late antique historical sources such as Rufinus and Paulus Orosius,⁵⁵ but his choice of language and his moralising framing of events are based relentlessly in scriptural allusions that go beyond those of Rufinus and give the text a deeper theological meaning. By laying out the theological mechanics of vengeance within the episode early in the *Life*, those same mechanics could be left implicit when describing the downfall of later opponents and persecutors such as Licinius: a strategy which allowed Jocelin to focus more on the positive theme of the divine protection of Constantine, rather than on the theme's converse in the self-inflicted miseries of his opponents.⁵⁶

First, the section which precedes the battle establishes the vindication of persecuted Christians and of the martyr-saints as the divinely-appointed outcome: 'they induced him by their tears and prayers, their counsels and warnings, to vindicate them and to exercise his power justly and effectively. The just Lord, beating the necks of sinners, wishing to vindicate the blood of his servants which was spilled upon the earth by Maxentius, roused against him the hostile Constantine for the purpose of taking power from his hand.'⁵⁷ In the *Lives of Kentigern and Patrick*, God is similarly depicted as the active protector of his saints,⁵⁸ and without the need for appeal from his saints he acts to avenge injuries upon them.⁵⁹ The

⁵³ Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 12 (Stubbs, 82); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 10 (Turner and Muir, 64-5). A compromise between the earlier and later accounts is provided by William, *Vita Dunstani W.*, 7 (Winterbottom and Thomson, 184-5).

⁵⁴ Jocelin, *Vita Helanae*, ll. 208-51 (Harbus, 158-9).

⁵⁵ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 60-3.

⁵⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Helanae*, ll. 365-93 (Harbus, 162-3).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 195-9 (Harbus, 158): '...ipsumque lacrimis et precibus consiliis et monitis ad ipsos uindicandum et imperium sibi iuste iudicandumt efficaciter inducebant. Iustus dominus concidens ceruices peccatorum, uolens uindicare sanguinem seruorum suorum qui effusus est super terram per Maxencium, excitauit Constantinum aduersarium sibi ob imperium de manu eius auferendum.'

⁵⁸ See eg. Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 37-8, 42 [43-4, 49] (*AASS*, Cols. 0549D-50A, 0550F-1A; trans. O'Leary, 182-4, 188-90).

theme of vindication is succinctly condensed in the words attributed to Patrick reflecting upon the fate of his persecutor: ‘The soul of Foylge has immediately left his body and descended into hell, with God justly judging and vindicating my cause, since he unjustly slew my chariot-driver.’⁶⁰ It was also a theme whose explicit moralisation could be drawn from the Gregorian *Dialogues*. As Gregory had written of the death of a man at a feast who had troubled Boniface of Ferentino enough to warrant his curse: ‘On account of which, think how much reverence is due to holy men because they are the temples of God. When a holy man is provoked to anger, who else is angered than He who dwells in that temple? We must therefore greatly fear the anger of the just, as much as it stands that He who is present in their hearts has full power to inflict whatever vengeance he may choose.’⁶¹ The same moral is allusively paraphrased by Jocelin, at the end of his telling of the death of a man whose interruptions had also troubled Patrick at a feast (enough to draw his fatal displeasure but not his explicit curse): ‘On account of which we are sufficiently admonished to cautiously beware obtruding the servants of God, lest we offend the Almighty Himself, their inhabitant and fighter in their difficulty.’⁶² In the *Life of Kentigern*, Jocelin reflected similarly on a man carried off by the divine judgement for his constant abuse of the saint: ‘For the chosen of God are his temple and the Holy Spirit lives in them. Therefore the more they are to be submitted to and the more we should abstain from attacking them, the more the inhabitant of them has the power to vindicate their injuries, and with equal patience he pronounces judgment on those who cause them injury.’⁶³ Much as in the *Lives* by the Benedictine and Cistercian hagiographers, the theme of vindication is the crucial justificatory underpinning of punitive miracles where the proper rights and dignity of the saint have been transgressed; though here perhaps it appears in much more explicitly Gregorian terms.

Returning to the Milvian Bridge, having introduced Maxentius’ stratagem of the false bridge in his prelude to the battle, Jocelin observes, following Proverbs 21:30, that there can be no wisdom or prudent counsel

⁵⁹ See eg. *ibid.*, 115, 135 [133, 153] (*AASS*, Cols. 0567C-D, 0571C; trans. O’Leary, 282, 302); *idem*, *Vita Kentigerni*, 29 (Forbes, 212-3; trans. *idem*, 87-8).

⁶⁰ *Idem*, *Vita Patricii*, 64 [73] (*AASS*, Cols. 0555E-F; trans. O’Leary, 217): ‘Anima Foylgi, ex quo interfecit aurigam meu iniuste, iudicante ac vindicante iuste causam meam Domino, statim exiens de corpore sepulta est in inferno.’

⁶¹ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 1.9 (Morica, 54; trans. Zimmerman, 38): ‘Qua in re...pensandum est quantus sit sanctis viris timor exhibendus; templum enim Dei sunt. Et cum ad iracundiam sanctus vir trahitur, quis alius ad irascendum nisi eius templi inhabitatur excitatur? Tanto ergo metuenda est ira iustorum, quanto et constat quia in eorum cordibus ille praesens est, qui inferendam ultionem quam voluerit invalidus non est.’

⁶² Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 66 [75] (*AASS*, Col. 0556C; trans. O’Leary, 220-2): ‘Qua in re satis admonemur a molestia famulis Dei ingerenda cautius cauere, ne offendamus omnipotentem Deum, illorum inhabitatorem & propugnatorem in eorum grauamine.’

⁶³ *Idem*, *Vita Kentigerni*, 10 (Forbes, 181; trans. *idem*, 53-4): ‘Templum enim Dei sunt electi, et Spiritus Sanctus habitat in eis. Tanto ergo magis ipsis deferendum, et a lesione eorum abstinendum est, quanto inhabitator eorum ad vindicandum eorum injurias potentissimus, et ad faciendum justiciam injuriam patientibus aequilibris est.’

against the Lord nor can human craft escape the bounds of divine judgement.⁶⁴ Next he refers to Maxentius as ‘the man of Belial, as if driven by certain Furies, condemned by the deep divine judgement’.⁶⁵ The ‘man of Belial’ is a biblical type which appears twice in the Book of Samuel, both with the connotations of usurpation and its final punishment.⁶⁶ In 2 Samuel 16:7, it is the term used by Shimei in his curse of King David as a usurper and spiller of blood, for which David is punished by the revolt of his son Absalom. In 2 Samuel 20, it refers to the rebel and usurper Seba bin Bochri who took the tribes of Israel from David and was beheaded while besieged at Abel-beth-maacah. The term as used by Jocelin thus describes both the nature of the offence committed by Maxentius and the nature of the divine punishment to be inevitably meted out to him: deposition and death in punishment for usurpation. The phrase which follows, ‘furiis agitatus’, plays on a similar phrase of Rufinus but is taken directly from *Aeneid* 3.331, and alludes to Orestes’ killing of Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus) for taking his wife Hermione.⁶⁷ Jocelin’s juxtaposing of the Furies with the theme of divine judgement transforms the fortune of events into a more direct product of divine providence, with Constantine as the apparent avenger of the transgressed deity. This extension of the biblical allusion into a classical metaphor brings with it the added implication that the specific character of Maxentius’ usurpation as a persecutor of Christians is that of usurping the Church as Bride of Christ, and that the anticipated character of his punishment can only be fully and properly effected in his death.

Following Rufinus, Jocelin notes further from Psalm 7:16 that Maxentius’ punishment is self-inflicted, for (in terms we have earlier seen in Goscelin) he has fallen into the pit he has dug.⁶⁸ The allusion invites comparison not only with the fact that Maxentius has been defeated by his own trap, but also that his punishment is more broadly self-inflicted on account of his sin. The theme of vengeance as self-inflicted appears elsewhere, in Jocelin’s *Lives of Patrick and Kentigern*, albeit with a slightly different scriptural and theological colouring, as will be discussed later. Though self-inflicted, the punishment of Maxentius is nonetheless attached directly to the divine aegis, since Jocelin evokes Habakkuk 3:14: ‘The Lord cursed

⁶⁴ Idem, *Vita Helanae*, ll. 226-8 (Harbus, 159): ‘Sed teste scriptura non est sapientia, non est prudentia, non est consilium contra dominum, nec illa humana uersucia poterit euadere districtum eius iudicium.’ (‘But according to scripture there is not wisdom, prudence or counsel against the Lord, nor can any human craft evade his encompassing judgement.’)

⁶⁵ Ibid., ll. 228-9 (Harbus, 159): ‘Maxencius namque uir Belial quasi quibusdam furiis agitatus immo diuino iudicio condempnatus [eum]...’

⁶⁶ Lewis, ‘Belial’, 655.

⁶⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.330-2 (Fairclough, 370-1): ‘Ast illum ereptae magno flammatus amore coniugis et scelerum furiis agitatus Orestes excipit incautum patriasque obtruncat ad aras’ (‘But Orestes, fired with strong desire for his stolen bride, and goaded by the Furies of the crimes, catches him unawares and slays him at his father’s altar’).

⁶⁸ Jocelin, *Vita Helanae* ll. 234-5 (Harbus, 159): ‘Iuxta psalmiste uocem, de talibus dicentem, lacum aperuit et effodit eum et incidit in foueam quam fecit’ (‘According to the voice of the psalmist speaking of such great things, he has opened a pit and dug it, and has fallen into the hole which he made’); Birkett, *Jocelin*, 61 fn. 6.

his sceptres, the head of his warriors'.⁶⁹ The character of Maxentius' punishment is likened to the image from Exodus ('the Lord truly hurled Maxentius into the sea like a second Pharaoh with his chariots'), which also hearkens back to the nature of his offence as a persecutor, while the character of his servant Constantine is compared with the man in Sirach 51:2-3, who has God as his helper and protector and is liberated from an unjust and deceitful king.⁷⁰

Finally, Maxentius is put to flight in disgrace, suffers intestinal rot, and in death surrenders his foul-smelling soul to the abyss.⁷¹ In narrative terms, Maxentius thus survives the battle only to suffer a more dramatic death later. Birkett has seen this as an apparent misreading of Orosius, who states that Maxentius was killed at the battle (as does Rufinus) and attributes the punishment of intestinal rot in a slightly earlier passage to Maxentius' uncle Galerius.⁷² Whether accidental or deliberate, however, the conclusion of the episode serves to underline an internally corrupt spiritual state as the primary cause of physical corruption and thus of the most dramatic miracles of vengeance. It thus aligns with the sensitive theological emphasis on interiority which we have seen in Goscelin, and also fits well with Jocelin's uncompromising outlook toward the enemies of the Church and toward the proper orientation of saintly and divine vengeance against them. A number of episodes in Jocelin's other hagiographical works depict punitive miracles similarly to Goscelin as the result of sin without the need for an external saintly agent, either perpetuating or consummating the causative sin in a kind of poetic justice, or corresponding with its more general character in such a way as to serve as a fitting punishment. In the *Life of Kentigern*, the hands of a group of thieves became irremovably fastened to the instantly petrified head of a ram they attempted to steal.⁷³ According to Jocelin, the petrification of the ram's head followed the biblical precedent of the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, in this case according to the hardness and cruelty of theft, but it more importantly required that the transgressors be loosed from what Jocelin called 'the double-bond' ('dupplici vinculo') of sin and of physical punishment.⁷⁴ Such a miracle showed punishment as a literalisation of the character of the sin in the material world, much as was the case with Goscelin's characteristic representation of punitive miracles, and it may be noted that miracles of

⁶⁹ Ibid., ll. 235-6 (Harbus, 159): 'Maledixit dominus <s>cepbris eius, capiti bellatorum eius.'

⁷⁰ Ibid., ll. 236-8 (Harbus, 159): 'Maxencium uero uelud alterum pharaonem cum curribus dominus proiecit in mari; adiutor et protector factus est Constantini serui sui.'

⁷¹ Jocelin, *Vita Helene*, ll. 249-51 (Harbus, 159): 'Uictus uero turpiter fugit, prius uiscerum morbo incurabili correptus; tandem amissis luminibus spiritum fetidum baratro tradidit.' ('The defeated man truly fled in disgraceful manner, before he was seized with incurable illness of the entrails; and finally having lost his sight he surrendered his foul-smelling soul to the abyss.')

⁷² Birkett, *Jocelin*, 62; Orosius, *Contra paganos*, 7.28.11-13, 7.28.16-7 (Arnaud-Lindet, 76-7; trans. 369-70).

⁷³ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 40 (Forbes, 231-2; trans. idem, 107-9).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 40 (Forbes, 232; trans. idem, 108): '...a dupplici vinculo, peccato scilicet et detentione lapidis' ('...from the double bond, that is from the sin and from the detention of the stone').

affixation are common in Goscelin's text.⁷⁵ In the Life of Patrick too, hands extended against the saint are withered without explicit saintly agent, while dogs set against him are frozen motionless.⁷⁶ Jocelin elaborates that this was to show that worshippers of stones become like the stones which they worship – an idea that may have its root in Augustine's theology of the image and in the Cistercian doctrines of the soul.⁷⁷ As a precedent and model, Jocelin explicitly noted the biblical motif of the hand of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 13:4-6, which once extended against a man of God withered so that it could not be withdrawn until his repentance.⁷⁸ The theme however can also be related more generally to Augustine's ideas of the operation of sin as a self-punishing and irretractable habit, as separately used as a conceptual-mechanical framework for vengeance miracles in Goscelin's works.⁷⁹

The internal corruption and foul-smelling soul ('spiritum fetidum') of Maxentius has a more specific parallel in the Life of Kentigern, in which Jocelin offers an analogous visual and olfactory depiction of sin which he attributed to the spiritual discernment of the saint.⁸⁰ The sinner in question was a sodomite clerk whom Jocelin depicted as displaying sulphurous flame and stench.⁸¹ The attributed character of the sin is derived from the nature of the biblical punishment of fire and brimstone upon the Five Cities, which is expounded upon in the Life, but by attributing the character of the punishment to the formal character of the sin itself, it additionally becomes implicitly causative of the character of the punishment in question.⁸² So, too, in the Life of Patrick, in Jocelin's account of the transformation of the persecutor Coroticus into a fox. Though this takes place as a result of Patrick's prayer rather than according to the unaided nature of the crime, Jocelin observes that monstrous vices are punished in a monstrous manner, and that one whom God already knew to be a fox was fittingly made into a fox.⁸³ Through the use of a play on words as an expression of the symbolist mentality, sin is once again literalised in the material realm through the spontaneous character of its punishment. In biblical terms, this miracle is ascribed to

⁷⁵ See again Chapter I, at 41-6 in particular.

⁷⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 27 [32] (*AASS*, Cols. 0547A-B; trans. O'Leary, 169-71).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* (*AASS*, Col. 0547A; trans. O'Leary, 169-70). Cf. P.J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), 80-4. The doctrine of the image has already been seen in Chapter II and will be returned to in Chapter V.

⁷⁸ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 27 [32] (*AASS*, Col. 0547B; trans. O'Leary, 170).

⁷⁹ See again Chapter I, at 41-6; and also Griffiths, *Lying*, 57-8. Both themes – the inwardly corrupting and self-punishing habituation of sin – will reappear in Chapters IV and V.

⁸⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 249-51 (Harbus, 159); *idem*, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 210-2; trans. *idem*, 85-7).

⁸¹ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 210; trans. *idem*, 85-6).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 28 (Forbes, 211; trans. *idem*, 86).

⁸³ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 131 [150] (*AASS*, Col. 0570D; trans. O'Leary, 298): 'Domine, Deus omnipotens, sicuti scis, et potes, hominem hunc vulpinum, in vitis monstruosum, modo monstruoso ejice a facie terrae, et illius consummatae malitiae finem impone.'

the dual-precedent of Lot's wife and of Nebuchadnezzar.⁸⁴ The precedent of Lot's wife is the same as that employed for the punishment of the thieves in the Life of Kentigern, meaning that the formal relationship between the character of the sin and the character of its punishment can be read in both episodes.⁸⁵

For Jocelin, the corrupting effects of sin could moreover have the result of a curse not only upon the individual transgressor but additionally upon the surrounding landscape.⁸⁶ In the Life of Kentigern, Jocelin observed that the punishment upon Sodom and Gomorrah not only destroyed the cities with their inhabitants but also turned the landscape into a 'locum horridum visu' unfit for any living thing, and whose trees 'displayed fruit outwardly healthy but inwardly full of smoke and ashes, and manifesting an image of certain punishments of the lower world.'⁸⁷ Such effects upon a suddenly hostile and unforgiving landscape were not simply the result of sexual sins but could be construed for any perceived deficiency of charity. In such a way Jocelin drew moralising messages out of his Patrician material. God deprived rivers of their fish and condemned them to barrenness when fishermen denied their gains to Patrick, which Jocelin construed directly as punishment for their lack of charity.⁸⁸ The sea inundated a meadow which had been denied to Patrick and was thereafter rendered fruitless forever: 'fitting and just was this judgement of God, that the people which hated him and refused his servant one blade of grass should lose the whole harvest.'⁸⁹

Such a role for the natural elements as instruments of vengeance can be compared with analogous treatments by Aelred. In foretelling the punishment of the heathen king Tuduvallus, the Life of Ninian told that the earth drank forth the rain that fell on it and brought forth thorns, such that it was 'near unto a curse.'⁹⁰ The allusion was to Hebrews 6:8, with the image of rain bringing forth thorns standing in for the Tuduvallus' rejection of the preaching of Ninian which fell upon him, and the earth 'close to a curse'

⁸⁴ Ibid. (*AASS*, Col. 0570D; trans. O'Leary, 298).

⁸⁵ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 40 (Forbes, 232; trans. idem, 108-9).

⁸⁶ This is a theme we will see again in the Irish material of Chapter IV and in Chapter V more broadly

⁸⁷ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 211; trans. idem, 86): '...verum etiam in locum horridum visu... habentem quidem in ripis suis arbores proferentes poma exterius quasi integra, sed interius fumo et cineribus plena, et quandam infernalis supplicii ymaginem preferentem, convertit.'

⁸⁸ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 58 [66] (*AASS*, Cols. 0554C-D; trans. O'Leary, 207-8); cf. *ibid.*, 25, 47 [29, 53] (*AASS*, Cols. 0546C-D, 0552A; trans. O'Leary, 166-7, 194), for other curses on rivers.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 135 [153] (*AASS*, Col. 0571C; trans. O'Leary, 302): 'Congruo itaque satis modo iustoque Dei iudicio actum est, vt qui viro Dei inuidit cespitem, Deo inuisus populus illius telluris in perpetuum amiserit messem.'

⁹⁰ Aelred, *Vita Niniani*, 4.11-4 (Pezzini, 120; trans. Freeland, 45): '...ita ut terra videretur reprobata et maledicto proxima, utpote que sepe super se venientem bibens imbrem, spinas et tribulos, non herbam opportunam germinabat' ('...thus the land seemed condemned and near to a curse, as "when it drank in the rain that often fell upon it, it brought forth thorns and thistles" [Hebrews 6:7-8], instead of useful grass').

forewarning the punishment that was to fall upon him. A similar image is used in Jocelin's *Life of Helena*, in describing the Temple of Venus on the Rock of Calvary, then a place deserted and overgrown with thorns. The explicit scriptural allusion cited by Jocelin is to Isaiah 5:1-7, in which the vineyard of the Lord is overgrown.⁹¹ Perhaps on account of the implicit similarity of image with Hebrews 6:8, however, the temple is immediately marked as 'templum execandrum', and it and its idols are destroyed by bishop Macharius of Jerusalem.⁹² Isaiah was the natural scriptural source for stock allusions to the corruption of sin upon the natural order and nature's refusal to bear the effects of sin. In the *Life of Kentigern*, when famine and pestilence followed the saint's enforced departure, the natural elements are even depicted as fighting actively against the people:

For the heavens and the earth and the sea and all things which are in them removed their service and use and accustomed assistance from them, so that in accordance with the scripture the whole world seemed to fight against these foolish people. And the elements were not thought to bear calmly the separation of so great a man when he was absent from the land. For according to that prophecy, 'All greenness left, and all the cattle perished. The heavens above were as bronze and the earth as iron and devoured its own inhabitants. And a consuming famine rode over all the earth for many seasons.'⁹³

The use of nature as an instrument of vengeance was of course not without hagiographical precedent, though the episodes in which it appears are especially pronounced in Jocelin's accounts. It may be suggested that the rhetorical severity with which they are represented is a result of his rhetorical preoccupation with the issues of heresy and sexual morality in his hagiographical productions. In an episode in which Patrick curses directly a pagan grove, the withering is related directly to the fig-tree in the Gospel, remaining unfit for any use other than being hewn and cast into the fire.⁹⁴ Birkett has suggested that the accounts of ancient heretics and pagans in Jocelin's *Lives of Patrick and Helena* may stand in for twelfth- and thirteenth-century heretics generally.⁹⁵ The terms of the destruction of the pagan

⁹¹ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 596-8 (Harbus, 169): 'Erat proinde eciam circumcirca locus neglectus atque desertus et iuxta Ysaie uaticinium uepribus et spinis obsitus' ('Hence all around that place was abandoned and deserted, and according to the prophecy of Isaiah, sown thickly with thorns and brambles').

⁹² *Ibid.*, ll. 598-9 (Harbus, 169): '...ergo templum Ueneris execrandum fecit destrui et ydolum abhominandum in illo minutatim confringi' ('...therefore she appointed the execrable temple of Venus to be destroyed and the abominable idol in it to be broken piece by piece').

⁹³ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 29 (Forbes, 212-3; trans. idem, 88): 'Celum enim et terra, mare, et omnia que in eis sunt, subtraxerunt eis obsequium, usum, et assuetum adiutorium suum; ut iuxta scripturam, contra insensatos pugnare videretur orbis terrarum [Isaiah 24:4-6]; et tanti viri a terra illa absentati elementa putarentur equanimiter non ferre abcessionem. Nam iuxta illud propheticum: 'Viror omnis recessit, pecus omne interiit, celum desuper eneum, et terra ferrea fuit, devorans habitatores suos; famesque consumptoria, super omnem terram multo tempore prevaluit.' [Deuteronomy 28:22-3].'

⁹⁴ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 110 [127] (*AASS*, Cols. 0566C-D; trans. O'Leary, 276-7).

⁹⁵ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 263-7.

grove are for instance similar to those in the Life of Helena, in which the Council of Nicaea pass judgement on ‘the unrepentant Arius, a fruitless tree fit for the fire of hell’, the judgement itself being ‘the pruning of pestiferous tree’.⁹⁶ Arius’ corruption had been less a matter of the natural order than of stirring up political rebellion and discord against the orthodox Christian order exemplified in the holy pontiff, but when set within a worldview in which the material and social orders stemmed foremost from the natural moral order such ideas were two sides of the same coin.⁹⁷

II

The foregoing examples have principally described the operation of divine vengeance and protection rather than of cursing per se. As one would expect, the representation of cursing in Jocelin’s four Lives varies according, at least in part, to the character of his sources and subjects. In the Life of Patrick, episodes of cursing abound in Jocelin’s sources, and as such these also appear with some frequency in his own reworking of the Life. In contrast, in his Life of Waltheof there are only two explicitly punitive miracles, both situated within vision narratives, among an extensive catalogue predominantly of healing miracles, and neither punitive miracle is performed directly by the saint during his earthly career.⁹⁸ This is likely a product of the emphasis on Waltheof’s gentleness and humility, which would again be dependent on the character of his recent cult, the memories and ideals of his community, and thus the oral and written sources available to Jocelin from Melrose.⁹⁹ The Life of Helena lacks spoken curses by the saint altogether, which may be attributed again to the stock of episodes available from historical sources, as well as to the office and gender of the main figures of the Life. Neither Constantine nor Helena is a clerical figure: the characterisation of Constantine is primarily as a secular agent and military ruler, while Helena is additionally constrained by a conception of sanctity framed in female terms. As Birkett has noted, the portrayal of Helena’s sanctity ‘remains largely enclosed by a combination of gendered and hierarchical constraints’, whose actions are typically subject to ‘prior or subsequent male authorisation’

⁹⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Helенаe*, ll. 568-70 (Harbus, 168): ‘Generali tandem iudicio tocus concilii ut arbor arida et apta igni gehenne Arrius incorrigibilis cuim suis sequacibus est dampnatus et anathematizatus atque ab ecclesia separatus...’ (‘At last by the general judgment of the whole council that the tree was dry and fit for the fire of Gehenna, the incorrigible Arius with his followers was condemned and anathematised and separated from the church...’); *ibid.*, ll. 572-3 (Harbus, 168): ‘Post expulsionem ergo Sathane, post abscissionem arboris pestifere, catholicam fidem luculenter exposuerunt, expositam conscripserunt’ (‘Therefore after the expulsion of Satan, after the cutting off of the pestiferous tree, they explained clearly the Catholic faith, and wrote down what had been explained’).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 533-5 (Harbus, 167): ‘Expulsus uero non solum respiscere refutauit sed eciam contra pontificem sanctum sedicionem concitauit’ (‘Indeed the expelled man refused not only to come to his senses but also roused sedition against the holy pontiff’).

⁹⁸ Jocelin, *Vita Waldeui*, 1.24.85-87, 2.4.100-4 (McFadden, 157-9, 170-5; trans. *idem*, 304-7, 322-8).

⁹⁹ For the character of his cult and community, see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 202-8; for his sources, *ibid.*, 116-27, 132-4.

and whose independent accomplishments are confined to the intellectual sphere.¹⁰⁰ She passes or threatens judgement on several occasions, but does so as queen in a purely earthly and secular legal capacity without any miraculous punitive elements.¹⁰¹ There are several episodes of vengeance in the Life of Kentigern, as already noted, though again in the absence of Jocelin's sources it is speculation to say how much of this was a product of Jocelin's sources and how much was of his own outlook.

As the account of a saint of Jocelin's own order, written during a broader period of conscious reflexion and reassessment within the Cistercian order, the Life of Waltheof may offer the clearest insight into the reform-order outlook of its hagiographer as it regarded cursing and saintly punishment.¹⁰² The general emphasis as noted is on the saint's exemplary gentleness and humility, which Jocelin saw as the true fulfilment of the ideal of abbatial piety.¹⁰³ Jocelin observed that from the time of his election as abbot, Waltheof strove more to be loved than feared ('plus amari quam timeri'), and would rather have been condemned for excessive mercy than excessive justice. Jocelin saw this as exemplary of the Cistercian and monastic life as encapsulated in the Rule of Benedict, a text whose fundamental importance is another important feature shared with the other Cistercian hagiographers.¹⁰⁴ It additionally stood in positive contrast with Waltheof's antitype in his immediate predecessor Abbot Richard and his immediate successor Abbot William.¹⁰⁵ While acknowledging their other good traits, Jocelin condemned Abbot Richard for his unrestrained and intolerable anger, and Abbot William for venting his burdensome arrogance on his monks; he also noted explicitly that William spurned the Rule's admonition by seeking to be more feared than loved ('plus timeri quam amari').¹⁰⁶ The two figures of Richard and William are in many ways mirrors of each other, and Jocelin represented both as having been justly deposed for their

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 234-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 233, 236.

¹⁰² See above in Chapter III, at 117.

¹⁰³ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.12.37 (McFadden, 121; trans. idem, 245): 'Dilectus & electus Domini Walthevus abbas effectus, nomen, rem & officium opere & veritate adimplevit: quia non in eo magni nominis umbra, sed veritas apparuit' ('Waltheof, the beloved and chosen of the Lord, once elected abbot fulfilled the letter and spirit of the office in deed and truth: since in him appeared not the shadow of a great name but the reality'). See also Freeman, 'Models for Cistercian life', 112-4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1.12.37-8 (McFadden, 121, 122; trans. idem, 245, 247-8): '...juxta S. Benedicti monita plus amari quam timeri studuit... Consueverat saepius illud B. Hugonis Cluniacensis abbatis verbum ore revolvere: Si contingeret unum e duobus evenire, malo puniri propter magnitudinem misericordiae, quam ob rigidae censuram justitiae' ('Following the holy Benedict's admonition, he strove more to be loved than feared... That saying of the blessed abbot Hugh of Cluny was a favourite of his: "If it comes to a choice, I would rather be punished for being abundantly merciful than for dealing out strict justice"'); ibid, 1.12.37 fn. 1 (McFadden, 245); cf. Benedict (attrib.), *Regula Benedicti*, 64 (McCann, 146-7).

¹⁰⁵ Freeman, 'Models for Cistercian life', 114.

¹⁰⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.12.36, 2.8.120 (McFadden, 119-20, 186-7; trans. idem, 243-5, 340-1), quoted at 2.8.120.

severity.¹⁰⁷ These contrasting abbatial representations were the product not only of the archetype of the Rule but of the communal memory of Melrose, which mutually reinforced the Waldevan model of abbatial sanctity.

In broader terms, these representations also framed Jocelin's discussion in the same text of the ideal prelate.¹⁰⁸ 'Debased and perverse prelates have vented their power upon their subordinates', giving public penances for private offences.¹⁰⁹ Waltheof however only applied public penances to public offences.¹¹⁰ For secret faults, he applied holy exhortation from scripture to wound the soul, followed by private penances applied as 'a medicinal ointment and antidote, yet in such a way that the wound or disease was not in the least exposed nor made worse by the medicine, somewhat bitter as it might be, but rather was effectively brought back to health'.¹¹¹ These too followed the Rule's distinction between punishments for lesser and graver faults, and its provision for the abbot to act as a wise physician who applied first the unguents of scriptural persuasion before at last the cautery of excommunication.¹¹² Underscoring the contrast between the exemplary Waltheof and the negative example of others, Jocelin condemned as assassins those prelates who on the slightest pretext 'do not hesitate to expel them from their own home and pitch them into the pit of perdition.'¹¹³ McFadden suggested that this meant the use of expulsion – the final step of monastic excommunication – was relatively common in Jocelin's day.¹¹⁴ What is more pertinent however is that whatever its frequency, Jocelin stood against its use except when conducted according to appropriately graded procedure and necessitated by extreme circumstances that left no alternative.

Elizabeth Freeman has suggested that these rhetorical criticisms were chiefly intended to address a broader range of concerns with prelates who remained overly immersed in questions of personal status and reputation carried over from their previous lives, at the expense of members of their communities,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.12.36 (McFadden, 120; trans. idem, 243-4). See also Birkett, *Jocelin*, 203-8.

¹⁰⁸ Freeman, 'Models for Cistercian life', 114.

¹⁰⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.12.36 (McFadden, 120; trans. idem, 245): 'Habent etiam praelati pravi atque perversi proprium, fortitudinem suam in subditos retorquere'; *ibid.*, 1.12.38, 1.13.41 (McFadden, 122, 124-5; trans. idem, 248, 251-2).

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.12.37 (McFadden, 120; trans. idem, 246).

¹¹¹ Ibid., 1.12.38 (McFadden, 122; trans. idem, 248): 'In his tamen tam discrete medicativum emplastrum & antidotum apposuit animarum vulneribus, ut nec vulnus aut morbus ullatenus detegeretur, nec confectione licet aliquantulum amara gravarentur, sed efficaciter sanitatem consequerentur.'

¹¹² Ibid., 1.12.38 fn. 3 (McFadden, 249).

¹¹³ Ibid., 1.12.38 (McFadden, 122; trans. idem, 249): 'Sed quid dicam de illis, qui... aliquam levem occasionem nacti, eos de domo propria expellere, & in barathrum perditionis praecipitare non verentur? ... venefici vocantur...' See also Freeman, 'Models for Cistercian life', 113-4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 1.12.38 fn. 2 (McFadden, 249).

tainting their actions and those of the order in the process.¹¹⁵ Why Jocelin should more specifically favour restraint in the application of excommunication and expulsion can however also be at least partly understood, much as in the previous two chapters, in terms of the contemporary understanding of its potential effects. We have already seen, for instance in the curses upon the bloodfeuders in William of Malmesbury's *Life of Wulfstan*, upon the pilgrim cleric in Aelred's *Hexham Lives*, and upon the flies of Foigny in William of Saint-Thierry's *Life of Bernard*, the striking blurring of the lines between episcopal and communal forms of excommunication, as well as between excommunication and cursing more broadly – and thus the ways in which the associated process of formal exclusion or expulsion could be seen to enact a miraculous and even fatal punishment.¹¹⁶ The same imaginative dangers of excommunication/expulsion for Jocelin can be seen in his *Life of Kentigern*, in which a heretic is denounced by the bishop, expelled from his diocese as a son of death whose death is at the door, and subsequently drowned by a surging river – a similar punishment to the curse that John of Forde recorded befalling the cellarer of Montacute expelled from fellowship at Wulfric's table.¹¹⁷ It may be noted however that the implicit causal relationship here between excommunication and miraculous punishment is rather more nuanced in Jocelin's account than in these other examples, and is one that again bridges them with the emphasis on the interior spiritual state previously seen in Goscelin. Because of the problem of internal corruption already noted in the case of Maxentius in the *Life of Helena* and of the sodomite clerk in the *Life of Kentigern*, death and damnation are for Jocelin a self-inflicted penalty that can befall the unrepentant sinner of their own accord. The role of the prelate then is not to inflict but to admonish the sinner that they can be brought back to salvation. When they have failed in spite of their best efforts to recall the sinner, they are required to excommunicate and expel their unrepentant target. Only then has expulsion become necessary on account of the corrupting effects which might otherwise implicate and wound the surrounding community as we have seen above. In this way *Kentigern* is forced to denounce and expel the unrepentant heretic from his diocese while warning of his destruction, following the apostolic instruction to 'shun the man who is a heretic after the second admonition, knowing that he who is such is destroyed' (Titus 3:10-11).¹¹⁸ The miraculous penalty that befalls the heretic is thus foretold rather than enacted by the saint's pronouncement, with the separation intended to preserve the faithful from further corruption rather than to enact the curse.

¹¹⁵ Freeman, 'Models for Cistercian life', 114.

¹¹⁶ Though it is not necessary to make a case for direct influence here, all of these were works which Jocelin could easily have accessed, at Holme Cultram (for the *Vita Wulfstani*), Rievaulx (for the *Hexham Lives*), and Furness (for the *Vita Bernardi*). See Bell, *Index of authors*, 18, 148, 151.

¹¹⁷ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 211-2; trans. idem, 86-7); cf. John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 45 [2.15] (Bell, 61-3; trans. Matarasso, 147-9).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 (Forbes, 212; trans. idem, 87): '...hereticum hominem post secundam ammonitionem devita, sciens quam subversus est hujusmodi.'

The details of this sketch can be seen in play in Jocelin's other Lives. The Life of Helena in its chapter on the Council of Nicaea refers to the heresiarch Arius adding 'to his heap of error and of his own damnation', and to Bishop Alexander's expulsion of Arius from the church of Alexandria only when he was unable to call him back to the truth.¹¹⁹ In the Life of Patrick, a notable addition in Jocelin's account is the careful need to make explicit the stages of that process and the extent to which Patrick is portrayed as labouring for his opponents' reform.¹²⁰ There are for instance ample cases where an initial curse functions as a kind of 'warning-shot' against a transgressor. Patrick splits a stone into four parts with his staff to convey the hard-heartedness of his opponent and to induce repentance through a demonstration of his power.¹²¹ He does similarly in another instance: 'The saint spat on a stone lying by chance before them, and for the softening, reproving and confounding of his hard-heartedness, the stone immediately split into three parts.'¹²² He warns the obstinate Fergus: 'So also the power of God could have dissolved you if it willed at the first word of my mouth.'¹²³ These subtle additions to the narrative accord well with Birkett's observation from the examples of ecclesiastical investiture, priestly instruction, and graded clerical orders that the minor details introduced by Jocelin to the Life of Patrick provide in general 'a fuller illustration of correct ecclesiastical procedure' in line with the broader reformist agenda.¹²⁴ We have already seen the importance of this agenda prior to Jocelin in terms of the later twelfth-century judicialisation of curses, as featured adroitly in the narratives of Aelred and John and stumbled into somewhat more haplessly by Walter. Sensitivity of another kind to contemporary canonistic developments in excommunication is something we will see again in the Irish material more broadly in Chapter IV.

Following this reformist logic of excommunication, the general sense of the saint's role from Jocelin's punitive episodes is consequently less one of saintly vengeance than of saintly foresight, admonition and intercession. This is a feature which accords with the hagiographers similarly immersed in canonistic procedures, such as Eadmer (who emphasises prophecy rather than malediction) and John (who emphasises adherence to the appropriate procedures of excommunication). It also accords with those

¹¹⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Helенаe*, ll. 524-5 (Harbus, 167): 'Ad cumulum eciam erroris et dampnacionis sue...'; *ibid.*, ll. 532-3 (Harbus, 167): 'Sed cum Arrium a perniciosi erroris reuocare non posset perfidia, expulit eum ab ecclesia sua' ('But when he could not call Arius back from his ruinous errors, he expelled him from his church').

¹²⁰ See eg. Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 41, 55, 88, 114, 131 [48, 60-1, 99, 133, 150] (*AASS*, Cols. 0550D-F, 0553D-F, 0561C-D, 0567B-C, 0570C-D; trans. O'Leary, 187-8, 202-3, 249, 281-2, 297-8).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 88 [99] (*AASS*, Cols. 0561C-D; trans. O'Leary, 249).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 114 [133] (*AASS*, Col. 0567C; trans. O'Leary, 282): 'Sanctus igitur Patricius sputaculum super lapidem coram illis forte iacentem proiecit; qui mox ad insinuandam, imo confutandam & confundendam cordis illius duritiem, in tres partes diuisus... crepuit.'

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 88 [99] (*AASS*, Cols. 0561C-D; trans. O'Leary, 249): 'Sic te dissoluere potuit potentia Dei, si voluisset, etiam ad primum verbum oris mei.'

¹²⁴ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 272-4, quoted at 272.

similarly sensitive to the terminality of its effects, such as Goscelin and Aelred. Thus the Life of Waltheof depicts its subject labouring tirelessly and successfully as intercessor, staying punishment that would otherwise befall those under his charge. The first of the two punitive visionary narratives in the Life recounts how an angel dismembered a lay brother of Melrose, Sinuin, only to be forced to reassemble him following Waltheof's prayers at that hour for those committed to his protection. By averting the divine punishment that would have befallen him, Sinuin is able to correct his behaviour.¹²⁵ In the Life of Kentigern, the saint's attitude toward a heretic is foremost 'that he would return rather than perish.'¹²⁶ It is often in the saint's absence or contrary to the saint's intentions that the heaviest vengeance befalls the sinner, as in the earlier quoted example of the elements raging in the Life of Kentigern.¹²⁷

It is notable too that Jocelin's saints take little satisfaction in terminal vengeance when applied by necessity, even when applied by the divine will. An integral theme to his writing is that of the patience and humility of the saint in the face of his opponents and persecutors, and his active will for their salvation. This aligns well with Eadmer's depiction of Anselm and of his other episcopal saints: as patient, self-sacrificing, and ultimately triumphant models for the persecuted reformist churchman, which Jocelin might easily have turned to amidst the trials of the Church in his own day.¹²⁸ It is moreover in accord with the emphases on patience and humility as signal themes of sanctity which we saw among the other Cistercian hagiographers, and likely arises from both direct and common influences. Most obvious of course would have been a familiarity with the models of the Rule and of Cistercian hagiography in general.¹²⁹ His familiarity with Cistercian thought would have given him a shared theological sensitivity to the stumbling paths of human experience, perfecting hardship, and ever-open redemption, as being worked out by his Cistercian predecessors and contemporaries. Addressing just such a Cistercian audience in his Life of Waltheof, and perhaps explicitly moralising in view of the homiletic requirements of the canonisation process, Jocelin wrote explicitly of the saint's suffering in illness in terms of the heavenly artificer who 'corrects and chastens those he loves', 'trims clean the branch that does not yield fruit so that it may yield more fruit', and 'with the fire of tribulation refines even gold that it may shine with richer

¹²⁵ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.24.85-6 (McFadden, 157-9; trans. idem, 304-6).

¹²⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 211; trans. idem, 87): '...volens igitur eum potius redire, quam perire'; cf. Ezekiel 18:23, 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9.

¹²⁷ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 29 (Forbes, 212-3; trans. idem, 88), quoted at length in Chapter III, at 129.

¹²⁸ Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi* for example could be found as already noted in the library of Holme Cultram, and may also have been held at Rievaulx, while his *Vita Wilfridi* was known at Hexham, Ripon and York; for which see Bell, *Index of authors*, 58; Turner and Muir, 'Introduction to the Life of Wilfrid', xlix-l, lii-i. The copying and use of Eadmer's other works however seems to have been mostly southern English or Continental in the century of Jocelin's writing; for which see Turner and Muir, 'Introduction', xliv-lviii, lxxvii-xciii, cxvi-xxvi.

¹²⁹ For Jocelin's familiarity with recent Cistercian hagiography, such as Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of Malachy and Aelred's royal hagiography, see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 63-4, 84, 242, 135.

lustre' – according a dignity to suffering that both trained and necessitated the virtue of patience.¹³⁰ Jocelin's local situation too would have given him a reinforcing historical awareness of the continuing need to rebuild and reform in the long wake of the Viking depredations, of which the persistent Norse presence and interaction on the Furness peninsula and his wider travels in the Irish Sea world would have emotively reminded him.¹³¹ In that respect Jocelin is comparable with Aelred, for whom stories of the rebuilding of the ruined Hexham by his grandfather similarly shaped his historical and theological outlooks; but without Jocelin being so obviously tinctured by a hostile ethnic dimension, on account of his close exposure to and cooperation with Gaelic and Norse-speaking neighbours and patrons.¹³² The people of Galloway in Jocelin's *Life of Kentigern*, who had seemed a generation earlier the ultimate alien to Aelred and Walter, were much closer to Jocelin's Cumbria. At the same time, Jocelin's distance from the Norman conquest of England and from the Angevin settlement under Henry II gave him the ability to take a view of history in the abstract, detached and reassured terms of Augustine: seeing political misfortunes such as the conquest as divinely-determined but ultimately prescribed events, over which man had very little control except to patiently endure until the appointed time.¹³³

These converging influences of theological truth, cultural exposure and historical experience all weighed in favour of the humble, patient and charitable disposition of the saint and of the model Christian regardless of what enemy they faced. Concerning the patient endurance of such hardship, Jocelin is thus led to write of Kentigern: 'The servant of God, who had learned by lasting custom with the blessed Job to be a brother with dragons and a companion of ostriches and to live with scorpions after the fashion of

¹³⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.23.81 (McFadden, 155; trans. idem, 301): 'Caelestis Artifex... aurum, ut ampliori fulgore rutilet, igne purificat tribulationis: ipse namque quos amat, arguit & castigat... & omnem palmitem in se ferentem fructum purgat, ut fructum plus afferat.'

¹³¹ Flanagan, 'Jocelin and the cult of Patrick', 65; cf. also Bernard of Clairvaux in D. Scully, 'Ireland and the Irish in Bernard of Clairvaux's "Life of Malachy": representation and context', in *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 253-6 [239-56]. For the immediacy to Jocelin of the Norse cultural presence, see Edmonds, 'Furness peninsula', 34-5, 38-43; idem, 'Norse influence in north-west England', 43-4, 54-6.

¹³² On Jocelin's wider network of Norse contacts, in particular with sources and patrons on the Isle of Mann, see Birkett, *Jocelin*, 42-4, 51, 167-8; Flanagan, 'Jocelin and the cult of Patrick', 61-4. On Jocelin's ethnic accommodation more broadly, see McFadden, 'Introduction', 5-7.

¹³³ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, Prologue.1 (McFadden, 92; trans. idem, 202-3), refers to 'Normannorum violenta direptio, Deo permittente, usque ad tempus praefinitum' ('the violent seizure of the Normans, with God's permitting, down to the time appointed'). For Jocelin's detachment from the conquest and the divisions of earlier generations, see McFadden, 'Introduction', 5-6, 51-2; and Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, Prologue.1 fn. 6 (McFadden, 203).

Ezekiel, possessed his soul in patience, and was peaceful with the one hating peace.¹³⁴ The saint is patient and enduring to the point of mourning his persecutor's death by the divine will: 'Kentigern, when he knew that his adversary had fallen, chastised himself with great lamenting and took care of a grave for him, imitating by that act the holy David, pious king of the Hebrews, who mourned over the destruction of his persecutor, Saul, and lamented with great mourning.'¹³⁵ One is reminded also of the weeping of Anselm at the death of his persecutor William Rufus in Eadmer's *Life*, and of the tearful Benedict's condemnation of rejoicing over the death of an enemy in the Gregorian *Dialogues*, which Gregory explicitly connected with the pattern of David.¹³⁶ These hagiographical exemplars would have carried less weight than explicit scriptural commentary, yet might nonetheless have formatively shaped Jocelin's view. It may be observed that Jocelin attributes to Constantine too a reluctance to shed the blood of fellow Romans,¹³⁷ praising his campaigns in terms of featuring minimal bloodshed.¹³⁸

To return to Waltheof as a reformist exemplar of Cistercian and Christian life, in one particularly memorable episode the saint undertook penance even for striking a fly dead with his hand, weeping that he had killed a creature that he could not revivify.¹³⁹ Though the episode lacks any element of a curse, the animal motif stands both in striking contrast with the flies of Foigny and in notable parallel with the regret of Wulfric at killing a mouse. Report of certain details of Bernard known from William's *Life* had reached Melrose by oral or written channels, and the *Lives* of Bernard and Wulfric would themselves have been available to Jocelin at Furness and Holme Cultram respectively.¹⁴⁰ Jocelin's familiarity too with the Gregorian *Dialogues* would have included both the hermit Florentinus calling down a thunderbolt to smite snakes in his cell and the same hermit's regret for pronouncing a fatal curse against four envious monks which could not be undone.¹⁴¹ His account of Waltheof may thus have formed an implicit commentary upon William of Saint-Thierry's *Life* of Bernard and perhaps have been tentatively part of a wider contemporary 'Cistercian' discourse shared with John and identifiably grounded in the Gregorian *Dialogues*. The Gregorian sentiment that both John and Jocelin captured within that discourse was regret

¹³⁴ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 10 (Forbes, 180; trans. idem, 53): 'At servus Dei qui usu diutino didicerat, cum beato Job, frater esse draconum, et socius strutionum, et cum scorpionibus, instar Ezechielis, habitare; in patientia possidebat animam suam, et cum odiente pacem erat pacificus.'

¹³⁵ Ibid., 10 (Forbes, 181; trans. idem, 53): 'Kentigernus agnoscens quia adversarius eius occubuit, gravibus lamentis se afflixit, et sepulturam ei procuravit; imitans in hoc facto sanctum David pium Ebreorum, qui super persecutoris sui Saulis interitus luxit, et planctu magno planxit.'

¹³⁶ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.49 (Southern, 125-6); idem, *Historia novorum*, 118 (trans. Bosanquet, 123), cited in Chapter I at 56-7 fn. 139; and Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.8 (Morica, 93; trans. Zimmerman, 72). Cf. 2 Kings 1:11-2, 18:33.

¹³⁷ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 215-7 (Harbus, 158).

¹³⁸ Ibid., ll. 923-5 (Harbus, 178).

¹³⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.13.39-40 (McFadden, 123-4; trans. idem, 249-51).

¹⁴⁰ Birkett, *Jocelin*, 202 fn. 5; Bell, *Index of authors*, 148, 151.

¹⁴¹ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 3.15 (Morica, 172-3; trans. Zimmerman, 137-9).

at being unable to revivify that which had been killed, which stands as a figure for the need to restrict the use of excommunication and cursing to all but the most extreme and necessary of circumstances.

In light of these reformist outlooks concerning excommunication, Jocelin would of course need to apply some rationalised model of sanctity to the episodes of cursing known from the sources for his *Life of Patrick*. One strategy was to represent a Patrick more in line with the more protracted ecclesiastical procedures of excommunication, the result being the more patient and medicinal Patrick already discussed. As already seen, where Patrick does pronounce a terminal judgement, Jocelin makes the point clear that the saint has exhausted all other available options. A second justificatory strategy was to distance effect from intention, appealing to the idea that curses, as with other miracles, were properly carried out under divine authority. The status of the saint as temple and vessel of the Holy Spirit was of course one suitable means of positioning the saint in this way. When in Jocelin's *Life of Patrick* a group attempted to deceive the saint by arranging to meet with him at a certain time and then deliberately failing to do so before evening, he addressed them: 'Since you have not only deceived me, but the Holy Spirit, neither you nor your children shall ever in this place finish any of your business until the evening.'¹⁴² The attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit via his deputised agent hearkens to Peter's fatal words spoken to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11, which was the paradigmatic episode of apostolic cursing known from the New Testament.¹⁴³ Peter's words that 'you have not lied to [us] men but to God' establish the saint merely as a prophetic vessel for a speech-act delivered on behalf of God rather than under one's own aegis. Elsewhere the saint makes clear that the words spoken through his mouth are properly the Lord's rather than his own, as the signs he worked reveal.¹⁴⁴ In the episode in which Patrick learns that the grove he encounters has been consecrated to infernal spirits, Jocelin wrote: 'Wherefore, knowing the divine will, and agreeing with the sentence of heaven, he raised his left hand, and cursed the grove.'¹⁴⁵ Patrick's knowledge of the divine will established him simply as announcing the pre-existent divine will when enacting a curse. In modern linguistic terms, his actions are thus more aptly 'predictive' or 'referential' than 'maledictory.'¹⁴⁶ Jocelin's comments later in the *Life* that whatever sentence he spoke by

¹⁴² Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 111 [128] (*AASS*, Col. 0566D; trans. O'Leary, 278): 'Quoniam non solum mihi, sed Spiritui sancto toties illusistis, conuenientia negotia nec vos nec semen vestrum post vos in generationes seculorum, ante vesperum in loco isto perficietis.'

¹⁴³ Acts 5:1-11: 'Dixit autem Petrus Anania: "cur temptavit Satanas cor tuum mentiri te Spiritui Sancto... non es mentitus hominibus sed Deo".'

¹⁴⁴ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 47 [53] (*AASS*, Col. 0552A; trans. O'Leary, 194): 'Hoc autem erit tibi signum, quod implebit Dominus verbum, quod locutus est per os meum' ('This shall be a sign to you that the Lord will fulfill the word which he has spoken through my mouth').

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 110 [127] (*AASS*, Col. 0566D; trans. O'Leary, 277): 'Sanctus secretorum diuinorum conscius, concorsque caelesti sententiae, leuata laeva maledixit silue, praefatae.'

¹⁴⁶ For the modern theoretical framework according to which words in a biblical or hagiographical context may be understood as 'magical' (comprising words coercive of a supernatural authority), 'referential' or 'predictive'

his mouth remained ‘fixed and unshaken’ seem to imply foremost that Patrick was unfailingly in connexion with the divine will.¹⁴⁷ They are moreover linked with the apostolic commission of binding and loosing, which has the effect of giving Patrick’s actions firm biblical and canonical grounding while underlining the strength and unfailing efficaciousness of that link with the divine:

Whomsoever he bound and loosed, the divine justice proved bound or loosed by evident signs; for just as giving blessing, he extended his right hand; thus bringing out the opposite, he used to lift his left. The blessing of the Lord came over him whom he blessed, and he whom he cursed appeared full with curses. Whomsoever the sentence from the mouth of Patrick was extended to, the sentence remained unshaken and fixed, as if it had gone forth from the judgement-seat of the supernal judge.¹⁴⁸

These two strategies could be rhetorically reinforcing while remaining congruent with the earlier idea of the role of the saint within vengeance narratives as being primarily intercessory rather than punitive. The aforementioned specification of Patrick ‘agreeing with the sentence of heaven’ for instance suggests a kind of intercessory veto on the part of the saint. This accords with the earlier model seen in the writings of Eadmer in particular, where the saint serves as intercessor of merited punishment, and of punishment being more likely to befall those on whom it is due in the saint’s absence as, for instance, due to rejection or exile.

A third strategy is to shift the emphasis on the effect of the curse. Aside from the individual punished, such curses may serve to have a positive effect on bystanders: ‘fearing that a like destruction might descend on themselves, the people escaped by flight, or rather by the sufferance of the divine mercy.’¹⁴⁹

(comprising words that merely announce or foretell the pre-existing intentions of a supernatural authority), or ‘performative’ (comprising words that, under certain appropriate conditions, themselves enact the will of the supernatural authority), see the critical review of the scholarship in D.R. McCabe, *How to kill things with words: Ananias and Sapphira under the prophetic speech-act of divine judgment (Acts 4.32-5.11)*, T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies, Library of New Testament Studies 454 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 7, 31-55. On the purely predictive or ‘referential’ view, see in particular *ibid.*, 31-6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 162 [185] (*AASS*, Col. 0578A; trans. O’Leary, 336): ‘Quaecumque sententia ex ore S. Patricii fuisse prolata, ita inconvulsibilis manebat et fixa, acsi a superni Iudicis tribunali fuisset egressa’ (‘Whatever sentence issued from the mouth of Patrick remained fixed and unshaken, even as had it gone from the tribunal of the supernal Judge’).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (*AASS*, Col. 0578A; trans. O’Leary, 336): ‘Quemcumque ligabat et absoluebat ipse, ligatum sive solutum divina justitia indicibus evidentibus comprobrabat: sicut enim benedictionem dando, dexteram extendebat; sic inferendo contrarium, laevam levare solebat. Quem autem benedicebat, benedictio Domini super eum veniebat: et cui maledicebat, maledictionibus repletus apparebat. Quaecumque sententia ex ore S. Patricii fuisse prolata, ita inconvulsibilis manebat et fixa, acsi a superni Iudicis tribunali fuisset egressa’; cf. *Vita tertia*, 94 (Bieler, 189-90); *Vita quarta*, 95 (Bieler, 113-4).

¹⁴⁹ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 110 [126] (*AASS*, Col. 0566C; trans. O’Leary, 276): ‘Vulgus... timens exitio pari se periturum, beneficio fugæ vel diuinæ potius permissu pietatis, euasit.’

‘Because, as Solomon testifies, when a foolish man perishes a wise man will be more prudent, we plainly have enough proof in the case of this man that we should beware of offending the servants and friends of God, and we should not dare to inflict on them trouble or harm or injury.’¹⁵⁰ Even after death, such concern for non-fatal mediation is attributed to the saint:

And while arrayed in armour they rose unto arms, they heard a voice from heaven, which seemed as the voice of Patrick, staying their violence; and the sea, rising above its wonted bounds, reared itself as a wall, and separated the contending people so that they could neither behold nor attack one another, and thus physically separated, they were united in the concord of mutual peace. With the people then restrained from their fury, the waters ceased from their fury also.¹⁵¹

As Jocelin recalled him, Patrick was one who could remind subsequent generations of his power while labouring for their reform without the need for fatal vengeance to befall them. As a hagiographer labouring for the reform of his contemporaries and fearful of the vengeance befalling those implicated with the enemies of the Church, Jocelin must have hoped that memorialising that same Patrick could accomplish that same goal too.

III

The foregoing discussion reveals that Jocelin’s work displays the three models of vengeance which we have already seen among the English Benedictines: the dualistic conception of the clerical-secular arenas of Eadmer; the literalisation of an internal spiritual state in physical punishment of Goscelin; the vindication of the transgressed order of Eadmer and William; and the restraints on the individual curser against all but the reprobate sinner. The extent to which vengeance or suffering is construed as corrective or perfecting is notably different from the Cistercians Aelred and John: vengeance is often punitive and curses, where resisted, are terminal. That heightened sense of divine severity in punishment was nonetheless tempered by a more emphatic emphasis on the patient and explicitly unmaledictive interior disposition of the saint, elaborating the theology of his Cistercian predecessors to meet the needs both of changing models of sanctity and Christian practice and the contemporary secular pressures and challenges of his own day.

¹⁵⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 10 (Forbes, 181; trans. idem, 53): ‘Sed quia teste Salomone, stulto pereunte sapiens astutior erit, evidens satis documentum habemus in casu hujus hominis, et servos et amicos Dei offendere caveamus, nec eis molestiam aut gravamen, vel injuriam, inferre audeamus.’

¹⁵¹ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 170 [194] (*AASS*, Col. 0580A; trans. O’Leary, 345-6): ‘Cumque accincti armis bellicis ad congressum consurgerent, vocem de supernis, in sanguine ire prohibentem audierunt, quam spiritum S. Patricij protulisse putauerunt. Mare nihilominus terminos transgrediens consuetos, instar muralis erectum, vtrumque populum sibi aduersantem, ne mutuis visibus sese conspicerent aut ictibus possent contingere, diuisit: diuisos corporaliter ad concordiam mutuae pacis ad horam cuniuit. Sedatis ergo populis a furore suo, sedatum statim stetit fretum a furore suo.’

Beyond the particular needs and possibilities of his textual sources, Jocelin's specific representation of cursing and vengeance are in large part the consequence of his particular reformist outlook. His heightened dualistic worldview and his preoccupations as a reform-minded Cistercian with the corruption of the world and of the individual soul by heresy and sexual impurity framed his understanding of the effects of sin upon the individual and upon the surrounding natural (moral, political and material) order. The punitive miracle was properly the effect of a self-inflicted disorder making the sinner ripe for vengeance, or the effect of God to vindicate his saint. Jocelin understood the imaginative dangers of cursing and of excommunication, but his Cistercian model of abbatial sanctity emphasised the need for gentleness, inclusion, and proper canonical procedure for abbots and bishops alike according to the provisions of the Rule of Benedict.

Miraculous punishment was the preserve of God, while miraculous intercession was the prerogative of the saint. Implicitly, this positioning of the role of saintly intercession with respect to vengeance narratives heightened the threatened effect of excommunication to one audience while trying to temper its use by another: though saints and prelates were bound to labour for the repentance of their sinful charges, it was only by their sufferance that the sinner was preserved from the fall of divine vengeance. The concerns for those twin audiences came to the fore when working with curse-heavy texts such as the Life of Patrick, who is represented as following Jocelin's conception of proper correctional procedure and as being guided by the divine will. Those terms were rather different however from the earlier Irish hagiography of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, whose own political and canonistic considerations were differently refracted, as Chapter IV will show.

Chapter IV: The Irish cursing saints, Ruadán and Máedóc

Leaving behind for the time being Jocelin and the Anglo-Latin hagiographers in favour of the native hagiography of central medieval Ireland, the present chapter represents a shift in region, linguistic range and cultural zone while retaining the broad chronological range of the long twelfth century.¹ Two clusters of texts are under examination here. The first are the hagiographical and vernacular saga literature connected with Ruadán of Lorrha and the Southern Uí Néill king of Tara, Diarmait mac Cerbaill. As the classic texts of saintly cursing for medieval and modern Irish scholars alike, but in many respects awaiting systematic attention in terms of theological content and structural patterning, much initial attention will naturally focus on this material.² The second cluster comprises a group of hagiographical texts connected with Máedóc of Ferns, divided into northern productions associated with Daiminis in the kingdom of Bréifne and southern productions associated with the kingdom of Leinster. Less well-attended to on the subject of cursing than the Ruadán and Diarmait material, the traditions concerning Máedóc have nonetheless earned him a similar reputation as a ‘champion curser along with Ruadán’.³ At the same time, this selection allows for a range of different literary, linguistic, and political contexts within a common cultural sphere. As before, the dates and contexts of the source material will first be set out below (I). Focusing initially on the vernacular saga material, the present chapter will then show the key source influence of the Psalms (II) and other important thematic influences on the narrative, in order to introduce and elucidate broader structural patterning and theological resonances within the material (III). From there, the chapter will proceed to outline the function of cursing narratives in the second narrative cluster in particular, in light of two key themes: ritual fasting (IV) and protections of sanctuary and clerical immunity (V). The latter theme touches on aspects already seen in the writings of Jocelin and the Cistercians. In light of both the presence and absence of episodes of vengeance and cursing, these themes will be used to show the importance of political contingencies and local contexts to representations of cursing in the Irish case.

¹ In this case the core texts were produced c. 1060-1170 as will be set out below, coinciding with the beginning of Goscelin’s career at one end and with the beginning of Jocelin’s at the other.

² Ruadán’s standout reputation among Irish saints for cursing is attested in an eleventh- or twelfth-century poem purporting to describe the favourite virtue of each of the most famous saints of Ireland, where that accorded foremost to ‘royal Ruadán of Lorrha’ was that ‘he loved cursing’ (‘Carais Ruadháin rígh Lothra / easccaoine’). See *Cuimín condeire cecinit*, ll. 129-130 (Stokes, 66-7); D.A. Binchy, ‘A pre-Christian survival in mediaeval Irish hagiography’, in *Ireland in early medieval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick, and D. Dumville (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), 175-6 [165-78].

³ L.K. Little, *Benedictine maledictions: liturgical cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 167.

I

The case study of Irish saintly cursing best known to modern scholars is that which concerns the ostensibly sixth-century monastic saint Ruadán of Lorrha and the Southern Uí Néill king of Tara, Diarmait mac Cerbaill (d. 565). This material can be divided into two groups, corresponding to the hagiographical and saga ‘genres’.⁴ One is a hagiographical body of material in both Latin and the vernacular directly concerning Ruadán. Of these, the most important texts are the Latin recensions respectively contained in the thirteenth-century Salamancan collection (S) and the Dublin collection (D), which share a common source and narrative outline.⁵ The other is a body of eight vernacular king tales, referred to by modern scholars as the ‘Diarmait Cycle’, of which the most important is *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill* (‘The Death-tale of Diarmait mac Cerbaill’, henceforth ‘*Aided Diarmata*’ or ‘*AD*’).⁶ The relationships, dates and contexts of these texts require setting out in some detail below.

Common to both groups of texts is the celebrated ‘Tara episode’, the ‘Cursing of Tara’ by Ruadán. This extended narrative episode takes up roughly a quarter of the Latin Lives and two fifths of *Aided Diarmata*, and is central to both narratives.⁷ The episode follows a shared general narrative outline in all three cases and reflects a lost independent recension as its source, though in the ordering of certain events *AD* and *D* are closer to each other than to *S*.⁸ Arguing from the vernacular orthography contained in the Latin *S*,

⁴ This label of convenience of the sources is employed in terms of their principal protagonists, with due acknowledgement of hagiography and saga as constituents of the genre of ‘historia’, as laid out in the Introduction.

⁵ These are *Vita Ruadani S.* and *Vita Ruadani D.* For discussion, see C. Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:lxvii-i; R. Sharpe, *MISL*, 397; P. Ó Riain, *DIS*, 541-4; D.M. Wiley, ‘An edition of “Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill” from the Book of Uí Maine (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Harvard University, 2000), 212-20.

⁶ For a discussion of the eight tales which make up the ‘Diarmait Cycle’, see D.M. Wiley, ‘An introduction to the early Irish king tales’, in *Essays on the early Irish king tales*, ed. idem (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 17-9 [13-67]; idem, ‘An edition’, 4-7. For traditions concerning the death of Diarmait, dating back to at least the seventh century, see M. Meckler, ‘The assassination of Diarmait mac Cerbaill’, in *Law, literature and society*, ed. J.F. Eska, CSANA Yearbook 7 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 46, 49, 57 [46-58]; J.T. Koch, ‘Diarmait mac Cerbaill’, in *Celtic culture: a historical encyclopedia*, ed. idem, 5 vols. (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1:586-7; while for the historical Diarmait, see also T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Diarmait mac Cerbaill (d. 565)’, in *ODNB*, 16:22-3; P. Byrne, ‘Diarmait mac Cerbaill’, in *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopedia*, ed. S. Duffy (New York: Routledge, 2005), 125-6 [125-7]; D. Ó Cróinín, ‘Ireland 400-800’, in *Prehistoric and early Ireland*, ed. idem, A New History of Ireland 1 (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 208-10, 214, 229 [182-234]; and Wiley, ‘An edition’, 10-16.

⁷ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 12 (*VSHH*, 163-5); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 15-18 (*VSHP*, 2:245-9); *AD*, 7-12 (Wiley, 117-28; trans. idem, 145-55).

⁸ Wiley, ‘An edition’, 224-5, has grouped these ‘sub-recensions’ for convenience as I(a), containing *S*, and I(b), containing *AD* and *D*. Nonetheless, given the freedom with which individual redactors could borrow from different versions of the same story, Wiley has preferred to see the relationship for this episode as ‘a complex web of interrelated texts that cannot be represented effectively in terms of a traditional stemma.’

Richard Sharpe suggested that the episode underlying these three texts was originally an independent Old Irish composition of uncertain date.⁹ Dan Wiley in his study of the episode argued however that it ‘contains no forms, proper nouns or otherwise, that are unambiguously diagnostic for the Old Irish period’ (ie. c. 600-900).¹⁰ With linguistic criteria inconclusive, one must turn to contextual criteria.¹¹ Joan Radner proposed that the episode best fit the extended aftermath of the death of the powerful Uí Néill king Máelsechnaill II in 1022, in the political context of strife among the Northern Uí Néill over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹² F.J. Byrne noted that the legend of Ruadán’s curse upon Diarmait and his seat at Tara appears briefly in the twelfth-century *Lebor na Cert* (‘Book of Rights’), which may have been composed for recitation at the synod of Cashel in 1101 at the height of the career of Muirchertach Ua Briain, king of Munster and claimant to the high-kingship symbolically represented by Tara, as a piece of propaganda against the Uí Néill.¹³ D.A. Binchy inclined toward the possibility that the episode may have itself originated in this propagandist context, ‘designed to show that the sceptre had passed from Judah, the Uí Néill dynasties, to the descendants of Brian Bóruma.’¹⁴ Pádraig Ó Riain elaborated the episode’s potential association with the southern dynasty of Brian by noting Ruadán’s status in the hagiographical texts that reproduce it as ‘a close associate of the kings of Cashel’, further arguing that the tale which featured in those later texts might have later been disseminated via the network of Augustinian canons who established a house at Cashel in the second quarter of the twelfth century.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the hagiographical and vernacular saga material set that episode within two very different and largely non-overlapping sequences of episodes – one concerned with Ruadán and one with Diarmait – even while preserving the general self-contained outline of the episode. Such setting within a wider framework allowed the later redactors to place their own stamp on the episode and to draw out original themes within a wider frame of narrative allusion and foreshadowing.¹⁶

⁹ Sharpe, *MISL*, 331-2.

¹⁰ Wiley, ‘An edition’, 214-16, quoted at 215.

¹¹ Though the potential pitfalls of this approach are noted, for instance, by R. O’Connor, *The destruction of Da Derga’s hostel: kingship and narrative artistry in a mediaeval Irish saga* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 288.

¹² J. Radner, ‘The significance of the threefold death in Celtic tradition’, in *Celtic folklore and Christianity: studies in memory of William W. Heist*, ed. P.K. Ford (Santa Barbara, California: McNally and Loftin, 1983), 198 [180-99].

¹³ *Lebor na Cert: the Book of Rights*, ed. and trans. M. Dillon, ITS 46 (Dublin: Educational Co. of Ireland, 1962), §3 (19); F.J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings*, Four Courts History Classics (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 191-2.

¹⁴ Binchy, ‘A pre-Christian survival’, 175.

¹⁵ Ó Riain, *DIS*, 542-3, quoted at 543; idem, ‘The O’Donohue Lives of the Salamanca Codex: the earliest collection of Irish saints’ Lives?’, in *Gablánach in scélaigeacht: Celtic studies in honour of Ann Dooley*, ed. S. Sheehan, J. Findon, and W. Follett (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), 48-9 [38-52].

¹⁶ Cf. T. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The rhetoric of “Fingal Rónáin”’, *Celtica* 17 (1985), 144 [123-144]; O’Connor, *The destruction*, 37-8, 39-41, 49-50.

The earliest extant setting of the episode is in *Aided Diarmata*, a Middle Irish composition that appears in two recensions, of which the earlier and more important is that which is best preserved in a fourteenth-century manuscript, the Book of Uí Maine.¹⁷ As evidenced by the prominence afforded to Saint Ciarán and his community of Clonmacnoise in the framing chapters which open and conclude the saga,¹⁸ the text appears to have been brought together at Clonmacnoise, albeit from a variety of earlier sources including the aforementioned Tara episode.¹⁹ Far from simply interpolating pro-Clonmacnoise ‘propaganda’ into an otherwise untampered text, I argue that the miraculous episodes connected with Clonmacnoise carefully frame the overall rhetorical structure of the narrative, and will analyse them in those terms in the main discussion below. Various assumed or implied on general literary, linguistic and content grounds to be of eleventh-²⁰ or twelfth-century date,²¹ Wiley has argued as the text’s most recent editor that one of the prophecies in the text alludes to the destruction of the fort at Ailech within the territory of the Northern Uí Néill by the Uí Briain in 1101, and that the recension of the saga which survives was ‘likely composed at Clonmacnoise in the early twelfth century.’²² It is an attractive working hypothesis, though again it must be admitted that the precise date of the text cannot be known with certainty. In terms of broader intertextual contexts, Ralph O’Connor has suggested the possible influence of the tenth-century saga *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (‘The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’), notably in its use of biblical Samuel-Saul typology ‘along with a portent-laden journey toward an expiatory and riddling death.’²³ Finally, because

¹⁷ Wiley, ‘An introduction to the early Irish king tales’, 17, 55; Meckler, ‘The assassination of Diarmait’, 46-7. The second recension contained in the Book of Lismore is later and more distantly related to the hagiographical material, and so is omitted from present discussion. For a full discussion of the manuscript witnesses and their relationships to each other, see Wiley, ‘An edition’, 89-98.

¹⁸ *AD*, 1-4, 22 (Wiley, 110-4, 136-8; trans. idem, 139-42, 163-4).

¹⁹ S.H. O’Grady, R. Flower, and M. Dillon, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London: 1926-1953), 2:273; Byrne *Irish kings and high-kings*, 91; Radner, ‘Threefold death’, 194; Wiley, ‘An edition’, 89, 98-102; W. Sayers, ‘Deficient royal rule: the king’s proxies, judges and the instruments of his fate’, in *Essays on the early Irish king tales*, ed. D.M. Wiley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 115 [104-26].

²⁰ Radner, ‘Threefold death’, 193; M. Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘The literature of medieval Ireland, 800–1200: from the Vikings to the Normans’, in *Cambridge history of Irish literature*, ed. M. Kelleher and P. O’Leary, 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 1:56 [1:32–73].

²¹ W. Sayers, ‘Deficient royal rule’, 115, saw the saga as ‘brought together some time in the twelfth century’. See also J.E. Rekdal, ‘From wine in a goblet to milk in cowdung: the transformation of early Christian kings in three post-Viking tales from Ireland’, in *Ideology and power in the Viking and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney, and the Faeroes*, ed. G. Steinsland, J.V. Sigurdsson, J.E. Rekdal and I. Beuermann, *The Northern World* 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 218 [211-67].

²² Wiley, ‘An edition’, 89. *Ibid.*, 103-4, 200 (at note 18.17), gives plausible reasons why the event referred to is the devastation of Ailech in 1101 and not the earlier devastation in 939.

²³ O’Connor, *The destruction*, 331-2. Similar concerns are also noted by O’Connor of the late Middle Irish saga *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca* (‘The violent death of Muirchertach mac Erca’), another text concerned with deficient royal rule, which recombines narrative elements from both *Togail Bruidne* and *AD*.

the performance of the psalms of malediction form part of the escalation of the Tara episode central to the saga, as the audience would have known, one must be attuned to the possibility that individual narrative events throughout *AD* more broadly contain allusions to the language and images of the Psalms, which will form a further basis for my analysis.

In simple narrative terms, the saga can be briefly summarised as follows.²⁴ Having been exiled by the high-king of Tara, Diarmait submits to Ciarán in return for the saint's promise that he will himself assume the high-kingship, which is that day fulfilled.²⁵ At first he rules propitiously, but his early violation of the sanctuary of Ciarán earns him the prophecy that he will ultimately suffer a violent threefold death: by piercing, by burning, and by drowning.²⁶ Reinforcing Ciarán's prophecy are various miraculous portents and foreshadowings.²⁷ Diarmait continues to rule until his second violation, this time of the sanctuary of Ruadán, earns him a confrontation with that saint in the Cursing of Tara episode.²⁸ Ruadán's curse sets in motion Diarmait's loss of sovereignty and violent death, and Ciarán's prophecy is fulfilled.²⁹

The hagiographical material is more contested. The material awaits a full critical study of the entire dossier, and scholars have varied widely on their proposed dates and contexts for the Life of Ruadán, some of which would have important implications for the dating of the material above. The 'original' Latin Life that underlies the manuscript witnesses is numbered among the O'Donohue Lives, a group of nine or ten texts which Sharpe proposed may date as early as the seventh or eighth century and argued to have been best preserved by the apparently conservative S-redactor.³⁰ Byrne had similarly dated the S-recension on the grounds of the vernacular orthography of the names within it to the eighth century, while observing on grounds of topography that the D-recension could be no earlier than the tenth century, and 'probably a good deal later'.³¹ The appearance of certain linguistic anomalies in the Tara episode of S however prompted Sharpe to argue that the proposed common exemplar on which both S and D were putatively based had been interpolated at a later date, possibly as late as the twelfth century.³² Nonetheless, such anomalies are not confined solely to the Tara episode. Ó Riain identified other seemingly late features throughout the supposedly conservative S-recension which might push the dating

²⁴ A longer summary can also be found in Sayers, 'Deficient royal rule', 115-7.

²⁵ *AD*, 1 (Wiley, 110-1; trans. idem, 139-40).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 (Wiley, 111-2; trans. idem, 140-1).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-6 (Wiley, 112-7; trans. idem, 141-5).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-12 (Wiley, 117-28; trans. idem, 145-55).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13-22 (Wiley, 128-38; trans. idem, 155-64).

³⁰ Sharpe, *MISL*, 297-339; see also Heist, *VSHH*, xxi-viii.

³¹ F.J. Byrne, 'Derrynavlan: the historical context', *JRS* 110 (1980), 118 [116-26]; *MISL*, 331. Byrne's dating of D on linguistic grounds is seemingly alluding to the very broad Middle Irish context of 900-1200.

³² Sharpe, *MISL*, 331-2.

of the entire dossier into the mid-twelfth century or later.³³ Other scholars have raised issues which call Sharpe's general thesis for an early date of the O'Donohue Lives into question.³⁴ Perhaps most importantly for present purposes, the most striking anomalies identified feature in key episodes at the beginning, middle, and end of the Life. This suggests that the overall rhetorical frame, which underlies the text as a single cohesive narrative, is a twelfth-century product.³⁵ Thus, while one cannot rule out the possibility of a mixed compilation combining material of an early period with new or revised material of a later date (much as is the case in *AD*), the accumulation of evidence outlined above seems to suggest that the texts of S and D that survive and the narrative frame they have been given are best understood in terms of essentially twelfth-century recensions.

Because the Latin Lives have not been translated and have received little attention apart from the Tara episode, and because the overall framework is necessary to understand how that episode is situated within the Lives, their miraculous contents can be summarised briefly. In the first parts of both S and D, Ruadán floods the field of a wicked man who violently expelled him;³⁶ raises a chief from the dead;³⁷ finds a lost hoard;³⁸ banishes two demons for their repeated destruction of the monastery's milk-vessel;³⁹ cures a queen in Leinster with blessed spittle;⁴⁰ revives the drowned son of the king of the Britons;⁴¹ and surrenders a marvellous tree to the will of his mentor Finnian.⁴² Roughly a quarter of the Life is then devoted to the events connected with Ruadán's confrontation with Diarmait – the Tara episode – for the release of the captive Áed Guare.⁴³ The remainder is given then to Ruadán's almsgiving and curing of

³³ Ó Riain, 'O'Donohue Lives', 44-5; idem, *DIS*, 543.

³⁴ Perhaps the most notable reservations, on linguistic grounds, were expressed by J. Carey, 'Review: "Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: an introduction to *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*" by Richard Sharpe', *Speculum* 68.1 (1993), 261-2 [260-2], who specifically noted forms in the Life of Ruadán (eg. *Vita Ruadani S.*, 1 [*VSHH*, 160-1]) which 'can scarcely antedate 900', and believed that while individual Lives may be as early as Sharpe claimed the collection as a whole 'should be assigned to the Middle Irish period' (ie. 900-1200). Other objections are quoted by Ó Riain, 'O'Donohue Lives', 41-2.

³⁵ The 'anachronistic' episodes noted by Ó Riain above, at fn. 33, can set within the overall rhetorical frame displaying tight thematic parallelism between episodes at either end of the Life: in *Vita Ruadani S.*, 1, 11-12, 23-4 (*VSHH*, 160-1, 163-5, 167). This rhetorical frame has been hitherto unrecognised, and it is my intent to explore it and the question of the dating of the Life further in another work.

³⁶ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 4 (*VSHH*, 161); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 6 (*VSHP*, 2:241).

³⁷ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 5 (*VSHH*, 161); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 7 (*VSHP*, 2:241-2).

³⁸ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 6 (*VSHH*, 161); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 8 (*VSHP*, 2:242).

³⁹ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 8 (*VSHH*, 162); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 10 (*VSHP*, 2:242-3).

⁴⁰ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 9 (*VSHH*, 162); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 11-2 (*VSHP*, 2:243-4).

⁴¹ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 10 (*VSHH*, 163); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:244).

⁴² *Vita Ruadani S.*, 11 (*VSHH*, 163); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 14 (*VSHP*, 2:244-5).

⁴³ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 12 (*VSHH*, 163-5); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 15-8 (*VSHP*, 2:245-9).

lepers, his miraculous raising of a felled tree obstructing a path, his transformation of meat into bread during Lent, his miraculous carrying of hot coals in his hands, his milking of a deer and use of deer to pull his chariot, his providing a firm path for cattle through a marsh, his multiplication of butter, his raising of three children, and his intercession on behalf of an evil man being carried off to hell by the demons of the air.⁴⁴ There are, in essence, six discrete punitive episodes within this narrative: three concerned with secular transgressions (the flooded field, the Tara episode, and the man accosted by demons on his death) and three concerned with monastic ones (the demons striking the milk-vessel, the surrender of Ruadán's tree, and the transformation of meat in Lent). On the whole these will not feature in the present chapter, in which discussion of the Ruadán and Diarmait material will instead largely focus on the more notable Tara episode and its place within *AD* in particular, though they will be alluded to in Chapter V.

Turning to the second group of texts, the Lives connected with Máedóc for their part represent a range of texts mediating the interests of churches and rulers from two disparate geographical regions of the same cult. The federation of churches linked with Máedóc centred on two competing kingdoms within Ireland, the kingdom of Leinster in the south-east and the kingdom of Bréifne in the north, and the clusters of texts connected with Máedóc can be similarly divided. The first cluster are those connected with Ferns, an important church site in Leinster during the eleventh century, which was later established as capital and episcopal seat of the kingdom during the reign of Diarmait mac Murchada (1126x1171).⁴⁵ The second are those connected with the churches of Daiminis and neighbouring Rossinver, sites on the exposed northern frontier of the kingdom of Bréifne, under the overlordship of Tigernán Úa Rúairc (1124x1172). Both sets of sites became the seats of Augustinian priories under those royal patrons, opening them up as conduits of reformist ideas, while also retaining (in the case of Daiminis) their earlier monastic communities.⁴⁶ These sites also produced around the same time Lives of other saints, notably Laisrén (Mo Laisse) at Daiminis and Moling Luachra at Ferns, which can each be considered as part of a cluster reflecting the same interests of those ecclesiastical centres.

The Lives of Máedóc connected with Ferns have been proposed to trace back to a vernacular Life originally written in Leinster in the mid-eleventh century. This vernacular Life does not survive, but several later recensions do. The earliest is the Life 'V', a Latin translation which was compiled in the MS Cotton Vespasian A. xiv at Monmouth c. 1200, and which seems to preserve much of the political content of the presumed vernacular original. On account of the political configurations described, the original vernacular Life has been argued to have been composed during the reign of Diarmait mac Máel

⁴⁴ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 13-23 (*VSHH*, 165-7); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 19-29 (*VSHP*, 2:249-52).

⁴⁵ For Ferns, see Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 78-9; also C. Doherty, 'The transmission of the cult of St. Máedhóg', in *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: texts and transmission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), 273 [268-83]; Sharpe, *MISL*, 223, 353-61, 365.

⁴⁶ Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 33, 79, 169, 175.

na mBó, king of Uí Chennselaig and of Leinster (1042x1072), and perhaps more specifically around the time of the death of Conaing Ua Faircellaig in 1059, by which time Diarmait had achieved a paramountcy over Leinster and the greater part of the island of Ireland.⁴⁷ It has been debated whether the earliest extant translation into Latin took place in the late eleventh or early twelfth century, or sometime around the Norman Conquest in 1169.⁴⁸ Given the early political content which the Life appears to preserve, the case for it being produced around the date of the conquest is not strong, nor indeed does there appear to have been much in the way of any significant detectable implications even if that had been the case.⁴⁹

The second surviving recension is the Latin Life ‘M’. This text survives in the Dublin collection of some twenty-seven saints’ Lives, the earliest major collection of saints’ Lives, made in Leinster in the 1220s and preserved in two fourteenth-century manuscript copies. Although the Lives of this collection cannot be attributed to a single author, Plummer and Sharpe observed an evenness in the collection which indicated that it had been ‘subjected to editorial revision which imposed on them a high degree of similarity of expression and outlook’, such that ‘almost every Life in the collection betrays the interests, the idiosyncrasies, and the linguistic stamp of one redactor’.⁵⁰ Once these factors are controlled for however (which has been made possible through Sharpe’s detailed analysis of the collection), the Life itself is believed to have been revised at Ferns from a recension similar to ‘V’ composed during the reign of Diarmait mac Murchada (1126x1171).⁵¹ A somewhat abridged later vernacular version of the Life also survives, *Betha Máedóc Ferna I*, which is taken to be derivative of ‘M’ though no more precise a date has yet been suggested.⁵² Given the century which appears to have intervened between these two sets of texts – those written under Diarmait mac Máel na mBó and those written under Diarmait mac Murchada – it should be possible to track various changes in outlook on cursing from the revisions in evidence. The

⁴⁷ C. Doherty, ‘The Irish hagiographer: resources, aims, results’, in *The writer as witness*, ed. T. Dunne, Historical Studies 16 (Cork, 1987), 18-20 [10-22]; B.T. Hudson, ‘Diarmait mac Máel na mBó (d. 1072)’, in *ODNB*, 16:23; D. Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, Gill History of Ireland 2 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), 133-7; idem, ‘The career of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó, king of Leinster’, *Old Wexford Society Journal* 3 (1971), 34-5 [26-35]; and 4 (1972-3), 17-20 [17-24].

⁴⁸ K.W. Hughes, ‘British Museum MS Cotton Vespasian A. xiv (“Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium”): its purpose and provenance’, in *Studies in the early British Church*, ed. N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge: CUP, 1958), 189-200, esp. 189-90 [183-200]; Sharpe, *MISL*, 223-7, 395-6; Doherty, ‘The Irish hagiographer’, 18; idem, ‘The transmission’, 268-9. Conversely Ó Riain, *DIS*, 433, has posited that the saint’s sojourn with St. David in Wales is an instance of ‘opportunistic hagiography... designed to show that Maodhóg’s churches, and especially Ferns, were on excellent terms with the Welsh Church’, and so by extension elicit the favour of the Cambro-Norman adventurers of 1169.

⁴⁹ For the already close secular and ecclesiastical ties between Leinster and Wales in the eleventh century, undercutting Ó Riain’s main argument in fn. 48 above, see especially Flanagan, *Angevin*, 61-9.

⁵⁰ Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:xxii; Sharpe, *MISL*, 115-8.

⁵¹ Doherty, ‘The transmission’, 271-73.

⁵² Plummer, *BNEÉ*, 1:xxxiii. The Life itself survives in an early seventeenth-century manuscript copy.

Augustinian priory at Ferns seems also to have been responsible around 1160 or shortly after for a Latin Life of Moling Luachra of Tech Moling (St. Mullin's), in which the saint is represented as Máedóc's successor as second bishop of Ferns, and linked with a branch of the ruling Uí Cheinnselaig dynasty of Leinster. This text would have been produced by the priory's canons as a pseudo-historical basis to consolidate in writing the newly-established connexion between Ferns and Tech Moling within the kingdom of Osraige, following the subjection of the kingdom to Leinster, and the grant of Tech Moling to Ferns by Diarmait mac Murchada around that time.⁵³ Also extant is a Middle Irish vernacular Life of Moling, *Geinemain Molling ocus a bhetae* ('The birth and life of Moling'). The Life has been suggested to date to the twelfth century,⁵⁴ building on earlier traditions, but has little direct relationship to the Latin Life.⁵⁵

Of these texts, the Cotton Life 'V' contains seven cursing episodes in total, all of which appear with subtle variation in the subsequent Lives based ultimately upon 'V'. Of these, three are in response to secular encroachment or transgression of sanctuary,⁵⁶ two in response to attempts to strike or drown the saint,⁵⁷ one for regicide,⁵⁸ and one to induce the release of hostages by a king in another province.⁵⁹ The curses are therefore largely political in theme and narrative purpose.

In Bréifne, the cult is chiefly represented by *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, a late medieval vernacular recension which translates the twelfth-century 'M' into both verse and prose, but which also incorporates additional, originally independent prose and verse material.⁶⁰ Of key importance, embedded within the prose of compilation, is a set of five poems written on behalf of the church of Máedóc at Rossinver, which declare their author as one Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside. Gilla Mo Dutu (fl. c. 1143-1147) is elsewhere identified as the author of three poems on Laisrén, as well as of two important secular compositions respectively concerning the kings of Ireland and genealogical lore about women, though his authorship of these

⁵³ Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 175; O'Riain, *DIS*, 488,

⁵⁴ J.F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical: an introduction and guide*, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies 11 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929; revised ed., Shannon: Irish University Press, 1966), 462, suggests a date of the eleventh or twelfth century. J. Carney, 'Suibne Gelt and the Children of Lir', in *Studies in Irish literature and history* (Dublin: DIAS, 1979), 139 n. 2 [129-164], more narrowly suggests that it would 'probably date from the twelfth century.' The text's most recent editor, M. De Paor, *Saint Moling Luachra: a pilgrimage from Sliabh Luachra to Rinn Ros Broic above the stream-pools of the Barrow* (Blackrock: Columba Press, 2001), 15, unfortunately does not suggest a specific date.

⁵⁵ O'Riain, *DIS*, 488-9.

⁵⁶ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 24, 26, 28 (*VSHP*, 2:301-3).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, 46 (*VSHP*, 2:298-9, 2:308).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 43 (*VSHP*, 2:307).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305).

⁶⁰ Doherty, 'Some aspects of hagiography as a source for Irish economic history', *Peritia* 1 (1982), 322 [300-28]; Doherty, 'The transmission', 274

bodies of material has been much debated and has yet to be conclusively established.⁶¹ Nonetheless, the poems on Máedóc fit well with a clerical writer acting on behalf of the closely connected monastic federations of Laisrén at Daiminis and of Maedóc at neighbouring Rossinver,⁶² and the suggestion that their author was Gilla Mo Dutu himself – who was attached to the ecclesiastical site of Ard Breacán in Míde before being later attached to the monastery on Daiminis (both at times under the overlordship of Tigernán Úa Rúairc of Bréifne) – remains a plausible one.⁶³ The poems themselves individually number between sixteen and twenty-nine four-line stanzas, coming to 117 stanzas in total.⁶⁴ The first four chiefly detail the rights and tributes due to the saint and his community, while Poem 5 is a simple elegy of the saint and exhortation on his behalf to devotion by its audience.⁶⁵ Taken together, such vernacular compositions would have been recited to the surrounding population to communicate and reinforce the ecclesiastical dues of the area under the church's control,⁶⁶ either as a form of 'serious entertainment' recited at such public events as banquets or inauguration rituals,⁶⁷ or as lectionary material appropriate to the liturgy of the saint's feast.⁶⁸ It is in the first four of these poems that curses and threatened divine vengeance appear, as the sole form of sanction in the case of transgressions of the honours and privileges due to the saint.

Because of the connexion between the federations of Máedóc at Rossinver and Laisrén at Daiminis, the hagiographical material produced at Daiminis concerning Laisrén is also of relevance. There is a Latin Life of Laisrén contained in the fourteenth-century Codex Insulensis, which represents a homiletic

⁶¹ The poems appear in *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, 196-8, 202-5, 217-20, 221b-4, 264-5 (*BNE*, 1:245-7, 1:248-51, 1:257-60, 1:261-4, 1:279-80; trans. idem, 2:237-9, 2:241-3, 2:250-2, 2:253-6, 2:270-2), with additional indirect influence on other sections of the Life also having been proposed. The three poems in the dossier of Laisrén stand apart from the Life proper in the manuscript and remain unpublished. See K. Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside', in *Cín Chille Cúile: texts, saints and places; essays in honour of Pádraig Ó Riain*, ed. J. Carey, M. Herbert and K. Murray, Celtic Studies Publications 9 (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2004), 156-157, 158 fn. 54 [150-162]. For the remainder of Gilla's works, see *ibid.*, 155-6, 158-60.

⁶² C. Doherty, 'Saint Máedóc and Saint Molaisse', *Breifne: Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhréifne* 7.24 (1986), 369-70 [363-74]; idem, 'The transmission', 275-8; Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu', 156-8. As noted by Murray, the two sites stand a mere 20 miles apart, although whether their association and cooperation long preceded the twelfth century is unclear.

⁶³ Doherty, 'The transmission', 276; Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu', 153, 154-5, 157.

⁶⁴ In Plummer's edition, this represents a dozen or so pages out of the 105 pages of the Life.

⁶⁵ On these functions, see Doherty, 'Saint Máedóc and Saint Molaisse', 364-5.

⁶⁶ K. Simms, *Medieval Gaelic sources*, Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History 14 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 59.

⁶⁷ Simms, *Medieval Gaelic sources*, 57; Doherty, 'The transmission', 274-5, 282.

⁶⁸ M.T. Flanagan, *The transformation of the Irish church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, Studies in Celtic History 29 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 15. Doherty, 'The transmission', 279, also notes the parallel with the versification of saint's Lives in northern France by professional minstrels from the eleventh century on.

reworking of an earlier Life.⁶⁹ Awaiting critical study, scholars have suggested in passing that the Life is a product of the twelfth century, possibly derived from the Augustinian house established on Daiminis in 1130.⁷⁰ Further evidence can be marshalled in support of this view. Episodes concerning the saint guiding his monks in time of famine and pestilence may allude to the great murrain of cows in 1133 and to the severe famine inflicted on the Uí Briuin of Bréifne and the Fir Fernmaige in Airgíalla by the men of Mide in 1138-9.⁷¹ The destruction of Daiminis by the men of Leinster in 1157 provides a reasonable terminus within that same generation after which the house would presumably have lacked the resources to produce such a Life.⁷² It additionally represents an event which would have made the Life's account of the saint's miraculous prevention of a waterborne attack by a neighbouring ruler (possibly inspired by report of the miraculous frustration of a similar waterborne attack on Inis Mochta in 1138) ring particularly hollow.⁷³ I would therefore briefly suggest that the Life can be reasonably narrowed to 1140x1157, and will further contextualise the episode in that light in section V below.

II

With the sources thus elaborated, the first stated aim is to examine those texts which reveal the thematic influence of the maledictory psalms, whose performance is integral to the narrative of the Tara episode. This cursus of twenty psalms can be shown to have been more broadly familiar in the period from the survival of a Middle Irish poem which Pádraig Ó Néill dates to the early eleventh century which lists them, as well as from references to them in narrative texts.⁷⁴ To date, work on these psalms has principally used narrative texts such as *AD* and the Lives of Ruadán as sources for their historical performance and for their legal contexts where they are directly and explicitly referenced, rather than investigating the indirect and implicit influence of the Psalms as a stock of literary imagery upon the

⁶⁹ Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:lxiv; Ó Riain, *DIS*, 484. The text is sometimes unnecessarily assumed to be an abbreviation of a longer original.

⁷⁰ Byrne, *Irish kings and high kings*, 96; Ó Riain, *DIS*, 484.

⁷¹ *Vita Lasriani*, 9, 29 (*VSHP*, 2:132-3, 2:138); cf. the later medieval records in *AFM* 1133.18, 1138.10.

⁷² Cf. *AU* 1157.3: 'Daimh-inis with its churches was burned'; *AFM* 1157.2: 'Daimhinis, Lis-mor, and Lothra, with their churches, were burned'; *MCB* 1157.2: 'Daimhinis was burned, including houses and churches'; see also Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 169.

⁷³ *Vita Lasriani*, 14-7 (*VSHP*, 2:134-5); cf. *AFM* 1138.10. As in the Life, this raid ended with the attackers repulsed and drowned without burning the island, 'through the miracles of God and the patron saint.'

⁷⁴ P. Ó Néill, 'A Middle Irish poem on the maledictory psalms', *Journal of Celtic Studies* 3 (1981), 49-51 [40-58]. These are Psalms 2, 3, 5, 7, 13 (14), 21 (22), 25 (26), 35 (36), 37 (38), 38 (39), 49 (50), 51 (52), 52 (53), 67 (68), 68 (69), 78 (79), 82 (83), 108 (109), Deuteronomy 32, and Psalm 115 (second half of 116); though the last three could alternatively run as Psalm 93, Deuteronomy 32, and Psalm 115. The origin of the cursing psalms was not confined to the Book of Psalms proper, as evidenced by the inclusion of Deuteronomy. See D.M. Wiley, 'The maledictory Psalms', *Peritia* 15 (2001), 265 [261-279].

narratives of the texts themselves.⁷⁵ This latter category of close reading is important however, because it expands our understanding of the broader resonance of the maledictory psalms within the religious and literary culture of Ireland in the central Middle Ages and may also reveal unexpected details of their use. That there should be such influence can be readily shown. In general terms, any cleric reared on the memorisation and daily recitation of the Psalms would have been fully immersed in a broad and readily available stock of biblical language and imagery.⁷⁶ Moreover, Irish clerics were also known to apply exegetical techniques directly to vernacular literature.⁷⁷ Thus for a literary production of clerical authorship, one might reasonably find both conscious and unconscious echoes of such biblical language and imagery even in a vernacular mode.⁷⁸ This would be especially likely in the specific instance of *AD*, in which the saints' ritual use of the psalms of malediction stands at the centre of the Tara episode and the ritual's target is none other than the saga's tragic protagonist. The original composer of the Tara episode might thus have built thematic allusions deliberately derived from those twenty psalms into the episode itself, while the compiler of *AD* in turn might have been particularly ready to build similar allusions into the broader narrative framework built around the episode. It must be noted that these verbal echoes and allusions by no means need be literal borrowings, but need only follow the visual impression of the Vulgate.⁷⁹ Meanwhile the audience, or at least a part thereof, being culturally attuned to the fact that these

⁷⁵ See eg. Wiley, 'An edition', 56-88; idem, 'The maledictory psalms', 270; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 167-71.

⁷⁶ T. Gross-Diaz, 'The Latin Psalter', in *The new Cambridge history of the Bible*, ed. J.C. Paget, J. Schaper, R. Marsden, E.A. Matter, E.K. Cameron, J.K. Riches, 4 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 2012-6), 2:436-9 [2:427-45]; M.-L. Ehrenschtendner, 'Literacy and the Bible', in *ibid.*, 2:708-9 [2:704-21]; T.J. Heffernan, *Sacred biography: saints and their biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 79-80; M. McNamara, *The psalms in the early Irish church*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 165 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 21-2; J. Coleman, *Ancient and medieval memories: studies in the reconstruction of the past* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 176; Wiley, 'The maledictory psalms', 261-2. On the intensity of this daily recitation, see W. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: monastic writing and identity in the early Middle Ages*, *Studies in Celtic History* 23 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 204-6, 209.

⁷⁷ On the suitability of vernacular saga-material for the application of exegetical techniques from the eleventh century on, see M. Herbert, 'The preface to Amra Coluim Cille', in *Sages, saints and storytellers: Celtic studies in honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, and K. McCone, *Maynooth Monographs* 2 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1989), 67-9 [67-75]; idem, 'Crossing historical and literary boundaries: Irish written culture around the year 1000', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 53/4 (2007), 94 [87-101].

⁷⁸ This point need not be overextended – equally there might be vernacular texts and sagas where such influence is only slight – but for any vernacular text which overlaps with the hagiographical genre it is only right that questions of influence should be asked.

⁷⁹ This point is made concerning classical Latin influence by B. Miles, *Heroic saga and classical epic in medieval Ireland*, *Studies in Celtic History* 30 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 114, in his examination of classical influence on *Togail Troí*: 'the description of the storm in *Togail Troí* by no means translate Virgil's ekphrasis literally, but correspond to the visual impression created in the Latin text; visual impressions follow nearly the same order, with only the image of the wave summits having been delayed in the Irish version.' This is in part a difference of 'formal equivalence' and 'dynamic equivalence', for which D. Luft, 'Translation theory and medieval translation', in *Translations from*

twenty psalms were integral narrative components of what would already have been a familiar tale of cursing, would have been especially attuned to pick up on such echoes and allusions within the saga more broadly from its outset. This would most likely have been true of a clerical reader or listener. The possibility however that the Psalms may additionally have filtered down to the level of the literate and vernacular laity is suggested not only by the importance afforded to them for general liturgical and penitential use, but also by the bilingualism and vernacular glossing of such manuscripts of sacred verse as the eleventh-century *Liber Hymnorum*.⁸⁰ It is also conceivable that discussion of sacred verse could have been communicated to an illiterate laity in a solely oral context.⁸¹ In any event, in the case of a mixed clerical and lay vernacular audience one could expect differing levels of meaning to be recognised: some scriptural resonances might be obvious to some, while less obvious or more multilayered resonances might only be apparent to the more learned.⁸² Biblical influence will thus be shown in three key areas. First, implicit narrative features: noting that much of what actually happens within the broader narrative framework of *AD* can be made to correspond with elements of the Psalms. Second, direct features: arguing that the cursing match of Ruadán and Diarmait in the Tara episode can be read as a vernacularisation of the psalmodic structure and certain of its themes. Finally, motivational features: noting that a reading of the maledictory psalms against the characters' motivations in the saga narrative cast Diarmait in a sympathetic, if at times somewhat ambiguous, light.

What follows first then is a summary of general narrative correspondences in the saga with the themes and imagery of the cursing psalms. The theme of offences foregrounded in *AD* §§1-4, and which recur throughout the saga – namely bloodshed, broken oaths, and violations of sanctuary – may be seen as encapsulated in the second cursing psalm, Psalm 5, which contrasts the psalmist who reveres the holy temple with the Lord's destruction of the bloody and deceitful man.⁸³ Similarly important in the cursing

classical literature: Imtheachta Aeniasa and Stair Ercuíl ocus a bás, ed. K. Murray, ITS Subsidiary Series 17 (London: Irish Texts Society, 2006), 90-1 [83-100].

⁸⁰ See T. Gross-Diaz, 'The Latin Psalter', 439-443; Ehrenschtendner, 'Literacy and the Bible', 704-5, 710-1; Herbert, 'Irish written culture', 88-90. The text of the *Liber Hymnorum* is dated to 989x1007, but its two extant copies are respectively of the early eleventh and late eleventh or early twelfth century in date. See L. Bieler, 'The Irish book of hymns: a palaeographical study', *Scriptorium* 2.2 (1948), 177 [177-194]. For other instances of the vernacularisation and versification of sacred texts in the eleventh century, and the objective of maintaining their accessibility for a contemporary public, see again Herbert, 'Irish written culture', 94, 97; and for an earlier period, which saw the pastoral use of the vernacular for the laity, see Follett, *Céli Dé*, 98, 210.

⁸¹ Ehrenschtendner, 'Literacy and the Bible', 704-5.

⁸² Even in a monastic context, different levels of meaning could be discerned according to one's familiarity with scripture and accumulated habits of *lectio divina*; see Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 100-1, 120-2.

⁸³ *AD*, 1-4 (Wiley, 110-4; trans. idem, 139-42). Cf. Vulgate Psalm 5:7: '...virum sanguinum et dolosum'. These themes are not confined to Psalm 5 and recur throughout the Psalms (see eg. Psalm 54:34 [55:23]: 'Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days'), but Psalm 5 is their most pronounced appearance as a group.

psalms is the man who lays claim to the sanctuary of God as if his own (Psalm 82:13) and who leaves God's slaughtered servants bloodied and unburied in the holy temple (Psalm 78:1-3). It may be argued that this image is viscerally present from the moment of Diarmait's first offence. In §2, Diarmait wounds Flann Find, a tenant on church land, and leaves him to drown in a bathtub that, presumably, spills when his house burns down on top of it.⁸⁴ On that theme, Psalm 78:3 runs accordingly: 'They have poured out their blood as much as water.'⁸⁵ In Psalm 67:7-10, unbelievers are punished with harshness and drought, but God goes forth among his people in the desert, moves the earth and the heavens, and provides rain which flows in abundance.⁸⁶ This theme is elaborated in §3, in which Diarmait is punished through drought, but the pleas of God's people induce Ciarán as representative to bring enough rain to create twelve great rivers, thereby bringing down heaven and transforming the earth in the process.⁸⁷ Next, Diarmait's saving submissions to Ciarán and later Ruadán recapitulate Psalm 2:10-11, serving the Lord with fear and trembling before his feet. Over the course of §§7-22 however, Diarmait repeats his earlier offences, becoming blind to them and to his advancing fate.⁸⁸ After the fulcrum of the saga in §§9-10 in which 'the clerics chanted maledictory psalms upon him', his offences come back to punish him in turn.⁸⁹ The theme is integral to Psalm 7:15-7: 'He hath conceived sorrow and brought forth iniquity. He hath opened a pit and dug it; and he is fallen into the hole he made. His sorrow shall be turned on his own head: and his iniquity shall come down upon his head (*verticem*).'⁹⁰ Accordingly, in §13, when the cursing psalms take effect upon Diarmait, he dreams that his royal diadem is taken from his head and broken.⁹¹ The psalmist's theme of vengeance has been set in motion. In §22, Diarmait dies in the same manner that he originally inflicted upon Flann Find: by wounding, burning, and drowning.⁹² He is thus not only

⁸⁴ *AD*, 2 (Wiley, 111-2; trans. idem, 140-1). Flann Find's tenancy is inferred: his social status is not specified in the saga, beyond the claim that he was an enemy of Diarmait, but Diarmait's granting of his lands to the Church before killing him as he lived on those same lands would seem to imply that, whatever his previous status, he had been made a de facto tenant.

⁸⁵ Gallican Psalter reading: '...effuderunt sanguinem ipsorum tanquam aquam.'

⁸⁶ Hebraicum Psalter reading: '...increduli autem habitaverunt in siccitatibus'; cf. Gallican reading: '...eos qui exasperant qui habitant in sepulcris.'

⁸⁷ *AD*, 3 (Wiley, 112-3; trans. idem, 141). Also relevant thematically is the penultimate cursing 'psalm', Deuteronomy 32:10: 'In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye.'

⁸⁸ *AD*, 7-22 (Wiley, 117-38; trans. idem, 145-64). Cf. Psalm 35:3-4 (36): 'For in his sight he hath done deceitfully, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred. The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile: he would not understand that he might do well.'

⁸⁹ Quoted at *AD*, 9 (Wiley, 120; trans. idem, 147): '...rogabsat na cléirigh salmu eascaine iarsin.'

⁹⁰ Vulgate Psalm 7:15-7: '...concepit dolorem et peperit iniquitatem; lacum aperuit et effodit eum et incidet in foveam quam fecit; convertetur dolor eius in caput eius et in verticem ipsius iniquitas eius descendet.'

⁹¹ *AD*, 13 (Wiley, 128-9; trans. idem, 155-6).

⁹² *AD*, 22 (Wiley, 136-7; trans. idem, 163-4).

punished as foretold, but in a manner which, on the theme of Psalm 5 that implicitly frames §§1-4, ‘corresponds with the multitude of his iniquities.’⁹³ There is however one important addition to the manner of his death. While being wounded, burned, and drowned, Diarmait is additionally crushed as his roof-beam collapses on his head. Scholars have noted that somewhat puzzlingly, this appears to break the pattern of his death on Flann Find’s, and turns Diarmait’s punishment into an almost unprecedented ‘fourfold death.’⁹⁴ The pattern becomes explicable however once recognised as fulfilling the promise of the psalms: ‘God will shatter the heads of his enemies’ (Psalm 67:22), or equally, ‘Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’ (Psalm 2:9). In the saga, Diarmait’s head and body are not only broken *like* a vessel, but are literally broken while he hides *in* a vessel, in this case a vat of ale. Moreover, Psalm 2 is the first of the cursing psalms. Diarmait thus meets his end not only precisely as his first offence merits, but also exactly as how the cursing psalms begin.

Moving on from general narrative correspondences, it falls to consider the possibility of more direct influence on the direct-speech imprecations that make up the cursing match between Diarmait and Ruadán in §10.⁹⁵ It must first be noted that the engagement between Ruadán and Diarmait comes in two phases. The first is the series of psalms chanted against Diarmait (§9), and the second is the direct cursing match in which the direct-speech imprecations are invoked (§10).⁹⁶ This division, otherwise unknown from studies of the psalms of malediction as tersely known from Irish sources, seems however to correspond with the formulas of monastic malediction more extensively known from a Frankish context. In the mid-ninth- or mid- to later tenth-century malediction of Saint-Wandrille in Normandy, for instance, the brothers are directed to sing a cursus of seven psalms, concluding with a litany of curses directly excerpted but creatively rearranged from among the Psalms more broadly.⁹⁷ This shows that the sequence of events in *AD* is not merely a literary construct, but might rather reflect the heightening of a readily imaginable social reality familiar to both saga-author and audience. As we shall see, the cursing match in *AD* seems to be constructed as a similar litany, evoking in the vernacular a comparable catena of the psalms to that of Saint-Wandrille.

It must additionally be noted that Diarmait himself is named as performer in both stages of the ritual. The saga reports (§9): ‘For an entire year after that, [the clerics] were cursing Diarmait and working miracles

⁹³ The quote does not appear in *AD*, but may be implied by the structure of the narrative in so far as the offence, prophecy and its fulfilment can all be encapsulated within Psalm 5.

⁹⁴ J.E. Rekdal, ‘From wine’, 229 notes the difficulty, but observes that it also occurs in *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*.

⁹⁵ *AD*, 10 (Wiley, 120-2; trans. idem, 148-9).

⁹⁶ The whole section comprises *AD*, 9-10 (Wiley, 119-22; trans. idem, 147-9).

⁹⁷ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 24, 64-5; idem, ‘Formules monastiques de malédiction aux ix^e et x^e siècles’, *Revue Mabillon* 58 (1975), 378-81, 397-8 [377-99]. The seven psalms in the Saint-Wandrille malediction are Psalm 12 (13), 45 (46), 51 (52), 78 (79), 79 (80), 82 (83), 108 (109); while the litany of curses are drawn from Psalms 68 (69), 54 (55), 20 (21), 34 (35), 51 (52), 82 (83), 107 (108), in that order.

against him, and Diarmait would pay back wonder for wonder, and [the clerics] then were unable to prevail against him'.⁹⁸ Since the cursing ritual involves the recitation of the psalms, paying them back wonder for wonder would seem to imply that Diarmait too was chanting the psalms. While at first surprising to see the king engaging with his opponents on ostensibly clerical ground, and with miraculous efficacy no less, it must be recalled that the original composition of the psalms was attributed to King David. Thus the quintessential psalmist is a royal figure, whom Diarmait resembles as an earthly paragon of justice. Diarmait's problem strongly resembles that of David himself as represented in earlier Irish homiletic *exempla*: namely that of maintaining under threat of divine punishment the awesome burden of an at times impossible balance of justice.⁹⁹ On these bases it is therefore natural to read Diarmait's speech in similarly Davidic terms. Moreover, the direct-speech exchange between Diarmait and Ruadán in §10 consists of an alternation of short, mostly one-line pronouncements, in which Ruadán's curses on the whole are primarily responsive to Diarmait's and take up the theme of the immediately preceding curse in appropriately secular terms. Repetition and reduplication of lines is a notable internal feature of the psalms, accompanied to great effect in the alternating call-response psalmody of the monastic office, as well as in the cursing litany in the Saint-Wandrille malediction.¹⁰⁰ The reduplication of Diarmait's short curses by Ruadán thus gives the cursing match a quasi-liturgical, almost ironic call-response quality. Having recognised the cursing match as alluding to the familiar form of the Psalms, it follows that the curses contained therein might also best be explicated in terms of their content.

To that end, when Diarmait confronts Ruadán directly in §10, he first states his motivations: 'You have done me wrong in harming my reign... for I am upholding the truth while you are protecting a criminal.'¹⁰¹ Diarmait's essential charge is that of Psalm 49:16-23, accusing his enemies of slander against his own truth and of keeping company with the unrighteous. As an opening charge, it moreover follows the internal rhetorical pattern of many of the individual cursing psalms, by first stating, before God and

⁹⁸ *AD*, 9 (Wiley, 120; trans. idem, 147-8): 'Bliadain lán dóibh iarsin oc escaine Diarmata 7 oc imirt mhír builed fair 7 doberadh Diarmait firt for aroile dóib 7 nír chumhaingsit iarum nach ní dó.' I modify Wiley's slightly vaguer translation, 'pay them back in kind.'

⁹⁹ See for example the story of David and Solomon from the *Leabhar Breac*, in W. Stokes, 'A Middle-Irish homily on S. Martin of Tours', *Revue Celtique* 2 (1873-75), 383 [381-402]; and the possibly tenth-century version in the Yellow Book of Lecan, ed. by K. Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *ZCP* 13 (1920), 179 [166-194], and trans. in E. Boyle, 'David and Solomon', *Bloga (Fragments)* (21 October, 2013):

[<https://blogafragments.wordpress.com/2013/10/21/david-and-solomon/>] [accessed: 2017-09-19] Diarmait's sins, too, are those of David: the violation of royal oath, the slaughter of his subject, and the commission of adultery.

¹⁰⁰ W. Brueggemann and W.H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: CUP, 2014), 3-4; D. Hiley and A. Lingas, 'Alternatim', in *The Oxford companion to music*, ed. A. Latham and I. Fenlon (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 27-8; A. Lingas, 'Antiphonal psalmody', in *ibid*, 51; Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 64-5.

¹⁰¹ *AD*, 10 (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 148): 'Olc i nderndsabar... mo flaithius-sa do lot ar beth dam oc dítin na fírinde 7 sibsi oc anocol in caintaigh.'

the public, the psalmist's motivation, the nature of his complaint, and the character of his enemy as the necessary prelude to petitioning for specific kinds of vengeance.¹⁰² This charge frames the opening of the cursing match, in which Diarmait's pronounces four curses which build on each other through the progressive intertwining of the themes of desolation, death, disfigurement and damnation. Diarmait's first curse invokes the theme of desolation: 'May the first paruchia destroyed in Ireland be yours, Ruadán, and may your monks abandon you!'¹⁰³ This curse appears implicitly to invoke the malediction of Psalm 68:25 ('May their camp be desolation, let no one live in their tents'), which appears also in the Saint-Wandrille malediction, along perhaps with the laments of Psalms 30:12 and 37:12, in which the psalmist is abandoned by his friends and companions. Diarmait's second curse adds: 'Furthermore your see (*do caithír-sí*) shall be vacant [and] swine shall root up your cemetery!'¹⁰⁴ This curse seems to escalate the desolation theme of Psalm 68:25 with the theme of death in Psalm 108:8: 'May his days be few, and his see (*episcopatum*) let another take.' The swine's destruction of Ruadán's cemetery seems meanwhile to be an allusion to the swine which destroy the vineyards in Psalm 79, being the only appearance of swine in the Psalms. Ruadán's cemetery is thus conceived of as a vineyard whose spiritual fruits have grown (or will grow) barren, with saints ceasing to be interred there, as implied by the image of it becoming sufficiently unkept and abandoned that swine can uproot it undisturbed. Diarmait's third curse – 'May there be a blemish upon your body!'¹⁰⁵ – moves to material malediction, and immediately causes one of Ruadán's eyes to burst.¹⁰⁶ Such disfiguration could allude to God shattering the bodies of his enemies (Psalm 2:9, Psalm 67:22), but the manifestation of the disfigurement in the eye specifically might allude more directly to God darkening the eyes of his enemies (Psalm 68:24, known from the Saint-Wandrille malediction) and bringing down the eyes of the proud (Psalm 17:28), as well as of those enemies 'who have hated me without cause, and wink with the eyes' (Psalm 34:19). Here the theme of those who 'wink with the eyes' might additionally be related with the motif of the 'evil-eye' and the saintly act of looking wrathfully, as attributed to the curse of the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 2:23-25 and to Patrick and Berach in a number of cursing episodes in Irish hagiography.¹⁰⁷ If so, in Diarmait's third curse and its outcome we have allusions to Ruadán's pride, his persecution of Diarmait without due cause, and his curse. In its fulfilment, for the first time the curser's curse has come back upon Ruadán, ironically fulfilling the final

¹⁰² The clearest examples being Psalm 5 and Psalm 21 (22), for which see Brueggeman et al., *Psalms*, 7, 44-5, 114-6.

¹⁰³ *AD*, 10 (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 148): '...curab sí cédfhairci millter a nÉrinn t'fharchisi, a Ruadán, 7 do manaigh dodt fhacbáil.'

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 'Bidh fás dono do caithír-si... tohailfit muca do reilec.'

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 149): 'Cu rab aithis for do corp-sa.' I modify my translation from Wiley's 'May your body become disfigured.'

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 'Romebaid lethrosc Ruadán fo cé dóir.'

¹⁰⁷ J. Borsje, *The Celtic evil eye and related mythological motifs in medieval Ireland*, Studies in the History and Anthropology of Religion 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 209-215, citing in particular a number of episodes from the *Vita tripartita* and the Life of Berach. The episode from the Life of Berach is evidently based on the case of Elisha in 2 Kings 2:23-25, though Borsje does not note this biblical context.

cursing psalm (Psalm 108:18): ‘He loved to curse; let curses come upon him.’¹⁰⁸ Diarmait’s fourth curse rounds out the themes of desolation, death and disfigurement, with perhaps also implicit damnation: ‘May a wild boar come and root up the mound in which you are buried, and may your remains be scattered, and may there be a wolf howling at your churchyard every nones, and may there be a scream in it every noontide, and may it not be its own monks that dwell therein!’¹⁰⁹ Much of this is rhetorical elaboration in the same breath of themes and images which the previous curses have built up. The uprooting of Ruadán from his own grave however seems to imply a rejection of his body from hallowed ground. It may be nothing less than a call for damnation recalling the words of Psalm 51:7, which appears also in the Saint-Wandrille malediction: ‘Thus will God destroy you forever: he will pluck you out, and remove you from thy dwelling place: and your root out of the land of the living.’

On the whole Ruadán’s curses are shorter than Diarmait’s and as noted are largely responsive to his. Ruadán’s complaint is already known to the audience, and perhaps on that account is not stated. His first two curses however introduce the themes of desolation and death in closely mirroring but appropriately secular terms: ‘May your reign fail soon! ... Tara shall be vacant and there shall not be a king’s dwelling on it forever more!’¹¹⁰ Ruadán’s third and fourth curses are of a piece in focusing on the theme of disfigurement: ‘May your body be mangled by your enemies, and may your body parts be scattered widely so that they may not remain in the same place! ... May the knee that was not raised before me not be buried attached to your corpse!’¹¹¹ The third curse invokes the theme of disfigurement in terms of the scattering of bones in Psalm 52:6, while the fourth invokes the wicked unable to rise in Psalm 36:12. The fourth curse however reads more as a repetition of Ruadán’s own third curse than as a response to Diarmait’s which interposes between them, and it is unclear whether they stop short of damnation. The scattering of Diarmait’s remains that they could not be brought together in the same place may have been intended to foreclose the possibility of them being brought back together in the Resurrection, thus implicitly damning Diarmait. Similarly, though in his earlier curse in §2 Ciarán said that he would neither rob Diarmait of heaven or sovereignty, neither was heaven promised to him. Nonetheless, as a more tentative alternative reading, the disfigurement of Ruadán’s eye in §10 may signal – both in terms of the manifest judgement upon Ruadán and in the neutralising of his maledictive eye – that his curses from that point on are no longer effective. The only additions that Ruadán makes after his fourth curse are to

¹⁰⁸ Vulgate: ‘...dilexit maledictionem et veniet ei...’

¹⁰⁹ *AD*, 10 (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 149): ‘Co tí torc allaid... cora tochla in tilaig a n-adhnaicter tú, cora sgaeliter do taisi 7 curabh conuail con allaid fot reilic cachá nóna 7 éigim cachá hedartraatha indti 7 ná rab iad a manaigh féin aitrebat indti.’

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 148): ‘Cu rab scitlim co luath for do ríghi-siu’ (in which my translation is modified from Wiley’s ‘May your reign deteriorate swiftly’); *ibid.*: ‘Bidh fás Temair... 7 ní bia aitreb rígh co bráth indti.’

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* (Wiley, 121-2; trans. idem, 148-9): ‘Coro cirrter do corp-sa ó náimdib... 7 curo scaílter do boill co hesraíchi conár fácbaiter a n-áeninad’; *ibid.*: ‘In glún náro tógbad romam-sa... náro hadnaicter frit corp hé.’

extinguish the hearths of Tara and to remind Diarmait of his final destruction beneath a roof-beam.¹¹² This fifth curse is essentially little more than a repetition of his second, while the sixth is a repetition of the terms of the prophecy already made by Diarmait's seer in §6.¹¹³ Whether Ruadán has moved to damn Diarmait or has been frustrated in his ability to pronounce further curses is unclear in comparison with the preceding curses. At the end of the exchange in §10, Ruadán and Diarmait come to an accommodation, and in the final act of the saga (§22) Diarmait performs penance.¹¹⁴ Neither action however averts the material consequences foretold. It may be that that ambiguity in Ruadán's fourth curse was something to be left to the saga's audience to decide.

It has already been noted that both Diarmait and Ruadán see themselves standing in the right as the just petitioner of the Psalms, and that their miraculous evocation of those Psalms seems to lend them both weight. Indeed, since the Psalms themselves often alternate internally between the voice of the psalmist and the imagined voice of the accused enemy, the call-response exchange between Diarmait and Ruadán blurs their distinction further. This ambiguity is perhaps most apparent when one turns to the question of the characters' motivations and to Diarmait's lament when read in light of the Psalms. At the conclusion of the cursing match, Diarmait recites a 22-stanza poem, *Mairg tagras fri cleircib cell* ('Woe to the one who quarrels with the clerics of the churches').¹¹⁵ The poem takes the form of a lament: proclaiming the justice of Diarmait's cause, but professing the superior strength of the clerics, confessing his single fault in contesting with them, and lamenting the terms of the curses that would fall upon him and Tara. Parts of the lament might be read thematically almost as an extended meditation on the lament attributed to the penitent David in Psalm 37:18-21: 'For I am ready for scourges: and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity: and I will think for my sin. But my enemies live, and are stronger than I: and they hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They that render evil for good, have detracted me, because I followed goodness.'¹¹⁶ With this, one may note the similarities of the opening two stanzas of *Mairg tagras*: 'Woe to the one who quarrels with the clerics of the churches. / ... / As a result of my contention with Ruadan, / Tara will be a desolate slope. // I was in the right, / Even though I was overthrown by a miracle. / Though there are earthly men in my house, / The clerics are stronger.'¹¹⁷ Similarly, one may read the accusation contained in the last of the cursing psalms (Psalm 108:15-17: 'Let the memory of them perish from the earth: because he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor man

¹¹² Ibid. (Wiley, 122; trans. idem, 149).

¹¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 6.9-16 (Wiley, 116-7; trans. idem, 144-5).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10, 22 (Wiley, 122, 136; trans. idem, 149, 163).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 (Wiley, 122-7; trans. idem, 149-54).

¹¹⁶ This psalm of lament is not only one of the Irish cursing psalms, but is also reckoned as one of the most potent of the seven penitential psalms according to the classical Christian interpretation; see Brueggeman et al., *Psalms*, 188.

¹¹⁷ Stanzas 1-2, in *AD*, 11 (Wiley, 122; trans. idem, 149-50): 'Mairg tagras fri cléircib cell / ... / Biaid Temair de co fáss fán / Dom debaid 7 Ruadhán. // Misi dobí forin cirt. / Ce rom trascrad-sa tre firt. / Ce atait fir talman im tight. / Isat calma na cléirigh.'

and the beggar; and the broken in heart, to put him to death') as the charge responded to in the eleventh stanza of the poem: 'Before him, I have never slain a man, / ... / I have not forgiven the strong his wickedness / And I have not slain the weak.'¹¹⁸ Diarmait further prophesies the evils that will befall the clerics not just of Ruadán's community but of the whole of Ireland on account of their curse's destruction of the Tara kingship.¹¹⁹ The ambiguity stands in favour of Diarmait as a tragic royal figure, and the curse upon the Church ultimately is self-inflicted.

In this light, the cursing match and events of *AD* begin to look less like something peculiarly Irish and more like something grounded in the biblical model of Davidic kingship and the universal monastic round of the Psalms. It also shows ways in which the author(s) might have been inclined to consciously construct detectable patterns of internal structure and intertextual allusion within the text, as well as ways in which his audience or readership might have been attuned to pick up those same patterns. In this case, the task of the saga-writer was broadly the same as that of the hagiographer, both in terms of form and method, and in terms of choice of allusion. The foregoing analysis also allows for one further intertextual observation to be made. It may be noted by way of epilogue that an eleventh- or twelfth-century poem on the saints of Ireland attributed to Cuimmín Conneire, in its quatrain on Ruadán, seemed certain not only of the power but also of the justice of the saint: 'Ruadán, king of Lothra, loved cursing which brought to an end the visiting [of Tara]. No business that he loved incurred the reproach of angels.'¹²⁰ Nonetheless, the immediately subsequent quatrain on Saint Fiachna might have subtly undercut this praise of Ruadán: 'Fiachna loved true devotion, the teaching of every one with a multitude. He never uttered a wicked word, but what seemed good to his Lord.'¹²¹ The second half of the quatrain with its praise of Fiachna never uttering a wicked word is perhaps more striking for being a repetition of the virtues attributed to Saint Fachtna in an earlier quatrain, so the repetition of the praise and its juxtaposition beside the comparatively more ambiguous praise of Ruadán, deliberately or otherwise, underlines the difference.¹²² A sensitive reader either of *AD* or of the Psalms could have encountered Cuimmín's quatrain on Ruadán, who 'loved cursing', with at the very least a touch of irony. As Psalm 108:18 ran: 'He loved to curse; let curses come upon him.'

¹¹⁸ Stanza 11, in *AD*, 11 (Wiley, 125; trans. idem, 152): 'Acht nír airgius duine riam. / ... / Nír maithius a olcc do trén / 7 nír airges eidrén.'

¹¹⁹ Stanzas 15, 20, in *ibid.* (Wiley, 126, 127; trans. idem, 153, 154).

¹²⁰ *Cuimin condeire cecinit*, ll. 129-132 (Stokes, 66-7): 'Carais Ruadháin rígh Lothra / easccaoine ro traigh tadhall / noch bhíodh oirbire aingeal / ar gach caingen ros carann.' Stokes suggested on linguistic grounds that the poem could scarcely be earlier than the twelfth century, though Binchy was apparently open to the possibility of it being eleventh century in date: see Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 175-6.

¹²¹ *Cuimin condeire cecinit*, ll. 133-6 (Stokes, 66-7): 'Carais Fiachna fíorchrabud foircedal cháigh go ccoimlin. / ní 'dhubhairt riam bríathir saich / ach ní bád maith le a Choimdidh.'

¹²² *Cuimin condeire cecinit*, ll. 87-88 (Stokes, 64-5).

III

Having established the close exegetical techniques with which *AD* was constructed and available to be read, it can be shown how miraculous vengeance upon specific offences forms an even more integral part of its structural patterning.¹²³ The saga, which contains a series of tightly patterned vengeance episodes enacted through secular, natural, and saintly actors under the divine aegis, notably displays a mirroring in its account of Diarmait's rise to power and of Diarmait's demise.¹²⁴ The saga opens with a sequence of three punished offences interwoven through the main narrative of Diarmait's rise: regicide committed by Diarmait's foster-brother against the king of Tara, slaughter committed within ecclesiastical sanctuary by Diarmait against Flann Find, and a false oath sworn on Ciarán of Clonmacnoise by a man at a royal assembly that he is innocent of the sin of adultery.¹²⁵ The punishments are the immediate death of the regicide, the prophecy and drought inflicted upon Diarmait, and the miraculous decapitation of the perjured man. In the final instance, the man survives, headless, and is made a monk at Clonmacnoise, where he outlives Ciarán by seven years but ultimately dies at God's command, when he returns to his initial sin by sleeping with a woman brought to him in the monastery.¹²⁶ This opening sequence of topical offences and punishments is mirrored in the saga's narrative of Diarmait's demise, in which are interwoven a final reversed sequence of the same basic offences, consisting this time of Diarmait's royal adultery, the infliction upon him of slaughter within the secular hall, and his own final death by regicide.¹²⁷ Finally, in a parallel mirroring, both sequences begin with the transgression of a royal figure to whom the transgressor is oath-bound (a subject against the king of Tara, Diarmait against his queen), and end in decapitation and death.

The result is a sequence of tightly patterned foreshadowings, understood not simply as literary artifice but in terms of a symbolist mentality allowing the inner meaning of events to be read from their patterning in the world.¹²⁸ Of the episodes mentioned, the one which most closely foreshadows the precise offences that precipitate Diarmait's demise is one which has received by far the least scholarly attention within the saga narrative, concerning the miraculously decapitated adulterer.¹²⁹ Close versions of the episode, known

¹²³ Earlier scholarship, notably Sayers, 'Deficient royal rule', 115-6, has noted the replication of certain narrative moments within the text, though the contribution that follows is new.

¹²⁴ In this context, by 'natural' I mean the role of the created order itself as an intermediate enacting agent. This will be seen further on in this chapter as well as in the final section of Chapter V.

¹²⁵ *AD*, 1-3 (Wiley, 110-3; trans. idem, 139-41).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 (Wiley, 113-4; trans. idem, 141-2).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-2 (Wiley, 135-8; trans. idem, 161-4).

¹²⁸ M.D. Chenu, *Nature, man and society in the twelfth century: essays on new theological perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. and trans. J. Taylor and L.K. Little, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 37 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 99-102; Heffernan, *Sacred biography*, 84-122.

¹²⁹ *AD*, 4 (Wiley, 113-4; trans. idem, 141-2).

as ‘The miracle of Ciarán’s hand’ or *Díchendad Ambacuc* (‘The decapitation of Ambacuc’), survive independently in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster and the fifteenth-century Liber Flavus Fergusiorum, and is referred to, much more cursorily, in three of the annals.¹³⁰ These diverse independent witnesses attest to the story’s likely ultimate origin outside Clonmacnoise, which was eager to appropriate tales of marvels from a variety of disparate sources in the later Middle Irish period.¹³¹ Its narrative role in the death-tale is more particular however despite having seemingly been hitherto largely overlooked by scholars beyond its implied interpretation as a simple promotional piece concerning one of the ‘wonders of Clonmacnoise’.¹³² The ‘Ambacuc episode’ is tightly woven into the meta-narrative of the saga, as an oblique commentary on the royal sin of Diarmait, and as a compact, implicit foreshadowing of the events which ultimately befall the king.¹³³

On a literal and moral level, the episode gives a notable prominence to adultery, falsehood, and clerical sexual liaisons within *AD*, appearing early in the saga, after only regicide and slaughter within sanctuary in terms of punished sins. These offences are thus implicitly associated in terms of gravity and severity of punishment. The prominence afforded to adultery and clerical incontinence may be attributed to a growing eleventh- or twelfth-century concern for clerical and royal chastity, as might be seen elsewhere in a hagiographical context for instance in the curse upon a young and lascivious cleric in the Life of

¹³⁰ See ‘The miracle of Ciarán’s hand,’ ed. J. Fraser, *Ériu* 6 (1912), 159-160; ‘Ambacuc,’ ed. and trans. S.H. O’Grady, in idem, *SG*, 1:416, 2:453; P. Grosjean: ‘Textes hagiographiques irlandais’, *Études Celtique* 2 (1937), 269-272. For annalistic references, see *AI* (RLA 23F9) 544; *Tigernach* 543; *AFM* 539. The first title is that given by Fraser, while the second is from *Tigernach*. The Book of Leinster contains the gloss, ‘Ní d’íongantaib aenaig Taillten in so’ (rendered by O’Grady, ‘Here follows an item from among the wonders of the Convention of Taillte’). Wiley, ‘An edition’, 4, dubs this *Echtra Ambacuc*, ‘The adventure of Ambacuc’, but omits the work or title from his published work on the king tales. Wiley did not specifically consider the Ambacuc episode beyond its status as a piece of evidence for the stemmatic relationship of the various manuscripts.

¹³¹ J. Carey, ‘Aerial ships and underwater monasteries: the evolution of a monastic marvel’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 12 (1992), 16, 23 [16-28], who specifically notes the Ambacuc episode, but surprisingly does not refer to its appearance in *AD*. The possibility that the saga itself was the source for the annals remains open per the discussion of other sagas by O’Connor, *The destruction*, 332, though the witness of the Book of Leinster seems to be independent of the saga.

¹³² This seems at least to be its interpretation by the scholars cited above at 145 fn. 19 who adduce a Clonmacnoise context for the saga’s compilation. On the ‘wonders of Clonmacnoise’, see again Carey, ‘Aerial ships’, 16, 23. It may be suggested that the independent witnesses have largely distracted scholarly attention from its role in the saga specifically.

¹³³ Though the decapitated adulterer is unnamed in the Book of Uí Maine which best preserves *AD*, the name ‘Ambacuc’ known from the independent versions of the episode appears in the version of the saga passage contained in the Yellow Book of Lecan, quoted (but untranslated) as an alternative reading by Wiley, ‘An edition’, 172. I use the name henceforth for convenience as clearly the same character is being referred to.

Laisrén.¹³⁴ In a sense, the three offences might also be collapsed into each other as different manifestations of one and the same sin, as patristic authors such as Augustine of Hippo equated truth with both chastity and integrity.¹³⁵ It has already been noted how these chapters relate to the theme of the deceitful man and the punishment of a multitude of iniquities in Psalm 5.

In more figurative terms, the figure of a man who slides from adultery to decapitation serves as an obvious figure for Diarmait, who follows the same course in the final stages of the saga. Indeed, as if to emphasise the connexion, both end up buried at Clonmacnoise: Ambacuc is buried there headless; while Diarmait, whose body is burned in the destruction of the secular hall, only has his head left to be buried at Clonmacnoise.¹³⁶ Within wider intertextual culture, the figure of Ambacuc is all the more significant within the saga for initially surviving his own decapitation, embodying what Ralph O'Connor has identified in other sagas as 'the phenomenon of deathless destruction, of surviving one's own destruction.'¹³⁷ In the particularly noteworthy case of *Togail Bruidne*, this motif of deathless destruction and survived decapitation is applied to figures who have committed wrongs and practised falsehood, including ultimately *Togail Bruidne*'s central royal figure Conaire Már, and as such the motif is also used at multiple earlier points in that saga to prefigure that precise punishment upon Conaire himself.¹³⁸ In the literary-historical tradition, Conaire was the first king under whom Tara was left (temporarily) desolate, while Diarmait was the last. As already noted, the model of *Togail Bruidne* was very possibly known to the authors and audience of *AD*. If so, this would not only have conditioned particular expectations about Diarmait's eventual death, but might also have attuned the audience's more focused attention to other possible parallels and foreshadowings contained within Ambacuc's story. In deeper allegorical and moral terms, the precise narrative sequence of punishment is also important in bringing this into focus. The offence which seals Ambacuc's first miraculous punishment is not his adultery but his false oath, bringing about his decapitation. The offence which brings about his miraculous death by God's hands is his return to both those sins by engaging in sexual intercourse within the monastery: so violating this time his

¹³⁴ *Vita Lasriani*, 30 (*VSHP*, 2:138). See also M. McLaughlin, *Sex, gender, and episcopal authority in an age of reform, 1000-1122* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 31-36; Flanagan, *Transformation*, 33, 98-100, 113, 203; D. Scully, 'Ireland and the Irish in Bernard of Clairvaux's "Life of Malachy": representation and context', in *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 247-50 [239-56].

¹³⁵ C.O. Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian ethics*, *New Studies in Christian Ethics* 33 (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 34; P.J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), 93. Indeed, Augustine seems to have identified truth as the higher of the two, and Ambacuc's lie may be seen as a perverted antithesis of Augustine's eighth (and most forgivable) category of the lie – being a lie told to conceal bodily impurity, rather than to prevent it; see B. Ramsey, 'Two traditions on lying and deception in the ancient Church', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 49.4 (1985), 506, 508, 512 [504-33].

¹³⁶ *AD*, 22 (Wiley, 137; trans. idem, 164).

¹³⁷ O'Connor, *The destruction*, 216.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216-7.

clerical ‘marriage’ with the Church, and so also simultaneously breaking his second oath to Ciarán in violating his profession of monastic discipline.¹³⁹ The dual-sin of swearing falsely by Ciarán and of committing adultery might correspond to Diarmait’s own offence of breaking his original oath to Ciarán by violating sanctuary protections, and so too implicitly to offending against his own ‘sacred marriage’ between king and Church.¹⁴⁰ The literal parallels between the two narrative sequences also noticeably operate in reverse: where Ambacuc slides in his initial offence from literal adultery into oath-breaking, Diarmait slides from oath-breaking into literal adultery – a path which seems all the more natural when recognised in patristic terms as essentially one and the same sin.

These points have important bearing upon the centrepiece of the Ruadán and Diarmait material: the Cursing of Tara episode. There, in all three versions, the Devil is accorded from the outset the role of ultimate instigator. It is the Devil who inspires the arrogance of Diarmait’s herald to insist that the entrance of each household and fortification he visits be opened wide enough that the king’s spear could pass through it cross-wise.¹⁴¹ It is an act which, offending against the honour of the lords visited, is sure to inspire rebellion and confrontation: as *AD* notes, a wicked deed inspired so that an even more wicked deed could come about.¹⁴² Indeed, the herald is slain, his murderer flees to the refuge and protection of bishop Senán and thereafter of Ruadán, and the fateful and destructive confrontation between king and cleric begins. Though the role of the Devil as an initiating cause has been identified by scholars, the full theological implications and the degree to which his background influence pervades the narrative have not been unfolded. Within this sequence, the Devil’s role as primary instigator assumes that almost of an independent agent of temptation and destruction, much as in the writings of Eadmer and Jocelin, rather than that of a simple delegated instrument of trial and punishment subject to divine aegis. Here it is distinct from the demonic episodes unique to the Lives of Ruadán, such as for example the saint overcoming demons breaking the milk-vessels of his monastic servants to punish their hidden faults.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ On the image of the Church as a woman and symbolic bride of the cleric, see McLaughlin, *Sex, gender, and episcopal authority*, 51-6.

¹⁴⁰ On the image in Ireland of the Church as bride of the king, see M. Ní Dhonnchadha, ‘On Gormfhlaith daughter of Flann Sinna and the lure of the sovereignty goddess’, in *Seanchas: studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. A.P. Smyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 225 [225-37]. Irish kingship was more traditionally conceptualised as a ‘hieros gamos’, a sacred marriage between king and goddess; and though this was undergoing changes in the eleventh century, its durability as a literary trope remained intact: see M. Herbert, ‘Goddess and king: the sacred marriage in early Ireland’, in *Women and sovereignty*, ed. L.O. Fradenburg, *Cosmos* 7 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 264, 267-70 [264-75]. On the openness of the trope to malleability and subversion, using the contemporary example of *Aided Muirbertaig meic Erca*, see Sayers, ‘Deficient royal rule’, 118-20.

¹⁴¹ *AD*, 7 (Wiley, 117-8; trans. idem, 145-6).

¹⁴² *Ibid.* See also discussion in Wiley, ‘An edition’, 38-40.

¹⁴³ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 8 (*VSHH*, 162); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 10 (*VSHD*, 2:242-3).

Moreover, the manner in which sin miraculously acts and proliferates as its own self-inflicted and self-perpetuating punishment within the narrative seems to share more in the dynamic theological worldview which we have seen emerging in English hagiography in the writings of Goscelin and again a century later in Jocelin. Within the narrative of *AD*, the Devil is only directly alluded to once, which makes his signalled role within the episode very particular. At the same time, the fact that his sole appearance is at the head of the chapter on which the entirety of *AD* hinges – the chapter which marks the transition of Diarmait’s reign from that of just monarch to his dramatic decline and fall, in which all the foreshadowings are tightly bound up – draws the audience’s attention to the subtle influence of the Devil at other points in the text. This influence is twofold, and concerns the grave sins of pride and falsehood. On the whole, once these are set in motion, the sin carries itself through and the Devil’s work is done. The reading by which these will be seen to operate is the same interpretation grounded in Augustine of Hippo and fruitfully applied to the hagiography of Goscelin and Jocelin. These are influences which could be readily apparent to a theologically-sensitive audience and may serve as a general structuring principle of the narrative, as will be argued below.

The first, and obvious, influence is the role of pride. Satan’s fall was through pride, and it is pride that is used throughout the text to bring about the fall of others: the death of the herald for his arrogant self-aggrandisement and the downfall of Áed Guaire for his proud refusal to yield; the destruction of the rule of Diarmait and of the community of Ruadán for their prideful and unaccommodating insistence upon their own respective cause.¹⁴⁴ For Augustine, the source of all sin by definition is pride, following Sirach 10:13: ‘initium omnium peccati est superbia’; pride entails the wilful turning away from the free gift of God to that which is one’s own, spurning the greater universal good for a lesser good, and becoming trapped in a self-caused diminution.¹⁴⁵ This is precisely the dilemma described in the overturning of the communal good of clerical-secular relations for the diminished private good of pride that the Devil offers.¹⁴⁶ In Augustinian terms, the hurried transaction of sin which leads on from pride produces four variations of *vertere*: to avert the good (*avertere*), to pervert oneself (*pervertere*), to invert oneself, by throwing oneself upside-down beyond recognition or self-righting (*invertere*), and to require a reverting to God that he may set us right (*revertere*).¹⁴⁷ This is in part the path followed by Diarmait: he averts the good of

¹⁴⁴ Rekdal, ‘From wine’, 227, observes that in *AD*’s confrontation between king and cleric, ‘the contest is not clear: both groups appear to be wrong.’ As Wiley, ‘An edition’, 55, has rightly observed of the presentation of the clerical and secular representatives in *AD*, ‘what is more important than establishing right and wrong is the manner in which the two powers pursue the resolution of their disputes.’

¹⁴⁵ Griffiths, *Lying*, 55-6, 59-63; Tollefsen, *Lying*, 33-5.

¹⁴⁶ It is also notably Eadmer’s rationale for the origin of the conflict between William Rufus and Anselm: if Anselm offered to Eadmer the model of episcopal self-restraint, William offered the self-aggrandising antitype, a king so exalted in his own mind that he refused to hear anyone speak of any acts at his command as being subject to the will of God. See Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 101 (trans. Bosanquet, 105). This will be returned to in Chapter V.

¹⁴⁷ Griffiths, *Lying*, 56.

deference to Ruadán in the name of pride; perverts himself in the act of adultery; is inverted, as the prophecies are unavoidably turned back on him and as he dies in the same violent manner he had originally inflicted upon Flann Find; but he reverts to God in doing penance moments before his death.¹⁴⁸ The transaction of sin thus leads to the sinner's destruction in the same terms of the initiating sin. At various stages in the narrative, Diarmait recognises and checks his self-destructive pride so as to delay further punishment – after his chastisement by Ciarán, his chastisement by Ruadán, and his attempt at penance moments before his death – but he is unable to avoid or reverse the sentences already passed. Ciarán and Ruadán's prophecies cannot be withdrawn. The sense is that to revert to God requires considerable grace.¹⁴⁹ In following this Augustinian path, it may be implicit that clerical and secular rulers might too be able to revert to this pre-lapsarian state of clerical-secular relations, but that it would require the recognition, humility and grace that Diarmait displays only too late in the narrative.¹⁵⁰

The second, and somewhat more subtle, demonic influence within the narrative is the role of the lie. As already noted, truth in word and deed is a major theme of *AD*. The 'original sins' of the text are the breaking of Diarmait's oath in slaying Flann Find, and the false swearing of an oath by the soon-to-be-headless-monk of Clonmacnoise. These sins are of course implicitly linked with the Devil, whose chief biblical epithet in John 8:44 is that of 'father of lies' and whose status as a deceiver is firmly entrenched in hagiography. These lies proliferate following the pride of Diarmait's herald and of Diarmait himself. Diarmait breaks his oath for a second time in detaining Áed Guaire, and Ruadán acts in a manner which preserves the outward appearance of truth but intends to deceive. When Diarmait confronts Ruadán on the location of Áed Guaire, 'for he knew that Ruadán would not tell a lie',¹⁵¹ Ruadán responds: 'I do not know unless he is beneath you.'¹⁵² This much is a clever, and nearly successful, equivocation, which could be celebrated in a hagiographical context when used by saints to serve good ends: such deliberate ambiguities are for instance used by Mo Ling to remit the *Bóroma* tribute, a cattle tribute from the kings of Leinster to the Uí Néill, in the eponymous saga tract on that subject and in the Life of Moling.¹⁵³ When however the saints are later unable to convince Diarmait to break his fast so that they might overcome him, they send a servant to lie to him that they themselves have done so.¹⁵⁴ The saints technically avoid

¹⁴⁸ *AD*, 22 (Wiley, 136; trans. idem, 163): '...dobreatha fáistine Bic 7 na ndruadh dia óidh ansin 7 dobreth a aithrigi co leir' ('And the prophecies of Becc and the druids were brought to his attention then, and he performed his penance in earnest').

¹⁴⁹ Griffiths, *Lying*, 57.

¹⁵⁰ See also Griffiths, *Lying*, 60, 65.

¹⁵¹ *AD*, 8 (Wiley, 119; trans. idem, 146): '...ar rofitir ná haprad Ruadán bréic.'

¹⁵² Ibid.: 'Ní feadar-sa... acht muna fil foot áit a tai.'

¹⁵³ *Bóroma* (*SG*, 1:386; trans. 2:421) cf. also M. Dillon, *The cycles of the kings* (London: Geoffrey Cumberledge, OUP, 1946), 113; and *Vita Moling*, 19 (*VSHP*, 2:198); cited in E. Poppe, 'Deception and self-deception in "Fingal Rónáin"', *Ériu* 47 (1996), 138 [137-51]. See also Ó Riain, *DIS*, 488.

¹⁵⁴ *AD*, 9 (Wiley, 120; trans. idem, 148).

the lie, but commit the sin of scandal in leading another into sin.¹⁵⁵ They have acted hypocritically and so entered into a state of self-deception which we will see mirrored elsewhere in the text.

The dual corrupting effect of pride and falsehood can be seen in the closely changing characters of Diarmait and his prophet Becc mac Dé. Both are figures on whom it is incumbent to speak and act truly. At his height, Diarmait is a king than whom there was never any better in discernment.¹⁵⁶ This ability remains intact such that he is able to interpret his own first dream, that of the Towering Tree, as his reign being cut down by the saints confronting him.¹⁵⁷ This feature is striking, because in the biblical account upon which it is modelled, the Dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:26-47), the dreamer makes recourse to a prophet.¹⁵⁸ Diarmait however is one who for the time being is himself of quasi-prophetic royal status: more like Solomon than Nebuchadnezzar. By the time of his second dream however, in which his sovereignty is compromised and his diadem is shattered, Diarmait must make recourse to Becc.¹⁵⁹ His ability to discern has been diminished by the accumulation of false speech and false actions, brought about through his pride. Even then, ultimately he angrily rejects Becc's prophecies and seeks a more favourable second opinion.¹⁶⁰ When the other druids state three different manners of his death, immediately recognisable to the audience as fulfilling Ciarán's original prophecy, Diarmait sees them as seemingly contradictory and considers himself secure.¹⁶¹ Thus, in addition to lies already spoken, Diarmait has become blinded by pride and lost even the ability to recognise evident truths, entering into a final state of self-deception.¹⁶² He is properly of the Devil in the terms of John 8:44-45: 'You are of your father

¹⁵⁵ On the unacceptability of the outright lie told even for good or religious ends, and its association with the sin of scandal by creating obstacles for belief, see Tollefsen, *Lying*, 36-8. That these acts were indeed considered problematic for the churchman's sanctity is suggested by the more overtly hagiographical *Vita Ruadani S.*, 12 (*VSHH*, 164), which strikingly omits any account of the deception; while *Vita Ruadani D.*, 17 (*VSHP*, 2:247) implies it as a misleading non-verbal act ('...quadam iam nocte sancti simulabant se comedere, et non commederunt': '...now on a certain night the saints pretended that they were eating but did not eat'), which as an instance of non-verbal trickery would evade the principal patristic criticism of the lie which was couched in specifically verbal terms. See Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 173; Griffiths, *Lying*, 33, 138-42.

¹⁵⁶ *AD*, 4 (Wiley, 114; trans. idem, 142).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 (Wiley, 120-1; trans. idem, 148).

¹⁵⁸ Wiley, 'An edition', 51-2.

¹⁵⁹ *AD*, 13 (Wiley, 128-9; trans. idem, 155-6).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 (Wiley, 133-4; trans. idem, 160).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20 (Wiley, 134; trans. idem, 161).

¹⁶² On the use of the building themes of misperception, deception, and self-deception to structure the narrative in Irish literature, citing in particular the instance of *Togail Bruidne* and *Fingal Ronáin*, see Poppe, 'Deception and self-deception', 139-51, especially at 143-5. The theme is also notably Augustinian, for which see B.C. van Fraassen, 'The epistemic dimension of self-deception', in *Perspectives on self-deception*, ed. B.P. McLaughlin and A.O. Rorty, *Topics in Philosophy* 6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 123, 136-8 [123-56].

the Devil... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But if I say the truth, you believe me not.¹⁶³ As was foreshadowed in the blinding of his charioteer and the incapacitation of his servant, Diarmait too has become blind to truth and has lost the capacity to avert his fate.

Similarly, at the height of Diarmait's reign Becc is described as 'the best seer of his time'.¹⁶⁴ Following Diarmait's cursing match, Becc is still able to interpret Diarmait's second dream as portending his loss of sovereignty, while later predicting accurately the manner of his death and the misfortunes to befall his kingdom after.¹⁶⁵ Such knowledge, as no less secure a prophetic authority than Columba states within the text, could only have been given to Becc by God.¹⁶⁶ In Augustinian terms, Becc's speech is a divine gift in which he fully participates.¹⁶⁷ At this point in the narrative however, Becc has lost the trust and approval of Diarmait as outlined above. This descent by Diarmait has a corrupting effect upon Becc also. Asked by Columba how long he has remaining to live, Becc tells the saint in quick succession that it is seven years, then seven months, then seven hours, before dying soon after.¹⁶⁸ The sequence is said to fulfil Becc's fate to tell three unintentional lies before his death. These unintentional lies are not however simply a convenient device to remove Becc from the narrative,¹⁶⁹ but fit within an overarching Augustinian theological frame concerning the expropriation of truth and of language. Again, truth and language are among God's free gifts. The attempt to expropriate God's free gifts as one's own, the sin at the heart of pride, is inevitably corrupting and bears the loss of other gifts.¹⁷⁰ In the Old Testament this was paradigmatically represented in terms of a corruption of language: thus the rebellious and expropriative

¹⁶³ John 8:44-45: 'vos ex patre diabolo estis et desideria patris vestri vultis facere ille homicida erat ab initio et in veritate non stetit quia non est veritas in eo cum loquitur mendacium ex propriis loquitur quia mendax est et pater eius.'

¹⁶⁴ *AD*, 6 (Wiley, 115; trans. idem, 144).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13, 17-18 (Wiley, 128-9, 131-3; trans. idem, 155-6, 17-9).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 (Wiley, 133-4; trans. idem, 160). On the use of Columba for this role, likely chosen with this very specific and deliberate intent, see John Carey's article on Columba's unprecedented access to hidden knowledge and his adjudication thereof: J. Carey, 'Varieties of supernatural contact in the Life of Adamnán', in *Studies in Irish hagiography: saints and scholars*, ed. J. Carey, M. Herbert and P. Ó Riain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 51-2, 54-5, 61-2 [49-62]. This authoritative statement is important in *AD*, as it elevates Becc beyond the question of his knowledge being demonic in origin and thus natural or imperfect; cf. for example later twelfth-century reflexions on demonic knowledge in Augustinian terms, as sophisticated but error-prone, in William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum anglicarum*, 1.4 (Walsh and Kennedy, 28-31).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Griffiths, *Lying*, 85; Tollefsen, *Lying*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ *AD*, 19 (Wiley, 133-4; trans. idem, 160).

¹⁶⁹ Contrast the view of Sayers, 'Deficient royal rule', 117, who sees Becc's conversion to Christianity and his prompt death thereafter as merely 'to clear the ideological playing field' between saint and druid.

¹⁷⁰ Griffiths, *Lying*, 85-94; Tollefsen, *Lying*, 33-5.

pride of the builders of the Tower of Babel brought about a fracturing of language, the corrupting consequences of which affect all of mankind and not solely the builders who participated in that sin of pride.¹⁷¹ Here however the offence is the pride and falsehood of Diarmait: the attempt to expropriate truth as his own, just as the Devil does in creating a false language for himself ('ex propriis') in John 8:44.¹⁷² And this, in turn, has had a corrupting effect on Becc, fracturing his own ability to speak truly that which is known from God, even though he does so unintentionally. In other sagas, the consequences of falsehood and misrule can have dire consequences for the individual or for the material fabric of society, as has been previously discussed.¹⁷³ Individual deceptions by one character can put pressure upon others to deceive or self-deceive.¹⁷⁴ Here too the sins that the Devil inspired have proliferated in unexpected, all-encompassing, and, in many respects, fairly miraculous ways, corrupting even the otherwise innocent with the marks of the same stain.

The preceding discussion shows how a single, explicit reference to the Devil may signal two sins which pervade the text of *AD*. It shows ways in which it may function as an exemplary myth, dramatically validating a particular ideology, a tale on the disruptive power of deception analogous to *Fingal Ronáin*: serving as 'a model for rulers and ordinary human beings in that it describes the social dangers of deception in specific application to kings and their successors which will also be valid for all members of society.'¹⁷⁵ Within an explicitly Christian frame, that point is reinforced through the miraculous punishments that befall not just kings but their servants and ordinary individuals: whether the blinded charioteer and crippled servant of Diarmait, or the decapitated man who had sworn falsely by Ciarán.

IV

Having analysed this broader societal context within which cursing was situated, one can consider directly the theme of coercive or maledictive fasting, which looms large in both bodies of material but has yet been particularly understudied in the Lives of Máedóc. It should be noted that the earliest hagiographical models for these kinds of fasts already existed paradigmatically in the Tripartite Life of Patrick (*Vita Tripartita*), a bilingual Latin/vernacular text produced at Armagh by the tenth century.¹⁷⁶ It has been

¹⁷¹ See eg. D. Anlezark, *Water and fire: the myth of the flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, Manchester Medieval Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 132-7, 372; W.E. Rast, 'Babel', in *ABD*, 1:561-2 [1:561-3].

¹⁷² Cf. Griffiths, *Lying*, 85-6.

¹⁷³ See also Poppe, 'Deception', 144-5.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁷⁶ The complex and not fully understood recension history of the *Vita tripartita*, whose core nonetheless appears to have existed from the tenth century, is outlined in T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 11-13; F.J. Byrne and P. Francis, 'Two Lives of Saint Patrick: "Vita Secunda" and "Vita Quarta"', *JRS* 124 (1994), 6-7, 14-5 [5-117]; K. Jackson, 'The date of the Tripartite Life', *ZCP* 41 (1986), 5-12, 15-16 [5-45]; *The tripartite*

suggested that the *Life*, as the key hagiographical text of the increasingly powerful church of Armagh, stood behind much of the character of subsequent hagiography in Ireland, and this would likely have been true also of the eleventh- and twelfth-century texts under present discussion.¹⁷⁷ Because the Tripartite *Life* was connected with Armagh and in large part concerned the tributes due to the church, it could easily have been brought south during one of the visitations undertaken by the coarbs of Patrick to major churches in the southern half of the country during the tenth and eleventh centuries.¹⁷⁸ General political ties with the southern secular dynasties would have been especially strong during this period, as the ruling Dál Cais dynasty of Munster began to establish a close relationship with Armagh;¹⁷⁹ while, as will be seen below, the rival Uí Chennselaig of Leinster would also have been closely attuned to these developments. The eleventh century would additionally coincide with the period in which it has been suggested that the *Life* was recast as a three-part homily to be read out on the saint's feast, which could have aided its dissemination.¹⁸⁰ The fasting episodes included one of the most extended and memorable episodes of the Tripartite *Life*, the celebrated fast on Croagh Patrick, which could then have been transmitted and recalled from either its oral or written form.¹⁸¹ A version of this episode appears also to have inspired 'The tale of Doomsday Colum Cille should have left untold', a text which has been suggestively dated on the basis of possible allusions to diocesan reforms to the first half of the twelfth

life of Patrick: with other documents relating to that saint, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, RS, 2 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 2:lxii-iv.

¹⁷⁷ K.W. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: introduction to the sources*, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 239.

¹⁷⁸ As for instance recorded in the contemporary *AU* 973.5, 1021.5, 1068.2; the later *AFM* 973.9, 1021.14, 1068.8; and in the *Fragmentary Annals* 449 [AD 913]. These entries often refer only to the first circuit or visitation of a particular coarb, so many more are likely omitted. The visitations also are listed only as being taken to Munster, without specifying particular churches, but as these were apparently grand circuits into Leinster's most important neighbour, the chance of further contact and transmission between the two kingdoms seems sufficiently close. Visitations of Meath, such as recorded in *Tigernach* 986.4 and *AFM* 985.4, could also have brought contact with Leinster while the ruling dynasty of Leinster was based in the northern half of the kingdom. Though produced in Munster, the *Annals of Tigernach* for their part do not record a great visitation in Munster until 1094. See also K.W. Hughes, *The Church in early Irish society* (London: Methuen, 1966; repr. 1980), 218-9, 244-5, on the development of the church of Armagh's relations with kings and churches in the southern half of the island.

¹⁷⁹ Hughes, *Church in early Irish society*, 244-5; M.T. Flanagan, 'High kings with opposition, 1072-1166', in *Prehistoric and early Ireland*, ed. D. Ó Cróinín, *A New History of Ireland 1* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 899-900, 906 [899-933]. This relationship was first promoted during the reign of Brian Bóruma in the late tenth century and became more firmly established under his son Donnchad mac Briain in the mid-eleventh century.

¹⁸⁰ M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: the history and hagiography of the monastic familia of Columba* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 194-8; Flanagan, *Transformation*, 16. See also F. Mac Donncha, 'Medieval Irish homilies', in *Biblical studies: the Irish contribution*, ed. M. McNamara, *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association 1* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1976), 68 [59-71].

¹⁸¹ The narrative of this episode will be introduced below.

century, and which seems closely connected with Leinster.¹⁸² That that text itself features a preponderance of Leinster saints and appeals for unity in the internal ecclesiastical politics of the kingdom, while apparently using information contained in the Tripartite Life, further suggests that some recension or portion of that Life was widely available in Leinster by the twelfth century at latest.¹⁸³ From the other side, topographical detail preserved in the Tripartite Life itself concerning the important monastery of Glendalough in Leinster suggests contact between the churches of Armagh and Leinster during the period in which the Tripartite Life was being written and reworked, which might have allowed for transmission at an earlier date still.¹⁸⁴ A later account of a maledictive fast likely based on the Patrician episode appears in the Life of Énda of Aran, a late and composite text preserved in the fourteenth-century *Codex Insulensis* but possibly assembled originally at Clonmacnoise no earlier than the thirteenth century.¹⁸⁵ A partial analogue which omits the fasting element appears meanwhile in the Life of Fintán (Munnu) of Taghmon, a text of Leinster provenance whose earliest recension's date is disputed, but which was revised in the twelfth century.¹⁸⁶ Thus, even before directly considering the material connected

¹⁸² Edited and translated by P. Grosjean, 'A tale of Doomsday Colum Cille should have left untold', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 3 (1929-31), 74-83 [73-85], dated at 74, and with further comments in idem, 'Addenda et corrigenda to S.G.S. III. 73 FF.', *ibid.*, 188-99; see also D. Africa, 'A tale of Doomsday Colum Cille should have left untold', in *Medieval hagiography: an anthology*, ed. T. Head (New York: Routledge, 2001), 429-30, 433-5, 439-40 [429-440].

¹⁸³ Africa, 'A tale', 433-5, quoted at 433: 'The saints named in the text are primarily connected with the region of Leinster. Those named as leading the Irish of Connacht and Munster are all saints associated with foundations on the western and southern border areas of Leinster.'

¹⁸⁴ A. Mac Shamhráin, *Church and polity in pre-Norman Ireland: the case of Glendalough*, Maynooth Monographs 7 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1996), 5.

¹⁸⁵ *Vita Endei*, 31 (*VSHP*, 2:73-4). Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:lxii-iv, considered the text a 'very late recension... clearly conflated from different sources', a view in which he was followed by Kenney, *Sources*, 374. Sharpe, *MISL*, 393, held that 'the present text cannot date from earlier than the thirteenth century.' No more precise date has been given for the individual parts of the Life, but the inclusion of the text in the *Codex Insulensis* additionally renders the version extant subject to the heaviest editorial and homiletic hand of the three major Latin collections of saints' Lives. The connection with Clonmacnoise is argued by Ó Riain, *DIS*, 281. See also Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 170-1, for the suggestion of dependence on the *Vita tripartita*.

¹⁸⁶ *Vita Fintani S1.*, 21 (*VSHH*, 203-4); *Vita Fintani D.*, 19 (*VSHP*, 2:233). The earliest version of the text is represented by S1 in the Salamanca collection and the later phase of revision is that of the Dublin collection (D), from which the two late medieval recensions in the Salamanca collection (S2) and Oxford collection (O) descend. On the relation of the recensions to each other, see Sharpe, *MISL*, 334-337, 394. The version in S1 is one of O'Donohue Lives, a group of texts considered by Sharpe to date as early as the eighth century, but alternatively suggested on the basis of the saint's dynastic assignations within the text to date to the twelfth century, for which see Ó Riain, *DIS*, 505-6. Whether the original in S1 is of early (eighth-century) or late (twelfth-century) date is not of great importance for present purposes, as the correspondence between the specific episode and that in the Life of Máedóc is not close enough for there to have been a dependence in either direction: what will be important are the twelfth-century revisions in D to the text.

with Rúadán, Diarmait and Máedóc, the Tripartite Life's pervasive influence can be plausibly reconstructed in precisely those parts of the country connected with those texts: Clonmacnoise (*AD*) and Leinster (Máedóc). Direct influence will be established in the discussion which follows, after introducing the relevant models of coercive or maledictive fasting it provided.¹⁸⁷

Within the Tripartite Life itself, these models can be divided into two types. The first is the famous 'fast against God', in which Patrick fasts to secure a series of special privileges and concessions from God.¹⁸⁸ The story there appears in two stages. In the first, which takes place at Mount Hermon without fasting, Patrick asks three petitions of God before his mission to the Irish: the right to sit at God's right hand in heaven, to judge the Irish at Doomsday, and to receive as much gold and silver as he and his companions could carry.¹⁸⁹ Patrick then embarks upon his mission, which he fulfils.¹⁹⁰ In the second stage, Patrick fasts for forty days on Croagh Patrick in confirmation of these terms, with an angel acting as intermediary with God.¹⁹¹ The second model appears in the final book and concerns the intercession of Patrick on behalf of slaves cruelly treated by the wicked king Tríán.¹⁹² Patrick fasts against him with no effect. The saint then proceeds to curse a rock with his spittle, placing two thirds of his fasting-curse upon the rock and leaving a third of the fasting-curse for Tríán himself, so that the rock split and Tríán would be dispossessed of his line and given an early hell-bound death. At this point, Tríán goes to beat the slaves for revealing him, but his horses drag him into the lake to his death. The theme of fasting is thus woven through each of the three books of the Life, allowing the saint to compel both God and man. These outlines will be considered in more depth below as they bear upon the texts under present discussion.

In the Lives of Máedóc, the punitive or coercive fast appears as a similarly overarching frame for an extended series of episodes which occur in identical sequence in 'V' and its descendant 'M'.¹⁹³ In the first episode, the saint fasts for fifty days and nights at Ferns until God grants him four petitions, with two

¹⁸⁷ Other episodes are cited in Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:cxx-i, but these either are much later vernacular texts, or else omit the fasting element (as noted immediately above of *Vita Fintani D.*, 19 [*VSHP*, 2:233]) or the conflict with the Deity (as in *Vita Comgalli*, 31 [*VSHP*, 2:14], where the target is Columba).

¹⁸⁸ See Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 170-1; Hughes, *Church in early Irish society*, 124-5.

¹⁸⁹ *Vita tripartita*, 1.28-30 (Mulchrone, 19; trans. Stokes, 1:29-31): 'Ocus durothlaigestar Pátraic tri itgi fair, .i. bith dia deis hi flaith nime, combad é pa breithem do Goí[d]elaib hi llathi bratha, 7 here in nónbuir choimthechtaigi di ór 7 argutt día thabairt do Goídelaib ar creitem' ('And Patrick asked three boons of Him: that is, to be on His right hand in the kingdom of heaven, that he might be judge of the Gael on Doomsday, and as much gold and silver as the nine companions could carry, to be given to the Gael for believing').

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.30-1.62 (Mulchrone, 19-38; trans. Stokes, 1:31-63).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.112-2.120 (Mulchrone, 71-5; trans. Stokes, 1:113-121).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 3.218-220 (Mulchrone, 130-2; trans. Stokes, 1:219-21).

¹⁹³ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33-37 (*VSHP*, 2:304-6); *Vita Maedoc M.* (*VSHP*, 2:153-6).

concerning those to be barred from heaven and two concerning those to be saved from hell. This introductory episode is brief and, for its key importance, should be laid out in full:

Another time also the holy Máedóc fasted fifty days and fifty nights in his monastery, eating and drinking nothing. And his body came to be more in fast; for his fist spread over the width of his body, and the other fist over his belt. And the fast having been accomplished, God granted to him four petitions: first, that whoever of the race of the Leinstermen should sit in his seat, would not be with him in heaven. And that hell should not be closed above his familia after the day of judgement. (And that whoever of his monks should deny him, and should be fugitive from him, likewise would not be with him in heaven.) And that each and every man of God should be freed from hell up to the day of judgement.¹⁹⁴

The episode thus contains two key elements: the heroic asceticism of Máedóc and the divine privileges conferred upon him at his fast's conclusion. Both elements are integral to the sequence of episodes which follows. In a biblical context, prolonged periods of fasting could serve as preparation for a period of ministry, as in the forty day fasts of Moses, Elijah and Christ in the desert.¹⁹⁵ Accordingly, after receiving his petitions, Máedóc is brought on a circuit of three of the major provincial kingdoms: Munster,¹⁹⁶ Leinster,¹⁹⁷ and Connacht.¹⁹⁸ At the same time, the narratives of these four episodes seem to expand

¹⁹⁴ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4): 'Alio quoque tempore sanctus Aidus ieiunavit quinquaginta diebus et quinquaginta noctibus in ciuitate sua, nichil manducans nec bibens. Et corpus illius magis in ieiunio creuit; auxit enim pugnum super longitudinem eius corporis, et alium pugnum super cingulum eius. Et consummato ieiunio quatuor petitiones donauit illi Deus; primam: quicumque de genere Laginensium sederit in sede illius, non erit secum in celo. Et quod non claudetur infernus super familiam ipsius post diem iudicii. (Et quicumque suus monachus negauerit eum, et fugitiuus fuerit ab eo, similiter non sit secum in celo.) Et quod uirum uniuscuiusque dei de inferno soluet usque ad diem iudicii.' The lemmatised text is supplied by Plummer from 'M', noting that it was probably omitted inadvertently, as without it there are only three petitions granted, not four. Plummer retains the order in 'M', introducing the lemmatised text as the second of the petitions. Given the seemingly deliberate sequence of episodes which follow, it makes more sense however if it is placed as the third, and I have done so accordingly. The order in 'M' presumably stems from a desire to pair the two promises of damnation and the two promises of salvation, with either the twelfth-century redactor or thirteenth-century compiler of the text failing to recognise that the order of the petitions was important for introducing the themes of the episodes which followed. I have also corrected 'uniuscuiusque dei' from Plummer's 'uniuscuiusque diei' as a typographical error.

¹⁹⁵ Exodus 34:27-28; 1 Kings 19; Luke 4:1-13, Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13.

¹⁹⁶ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34-5 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34-5 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5).

¹⁹⁷ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:305-6); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:155).

¹⁹⁸ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 37 (*VSHP*, 2:306); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 37 (*VSHP*, 2:157-8). The theme of fasting in preparation for ministry also appears in *Vita Moling*, 3, 9 (*VSHP*, 2:191, 2:193-4), also written in Ferns around a similar time to 'M', though the theme was likely borrowed from the Life of Máedóc to underscore Moling's status as successor to Máedóc. In *Vita Moling* 3-5 (*VSHP*, 2:191-2), the theme of fasting is connected with Petrine ministry in terms of the miracles performed (which include fishing for souls and walking on water). Much as in the Life of Máedóc, the theme of fasting is similarly mediated through a sequence of episodes reinforcing the internal ecclesiastical unity of Leinster.

thematically in their turn upon the petitions, fulfilling implicitly and typologically the content of each. First comes the saint's prophesied accession of Mochua Luachra to his seat, thereby providing the saint with a promised successor of a non-Leinster lineage.¹⁹⁹ Second is the three-day fast of Máedóc to secure the release (via social pressure and threat of divine punishment) of his companions from their imprisonment by a king of Uí Chonaill Gabra in Munster, a typological fulfilment of the promise that none of his familia would be forsaken in hell.²⁰⁰ Third is the swift and violent death, within seven days of his departure, of a monk who forsakes Máedóc's monastery at Ferns.²⁰¹ Fourth and finally comes the angelic command to the saint to cure a king of the Uí Duach of Connacht, marking the king as a man of God to be preserved in long reign until his own day of judgement.²⁰² The combination of a preparatory fast and an inter-provincial itinerary linked with the specific content of Máedóc's divinely-granted petitions confers upon the saint a divinely-appointed and almost national ministry, to be carried out by him and his successors. These episodes deserve further detailed analysis below insofar as they can be related specifically to the theme of cursing and vengeance, which will be true of the second episode in particular.²⁰³ However, because of the overall pattern of the sequence, primary consideration must be given to the framing episode in order to establish how these episodes relate to it and what their narrative purposes may be.

Importantly, the framing episode and the sequence that follows contain the only two points in the Life in which the saint fasts: first for fifty days before securing his petitions, then for three days to compel the release of captives from Uí Chonaill Gabra. In patristic and monastic terms universal to Christendom, fasting was an important physical component of asceticism, as defined as 'a monastic endeavour that combines the cultivation of virtuous qualities with self-denial and mortification, manifest in practices such as sexual and dietary abstinence, fasting, self-imposed poverty, vigils, prayers, and physical labour, performed with God as the final objective.'²⁰⁴ Its biblical context has already been referred to and was indeed made explicit in the version of the text contained in 'M' and its descendants.²⁰⁵ Where the Life of

¹⁹⁹ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:154). His lineage is explicitly given in both as in Munster; in *Vita Maedoc V.*, loc. cit.: 'De genere Mumunensium ego sum, et de habitatoribus Hirlocre' ('I am of the people of Munster, and from the inhabitants of Uí Luachra').

²⁰⁰ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5).

²⁰¹ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:305-6); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:155).

²⁰² *Vita Maedoc V.*, 37 (*VSHP*, 2:306); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34-5 (*VSHP*, 2:157-8).

²⁰³ The third episode, concerning the death of the renegade monk, will be left until Chapter V for consideration.

²⁰⁴ Follett, *Céli Dé*, 25. The importance of fasting to monastic discipline is underscored in *Vita Moling*, 18 (*VSHP*, 2:197), which notes that Moling fasted daily with the exception of Sundays, high feasts, and visitations by guests or pilgrims.

²⁰⁵ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4): '...secundum exemplum Moysi et Helie, ymmo secundum exemplum conditoris omnium, vnici Filii Dei, Domini nostri Iesu Christi' ('...according to the example of Moses and Elijah, and above all the example of the Creator of all, the only Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ').

Máedóc differs from these biblical and ascetic models however is that the fasts seem directed more toward specific material objectives, whether the granting of petitions concerning Doomsday or the release of captives.²⁰⁶ The closest biblical parallel to petitions concerning those saved and damned would be the granting of the Ten Commandments to Moses following his fast in Exodus 34:27-28, but there the prophet fasts in order to receive worthily the Commandments under God's autonomy, rather than to extract petitions as such. This point of difference and its probable source can be seen most readily in light of the broader hagiographical representations of 'fasts against God' as known paradigmatically from the Tripartite Life of Patrick and from the analogues already discussed. In the case of the framing episode in the Life of Máedóc, the correspondence is closest with the fast on Croagh Patrick. The episode had developed from earlier Patrician hagiography where the fast was originally inspired by the fasts in the desert by Moses and Christ in preparation for their respective missions,²⁰⁷ but by the time of the Tripartite Life, the episode in its second stage in particular appears to have developed into something closer to an extended 'coercive fast' against the Divinity.²⁰⁸ It has long been argued that such well-documented hagiographical episodes represent a conflation of 'fasting as a Christian ascetic practice' with the secular legal custom of the 'troscud'/'troscad', a practice which involved fasting against a person of higher status to pressure him into conceding justice.²⁰⁹ Medieval commentators on *Di Chetharsblicht Athgabála*, a law-text on distraint contained in the eighth-century *Senchus Már*, suggested that this practice was undertaken from sundown to sunrise, rather than a fast until death or settlement.²¹⁰ In its hagiographical setting however, it is implied to be a fast unto death or settlement, suggesting something of a more heroic sanctity. In the Tripartite Life, Patrick explicitly tells the angel: 'It is my pleasure... that I will not go from this Rick till I am dead or till all the requests are granted to me'.²¹¹ In the Life of Énda, the saint is similarly explicit: 'I will not break my fast until I obtain three petitions from my God'.²¹² The terms are more implicit in the Life of Máedóc, which omits the saint's words but notes that the fast lasted

²⁰⁶ It must be admitted that in the fast concerning Doomsday the coercive element is not totally explicit, as the episode suggestively moves from heroic fast to what might be freely granted by God without the clear and explicit sense of coercion, but the sense of 'petitio' suggests something which is being actively sought, while the duration of the fast past the forty days one might reasonably expect of a Lenten ascetic fast suggests an act designed to compel the Deity. These points will be further elaborated below.

²⁰⁷ Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 170. The explicit parallel drawn is with that of Moses: see *Vita tripartita*, 2.114 (Mulchrone, 71; trans. Stokes, 1:115).

²⁰⁸ Africa, 'A tale', 429, summarises the traditional scholarly reading of the episode as a 'presentation of saints and godhead as collegial adversaries.'

²⁰⁹ Plummer, *VSHP*, 1:cxx-i; Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 168-171; F. Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin: DIAS, 1988; revised 2015), 182-3.

²¹⁰ *CIH* 265.5-367.7; see also R. Thurneysen, 'Aus dem irischen Recht II: Das Fasten beim Pfändungsverfahren', *ZCP* 15 (1925), 265-6 [260-75]; Kelly, *Guide to early Irish law*, 182.

²¹¹ *Vita tripartita*, 2.112-4 (Mulchrone, 71; trans. Stokes, 1:113-5).

²¹² *Vita Endei*, 31 (*VSHP*, 2:73-4): 'Ieiunium meum non soluam donec tres petitiones a Deo me optineam.'

day and night ('diebus et... noctibus'). This itself could almost be a simple biblical formulation, as fasting day and night without food or water was known from Exodus 34:27-28. However, the fact that Máedóc's fast goes beyond forty days breaks the biblical or Lenten model of fasting, implying a fast that could not be broken until settlement had been reached. The implication is a performance which goes beyond simple asceticism to a more radical and aggressive self-abasement in its supplication or coercion of the Divinity.

D.A. Binchy considered the episode in the Lives of Máedóc to be 'doubtless modelled' on the Tripartite Life, though he did not elaborate further.²¹³ Part of the difficulty in drawing direct parallels is that the episode in the Life of Máedóc is significantly shorter than those of the Tripartite Life, containing only a single brief episode with three lines of narrative, rather than two extended episodes. Moreover, in their extant forms the Tripartite Life and the Life of Máedóc have shifted in linguistically opposite directions. Bare hints of verbal correspondence might thus include no more than the use of the Latin 'peticio' in the Life of Máedóc and the Old Irish 'itgi' in the Tripartite Life.²¹⁴ The key narrative correspondences however are as follows. Both feature a fast without food or drink,²¹⁵ of similar length (40-50 days),²¹⁶ aim (granting of petitions), implicit terms (unto death or settlement),²¹⁷ and approximate number (3-4) of petitions sought.²¹⁸ Both sets of petitions follow a similar order which somewhat loosely concerns, either in heaven or on earth, the saint's seat, his status as judge in the salvation or damnation of those at Doomsday, and the rewards to be given to those who believe. And in both cases, crucially, the granting of petitions is connected with the saint embarking on a specific divinely-appointed ministry, whether Patrick's explicit mission to the Irish,²¹⁹ or Máedóc's guided circuit of the provincial kingdoms.²²⁰ Such transmission may have provided the inspiration for the saintly petitions actively sought from God in the Life of Énda,²²¹ and have influenced the narrative reframing of similar petitions in the Life of Fintán. The

²¹³ Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival', 171

²¹⁴ *eDIL* s.v. itge, itche [http://www.dil.ie/29148 accessed: 2017-09-18]: 'a request, petition, prayer; a boon.' See *Vita tripartita*, 1.30 (Mulchrone, 19; trans. Stokes, 1:31). Cf. *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:304); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153).

²¹⁵ *Vita tripartita*, 2.114 (Mulchrone, 71; trans. Stokes, 1:115); cf. *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:304); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Vita tripartita*, 2.112-4 (Mulchrone, 71; trans. Stokes, 1:113-5); cf. *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:304); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4).

²¹⁸ *Vita tripartita*, 1.30 (Mulchrone, 19; trans. Stokes, 1:31); cf. *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:304); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4).

²¹⁹ *Vita tripartita*, 1.30 (Mulchrone, 19; trans. Stokes, 31).

²²⁰ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34-37 (*VSHP*, 2:304-6); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34-37 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5).

²²¹ That all who are buried with him in contrition of their sins should escape hell; that any who call upon them in anguish should be helped by Christ; and that he should sit at God's right hand. There are however fewer narrative parallels between the Lives of Máedóc and Énda than with the *Vita tripartita*, suggesting that the episode in the Life

earliest version of the Life of Fintán, which may date as early as the eighth century, provides a single introductory line, without mention of fasting, concerning how the saint received petitions from God, before going on immediately to enumerate the content of those petitions.²²² This remains true of the later recensions of the text, but the versions known from the twelfth century and likely also reworked in Leinster²²³ show the likely influence of the Tripartite Life in their single narrative revision: by very briefly introducing an angelic intermediary between God and saint.²²⁴

Additional reasons for the further dissemination of the Tripartite Life and for active engagement with it in the eleventh-century Life of Máedóc can be explained by the general contemporary political context. It has already been suggested above, following the work of Doherty, that the original Life of Máedóc might date to around the time of the death of Conaing Ua Fairchellaig in 1059.²²⁵ In the two preceding decades, the most powerful kings in the south had been Diarmait mac Máel na mBó in Leinster and his father-in-law Donnchad mac Briain in Munster, each of whom held aspirations of rule beyond those kingdoms which brought the pair into regular conflict over the course of their careers.²²⁶ The close relationship between Armagh and the Dál Cais in Munster had developed as a means of mutually reinforcing their respective claims, ecclesiastical and secular, over the whole island of Ireland.²²⁷ The Tripartite Life was, as noted, a text concerned with promoting Patrick as a national saint accorded an unparalleled closeness with God and an authoritative pre-eminence inherited by his successors. The association of the saint with his Dál Cais patrons would thus have lent at least implicit support to the Munster dynasty's wider political ambitions, and it seems no coincidence that key clerical personnel of Armagh were hosted by Donnchad in 1026, the same year in which he took hostages from Leinster, Dublin, Osraige, Brega and Meath.²²⁸ It may be noted that though journeys of the coarbs of Armagh into Munster are recorded in the annals, similar journeys into southern Leinster do not appear. While this may simply be an accident of source

of Énda could not have been an intermediate stage in the transmission to Máedóc; most notably, the episode occurs at the end of the Life and does not precede a religious ministry.

²²² In full, the single line of introductory narrative in *Vita Fintani* S1., 21 (*VSHH*, 203-4) is 'Hee sunt petitiones sancti Fintani, quas sibi Dominus donavit', before going on to enumerate the petitions.

²²³ *Vita Fintani* D., 19 (*VSHP*, 2:233) and its descendants; cited above at 172 fn. 186, but for which see again Sharpe, *MISL*, 334-337, 394.

²²⁴ *Vita Fintani* D., 19 (*VSHP*, 2:233): 'Tunc has petitiones vir sanctus petiuit a Deo, quas Deus sibi donauit per angelum suum'; and based on it (per Sharpe, *MISL*, 335), *Vita Fintani* S2., 19 (*VSHH*, 252): 'Illo tempore, vir sanctus quasdam petitiones a Deo per angelum postulavit et exaudiri promeruit'.

²²⁵ Doherty, 'The transmission', 271-73.

²²⁶ D. Bracken, 'Mac Briain, Donnchad [Donough O'Brien] (d. 1064)', in *ODNB*, 35:66 [35:65-7]; Hudson, 'Diarmait mac Máel na mBó', 16:23. The crucial (two-part) study remains Ó Corráin, 'The career of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó, king of Leinster', *passim*.

²²⁷ Hughes, *Church in early Irish society*, 244-5; Flanagan, 'High kings with opposition', 899-900.

²²⁸ *AI* 1026, recording Easter at Cenn Corad (Kincora, near Killaloe in Co. Clare).

survival, it may have been a by-product of this latent rivalry.²²⁹ It might be further suggested that the hagiographer behind the Life of Máedóc was trying to elevate the patron of the Uí Chennselaig at Ferns to rival the Armagh patron of the neighbouring Dál Cais of Munster, claiming for him a similarly wide, quasi-national status. This would seem natural for a text produced at a church with royal patronage; it would also explain the patterning of an episode in the Life on the fast on Croagh Patrick, establishing a heroic asceticism which surpassed that of Patrick (lasting fifty rather than forty days), a comparable closeness with God in extracting various petitions, and a jurisdictional reach effectively encompassing the southern half of Ireland. Such a claim for the saint at Ferns would correspond well with the height of Diarmait's rule at Ferns from around 1055 or 1058 onwards, with Diarmait establishing himself as the dominant power in Leinster and Osraige in 1055, and as the most powerful king in the south with effective supremacy over a greater part of the island by his defeat of Donnchad in 1058.²³⁰ In that respect, the secular and ecclesiastical interests of the hagiographer in utilising an episode of preparatory and coercive fasting, in order to reinforce the king and church at Ferns, went hand in hand.

These points can be extended in the second episode concerning the fast of Máedóc,²³¹ which in spirit resembles more closely the fast of Rúadán. There, Máedóc fasts ('ieiunauit') for three days and nights at the fort of the king of Uí Chonaill Gabra, in order to secure the release of his companions or kinsmen ('suos propinquos'). Unheeded, the fast leads miraculously on the third night to the death of the daughter of the king, before her eventual restoration to life by the saint on the queen's intercession. After these first two representations the king remains unmoved and responds with harsh words, and the saint proceeds to the third and severer stage of malediction.²³² On the suggestion of a boy standing beside him, the saint hurls his curse against a substitute stone, causing it to split into two parts. At this point the miraculous sign causes enough fear in the king to induce his repentance and reconciliation, leading him to grant the foundation of Cloncagh to Máedóc.²³³

²²⁹ Regarding source survival, while an important collection of Munster annals survive in the form of the *Annals of Inisfallen*, we do not have equivalent contemporary annals for Leinster; although the seventeenth-century *Annals of the Four Masters* preserves some earlier Leinster sources from our period. See Flanagan, *Transformation*, 2; N. Evans, *The present and the past in medieval Irish chronicles*, Studies in Celtic History 27 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 7 fn. 47, 13-4, 232-3; and G. Mac Niocaill, *The medieval Irish annals* (Dublin: Dublin Historical Association, 1975), 24-5.

²³⁰ Mac Shamhráin, *Church and polity in pre-Norman Ireland*, 94-7; Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 135-7.

²³¹ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5).

²³² *Vita Maedoc V.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305): '...set rex durus uiro sancto uerbis asperis resistebat. [...] sanctus Aidus regem maledicere cepisset...' ('...but the hardened king resisted the holy man with harsh words. [...] Máedóc began to curse the king...'); and nearly verbatim in *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:155)

²³³ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:155). E.I. Hogan, *Onomasticon Goed.*, 258, lists the site of 'Cluain Claidbaich' (Cloncagh, in the modern barony of Upper Connello, Co. Limerick) as a monastery in Uí Conaill Gabra in Munster. The Life of Máedóc is the only textual reference to the site, and as such is also the earliest

As already noted, in typological terms the episode fits within the overall sequence in fulfilling the promise of Máedóc's second petition, that none of his familia would be forsaken in hell.²³⁴ Situated within that overarching frame, the saint takes on an initial role similar to Christ in the harrowing of hell, with his three days of fast corresponding with Christ's three days in the tomb, as he descends into another kingdom in order to secure the release of those imprisoned there. The harrowing of hell was known from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, from which it had effectively assumed a canonical status.²³⁵ The rock split before the king of Uí Chonaill Gabra typologically alluded to the rocks split, the tombs opened, and the holy men raised back to life in Matthew 27: 51-53. The framing of the intervention of Máedóc in its specifically Irish context of course alluded to the secular 'troscad' already discussed. The three-stage intervention seems however to have an element of excommunicatory procedure to it, with the three interventions partly corresponding with the three warnings required by Matthew 18:15-17 before the pronouncement of the curse upon the reprobate sinner. Following what we have seen in earlier chapters, the partial conflation of the secular 'troscad' with the clerical practice of excommunication should not be too surprising, as the 'sailm escaine' (excommunicatory or cursing psalms) also conflated the (technically subtly distinct) practices of shaming fast, excommunication and malediction in a no less formally regulated clerical practice.²³⁶ Finally, the hagiographical representation may also owe something to the model of the Tripartite Life. It has been noted that in Patrick's unanswered fast on behalf of slaves abused by the wicked king Tríán, Patrick proceeds to curse a rock with his spittle – placing two thirds of his fasting-curse upon the rock and leaving a third for Tríán himself, so that the rock split and Tríán would be dispossessed of his line and given an early hellbound death. Here then the hagiographer of the Life of Máedóc is not only engaging with the biblical account but once again with a model known from the Tripartite Life, with the modification of the curse upon the stone being to intimidate and reconcile a wicked king rather than to pronounce his damnation. In terms of the Great Chain of Being, the laying of the curse of Máedóc upon the stone would have served to demonstrate the power of the saint without imputing to him the guilt of punishing a living person.²³⁷

With these structural observations having been made, the episode can be fitted to one possible political context and one more possible layer of figurative meaning. The Uí Chonaill Gabra were a branch of the

reference to its connexion with Máedóc. Little is known of the history of the site, which seems to have been a foundation of mainly local importance. See also Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 376.

²³⁴ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:304); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:154).

²³⁵ F. van Liere, *An introduction to the medieval Bible*, Introduction to Religion (New York: CUP, 2014), 70.

²³⁶ See Wiley, 'Maledictory psalms', 263, 269-71, 276-7; B. Mees, *Celtic curses* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 117; Ó Néill, 'A Middle Irish poem on the maledictory psalms', 40-1.

²³⁷ The 'Great Chain of Being', the prevalent hierarchical conception of the created order, will be returned to in Chapter V.

Uí Fidgenti who ruled in what is now Co. Limerick, within the kingdom of Munster and far from the border of Leinster.²³⁸ The release of captives who are either companions or kinsmen of Máedóc might allude to hostages given to the king of Munster by Diarmait mac Máel na mBó, as during his submissions to Donnchad in 1048 and 1053.²³⁹ The events which fit best with Diarmait being able to secure the release of those hostages would be the period of his ascendancy in the later 1050s, which would also fit with the pre-existing dates proposed by Doherty for the Life's composition (c. 1059). The annals record the campaign of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó across the plain of Munster and into Limerick in 1058: the city of Limerick, along with the stone church of Emly and the southern half of its monastery, were burned, and Diarmait defeated the army of Donnchad in the Galtee Mountains.²⁴⁰ The church of Emly itself was one of the greatest and wealthiest churches of Munster, traditionally the chief church of the kingdom.²⁴¹ The Uí Chonaill Gabra are not mentioned in the annals' account, but from the other points mentioned (Limerick, Emly, and the Galtees), the campaign seems to have ranged to at least within thirty miles of Cloncagh – the foundation in Uí Chonaill Gabra territory supposedly granted in the Life to Máedóc.²⁴² The Life may thus implicitly reference the campaign and the concomitant extension both of Uí Chennselaig power and of the federation of Máedóc as far west as Uí Chonaill Gabra, projecting recent gains into an immemorial past. It may be further suggested that Máedóc and the boy accompanying him stand in for Diarmait and his ally and protégé Tairdelbach ua Briain, Donnchad's nephew. Tairdelbach had been an enemy of Donnchad on account of the latter's slaying of Tairdelbach's father Tadc in 1023 and gained the support of the king of Connacht in 1053, but it was only in 1054 that Diarmait aligned himself with Tairdelbach's cause and supported his claim to the kingship of Munster.²⁴³ The threatened curse falling upon the substitute stone to intimidate the onlooking king perhaps references either the figurative split of the Uí Briain, which only truly began to bring down Donnchad in the latter half of the 1050s, or literal split of the stone church of Emly, both of which took place on the figurative doorstep of Uí Chonaill Gabra as in the Life ('ante ostium regis', as the Life put it).

²³⁸ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 6, 115-7; Byrne, *Irish kings and high kings*, 213, 296. On the possible connexions of the Uí Fidgenti with the cult of Máedóc later in the late eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries, see Doherty, 'The transmission', 275-6.

²³⁹ *AI* 1049.5; Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 133-4; B.T. Hudson, 'Diarmait mac Máele-na-mBó (reigned 1036-1072)', in *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopedia*, ed. S. Duffy (New York: Routledge, 2005), 127 [127-8].

²⁴⁰ *AI* 1058. See also Hudson, 'Diarmait mac Máel na mBó', 16:23; D. Bracken, 'Ua Briain, Tairdelbach [Turlough O'Brien] (1009-1086)', in *ODNB*, 55:833 [55:832-4]; idem, 'Mac Briain, Donnchad', 35:65-7; Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 135; idem, 'The career of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó', 34-5.

²⁴¹ Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 77-8. Emly's status as chief church of Munster lasted until its displacement by Cashel in 1101: see Flanagan, 'High-kings with opposition', 915; D. Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Cashel and Germany: the documentary evidence', in *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), 184-5 [176-217].

²⁴² See the references in *Onomasticon Goed.* cited above at 179-80 fn. 233.

²⁴³ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 134-6.

The coercive fasting episodes as they stand in ‘V’ seem thus to exist chiefly as adapted narrative frames fitted to specific political contexts, designed to reinforce the mutual ambitions of the king and church at Ferns with respect to Leinster’s neighbours as they were in the process of their realisation. The first fasting episode establishes Máedóc as a saint to rival Patrick in the southern half of Ireland and beyond, and in so doing, implicitly elevates the secular and ecclesiastical claims of the Uí Chennselaig of Leinster against those of the Dál Cais of Munster. The second episode reinforces that ambition by narrative allusion to recent events which had allowed the progressive realisation of those same claims, namely in representing in real terms the extension of Leinster power into distant parts of Munster. That fasting should be utilised as the frame in either instance was a necessary engagement with rival hagiographical claims being made in the Tripartite Life, both in terms of the form which those claims took and the aims they sought to address. The maledictive barbs are strongest however in §35 and §36, the latter of which was briefly alluded to. The fasting episode at Uí Chonaill Gabra showed the terms of the practical threat exercised over the petty-kings in Munster, and the terms of submission to avert that same threat: the release of hostages to the secular power, and the granting of churches to the federation of Máedóc on the ecclesiastical side. Both interests are represented in the person of Máedóc, as saint and subject of the Life. The final threat in §36 – of death and damnation upon those monks who leave Máedóc against his will – would have served to consolidate and reinforce those other political gains. Notably, though the curse is pronounced by the saint, it is the secular power in the person of Brandub who is tasked with undertaking the punishment of defections. By extension, political units like the Uí Chonaill Gabra and foundations such as the church of Cloncagh had been yielded to Máedóc in perpetuity, and any attempt to break away could only bring dire consequences.

V

The next set of cursing episodes to be considered concern matters related to clerical immunity, specifically the breach of sanctuary, encroachment on ecclesiastical lands, or violence against clerical personnel. The importance of these questions has already been seen in the Ruadán and Diarmait material, and as before this is where recent scholarship has most heavily and productively focused.²⁴⁴ In particular, it has been noted that while this material is certainly concerned with the principle of sanctuary, it is moreover conscious of its practical application and of the importance of mutually beneficial accommodation and amicable dispute resolution when secular and clerical jurisdictions conflict.²⁴⁵ This understanding of the somewhat more porous relations between secular and clerical authority can be extended and deepened by attending to the theme in the Máedóc material. In the Lives of Máedóc, the centrepiece sanctuary episode takes place at Clonmore in northern Leinster, during an invasion by Áed

²⁴⁴ J. Radner, ‘Threefold death’, 198; and esp. Wiley, ‘An edition’, 32-48.

²⁴⁵ Wiley, ‘An edition’, 46-55, esp. 55.

mac Ainmuirech, king of the Uí Néill.²⁴⁶ The events described allude to an earlier monastic tradition of war between Áed and Brandub independently reported in the earlier mentioned *Bóroma* saga, a vernacular text concerning the war for the remission of the tribute by the Leinstermen, already being developed in the eighth and ninth centuries but plausibly argued to have been given its final (and earliest fully extant) form at Tech Moling in the eleventh century.²⁴⁷ ‘V’ relates how the people of that place entrusted certain gifts (‘munera’) to Máedóc at Clonmore, and how the followers of Áed came to Clonmore to bear them off. Máedóc then drew a line (‘uestigium’) around the place where they were deposited with his staff (‘baculus’). When a herald crossed the boundary in vocal defiance of the power of any cleric to forbid him to cross, he fell dead upon speaking those words, striking the remainder of the Uí Néill with fear and causing them to retreat with his corpse while giving glory to Máedóc.²⁴⁸ It has been suggested that the episode derived from an earlier tradition originally concerning a Máedóc of Clonmore, patron of the Uí Dúnlainge, as distinct from Máedóc of Ferns, patron of the Uí Chennselaig. According to this theory, the episode was taken over into the Ferns Life with its saintly protagonist purposefully rewritten in order to subsume the recently subordinated dynasty’s main cult.²⁴⁹ A potential difficulty of the maledictive content of the episode however is that Diarmait mac Máel na mBó had himself burnt and plundered Clonmore in 1040, and in that context, a story of the saint’s successful protection of Clonmore against aggressors could surely not have reflected well either on Diarmait (some of whose earliest appearances in the annals are as a serial raider of monasteries) or on the federation of Máedóc.²⁵⁰ It may be then that the episode’s emphasis and its immediate eleventh-century resonance is not on some general principle of inviolable sanctuary, but rather on the instantaneousness of Máedóc’s vengeance in defence of lands he was protecting. By analogy with hagiographical representations of ‘furta sacra’ – the theft of relics seen as having been given providential sanction by the saint allowing the thefts to occur in the first place – the subtext of the story could have been that because Diarmait’s attack on Clonmore had not brought him immediate death, he had been given implicit saintly sanction.²⁵¹ Similarly, if the saint being venerated at Clonmore was the wrong saint, Máedóc had not been shown due honour, and the providentially sanctioned annexation of Clonmore by those who did rightly venerate him would have been fully justified.²⁵² Finally, the ritual use of the saint’s staff in marking the land against aggressors might also have

²⁴⁶ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:301); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:149).

²⁴⁷ The text itself survives in its extant version in the late-twelfth century Book of Leinster. See For discussion of its relevance, see Doherty, ‘The Irish hagiographer’, 18-9; idem, ‘The transmission’, 272, 275; Ó Riain, *DIS*, 433; M.T. Davies, ‘Kings and clerics in some Leinster sagas’, *Ériu* 47 (1996), 54-66 [45-66].

²⁴⁸ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:301).

²⁴⁹ Doherty, ‘The Irish hagiographer’, 19.

²⁵⁰ Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 377; *AFM* 1040.

²⁵¹ R. Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?: saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 306-7; P. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 108-110, 113-4.

²⁵² Geary, *Living with the dead*, 114-5.

been introduced to lend support to Diarmait's position. If the Máedóc who protected Clonmore was the same as the one who protected Ferns, then the ritual protection of Clonmore would have implicitly required the use of the episcopal rod of Ferns, thereby placing the protection (or otherwise) of Clonmore under an Uí Chennselaig prerogative. Far then from upholding a general principle of inviolable sanctuary, the episode was granting exception to Diarmait and the Uí Chennselaig: a post-hoc rationalisation of a state of affairs being inserted into hagiography.

The episode was made subject to subtle reworking in 'M' over a century later.²⁵³ In 'M', the Uí Chennselaig do not simply deposit their material wealth at Clonmore, but flee there themselves, 'hoping for defence by the sanctity of the man of God.'²⁵⁴ The vernacular *Betha Máedóc I* is the first to frame this specifically and explicitly in terms of sanctuary, referring to the whole land taking refuge within the 'termon'.²⁵⁵ The events happen essentially as in 'V': Áed as king of Tara comes to devastate the region and to plunder the site, Máedóc signs the earth against the army with his staff, and an arrogant soldier is struck dead for crossing it. Áed announces to his men that none can contest against God and withdraws from the sanctuary. The story continues however with Áed rallying his men with the standards of Connacht, Munster, and the northern part of Ireland in order to devastate Uí Chennselaig and expel Brandub, with Brandub responding decisively on account of his military experience and killing Áed and many of his followers in a counterattack upon the enemy camp.

The episode thus sees an important shift in its emphasis. In the mid-eleventh-century 'V', the sole emphasis is on the ostensibly independent power of sanctuary under the protection of Máedóc. Intended to subsume the cult of a rival Máedóc, it made sense that Máedóc should be sole protagonist. In the mid-twelfth-century 'M', there is however a closer and more developed relationship of cooperation between the ecclesiastical and secular powers. In their mutual defence of Uí Chennselaig and their frustration of a common enemy, Brandub is as much the hero of the tale as Máedóc, whose spiritual intervention seems to buy time for the secular leader to rally in defence of the kingdom. The close linking of the spiritual and secular power in time of war may allude to the concession by twelfth-century canonists of the right of the founder to draw on the resources of his foundation in time of crisis, a right which M.T. Flanagan notes that Diarmait mac Murchada himself arguably exercised in 1166 when he took refuge at Ferns abbey before his departure into exile from Leinster.²⁵⁶ In either case, the protective curse of the saint is aligned

²⁵³ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:149).

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 'Multi homines illius regionis cum substantiis suis fugerunt ad sanctum Moedhog manentem in predicto loco, sperantes defensionem per sanctitatem uiri [Dei].'

²⁵⁵ *Betha Máedóc Ferna I*, 18 (*BNÉ*, 1:185; trans. idem, 2:179). *eDIL* s.v. *termonn* [<http://www.dil.ie/40562> accessed: 2017-09-18]: 'the lands of a church or monastic settlement within which rights of sanctuary prevailed'; cf. Wiley, 'An edition', 30-3.

²⁵⁶ M.T. Flanagan, *Irish royal charters: texts and contexts* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 99.

closely with the interests of the church's royal patron, and the enemies to be cursed are those external to the kingdom rather than those within it.

A similar picture can be seen in the roughly contemporary *Life of Laisrén* (c. 1140x1157), whose longest episode records the miraculous prevention of an attack on Daiminis by the neighbouring pagan ruler Conall Derg. There the militant king is frustrated in turn by his horses lying on the ground, by the wreck and drowning of his men while crossing Lough Erne, and by temporary blindness at the command of the saint, while his sons are dispossessed of any future claim to the kingship.²⁵⁷ In the much later (sixteenth-century) vernacular *Life*, Conall is identified as a member of the *Síl nDaiméni* branch of the *Uí Chremthainn*,²⁵⁸ which might identify him in the Latin *Life* also as a surrogate for the twelfth-century ruling *Uí Cherbaill* of that kingdom in *Airgíalla*.²⁵⁹ The *Uí Cherbaill* were not a lineage of ancient pre-eminence, first appearing in the annals among the *Fir Fermaige* in 1043,²⁶⁰ which may account for Conall's claim in the Latin *Life* that his royal predecessors could be traced back four generations: a respectable but still relatively recent claim.²⁶¹ Daiminis itself, under the overlordship of *Ua Ruairc* in *Bréifne*, was in an exposed position near the borders between *Bréifne* and western *Airgíalla*, and was attacked in 1157.²⁶² Given this potentially vulnerable position, the story may thus have served as an attempt by *Ua Ruairc* and a prosperous house under his overlordship to ward off the threat of assault or encroachment by a precocious and expansionist neighbouring dynasty against whom it was very consciously directed. The appeal to the saints in such instances can be compared with the aforementioned note in the annals for 1138, in an account of an attempt by the men of *Mide* to plunder *Inis Mochta* during a campaign against the men of *Connacht*, *Bréifne* and *Airgíalla*. That island raid too was unsuccessful, and the attackers were repulsed and drowned by the island's defenders without burning it, 'through the miracles of God and the patron saint.'²⁶³

²⁵⁷ *Vita Lasriani*, 14-17 (*VSHP*, 2:134-5).

²⁵⁸ *Betha Molaise*, 8 (*SG*, 1:25; trans. *ibid.*, 2:24), where the antagonist is labelled as 'Conall Derg mac Daimín.' For this lineage see also T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Ulster, saints of', in *ODNB*, 55:877 [55:872-8].

²⁵⁹ B. Smith, *Colonisation and conquest in medieval Ireland: the English in Louth, 1170-1330*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought Fourth Series 42 (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 11-13.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁶¹ *Vita Lasriani*, 16 (*VSHP*, 2:134).

²⁶² *AU* 1157.3: 'Daimh-inis with its churches was burned'; *AFM* 1157.2: 'Daimhinis, Lis-mor, and Lothra, with their churches, were burned'; *MCB* 1157.2: 'Daimhinis was burned, including houses and churches'; see also Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 169. *MCB* 1157.1 implies that this attack took place at the hands of the men of *Leinster*, though this need not affect the overall conclusion of Daiminis' exposed position within a fragile and shifting political landscape.

²⁶³ *AFM* 1138.10.

These can be contrasted with the Life of Moling, whose foundation Tech Moling stood on the east bank of the River Barrow which marked the boundary between the kingdoms of Leinster and Osraige. Unlike the other Lives, the text contains few episodes of cursing or vengeance and instead the saint's clemency and peacemaking are brought to the fore.²⁶⁴ Here a different political context explains this absence. In 1156-7, the claimant to the high kingship Muirchertach mac Lochlainn invaded the kingdom of Osraige with the support of Diarmait mac Murchada, plundering both its lands and churches, and making the kingdom effectively subject to Leinster.²⁶⁵ As already noted, Diarmait and the hagiographer likely had common cause in respectively tying Tech Moling to Ferns and in composing a Life of its saint.²⁶⁶ By representing Moling as holding simultaneously the positions of abbot of Tech Moling and archbishop of Ferns while also depicting him as remonstrating on behalf of the people of Osraige, the hagiographer may have sought to consolidate the union between the two kingdoms, and to assert the influence and rightful guardianship of the archdiocese of Ferns over the ecclesiastical institutions under its protection in Osraige. That objective was best served by emphasising Moling's role of protector in terms of peacemaking, clemency and mediation, rather than in terms of excommunications or curses.²⁶⁷

Nonetheless, not all threatened curses and punitive miracles were directed outwards, and the Lives of Máedóc also contain curses hedged against the Uí Chennselaig lest they should encroach, though these appear later in the hagiographical tradition. Here we see reflected the kinds of changing political and reformist interests of the Irish Church that we saw in Chapter III. Flanagan has noted that the Latin Lives of Máedóc include among the petitions granted by God to Máedóc the warning that should any member of the dynasty intrude itself upon the abbacy, they would be denied heaven.²⁶⁸ Such a denial would have been a de facto excommunication from the body of the faithful as effectively a curse of damnation, albeit without the precise language to frame it in those terms. The threat is also present in 'V', but there the debarred group are the Leinstermen in general.²⁶⁹ Doherty has suggested that this was intended not to debar the secular dynasty of Uí Chennselaig, but rather to cement the displacement of the hereditary ecclesiastical dynasty of the Leinster paruchia, the Uí Laidhgneáin: a family which had previously held the

²⁶⁴ In the animal world, this includes his protection of mice snatched by wrens (*Vita Moling*, 22 [*VSHP*, 2:200]), his chiding of foxes for snatching books and hens from their rightful owners (*ibid.*, 23-24 [*VSHP*, 2:201]), and the divine protection in turn of foxes from hounds (*ibid.*, 27 [*VSHP*, 2:202-3]). In the human world, Moling's empathy is strongest with the people of Leinster and of neighbouring Osraige, as in his interventions on behalf of the people of Osraige in moving objects (*ibid.*, 12 [*VSHP*, 2:195]) and in averting war with Leinster (*ibid.*, 16 [*VSHP*, 2:196-7]).

²⁶⁵ *AFM* 1156.17, 1157.10; S. Duffy, 'Mac Lochlainn, Muirchertach (d. 1166)', 35:842 [35:841-2].

²⁶⁶ Gwynn et al., *Medieval religious houses*, 175; O'Riain, *DIS*, 488.

²⁶⁷ Cf. comparable activity of genealogists in masking the political changes effected by occupation as a means of maintaining legitimacy; Flanagan, *Angevin*, 89.

²⁶⁸ Flanagan, *Charters*, 97-99.

²⁶⁹ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:305): '...primam quicumque de genere Laginensium sederit in sede illius, non erit secum in celo.'

position of coarb, and which, one infers from Doherty, might have had ties to the Uí Dúnlainge whom the Uí Chennselaig opposed.²⁷⁰ The eleventh-century episode was thus an expressly political secular intervention, rather than an attempt to deter such interventions. In the twelfth-century ‘M’, the passage is however narrowed from the Leinstermen to the descendants of Brandub more specifically.²⁷¹ This may have reflected the reformist interests of Diarmait mac Murchada, as elsewhere attested in charters issued during his reign which guarantee free abbatial election.²⁷²

There are additionally more general curses threatened against secular encroachment from within the kingdom. In ‘V’, a certain Bec son of Eogan grants land to the saint at Ferns, but the grantor’s female relatives refuse the saint’s order to withdraw from the adjacent river where they had been accustomed to wash their clothes.²⁷³ At that moment of refusing the saint’s command, the women miraculously adhere to their clothes and their clothes to the ground, bringing them almost unto death; they are only released after Bec intercedes with Máedóc and grants the site to the saint in perpetuity. The act of transfixion is thus represented as a punitive miracle performed under the divine aegis on the saint’s behalf, and its effect is to separate the women from the community of the faithful: by being frozen but unable to touch the ground, the accursed women acquire a liminal status, accentuated by their standing between life and death (‘pene mortua fuit’).²⁷⁴ The cause of the saint’s displeasure differs however between ‘V’ and ‘M’. In ‘V’, it is the mere sight of women – an intrusion of the female as much as of the secular upon the monastic space – which displeases the saint.²⁷⁵ In ‘M’, the female status of the women is also of implicit concern, but additionally to the fore is the more specific concern that the women are acting ‘quasi ad suam aquam’ and claiming the waters as their own.²⁷⁶ The concern which the punitive miracle raises arises then from the idea of a patron’s family attempting to exercise continuing proprietorship over church lands once granted, which would plausibly reflect the development of heightened concerns in canon law

²⁷⁰ Doherty, ‘The transmission’, 19-20. The precise shift took place in favour of the Uí Faircheallaigh of Bréifne.

²⁷¹ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:154): ‘...ut quicumque de regali genere Laginensium, et maius de semine Brannadubh filii Eathach, sederit in sede eius, et mortuus fuerit in ea, non sit secum in celo.’

²⁷² Flanagan, *Charters*, 97-99, 101-2.

²⁷³ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 26 (*VSHP*, 2:302).

²⁷⁴ Ibid.; C. Jaser, ‘Ritual excommunication: an “ars oblivionalis”?’ in *Memory and commemoration in medieval culture*, ed. E. Brenner, M. Cohen, M. Franklin-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 129-36 [119-139]; A. Bergholm, *From shaman to saint: interpretive strategies in the study of Buile Shuibhne*, FF communications 302 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 2012), 149-53.

²⁷⁵ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 26 (*VSHP*, 2:302): ‘...viroque sancto mulieres videre non placuit.’ This is also the reading of Ó Riain, *DIS*, 433: ‘the story of its foundation... misogynistically, involved the expulsion of women washing in the nearby stream.’

²⁷⁶ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 27 (*VSHP*, 2:151), notes also the words of the women: ‘Non exibimus, noster enim locus est, et nostra aqua’ (‘We will not leave, for this is our place and our water’).

over the intervening century.²⁷⁷ Diarmait's charter to the abbey of St. Mary's at Ferns guaranteed the independence of both lands and waters granted to the foundation, 'against all the men and women of the world.' It has been noted that the charter is unusual in including women in its warranty clause, and it might be therefore suggested that the reworking of the episode could have had in mind the women among Diarmait's heirs who might enjoy limited control over lands or goods within the Uí Chennselaig demesne.²⁷⁸

It may be noted however that the status of the grantor also differs between the two texts. In 'V', Bec is named as 'rex', a member of the Uí Fheilmeda branch of Uí Chenneslaig, the branch of which Brandub was also a member.²⁷⁹ Conversely, in 'M' he is relegated to 'plebeus'. It is unclear whether this is the result of the redactor of the Dublin collection in the 1220s or of the hagiographer during Diarmait's reign.²⁸⁰ Either way, the effect on the narrative of the extant Life is that the threat is no longer against kings but against men of lesser status who might encroach. Here the Ferns hagiographer and Diarmait may have had common cause. Though Flanagan has suggested that the main concern in Diarmait's warranty clause was a guarantee against the encroachment of his own heirs rather than of external parties, the charter nonetheless provides for protections against 'bishop, king, count, or any other man at all', and would have entailed the positive promise that Diarmait and his successors would maintain the grant against outside challenge and compensate for loss if unable to do so.²⁸¹ Encroachment by an external party might therefore have been as much a financial risk to Diarmait and his heirs as it was to the abbey itself, and the episode may therefore have served as another instance of a 'barbed-wire' miracle designed to deter those outside Diarmait's own family from encroaching upon the abbatial lands.

Changing canonistic attitudes to anticlerical violence can also be tracked across the Lives of Máedóc. The relevant episodes concern two attempts to strike or fluster the saint. In the first episode, a brigand who raised his hand to kill Máedóc, at the instigation of an iniquitous steward ('equonomus'), finds his hands suddenly unable to move.²⁸² Brought to his senses by the miracle, the brigand confesses his fault and is

²⁷⁷ Flanagan, *Charters*, 98; Flanagan, *Transformation*, 17.

²⁷⁸ Flanagan, *Charters*, 97, 284-5; Flanagan, *Angevin*, 91-5.

²⁷⁹ Ó Riain, *DIS*, 433.

²⁸⁰ The redactor often omits the term 'rex' for all but national or provincial kings, though the partisan hagiographer of Diarmait's reign might himself have sought to downplay kings around the Ferns area other than those of Brandub's direct lineage. See Sharpe, *MISL*, 214.

²⁸¹ Flanagan, *Charters*, 97, 284-5.

²⁸² *Vita Maedoc V.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:298-9): 'Sed manus illius erecte siccauerunt in aere'; *Vita Maedoc M.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:145-6): 'Set illico manus eius diuina potencia arefacte sunt circa securem, et non potuit eas mouere.' The entire episode is abbreviated to a single line among a summary of miracles in *Vita Maedoc S.*, 10 (*VSHH*, 236): 'manus vibrantis contra eum securim arefacte sunt.'

absolved through the saint.²⁸³ The steward however does not repent, and dies under a curse of Saint David.²⁸⁴ In the second episode, a vituperative brother throws Máedóc into the spring where he was washing to test whether it was possible to inspire the saint to annoyance. The brother repents before the saint and dies forty days later, having been spared the earth swallowing him up instantly for his misdeed by the saint's intercession.²⁸⁵ The severity with which anti-clerical violence was treated in the eleventh century can be illustrated through contrast with Máedóc's treatment of unjustified regicide, in the figure of Sarán, the murderer of Brandub. Máedóc pronounces that the hand which wounded the king would fall off but that Sarán would repent and make satisfaction.²⁸⁶ Sarán survives and lives morally thereafter.²⁸⁷ The implicit redemptive theology is once again that of 1 Corinthians 5:5, promising the salvation of the spirit through the destruction of the flesh, as well as that of Matthew 5:30: 'And if your right hand cause you to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is better that one of your members should perish, rather than that your whole body be cast into hell.' In both sets of episodes, the saint allows the repentant sinner to avert damnation (represented by being swallowed up by the earth) through physical punishment, but where the successful regicide and the unsuccessful brigand are both spared death, the brother who did successfully lay a hand on Máedóc is merely given a delayed sentence. Thus, strikingly though perhaps unsurprisingly for a text of clerical authorship, successful but repented anticlerical violence is held to a higher standard of physical punishment than successful but repented regicide.

What is of particular interest however in terms of later editorialisation is how the ending of the episode involving the brigand and steward differs over the century between 'V' and 'M'. At the end of both episodes, Saint David begins to inveigh ('incredpare') against the steward, while Máedóc attempts to restrain David from doing so. In 'V', Máedóc warns David that if he does so the man will soon die and none will know his grave, which the Life notes is exactly what happened.²⁸⁸ In itself the term 'incredpare'

²⁸³ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:298-9): 'Tunc laicus culpam suam confessus est; et sic per orationem sancti solutus est'; *Vita Maedoc M.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:145-6): 'Tunc confessus est culpam suam, rogans indulgenciam a uiro Dei'

²⁸⁴ Discussed further below.

²⁸⁵ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 46 (*VSHP*, 2:308): 'Dixit: "Penitet me quod feci." Cui sanctus respondit: "Bene fecisti agendo penitenciam; nam si non peniteres, terra te absorbuisset. Nunc celum habebis, et quadragesimo die morieris."'; *Vita Maedoc M.*, 47 (*VSHP*, 2:159): 'Dixit: "Penitet me quod feci, da mihi indulgenciam." Cui sanctus ait: "Bene fecisti confitendo et agendo penitenciam; quia, si non peniteres, terra modo te absorbuisset. Nunc autem celum habebis, et quadragessimo die morieris." Et sic iam factum est.'

²⁸⁶ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 43 (*VSHP*, 2:307): 'Utinam illa manus que Brandub iugulauit, ex latere illius viri caderet, set tamen post penitentiam'; *Vita Maedoc M.*, 43 (*VSHP*, 2:157): 'Utinam illa manus, que defensorem ecclesiarum et regionum, atque iudicem uiduarum et pauperum iugulauit, ex latere suo caderet'; *Vita Maedoc S.*, 38 (*VSHH*, 244): 'Utinam manus que patrem pauperum et viduarum ac defensorem ecclesiarum percussit ex latere caderet!'

²⁸⁷ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 43 (*VSHP*, 2:307): 'Et in reliquo uite sue ipse bene uixit.'

²⁸⁸ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:299): '...cepit David increpare equonomum. Et dixit puer sanctus: "Non est necesse ut illum increpes; si enim increpaueris eum, ipse mox morietur, et sepulchrum illius neo sciet." Et sic euenit.'

(lit. ‘to chide’) might suggest a chastisement by formal excommunication or by a more general curse, but what seems clear from the reference to the unknown grave is that the imaginative dangers of malediction and *damnatio memoriae* are understood in David’s actions,²⁸⁹ and the young Máedóc is reluctant to approve. In ‘M’ however, Máedóc’s reasoning is different: ‘Father, do not inveigh against him, since God will inveigh against him sufficiently for us, and soon he will die.’²⁹⁰ The difference of resolution may be one of the two Lives’ respective contexts. In ‘V’, the reluctance of Máedóc to curse rather than to bestow mercy may have been original to the Life, but it may also have been a revision by a late twelfth-century scribe conscious of the reticence about cursing which had developed by the end of the century.²⁹¹ In ‘M’, the objection is instead that the excommunication is redundant: sentence has already been passed by God. Something quite specific may have been implied here. It could have been a reference to the terms of *latae sententiae* excommunication as introduced for violence against clerics in Canon 15 (*‘Si quis’*) of the Second Lateran Council in 1139.²⁹² The possible influence at Ferns of other canons of the same council – specifically those guaranteeing the freedom of abbatial election – has already been noted in ‘M’ as well as in the 1160x1162 charter of Diarmait mac Murchada to the Augustinian abbey of Ferns.²⁹³ The Lateran

²⁸⁹ This is *damnatio memoriae* in both a social and eschatological context, as discussed by C. Jaser under the rubric of ‘ars oblivionis’, for which see idem, ‘Ritual excommunication’, 126-9. On the denial of funerary services, see also *ibid.*, 133-6.

²⁹⁰ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:145-6): ‘Pater, ne increpes eum; quia Deus pro nobis satis increpabit eum, et cito morietur...’ The element of *damnatio memoriae* is still present: ‘Et nemo sciet sepulcrum eius.’ The Life concludes: ‘Et ita illi inuido equonimo omnia contigerunt secundum uaticinium sancti Moedhog, viri Dei’ (‘And thus everything came to pass according to the prophecy of holy Máedóc, man of God, for the *equonomus* who envied him’).

²⁹¹ L.K. Little, ‘The separation of religious curses from blessings in the Latin West’, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006/2007), 34-36 [29-40].

²⁹² Lateran Council II, Canon 15, in *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, ed. N.P. Tanner, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 1:200: ‘Item placuit ut si quis, saudente diabolo, huius sacrilegii reatum incurrerit, quod in clericum vel monachum violentas manus iniecerit, anathematis vinculo subiaceat et nullus episcoporum illum praesumat absolvere, nisi mortis urgente periculo, donec apostolico conspectui praesentetur et eius mandatum suscipiat. Praecipimus etiam ut in eos, qui ad ecclesiam vel coemeterium confugerint, nullus omnino manum mittere audeat. Quod si fecerit, excommunicetur.’ (‘In the same way we have decided to legislate that if anyone, at the instigation of the devil, incurs the guilt of the following sacrilege, that is to lay violent hands on a cleric or a monk, he is to be subject to the bonds of anathema; and let no bishop presume to absolve such a person unless he is in immediate danger of death, until he has been presented before the apostolic see and submits to its decision. We also prescribe that nobody dare to lay hands on those who flee to a church or cemetery. If anyone does this, let him be excommunicated.’) This was interpreted to embrace all real injuries, not just those of the hands. For discussion, see P. Huizinga, ‘The earliest development of excommunication *latae sententiae*’, *Studia Gratiana* 3 (1955), 292-300, esp. 297-8 [277-320].

²⁹³ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34 (*VSHP*, 2:154); *Vita Maedoc S.*, 28 (*VSHH*, 241); Flanagan, *Charters*, 97-102, 284-5; Flanagan, *Transformation*, 96 fn. 24, 146. See Lateran Council I (1123), Canon 8, and Lateran Council II, Canon 25, in *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, 1:191, 1:202.

canons had been promoted in Ireland in the immediate aftermath of the council by Bishop Malachy of Down, as papal legate responsible for their dissemination within the Irish Church.²⁹⁴ They could additionally have been reinforced in Leinster through the reformist activity promoted from neighbouring Munster and Cashel,²⁹⁵ as well as through the links between the sees of Dublin, Worcester and Canterbury which are well-attested in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and which seem to have persisted until the firm establishment of an independent Irish diocesan structure in 1152.²⁹⁶ It has been argued that engagement with canon law ‘must have been a very significant element of the reform movement’,²⁹⁷ and that the church at Ferns seems to have had ‘a singularly well-informed knowledge’ of those developments.²⁹⁸ With reference then to the Lateran canons, it is of interest that the brigand himself receives forgiveness while it is the steward who receives God’s sentence. Here the episode may be taking account of the later exceptions to the canon of diminished responsibility for carrying out an ordered duty,²⁹⁹ or perhaps because of the miraculous mercy that in having his hand transfixed he did not actually manage to strike the saint.

There is some further tentative evidence for knowledge of Canon 15 among the federation of Máedóc in the fourth poem attributed to Gilla Mo Dutu in *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, which could serve as evidence of the canons’ reception as early as the 1140s. After its discussion of royal duties, the vernacular poem details the sole three acts that warrant the excommunication of a king of Bréifne as fictively ordained by Máedóc: first, ‘cumgugad’ (encroachment or ‘constriction’³⁰⁰) against the saint’s lands or community; second, the conscious permitting of ‘sárugud’ (‘outrage’³⁰¹) against the church; and third, the failure to honour appropriately the successor of Máedóc. The poem’s description of the second act warranting excommunication is particularly explicit: ‘This will be the end of him, / His own act will excommunicate him.’³⁰² These stipulations could simply be taken as a spontaneous, local development of an individual church’s self-interest in maintaining its independence and self-preservation through the invocation of

²⁹⁴ Flanagan, *Transformation*, 140; see also idem, *Angevin*, 71; idem, ‘High-kings with opposition’, 924-5.

²⁹⁵ Flanagan, ‘High-kings with opposition’, 914-6.

²⁹⁶ Flanagan, ‘High-kings with opposition’, 903-5, 911-5; idem, *Angevin*, 7-8, 8-15, 29-31. Mac Murchada was intermittently overlord of Dublin c. 1137-1166, and also maintained close trading links with England through the ports of Bristol and Chester; see *ibid.*, 75.

²⁹⁷ Flanagan, *Transformation*, 17.

²⁹⁸ Flanagan, *Charters*, 97.

²⁹⁹ Huizing, ‘The earliest development’, 295.

³⁰⁰ *eDIL* s.v. cumgugad [<http://www.dil.ie/13842> accessed: 2017-09-18]: ‘act of constricting, narrowing, straitening; constriction’; appearing in its form ‘cumhgugadh’ in *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, 223 (*BNÉ*, 1:262; trans. idem, 2:254).

³⁰¹ *eDIL* s.v. sárugud [<http://www.dil.ie/36218> accessed: 2017-09-18]: ‘(a) act of violating, outraging, flouting, disobeying [...] (b) of persons [...] (f) of sacred places, churches’; appearing in its form ‘saraighthe’ in *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, 223 (*BNÉ*, 1:263; trans. idem, 2:255).

³⁰² *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, 223 (*BNÉ*, 1:263; trans. idem, 2:255): ‘Isé deiredh bás de, / A gniomh féin da eascainne.’

spiritual sanction, particularly amidst the harrying and plundering of local and provincial warfare which seems to have been on the rise in the twelfth century.³⁰³ Indeed, punitive miracles for violence against clerics and their churches were a staple of hagiographical representation back to the beginnings of the genre. However, the invocation together of excommunication, of an automatic sentence, and of the particular offence of ‘sárugud’ (the only act in the poem to suggest such an automatic excommunication) are all both curiously specific and also of close accord with the ideas of Canon 15.³⁰⁴ The specific offenders listed in Canon 15 included not only those who laid violent hands on clerics or monks, but also those who laid hands on those who fled to a church or cemetery.³⁰⁵ The poem is therefore suggestively close to the Lateran canons in its stern prohibition against outrage or violation of sanctuary, not only in terms of the specific offence to be punished but in terms of the automatic manner of punishment proscribed. That the poem should ground its appeal to authority in the saint as legislator rather than in the Lateran Council should not come as too great a surprise, as the poem was after all primarily concerned with the saint as an autonomous figure of power, and a myth in its appeal to antiquity was often held to carry greater weight than a more recently grounded claim.³⁰⁶ Equally notable with respect to Canon 15 are the poem’s exceptions. The poem’s stipulation that either the king must have been aware of the outrage permitted or that it must have been performed by his own officials before the act can bring excommunication upon him corresponds with the informal clarification of Canon 15 by Pope Eugene III, at the Council of Rheims in 1148, which specified the requirement of evil intention but also implied that

³⁰³ Flanagan, *Transformation*, 172-3; K. Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages*, Studies in Celtic History 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), 12.

³⁰⁴ It is also noticeably different from the kinds of claims one finds in comparable vernacular poems concerned with the dues to the saint, such as *Lebor na Cert* or the charter poem of the Airgíalla. For this latter text, see ‘The Airgíalla charter poem: edition’, ed. and trans. E. Bhreathnach and K. Murray, in *The kingship and landscape of Tara*, ed. E. Bhreathnach (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 124-58.

³⁰⁵ Lateran Council II, Canon 15, in *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, 1:200: ‘Praecipimus etiam ut in eos, qui ad ecclesiam vel coemeterium confugerint, nullus omnino manum mittere audeat. Quod si fecerit, excommunicetur.’ (‘We also prescribe that nobody dare to lay hands on those who flee to a church or cemetery. If anyone does this, let him be excommunicated.’)

³⁰⁶ *Betha Máedóc Ferna II*, 224 (BNE, 1:263; trans. idem, 2:255): The verse concludes the stipulated terms of tribute and excommunication as follows: ‘Agsin bretha meic Sétna, / Mairg Bréifnech bes da séna [...] / Suil tí lá na neittirbreth’ (‘These are the judgements of the son of Sétna, / Woe to the man of Bréifne who denies them [...] / Before the day of the decisions comes’). The invocation of ‘mairg’ (‘woe’) suggests a vernacular echo of the terms of Mosaic law in Deuteronomy, with its own Vulgate refrain of ‘vae’ (‘woe’). In so doing, such an echo would imply a legislation of the biblical kind, which is able to effect its own punishment through automatic sanction without recourse to an earthly agent. On how the high value accorded to myth meant that ‘a recent historical claim was often restated in mythical... terms’, see Simms, *From kings to warlords*, 1-2.

guilt could be imputed through a direct chain of command.³⁰⁷ Accepting that the date of the poem's composition is not known beyond Gilla Mo Dutu's approximate floruit, this would nonetheless have been a precociously early acceptance of the specific doctrine (or doctrines) of *latae sententiae* excommunication in the decade or so after their introduction, not least because its firm acceptance among canonists more widely was delayed by the resistance of Gratian until the 1180s.³⁰⁸ Regardless, this explanation is far from an impossible one, as the federation of Máedóc's noted conduits of contact with contemporary developments in canon law, the fertile local contexts for the canons' reception, and the accumulation of embedded literary evidence to that effect are all wont to suggest.

Having argued for such possible canonistic influence, we can return to the treatment of the vituperative brother in 'M'.³⁰⁹ Here the twelfth-century recension is particular in specifying that it is Máedóc who grants indulgence for the offence, and in noting the needs both of confessing and of doing penance.³¹⁰ It may be notable that in cases of excommunication for violence against clerics, satisfaction to the injured party and to the Church alike by submission and public penance were both necessary for forgiveness, but a bishop himself could not grant absolution without papal approval unless the aggressor was within imminent danger of death.³¹¹ In providing an exemplary model of episcopal leadership, it could be that the twelfth-century hagiographer behind 'M' sought to subtly rework the story into an exemplary episode on the terms under which a bishop could provide such absolution. In *Betha I*, which is taken as derivative from 'M', the episode is even more pronounced, underscoring the gravity of the offence and the

³⁰⁷ John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 9-10. See also discussion in R. Helmholz, 'Si quis suadente (C.17 q.4 c.29): Theory and Practice', in *Proceedings of the seventh international congress of medieval canon law, Cambridge, 23-27 July 1984*, ed. P. Linehan, Monumenta Juris Canonici: Series C Subsidia 8 (Vatican: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1988), 427 [425-38]; Huizing, 'The earliest development', 295; and A.J. Duggan, 'Jura sua unicuique tribuat: Innocent II and the advance of the learned laws', in *Pope Innocent II (1130-43): the world vs. the city*, ed. J. Doran and D.J. Smith, Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (London: Routledge, 2016), 298 fn. 156 [272-310]. Malachy himself had intended to attend this council but failed to do so due to prohibition by King Stephen and later died at Clairvaux; he would nonetheless have informed himself of its deliberations and others would likely have carried word from the council to Ireland in the flurry of contact with Ireland shortly after Malachy's death. See Flanagan, 'High-kings with opposition', 924.

³⁰⁸ E. Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 29-32; Huizing, 'The earliest development', 279-282. Such resistance might be another reason not to cite the canons directly, even when evoking their spirit. Ultimately, Gratian's resistance was overcome by the authority of his commentator Huguccio.

³⁰⁹ *Vita Maedoc M.*, 47 (*VSHP*, 2:159).

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Bene fecisti confitendo et agendo penitentiam', as also quoted above at 189 fn. 285. The agency of the saint is also made particularly prominent in the aforementioned regicide episode, with the manner of satisfaction bringing about absolution (the loss of his hand) being attributed to Máedóc's choice rather than mere foretelling; see *ibid.*, 43 (*VSHP*, 2:158): 'sicut prius optavit sanctus Moedhog.'

³¹¹ Helmholz, 'Si quis', 425, 431.

attenuating circumstances for its otherwise non-canonical forgiveness. There the man's intention is not to annoy but to drown Máedóc, and his death is more imminent, occurring within four days rather than forty of his crime.³¹²

VI

The two hagiographical clusters considered in this chapter reveal a rich array of themes within the literary, political and religious culture of the Irish Church in the long twelfth century. Careful analysis of the Ruadán and Diarmait material shows how a single thematically-apposite biblical text such as the Psalms could be made a deeply embedded thematic feature of a given narrative, and how decoding such features can situate the cursing culture of Ireland within wider Continental and Christian practice. Such analysis also reveals how hagiographical and historical-writing could be crafted with tight foreshadowing, in order to communicate to its audience the inner workings of creation and its moral truths according to the symbolist mentality. It additionally reveals how concern with the conflicting secular-clerical worlds could be crafted in similarly dualistic terms to those favoured by writers faced with similar pressures elsewhere in both England and Ireland. At the same time, the ambiguous characters of Diarmait and Ruadán show the kind of sensitive ambivalence of moral judgement that we have seen in the writings of Aelred, revealing that hagiography and exemplary narratives at the turn of the twelfth century were not wholly partisan products isolated from the lay sphere in their sympathies and audiences, but could sensitively address the needs of both. In a similar vein, attention to the thematic concern with the corrupting influence of sin reveals also how rich and complex theological and exemplary narratives could be integral and communicated features even in texts ostensibly concerned with such 'mercenary' interests as defence of sanctuary and with a partly secular audience.

The second cluster reveals the guiding influence of secular and ecclesiastical interests in the other direction. The Lives of Máedóc and Laisrén show how cursing episodes could encode tight political narratives concerned with immediate contemporary events and figures, while the influence of the Tripartite Life reveals purposeful engagement not just with timeless Christian texts but with the favoured hagiography of rival secular and ecclesiastical rulers. The cluster illustrates well how the different local and political circumstances of particular churches could have a determinative impact on the hagiography which they reproduced, similar to the importance of local conditions and interests in Chapter II. Thus the exposure of the churches of Clonmore in the Life of Máedóc and of Daiminis in the Life of Laisrén afford narrative opportunities for a maledictive saint or divinity defending transgressed sanctuary, while in the Life of Moling, the transition of the once-exposed border-church of Tech Moling to the position of a church bordering a subject kingdom earned the imperative of representing a more peacemaking saint. The diachronic evidence of the eleventh- and twelfth-century stages of the Life of Máedóc also reveals

³¹² *Betha Máedóc Ferna I*, 35 (BNÉ, 1:188-9; trans. idem, 2:183).

detectable shifts in line with the emergence of new reformist interests, much as in Chapter III. These include shifts from implicit hagiographical support for interference in elections to expressly barring such interference; shifts from barring women from monastic land to barring secular encroachment more generally; and increasing emphasis on protecting clerical personnel remarkably attuned with contemporary canonistic developments. The impression then which emerges from the various cursing episodes of the two earliest Latin Lives of Máedóc is the development and revision of a Life which was first relentlessly partisan in its secular politics, with little to say of the general principle of the independence of the Church in its own right, into a Life which has absorbed and applied to its narrative subject matter a range of twelfth-century reformist attitudes concerning matters of sanctuary, secular encroachment, and clerical immunity. In both clusters – the Diarmait and Ruadán material and the Máedóc material – the impression of this hagiography is of one much more relentlessly ‘political’ in its outward orientation toward the secular sphere than we have seen in most of the hagiography of the Anglo-Latin monastic authors, yet without losing any theological sensitivity for it. Though faced with a different inherited culture and particular local challenges to those in England, the forces which motivated texts such as *Aided Diarmata* and the Life of Máedóc as the century progressed were very much in tune with those more broadly visible in contemporary Christendom.

Chapter V: Creativity and convergence

The previous chapters have introduced the narrative representations of divine vengeance and saintly cursing in eleventh- and twelfth-century England and Ireland in their individual settings. In the present chapter these four bodies of material are set alongside each other, in order to evaluate instances where similarities and differences illuminate broader aspects of vengeance and cursing as represented across the period and the wider Insular world. Evaluating such instances can be undertaken in three general areas: language and terminology (**I**); the formal influence of common biblical (**II**) and hagiographical sources (**III**) upon the availability and narrative expression of certain key themes; and a range of shared theological outlooks and thematic paradigms (**IV-VI**), which further influenced the selection and adaptation of those specific narrative models in particular contexts. These issues will each be attended to in turn. It will be seen that while questions of language and terminology show considerable flexibility both within and across the studies, there are nonetheless noticeable narrative and thematic convergences to be seen in groups of texts drawn from within the studies. It will be further shown that these convergences of thematic outlooks are a product of the theological and sociological imperatives of particular contexts in dialogue with common narrative influences.

I

Hagiography is a narrative genre. Accordingly, when communicating the events and message the hagiographer intended his audience to construe, general narrative markers and rhetorical structure regarding cause and effect are of greater immediate utility than legalistic labels for the overarching ritual mechanism.¹ As seen in the earlier chapters, hagiographers will often refer in general terms to the anticipated or enacted miraculous punishment as ‘castigatio’ (castigation, chastisement), ‘punitio’ (punishment, vengeance), ‘ultio’ (retribution, vengeance), or ‘vindicta’ (retribution, vengeance, vindication, or satisfaction). More ritually-precise terms such as ‘clamor’ and ‘humiliatio’ – important ritual labels for cursing known from the liturgical manuscripts – on the whole do not appear in reference to cursing, while ‘maledictio’ itself is far from ubiquitous.² This point is important to underscore, as it shows that related

¹ This point has been partly made by M. Johnson, “‘Vengeance is mine’: saintly retribution in medieval Ireland”, in *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: emotion, religion and feud*, ed. S.A. Throop and P.R. Hyams (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 9 [5-50].

² The Latin word ‘clamor’ is used in the prayer of several petitioners in William, *GP*, 1.66.5, 5.272.5 (Winterbottom, 1:198-9, 1:650-1), without being attached to the liturgical clamor, the monastic cry for justice in the form of a threatened malediction; usage is similar among the other hagiographers discussed. In the two main bodies of Irish material discussed, ‘maledictio’ appears in *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:155), while the cursing of Diarmait (‘escaine Diarmata’) is explicitly labelled as such in the vernacular of *AD*, 9 (Wiley, 120; trans. idem, 147-8); but perhaps notably, the celebrated ‘cursing of Tara’ does not receive its label to that effect in the Lives of Ruadán (‘Qualiter

hagiographical episodes may be bound together in more general narrative terms rather than by labels which have been accorded prominence in modern scholarship.

The issue can be reasonably illustrated by an episode in the *Life of Anselm*. Shortly after the saint's recovery from illness, a man of the abbey of Séez spoke ill of the saint in his absence.³ When the abbot of Séez heard this, 'he warned the man to be quiet and not to utter any more evil about such a great man.'⁴ The detractor 'derided and disdained these words', and persisted in a rage with his original remarks.⁵ 'Thereupon the abbot declared that as he trusted in God's justice, he was certain that he would not allow this injury to his servant to pass unpunished.'⁶ The man laughed and continued on his way, but soon afterwards he fell from his horse with his foot caught in his stirrup, and was dragged some way until the cries of his companions to Mary for intercession freed him.⁷ The narrative offers a number of terminological markers related to the offending acts and their punishment. There are the slanderous voice ('maledica vox') and blasphemies ('blasphemia') by the detractor, the offending injury ('injuria') to the saint, and, in the abbot's foretelling, the implied punishment ('punita'⁸) of the offence. The abbot's actions meanwhile are drawn out through the narrative. There is his initial frustrated admonition ('monuere'), and thereafter his declaration ('inferre') with its confident appeal to God for justice. There are his paraphrased words in reported speech, which might be construed as performative of the miraculous punishment of the detractor, and which therefore might make the combination of admonition and declaration akin to an ad-hoc curse.⁹ There is however no overarching label applied to the abbot's action. One reason may be that it was in the hagiographer's interest to be ambiguous as to whether the abbot's actions were to be construed as performative curse or foretelling prophecy, the latter of which might align better with the theological sensitivities of the period and of Eadmer in particular.¹⁰ A more

maledixit Themoriam') until a fourteenth-century gloss on a late recension of the text (see Plummer, *VSHP*, 2:245 fn. 9).

³ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.58 (Southern, 136-7).

⁴ Ibid. (Southern, 136): '...hominem monuit ut sileret, nec de tanto viro quid sinistri ultra proferret.'

⁵ Ibid.: 'Quae cum ille subsannando despiceret...'

⁶ Ibid. (Southern, 136-7): '...intulit abbas se de justicia Dei ita certum existere, ut injuriam servi sui non pateretur impunitam transire.'

⁷ Ibid. (Southern, 137).

⁸ Ibid. (Southern, 136), as construed from the phrase 'non pateretur impunitam transire.'

⁹ On the ad-hoc curse, see R.H. Helmholz, 'Excommunication in twelfth-century England', *Journal of Law and Religion* 11.1 (1994-5), 236, 241-4 [235-53].

¹⁰ See Chapter I at 55-7, 61-2, 64. On the contemporary attractiveness of prophecy as a defusing category for the tensions associated with the curse, see again L.K. Little, *Benedictine maledictions: liturgical cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 88, 94-99; C. Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan: a prophet in politics?', in *Myth, rulership, church and charters: essays in honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. J. Barrow and A. Wareham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 154-5 [145-166].

important (and in itself sufficient) reason however may be that what was important to the hagiographer was not to discuss the invoked sanction with a label on the precise enacting mechanism, but rather to demonstrate the divine power protecting the saint's proper dignity – a point which could be conveyed in more general narrative terms. A similar feature has already been seen at work in the episode of the feuding brothers in Coleman/William's *Life of Wulfstan*.¹¹ That episode moves from entreaty, to humble self-abasement ('in humilitate'), to pronouncement against the offending parties, and at last a miraculous punishment.¹² Here the process of humiliation, the final assenting curse of the people ('maledicta populi'), and the opening declaration of the blood-feuders that they would rather be excommunicated from all ('se omnino excommunicari') than reconcile, form parts of the hagiographer's communicative strategy, but are embedded in a complex surrounding narrative of spoken words and constitutive actions that inform the audience of what is in effect an ad-hoc excommunication.¹³ The narrative could be even more streamlined. In William's *Life of Dunstan*, a mere single-line instruction by the saint – 'Look for vengeance to the Mother of God' – is the most precise allusion to what modern scholars might recognise as the 'clamor', the fervent appeal of the monastic community or saint for divine vindication against a wrongdoer.¹⁴

The Bible has been hitherto identified as providing the most important terminological and phenomenological base for the later Christian lexicon of vengeance and cursing.¹⁵ The terms favoured by Jerome – the Latin cognates 'maledictio', 'maledictum' and 'maledicere' (referring to the spoken or unspoken act), 'maledicus' (referring to the agent), and 'maledictus' (referring to the object) – stand as the standard lexical base for cursing in the Latin Christian tradition, appearing abundantly in clamors and sanction clauses featuring the Deuteronomic formulation 'maledictus sit'.¹⁶ This biblical lexicon encompasses both the formal speech-act of the curse and the divine act of vengeance ('maledictio'), as well as the more informal state of being under divine vengeance ('maledictus'), regardless of whether that vengeance had the specific formal speech-act as its cause. Thus two conceptual categories – the spoken invitation of vengeance and the act of vengeance proper – are blurred. Accordingly in hagiography, the

¹¹ William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15 (Winterbottom, 88-93).

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.15.3-6 (Winterbottom, 90-3).

¹³ The same may be seen as true of the excommunication narratives of Aelred, Walter and John in Chapter II.

¹⁴ William, *Dunstani Will.*, 2.25.3 (Winterbottom, 280-1): 'A Domini matre ultionem exigit'; see Cubitt, 'A prophet in politics?', 153, 161.

¹⁵ For the importance of the Bible, see Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 59-72, 94-105; C. Jaser, *Ecclesia maledicens: rituelle und zeremonielle Exkommunikationsformen im Mittelalter*, Spätmittelalter Humanismus Reformation 75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 171-84.

¹⁶ The favoured term in Jerome's Vulgate was that of 'maledictio', though Jerome also admitted some variation with the Greek 'anathema', the Aramaic 'maranatha', and the Latin 'vae'. B. Mees, *Celtic curses* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 116; W.J. Urbrock, 'Blessings and curses', in *ABD*, 1:756 [1:755-61].

formal speech-act may be signalled with the noun ‘maledictio’, ‘maledictum’ or ‘maledicere’, while the more general state of being under vengeance may be ‘maledictus’.¹⁷

This biblical lexicon nonetheless carried an ambivalence which may not have been well-suited rhetorically to description of a formal ritual in a hagiographical context. In addition to its descriptive ambiguity, the term also carried the weight of biblical condemnations of spoken acts of cursing (eg. Romans 12:14, 1 Corinthians 6:10, James 3:1-11).¹⁸ Thus the sole instances of speech-acts described as ‘maledicta’ in the works of Goscelin and Eadmer concern illicit practices related to paganism or magic.¹⁹ This seems to have been inherited from early medieval usage, which was typical in its association of cursing with paganism.²⁰ The terms were also ambiguous in that they might describe the similarly illicit, though more informal and less miraculous, acts of abuse and slander. The slanderous voice (‘maledica vox’) of Anselm’s detractor has been seen above, as has the cursed slanderer (‘maledicus’) in Aelred’s *Hexham Lives*.²¹ These additional senses of paganism, magic, abuse or slander are not wholly explicit in Jerome’s Vulgate or the underlying Hebrew usage he adapts, but instead are a matter of later reception. As Little notes, why the practice is associated with paganism is not made clear in early medieval sources.²² The sense however of ‘to speak ill of, rail or carp at, revile, slander, asperse, abuse, reproach’ is a borrowing from classical Latin.²³ Though this sense of abuse and slander is not explicit in the Vulgate, it could be inferred from certain passages: for instance, the association of cursers (‘maledicentes’) with calumniators (‘calumniantes’) in Luke 6:28, or the condemnation of lies, curses and contention as sins of the tongue in James 3. These overlapping associations of the sins of the tongue may broaden out the context of the lie as elaborated at greatest length in *Aided Diarmata* in particular, in which false speech by Ambacuc, Diarmait and Becc, the curse (or slander) by Ruadán, and the verbal contention of king and cleric are all sins that the saga leads its diverse audience to reflect carefully upon, in moral and societal terms.

An alternative biblical term to malediction was execration (‘execratio’), which appears with about a sixth as much frequency in the Vulgate, and is associated with the curse as in Numbers 5:18’s ‘curses with execration’ (‘cum execratione maledicta’). The hagiographers’ usage seems to reflect a looser term of detestation without necessarily calling upon God’s wrath. Goscelin uses it to describe how Wulfhere of Mercia, following the example of his saintly wife, ‘cursed (*execrabatur*) and cast out of his realm evil

¹⁷ The use of these terms has already been seen in part in Chapter I, at 55-7.

¹⁸ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 88-93.

¹⁹ See again Chapter I, at 55-6.

²⁰ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 89-90.

²¹ See Chapter II, at 93-7.

²² Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 91.

²³ C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *Harper’s Latin dictionary: a new Latin dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 1102 (‘maledico’).

images'; seemingly denoting not a curse invited through human petition and enacted through divine power, but rather a 'curse' or ban invited by divine inspiration and enacted through human power.²⁴ Eadmer uses the term execration in reference to William Rufus in his rejection of Anselm's blessings;²⁵ to Anselm in a letter professing his detestation of the activities of the world and the detestable tribulations of his soul;²⁶ and to the crowd of onlookers detesting the royal detention of Anselm while his baggage was searched at Dover.²⁷ This term blends into the ecclesiastical with the Pope calling the submission of churchmen to laymen 'too execrable' to fail to pass sentence,²⁸ and implies the potential for divine wrath in Anselm's admonition that a betrayal of allegiance to Henry would be execrable in God's sight.²⁹ In Walter's *Life of Aelred*, the monks who execrate the unstable monk do so seemingly as a verbal abuse or admonishment, rather than willing or enacting any vengeance upon him.³⁰ Its usage is a general one, again without implying any specific practice as such.

Some hagiographers displayed more precision in their use of terms for excommunication and exclusion ('excommunicatio', 'exclusio', 'escain'), as we have seen of Eadmer, William, Jocelin, and the poet of *Betha Máedóc II* in particular. These were not biblical terms and their usage may have been on account of the writers' close proximity to those canonistic circles in which such questions were at issue. Nonetheless, these authors were once again more likely to describe in general terms and to emphasise the powers being invoked (the chain of anathema, the Matthean theme of fraternal correction, or the power of binding and loosing) rather than to label the precise nature of the act itself; and with the notable exception of Eadmer, the distinction between excommunication and curse remained blurred. This is in large part a product of the purpose of hagiographical texts in relation to other sources such as canon law and liturgy in which distinctions between different ritual practice are necessary, as well as to the ambivalence of biblical terminology as a whole. In the absence of the demands of those other genres and the lack of clear and

²⁴ Goscelin, *Lect. Eormenhilde*, 4 (Love, 14-5): '...execreabtur et exterminabat a finibus suis nefanda simulacra.'

²⁵ Eadmer, *Historia novorum*, 52 (trans. Bosanquet, 53): '...sed benedictiones et orationes ejus execrans penitus respuo' ('...but cursing his blessings and prayers, I do spew them from me').

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 92 (trans. Bosanquet, 96): '...quae omnino omnes saeculi actiones fugiunt et inconsolabiliter execrantur... sed in immensis et execrabilibus tribulationibus animae meae inutiliter vixi' ('...all of which do utterly flee from the activities of the world and incurably detest them... but in innumerable and detestable tribulations of my soul I have uselessly lived').

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 88 (trans. Bosanquet, 92): '...ingenti plebis multitudine circumstante, ac nefarium opus pro sui novitate admirando spectante, et spectando execrante' ('...a great crowd of the people standing around watched this disgraceful work, wondering at its novelty, and cursing at the sight').

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114 (trans. Bosanquet, 118): '...dicens nimis execrabile videri' ('...saying that it should be seen too execrable').

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 127 (trans. Bosanquet, 133): '...quam execrabiles Deo et omni bono homini forent' ('... how accursed to God and to all good men they would be').

³⁰ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31).

unambiguously acceptable biblical terminology on which to converge, hagiography was open to greater creativity and diversity in its narrative usage.

II

Thus, for reasons partly of literary form, partly of inherited lexicon, and partly (as we have seen in Chapters I-IV) of theological sensitivity, the terminology for malediction, both within individual works and authors and also across the case studies, displays considerable flexibility. Nonetheless, convergences across the material can be found in terms of common narrative sources: notably the Bible, but also fundamental hagiographical texts such as the Life of Martin and the Gregorian *Dialogues*. Because these texts were available in all periods and places here examined, they afford a stability of convergence in thematic and narrative terms across the case studies. The emphasis on these sources can however be further compared and contrasted in the narrative sources with those of the liturgies of the clamor as previously studied by Little and Jaser.

Naturally the first text to turn to is Deuteronomy: the great supplier of phrases to the clamor.³¹ The key chapter was Deuteronomy 28, which set forth the blessings for those who uphold the covenant (28:1-14) and the curses for those who fail to uphold it (28:15-68). Encapsulated in this one chapter are virtually all conceivable forms of divine vengeance that could befall the wicked. To take one example, a single passage, quoted in a late eleventh-century forged charter confirming the grant of Edward the Confessor to St. Augustine's, Canterbury, over Minster-in-Thanel – 'The Lord strike thee with madness and blindness and fury of mind' (28:28) – covers an impressively broad range of hagiographical episodes from virtually all of the texts discussed.³² For the hagiographers, Deuteronomy, along with the Psalms and Isaiah, may also be seen to serve as the chief biblical basis for the ideas of the natural elements responding favourably to positive royal rule and negatively to royal or national sin. The key passage is the

³¹ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 61.

³² 'Charta Anglosaxonica 90: Eadward', in *Codex diplomaticus aevi saxonici*, ed. J.M. Kemble, English Historical Society Publications, 6 vols. (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1839-48), 4:237-8 [4:236-38]: 'Si cui uero haec largitio displicet, uel si quis, quod absit, hanc donationem zelo ductus diaboli quoquo ingenio infringere temptauerit, iram dei et omnium sanctorum maledicta incurrat et subita morte intereat, sicut praedictus dei inimicus Thunur interiit, percutiatque eum deus amentia et coecitate ac furore mentis, omnique tempore calumpniam maledictionis dei sustineat, nee sit qui eum liberet nisi poenitens respiscat et digna emendatione satisfaciat' ('If indeed this generosity displeases anyone, or if, since absent, led by inspiration of the devil by any disposition whatsoever he should attempt to infringe this donation, may he incur the wrath of God and the curses of all the saints, and be undone in immediate death, just as the aforesaid enemy of God Thunur was undone, and may God strike him with madness and blindness and fury of mind, and may he for all time undergo the charge of the curse of God, nor let there be anyone who should absolve him, unless he should recover his sense repenting and make satisfaction with appropriate amends'). On this charter, see Rollason, 21.

promise of drought, famine, pestilence, and fire from heaven as the elements rage against those who reject the covenant in Deuteronomy 28:20-24. Across the case studies, this has been seen for instance in Eadmer's *Life of Wilfrid*, in *AD*, and in the writings of Aelred and Jocelin. The text of Deuteronomy 28:22-3, alongside Isaiah 24:4-6, is explicitly quoted in Jocelin's *Life of Kentigern* to justify the elements punishing a foolish nation through famine.³³ In Aelred's *Relatio*, the speech of Walter Espec is essentially an extended meditation on the covenant of Deuteronomy 11, utilising the same imagery of the natural order railing against the Scots for their failure to uphold natural justice.³⁴ Such curses however had their counterpart in blessings of rain and abundance in Deuteronomy 28:12, as well as in two important cursing psalms, Psalm 67:8-10 and Deuteronomy 32:10.³⁵ The latter ran: 'In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye.'³⁶ Taken together, such Deuteronomic ideas can be seen to be implicit in Eadmer and *AD*. They are implicit for instance in the transformation of barren land through saintly intercession: in *AD*, in which Ciarán lifts the drought punishing Diarmait;³⁷ and in the *Life of Wilfrid*, in which the conversions of the English, Frisian and the South Saxon kings transform their land from sterility, drought and famine to abundance through the intercessions of the saint.³⁸ The corollary of these ideas becomes most pronounced in Aelred's *Genealogy* through the figure of Edgar the Peaceable,³⁹ and in Jocelin's *Life of Helena* through the figure of Constantine, under whom the sun shines more brightly and the military triumphs.⁴⁰ Deuteronomy thus provides as its most important narrative contribution the alternating power of the elements to bless or curse, situating the elements as the instrument of vengeance subject to the intercession of the saint.

³³ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 29 (Forbes, 212-3; trans. idem, 88).

³⁴ The speech which Aelred attributes to Walter Espec in *Relatio*, 3 (Pezinni, 62-5; Freeland, 521-7) is more generally built upon the covenantal framework of Deuteronomy 11, alluding at various points to the chastising arm of heaven (11:2), enemies overwhelmed by the sea or swallowed up by the earth (11:4, 11:6), the promise of regular rain and abundant crops to those who keep his covenant with warnings for those who forsake it (11:13-7), the importance of teaching future generations to meditate upon the past (11:18-9); and the promise to those who keep the commandments that they shall have the power to destroy and conquer nations greater and more powerful than their own (11:22-23).

³⁵ These two passages are included among the maledictory psalms known from the Irish tradition and would have been elsewhere recognised for their maledictive content.

³⁶ Deuteronomy 32:10: 'invenit eum in terra deserta in loco horrois et vastae solitudinis circumduxit eum et docuit et custodivit quasi pupillam oculi sui.'

³⁷ *AD*, 3 (Wiley, 112-3; trans. idem, 141).

³⁸ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi*, 42, 53, 81-4 (Turner, 54-5, 70-1, 100-3).

³⁹ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 8-9 [16-17] (Pezinni, 38-44; trans. Freeland, 95-104).

⁴⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Helenae*, ll. 919-23 (Harbus, 178).

After Deuteronomy, the most important and obvious source for cursing was the Psalms. The memorisation of the daily round provided a stock of languages and imagery seen as appropriate to all daily life and seasons.⁴¹ The book has also been identified as a major textual source for the clamor, given its powerful theme of the cry of the oppressed for justice.⁴² In narrative texts, the use of the Psalms influenced both the form of the imprecation and the form of the vengeance construed from the curse. We have already seen in Chapter IV how the saint's spoken imprecation might be drawn directly from the Psalms, and how the narrative events of vengeance too might fulfil the terms of vengeance promised and invoked in the Psalms. The theme of the Psalms' use and malleability can of course be extended across the case studies. In the Tripartite Life for example, three psalms are separately invoked directly by Patrick to enact in each case a miraculous self-defence and vindication: Psalms 19, 67 and 73.⁴³ Of these, the main miracle of defence and vindication is enacted through Psalm 67, one of the cursing psalms, which begins: 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face. As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish away: as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.' In the Life, the invocation of the psalm enacts a violent earthquake (closely following Psalm 67:9) and scatters the chariots and horses of the saint's opponents. In an eleventh- and twelfth-century Irish context, the theme of divine protection and the scattering of enemies in Psalm 67 might be seen elsewhere as implicit in the confusion and scattering of those that stand against the saint: as in the defeat and madness of Diarmait in *AD*, the scattering of the armies of Áed mac Ainmuirech in the Life of Máedóc and of Conall Derg in the Life of Laisrén, and the transformation of Coroticus into a fox in Jocelin's Life of Patrick.⁴⁴ On the other side of the Irish Sea, the same theme of the psalm is directly quoted to pass comment upon the Vikings cut down, scattered and put to flight by Alfred in Aelred's *Genealogy* ('As wax melts before fire, the pagans perished before God'),⁴⁵ and can also be seen as implicit in the confused wanderings of the army of Malcolm in the Hexham Lives and of the ignorant thieves in the Life of Ninian.⁴⁶ The direct invocation of the same psalm's call for God to arise and scatter the saint's enemies appears also in the Lives of Dunstan in the saint's call to banish the Devil,⁴⁷ and the theme is additionally taken up by Eadmer and William in their retellings of how the saint banished demonic

⁴¹ D.M. Wiley, 'The maledictory Psalms', *Peritia* 15 (2001), 261-2 [261-279].

⁴² Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 62-3.

⁴³ *Vita tripartita*, 1.36, 1.44-6 (Mulchrone, 23-4, 28-3; trans. Stokes, 1:37, 1:45-7). Psalm 19 is specific to the narrative setting of the Life, invoked prophetically to contrast Lóegaire's trust in chariots and horses with Patrick's trust in God.

⁴⁴ *AD*, 14-22 (Wiley, 129-38; trans. idem, 156-64); *Vita Maedoc V.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:301); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 24 (*VSHP*, 2:149); *Vita Lasriani*, 14-6 (*VSHP*, 2:134-5); Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 131 [150] (*AASS*, Col. 0570D; trans. O'Leary, 298).

⁴⁵ Aelred, *Genealogia*, 3.47-8 [8] (Pezzini, 31; trans. Freeland, 84): '...sicut fluit cera a facie ignis, sic perierunt pagani a facie Dei.'

⁴⁶ Aelred, *Hexham*, 6.1-24 [1.2] (Pezzini, 83; trans. Freeland, 73); idem *Vita Niniani*, 8.39-41 (Pezzini, 125; trans. Freeland, 52).

⁴⁷ B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 17 (Lapidge and Winterbottom, 56-7); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 28 (Turner et al., 94-5).

hounds with his staff as the wind dispels smoke.⁴⁸ It appears elsewhere in Irish and Welsh hagiography, where the emphasis is on the more literal motif of fire from heaven and enemies melting like wax, and in Goscelin's *Life of Mildrith*, where both emphases are reflected in the murderer Thunor being both swallowed by the earth and handed over to eternal fire.⁴⁹ Psalm 67 was bound up with different layers of association upon which the above episodes drew. The promise of the wrathful divine presence scattering enemies, bringing fire from heaven, and hardening the earth of course had its parallels in the aforementioned Deuteronomy 28:7 and 28:23-5, as well as in Isaiah 64:1-2. The theme of fire from heaven and melting like wax moreover hearkened back to the punishment of the Korahites in Numbers 16:34-5, while the theme of the earth moving was connected with the earth swallowing up Dathan and Abiron in Numbers 16:28-33 and 26:9-11, biblical events also set alongside each other in Psalm 105. Through the weekly round of the psalms, Psalm 67 was thus one of the most dramatic and frequent reminders of those biblical events and of the divine judgement passed upon those figures. The direct or implicit invocation of Psalm 67 might therefore associate the actions of the transgressive party with the historical opposition to God known from the Bible, remind God and the audience of the precedent of past punishment for such transgressions, and call upon God to vindicate his saints. Once again, the hagiographer's proof of such vindications served to situate the saint in a universal model of sanctity drawn across time.

Of course, such themes as those noted above recurred throughout the Psalms and Deuteronomy and need not be limited to any one passage in either, and the hagiographer's familiarity with the psalms would have left a broad range of possible invocations at his disposal. Eadmer for instance also cites the invocation of other psalms to banish the Devil: namely Psalm 15 in his *Life of Oswald* and Psalm 90:18 in his *Life of Dunstan*.⁵⁰ Correspondences could be anywhere between the specific and the general. In the *Tripartite Life*, when Patrick quotes Psalm 73 ('Deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to thee') it is to pacify a barking hound of his pagan adversary Díchu.⁵¹ In B.'s *Life of Dunstan*, the barking dogs which attack Dunstan fall silent at his coaxing voice, fulfilling the psalm without it being directly

⁴⁸ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 3 (Turner et al., 54-5).

⁴⁹ Goscelin, *Vita Mildrithe*, 5 (Rollason, 118-9). For the theme in Welsh and Irish hagiography, see L.M. Guimarães, 'Saints' encounters with secular rulers in the Welsh saints' Lives in the *Vespasian Legendary: miracles between belief and religious politics*, in *Spiritual temporalities in late-medieval Europe*, ed. M. Foster (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 65 [57-76]; D.A. Bray, 'Saint Brigit and the fire from heaven', *Études Celtique* 29 (1992), 105-113.

⁵⁰ Eadmer, *Vita Oswaldi*, 5 (Turner et al., 230-1); idem, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 18 (Turner et al., 82-3).

⁵¹ *Vita tripartita*, 1.36, (Mulchrone, 23-4; trans. Stokes, 1:37).

invoked;⁵² while in Eadmer's version, the dogs serve to shield Dunstan from the metaphorical beasts (wicked men) that conspire against him.⁵³

Beyond such instances of specific allusion however, the Psalms may also have had a broader influence on the general form of vengeance episodes and on the underlying cultural mentality of cursing. The Psalms' prevalent concern with appeals for justice, ingrained in the minds of clerical authors through regular repetition, may partly account for the fact that the highest proportion of punitive miracles in the hagiographical narratives function primarily as miracles of vindication – rather than, for instance, purgative chastisements or literalised outward manifestations of interior sins. The general form of the Psalms may moreover serve partly to explain the apparent directness and indeed aggressiveness with which such appeals for vindication or restitution were sought. This apparent aggressiveness through which miraculous satisfaction is compelled from the Divinity, particularly in cases of 'coercive fasting' and 'ritual humiliation', has sometimes appeared to modern scholars more as 'coercive' than as 'supplicatory', and has accordingly raised questions concerning its acceptability as a Christian practice.⁵⁴ Though the Irish cases have drawn most of the scholarly attention and criticism, such instances of compelled miracles and satisfaction include not only the 'coercive fasts' of Patrick, Ruadán and Máedóc, but also the radical self-abasements of Wulfstan, David of Scotland, and Aelred, as well as the adamant lay petitioners of Anselm and Wulfric. The explicitly compelled target of such self-abasements could be God,⁵⁵ a non-saintly human figure,⁵⁶ or a saintly one.⁵⁷ Far from being unique however to the early and central Middle

⁵² B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 6.7 (Winterbottom et al., 24-5).

⁵³ Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 9 (Turner et al., 62-3). The episodes also play on the Martinian themes of Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.14 (Migne, Col. 0192C-3C; trans. Hoare, 84-5), in which beasts are made rational and recognise God's majesty, and humans do not.

⁵⁴ D.A. Binchy, 'A pre-Christian survival in mediaeval Irish hagiography', in *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. N. Dumville (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), 167-70 [165-78], considered this medieval representation of the Irish saint as unpleasant, unsympathetic, and 'an embarrassment' (quote at 170), placing it into the category of 'pre-Christian or sub-Christian' practice. K.W. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: introduction to the sources*, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 239, regarded the episode in the *Vita tripartita* of 'sulking on the mountain top "in evil mind" and brow-beating the angel to wring greater benefits from God' as 'poor spiritual teaching' that 'does not present a morally elevating picture of Patrick.'

⁵⁵ Such as the fasts of the saint in *Vita tripartita*, 2.112-2.120 (Mulchrone, 71-5; trans. Stokes, 1:113-121); *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4).

⁵⁶ Such as the fasts of the saint in *Vita tripartita*, 3.218-220 (Mulchrone, 130-2; trans. Stokes, 1:219-21); *Vita Maedoc V.*, 34-5 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 34-5 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5); *Vita Ruadani S.*, 12 (*VSHH*, 163-5); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 15-8 (*VSHP*, 2:245-9); Wiliam, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15.3-4 (Winterbottom et al, 90-1); Aelred, *Lamentatio*, 5.28-35 (Pezzini, 9; trans. Freeland, 52); Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31).

Ages, this common cultural and social reference of coercive self-abasement had crucial but hitherto unappreciated supporting precedents in the Psalms. It should be cautioned that the Psalms should not be taken as the sole ‘source’ for the practice: early patristic hagiography suggests in many cases a more direct narrative influence, as will be discussed in further detail below. Nor should it be taken as a necessarily direct influence on its narrative representation, rather than as an indirect influence shaping the total culture within which ‘coercive supplications’ sat. Psalm 21 – one of the cursing psalms – is a particularly illustrative example of this general influence. Addressing God, the psalm moves through expressions of motivation, complaint, and petition: reminding God of his past protections of his people, accusing him of failure in permitting the petitioner’s present suffering, and crying out to him for justice and vindication. Because it is assumed that God does not want any of his people to be ridiculed, it is assumed that he too ‘has a stake in the rescue and so is humiliated alongside the humiliation of the petitioner’.⁵⁸ The pattern of motivation, complaint and petition can be seen also in the narrative representation of the maledictive-fasting saint, whether conveyed through direct speech or narrative structure: as in the Tripartite Life,⁵⁹ the Life of Máedóc,⁶⁰ of Ruadán,⁶¹ and of Wulfstan.⁶² The Psalms thus provided a precedent through which the petitioner could ostensibly ‘compel’ justice from the Divinity or holy figure through the process of outward shame.

The Psalms as a whole took on a deeper significance in the Christian theological tradition in that the opening cry of appeal in Psalm 21:2 – ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ – formed one of

⁵⁷ Such as the petitioner rolling at the feet of Wilfrid in William, *GP*, 3.100.25 (Winterbottom, 1:336-7); and the petitioner on the bridge in John, *Vita Wulfriçi*, 59 [3.1] (Bell, 89; trans. Matarasso, 174).

⁵⁸ W. Brueggemann and W.H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: CUP, 2014), 114-5

⁵⁹ *Vita tripartita*, 2.116 (Mulchrone, 73; trans. Stokes, 1:117), where the motivation, complaint and petition is most succinctly encapsulated in the refrain of Patrick: ‘Ní dingéb... ol rom chráded, condom digdider’ (‘I will not get me gone... for I have been wronged – until I am blessed’).

⁶⁰ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:305); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 35 (*VSHP*, 2:154-5), where the motivation, complaint and petition are conveyed by the narrator.

⁶¹ The motivation and complaint of Ruadán is conveyed chiefly through the narrative leading into the episode, but note also the explicit claims accompanying Diarmait’s curses: *AD*, 10 (Wiley, 121; trans. idem, 148): ‘Olc i nderndsabar... mo flaithius-sa do lot ar beth dam oc dítin na fírinde 7 sibsi oc anocol in cintaigh’ (‘You have done me wrong in harming my reign... for I am upholding the truth while you are protecting a criminal’); and *Vita Ruadani D.*, 17 (*VSHP*, 2:248): ‘Ego bonum defendo secundum legem Christi; uos autem malum operamini defendentes reum mortis. [...] Vos, patres, uere iniquitatem defenditis; ego autem iam in Christi nomine ueritatem defendo. Vos interfecistis me, et regnum meum perdidistis...’ (‘I defend good according to the law of Christ; you however are working evil by defending a man guilty of death. [...] You fathers truly defend iniquity; I even now defend the truth in the name of Christ. You have killed me, and destroyed my kingdom...’).

⁶² William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15 (Winterbottom et al, 88-93), where there is a mix of narrative explication and direct speech.

the seven sayings spoken by Christ upon the Cross. The theme of appeal for vindication within the Psalms is thus tied in with Christological passages in the New Testament, in which undergoing humiliation and radical self-abasement serve as prelude to vindication and self-exaltation. Particularly key to this mentality is Philippians 2:8-9: ‘He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; for which cause God also has exalted him and given him a name which is above all names.’⁶³ The full depth of these connexions is most deeply apparent in the Life of Máedóc, as we saw in Chapter IV. There the forty-day fast of the saint secures his exaltation, while the three-day fast of the saint against the king of Uí Chonaill Gabra in Munster to secure the release of his companions seems to be modelled on the three-day death and descent of Christ to secure the release of mankind from the king of the underworld during the harrowing of Hell, right up to and including the rock split at the decisive moment of their release. But the theme of self-abasement as purposive, specifically undertaken to achieve the related goals of exaltation, vindication or restitution, is a common underlying logic of all the hagiographical instances of aggressive supplication. In that sense the Psalms and the Christology of the New Testament, if not indeed the ‘source’ of this culture of aggressive supplication and dispute resolution more broadly, at the very least formed a unifying common reference point, justifying the representation of such themes in a hagiographical setting throughout the various regions of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Other biblical narrative episodes provide obvious precedents for spoken imprecations or admonitory prophecies which would have been available on both sides of the Irish Sea, but their direct use is only occasional. Christ’s cursing of the fig-tree would be an obvious model, but this appears only in the cursing of a nut-tree in Coleman/William’s Life of Wulfstan and of a lime-tree in the Life of Ruadán.⁶⁴ Both serve to discharge functions concerning the necessity of fruitfulness by the faithful, deploying the saint’s curse against a morally ‘curseable’ lower inanimate in order to underscore a particular moral point for those intended to reform.⁶⁵ The figure of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel, cursed by God to lose his throne and wander in madness and purgative bestial exile for his sin, appears as an implicit model for the deposition and madness of Diarmait in *AD* and the vulpine transformation and exile of Coroticus in Jocelin’s Life of Patrick.⁶⁶

⁶³ Also important are Christ’s promise in Matthew 19:30 (‘The last shall be first’) and the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Luke 14:7-11 (‘Because everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted’).

⁶⁴ The biblical models were curse of Christ in Mark 11:12-14 and 11:20-25 and the barren fig-tree in Luke 13:6-9. The hagiographical reworkings are William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.17 (Winterbottom et al., 94-7); *Vita Ruadani S.*, 11 (*VSHH*, 2:163); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 14 (*VSHP*, 2:244-5).

⁶⁵ This is similar to John of Forde’s use of Wulfric’s cursing of the mouse and Jocelin’s cursing of the flies, as acceptably cursed lower animates serving the hagiographer’s instructive moral ends, as we saw in Chapters II-III.

⁶⁶ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 131 [150] (*AASS*, Col. 0570D; trans. O’Leary, 298); D.M. Wiley, ‘An edition of “Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill” from the Book of Uí Maine (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis,

Arguably more important than these however is the curse by Peter against the perjurer Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Ananias is frequently named among the damned of the clamor and is cited in the decretals as an example of the punishments upon those who steal or usurp property from the Church.⁶⁷ Less well appreciated however is the way in which this episode forms an important narrative instance of lies inviting curses, which in terms of its reception in an eleventh- and twelfth-century environment would serve to further underscore the close association, verbal ambiguity and conceptual overlap between the speaker of lies and slander ('maledicus') and the accursed ('maledictus'), while fulfilling the promise of Psalm 11:4 ('May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips') and of Psalm 108:18 ('He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him'). The Petrine curse might thus inform and 'justify' the cursing match between Diarmait and Ruadán in *AD* and the *Life of Ruadán*, the returning of curses for slander between the irreverent priest and the Hexhamite pilgrims in Aelred's *Hexham Lives* and between the slanderer and saint in John's *Life of Wulfric*, and the exchange of curses between the vituperative abbot and Aelred in Walter's *Life of Aelred*. The cursing of the curser by the abstract divine justice, on account of their curse 'backfiring', might also appear. The figure of the witch Cwoenthryth in Goscelin's *Life of Kenelm* and William's *GR* is one such example, in which her maledictive recitation of the psalter against the crowd bearing the murdered saint falls upon her instead and causes her eyes to drop out.⁶⁸ These later instances are not altogether without controversy however, as even though God vindicates the cause of the saint in each instance, it is unclear whether either Diarmait or Ruadán is wholly in the right, while the attributed curses of Aelred and Wulfric as we have seen drew stern reproof. Nonetheless, the combination of the Petrine curse with the promises of the psalms might have provided one possible precedent that cursing could be considered an acceptable and appropriate response for those who themselves curse, lie and slander.

III

The importance of the early hagiographical sources shows that even where particular themes of vengeance from across a range of geographical areas may have a possible biblical basis, the Bible may not be the sole common factor, and indeed the theme itself may display the subtle interplay of different sources. The theme of the saint warding off bad weather or bringing storms upon pagans for instance could be found in the Severan *Dialogues*.⁶⁹ The citation of the Psalms by the maledictive saint for its part had the precedent of the *Life of Antony* and of *Martin*, who explicitly invoked Psalms 26:3 and 108:6

Harvard University, 2000), 51-2; see also Sayers, 'Deficient ruler as avian exile', 217-9 [217-20], for a further instance of the motif in an Irish saga.

⁶⁷ Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 9, 56, 69-70, 87, 104.

⁶⁸ Goscelin, *Vita Kenelmi*, 16 (Love, 70-3); William, *GR*, 2.211.2-3 (Mynors et al., 392-3).

⁶⁹ Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 2.7-8, 2.14 (Migne, Cols. 0215D-6D, 0219C-20D; trans. Hoare, 127-31, 138).

respectively in confronting the Devil, and the invocation of particular psalms could similarly be represented as divinely inspired.⁷⁰

Miraculous confrontations, involving a radically self-abasing saint in the pursuit of petitions against a superior secular dignity, could meanwhile be found in at least two notable instances in the Severan *Dialogues*. In the first, Martin fasts for seven days in sackcloth and ashes in pursuit of unspecified petitions, after being barred entry to the palace of the Emperor Valentinian.⁷¹ In the second, Martin spends a night prostrate upon the blood-stained threshold of Count Avitianus in order to secure the release of prisoners held in Tours.⁷² Both acts result in angelic intervention: the palace gates are miraculously opened, and the imperial throne is enveloped in flames when Valentinian refuses to rise to greet the saint; while Avitianus is struck in his sleep with angelic blows of increasing severity until he admits Martin and comes to terms. The miracles enacted in the later hagiography might vary but ultimately echo one or other of the Severan models: the gates could be miraculously held shut rather than opened, as in the saintly fast in the *Life of Aelred*;⁷³ and the angelic beatings might instead be demonic chastisement, as in the *Life of Wulfric*.⁷⁴ At their most fundamental however, both sets of episodes operate according to an understanding of an avenging divine justice which serves to vindicate the saint, but which can also be to some extent invited or compelled by the saint through deliberately undergoing outward self-abasement in the active and direct pursuit of such vindication. Thus prayer and prostration are, in the terms of the *Life of Martin*, the ‘weapons’ of the saint.⁷⁵ Integral to such appeals is the social logic of the conscious and public exaggeration of the imbalance between the two parties, contrasting before God and the people the suffering and humility of the petitioner alongside the comfort and pride of the accused, thus evoking the supplicatory logic of the Psalms already described.⁷⁶ The prescribed reason for the nocturnal punishment of Avitianus, as announced by the angel, was that the servant of God was

⁷⁰ Evagrius, *Vita Antonii*, 9.171 (Bertrand, 163); Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 6 (Migne, Col. 0164A; trans. Hoare, 18). The recitation of the psalm as divinely inspired appears in *ibid.*, 9 (Migne, Col. 0165D; trans. Hoare, 23).

⁷¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.2.5 (Migne, Col. 0205A-C; trans. Hoare, 108-9).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.4 (Migne, Col. 0214A-C; trans. Hoare, 126-7).

⁷³ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 31).

⁷⁴ See the first book of the *Vita Wulfrici* and also P. Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, in John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, anchorite*, trans. P. Matarasso, Cistercian Fathers Series 79 (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2011), 70-2 [1-80].

⁷⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 16 (Migne, Col. 0169C; trans. Hoare, 29-30): ‘Ac primum, quae erant illius familiaria in istiusmodi rebus arma, solo prostratus oravit...’ (‘But first, since they were his familiar weapons in such matters, he prayed prostrate on the ground...’). We have already seen this language of weapons and violence also used of prayer by William in Chapter I, at 63-4.

⁷⁶ P. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 102-3, 105.

lying on his threshold while the count remained sleeping.⁷⁷ A similar logic can be seen at work in the Life of Ruadán, in which after eating and retiring to sleep, Diarmait is roused from sleep by a dream which likewise signals the ongoing curse of the saints sleeplessly fasting on his threshold.⁷⁸ The prostrate cry for justice to rouse a sleeping dignity from rest might too be seen in the ritual humiliations of monastic communities and the laity in which God and the (departed) saints are rhetorically accused of sleeping in failing to protect their community's interests.⁷⁹ The logic of the Martinian episodes might however also imply the possibility that the targeted party could counteract or neutralise the petitioner by undergoing the same suffering: hence the counter-fast of Diarmait in *AD* neutralising the initial fast of the saints against him. Though the possibility of the counter-fast may also have existed in Irish vernacular law, patristic hagiography would naturally have afforded a key reinforcing precedent and rationale for later hagiographical representation, certainly where the negating of miraculous effects was concerned.⁸⁰

The most abundant and influential miracles in the Martinian material are those of transfixion, paralysis, and withering. The key biblical precedents are the withered hand of Jeroboam after ordering to seize the prophet in 1 Kings 13:4-7, the prophecy of the wasting disease for those who disobey God in Leviticus 26:16, and the paralysis of the plotting Ptolemy in 3 Maccabees 2:22.⁸¹ The Life of Martin of Tours and the Severan *Dialogues* provide a further three variations on the motif: one in which a pagan procession is transfixed by the gesture of the saint;⁸² one in which attackers of the saint find themselves knocked over or their weapons invisibly struck from their hands;⁸³ and one in which soldiers who beat the saint found their own horses unwilling to move.⁸⁴ For immediate purposes the final of these is the most important to

⁷⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, 2.4 (Migne, Col. 0214B; trans. Hoare, 126): ‘Servus, inquit, Dei ad tua limina jacet, et tu quiescis?’ (“‘The servant of God”, he said, “lies on your threshold, and you sleep?””).

⁷⁸ It can also be noted, within the Irish laws generally, that the targeted character eating during a fast of distraint brought twice the penalty owed. See F. Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin: DIAS, 1988; revised 2015), 182-3.

⁷⁹ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 112-3.

⁸⁰ D.A. Binchy, ‘Irish history and Irish law’, *Studia Hibernica* 15 (1975), 23, 25-26 [7-36], claims the possibility of counter-fast, but his legal evidence in the Irish context is elusive and hangs on those same central medieval and later hagiographical sources which were likely influenced by the Martinian material. Kelly, *Guide to early Irish law*, 182-3, does not refer to the possibility of the counter-fast in his description of the practice of fasting as distraint, implying instead that it merely attenuated the penalties.

⁸¹ Cited by Johnson, ‘Vengeance is mine’, 47, 49.

⁸² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 12 (Migne, Col. 0167A-C; trans. Hoare, 26). But cf. also Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii*, 20 (Pelligrino, 78-80; trans. Hoare, 163-4); and *Vita Martini*, 4-5 (Migne, Col. 0162D-3D; trans. Hoare, 17-20), in which an army standing against Martin sue for peace, and the hands of one brigand are checked by another brigand, noting that miraculous could be attributed to human agency.

⁸³ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 15 (Migne, Col. 0169A; trans. Hoare, 29).

⁸⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, 1.2.3 (Migne, Col. 0163A-D; trans. Hoare, 104-6).

trace, and some general formal similarities can be briefly sketched. It appears for instance in William's *GP*, in which the murderous stepmother of Edward Martyr finds her horses unwilling to move while travelling to her stepson's shrine at Shaftesbury;⁸⁵ in the *Life of Laisrén*, in which the horses of Conall Derg refuse to partake in his march on Daiminis;⁸⁶ and in John's *Life of Wulfric*, in which a man who had taken an oath by the Devil repents and travels as far as the river bordering Haselbury, where the Devil transfixes him and his horse in the middle of the ford.⁸⁷ All three instances draw on the Severan motif, associating the target of the miracle as erstwhile opponents of God and the saint, but they draw different narrative emphases in common with the Severan episode and creatively deploy it to different purposes. For William, the key implicit similarity with the Severan episode is in showing that even the brutish hearts of animals can recognise injustice and the divine power forbidding them to move, thus underscoring the possibility of the brutish hearts of those who wrong the saint themselves coming to recognise the nature of the portent. For the *Life of Laisrén*, the same essential Severan theology seems also to be implicit, but the rhetorical thrust of the narrative is in the opposite direction: affording Conall Derg a chance to correct his ways on the same Martinian model, but doing so to implicitly justify the much harsher treatment of him when he refuses to embrace the opportunity. For John, the implicit common emphasis is instead on the saint knowing of the miracle from a vision and thus being able to supply spiritual aid, thereby emphasising the proof of his subject's sanctity in Martinian terms rather than making theological statements about sin per se.

The subtle interplay of the biblical and hagiographical motifs can however be seen by introducing the relationship between 1 Kings 13:4-7, with the withering of Jeroboam's arm for ordering the seizure of the prophet, and the Severan *Life*, in which the sword raised against the saint is deflected. The motif appears twice in the *Patrician Lives*: when the saint transfixes the sword-bearing hands of two feuding brothers so they could not raise or lower them,⁸⁸ and when he does the same to a would-be pagan assailant, Díchu.⁸⁹ In terms of sources, the paralysis of the feuding brothers first appears in the *Patrician tradition* in the *Tripartite Life* and is likely drawn from earlier stock hagiography; given that the narrative outline, in which the saint is not directly threatened and the transgressors are a quarrelling pair, more closely resembles episodes in *Brigitine hagiography* than the narrative of *Kings* or the *Severan Life*. The episode of Díchu for its part originally lacks the transfixion miracle, with the version in the *Tripartite Life* having Díchu converted merely at the sight of Patrick, and his barking dog silenced by Patrick's recitation of

⁸⁵ William, *GP*, 2.86.4-6 (Winterbottom, 1:294-7).

⁸⁶ *Vita Lasriani*, 14-6 (*VSHP*, 2:134-5).

⁸⁷ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 17 [1.17] (Bell, 31-5; trans. Matarasso, 117-21).

⁸⁸ *Vita tripartita*, 2.108-10 (Mulchrone, 67-70; trans. Stokes, 109-11); *Vita tertia*, 62 (Bieler, 160-1); *Vita quarta*, 58 (Bieler, 101); Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 67 [76] (*AASS*, Col. Col. 0556C-D; trans. O'Leary, 221).

⁸⁹ *Vita tertia*, 31 (Bieler, 136-7); Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 27 [32] (*AASS*, Col. Col. 0547A-B; trans. O'Leary, 170).

Psalm 73.⁹⁰ The later versions however introduce the motif of Díchu's transfixion alongside the claim that Díchu was acting under orders of King Lóegaire, both linking the episode with the events of Kings and the Severan Life. The biblical precedent in particular is explicitly cited by Jocelin.⁹¹ Jocelin further notes that the stiffening of the pagan and his hound as like stone 'plainly showed that the worshippers of stones were like unto the gods which they worshipped.' The stiffening of man and beast alike, absent from Kings, draws implicit comparison with the Severan episode, in which the soldiers who beat Martin acknowledged 'that they ought to have been deprived of their senses and turned as rigid as rocks in the way they had seen the mules fixed where they stood.'⁹² Once introduced to the episode concerning Díchu, these biblical and hagiographical precedents are also implicitly available for the feuding brothers whose arms were made 'as immovable as wood or stone' later in Jocelin's narrative.⁹³ Such recasting seems to be in part the result of the desire to give both episodes a more biblically apposite framework to underscore their acceptability to less familiar Christian audiences, transposing the motif of the already attested Patrician miracle from the feuding brothers to Díchu, and tightening and foregrounding the connexions between hagiographical and biblical precedents. Thus, even where the clearest and most explicit parallel for a particular episode is biblical, the ultimate source may have been filtered from another hagiographical source, redressed in biblical cloth, and consciously placed within a wider circle of resonances and associations.

The process can be seen at work too in two episodes already seen in the Life of Máedóc. In the first, the brigand who raised his hand to kill Máedóc finds his hands suddenly unable to move; being brought to his senses by the miracle, he confesses his fault and is absolved through the saint.⁹⁴ The episode is similarly implicitly woven with both biblical and Severan skeins. In the second episode, the vituperative brother who hurls Máedóc into the spring repents and dies after forty days, but having been spared the

⁹⁰ *Vita tripartita*, 1.36 (Mulchrone, 23-4; trans. Stokes, 1:37), which introduces the dog. The transfixion and hound are lacking in *Vita secunda*, 29 (Bieler, 82-3); and *Vita quarta*, 33 (Bieler, 82); their earliest extant Latin text in which they appear is *Vita tertia*, 31 (Bieler, 136-7).

⁹¹ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 27 [32] (*AASS*, Col. Col. 0547B; trans. O'Leary, 170): 'Ecce signum, quod quondam in Rege Ieroboam patratum liber Regum narrat, Patricius in Dichu salubrius iterabat: nam cum idem Rex idolis sacrificans, ad Prophetam se redarguentem comprehendendū manum extenderet, mox brachium eius obstupuit, quod postmodum ipsi pœnitenti Prophetæ deprecatio restituit.' ('Behold that Patrick more profitably renewed on Díchu the miracle which the Book of Kings relates to have been formerly wrought on King Jeroboam; for when that king was sacrificing unto idols, and stretched out his hand to seize on the prophet who was reproving him, forthwith his arm stiffened, which on his repentance the prophet healed').

⁹² Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.2.3 (Migne, Col. 0203D; trans. Hoare, 104-6): '...vel ipsi potius amissis sensibus in immobilem saxorum naturam rigescere debuissent, sicut affix locis quibus steterant, iumenta vidissent...'

⁹³ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 67 [76] (*AASS*, Col. Col. 0556C-D; trans. O'Leary, 221).

⁹⁴ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:298-9); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 13 (*VSHP*, 2:145-6).

earth swallowing him up instantly for his misdeed by the saint's intercession.⁹⁵ The episodes are unified not only by the theme of opposition and rebellion against the saint but once again by the theme of the Severan Life. The soldiers who beat Martin, but repented, 'fully realised that the earth might have swallowed them alive on the spot'.⁹⁶ The pair of episodes in the Life of Máedóc allusively illustrate both possible punishments for violent hands lifted against the saint, using a hagiographical precedent itself built upon the biblical themes of Jeroboam, Dathan and Abiram, but recast in such a way as to emphasise the Severan theme of repentance and forgiveness over the biblical threat of damnation.⁹⁷ The Life of Martin thus formed a common and readily utilised reference point for themes of vengeance available to clerics on either side of the Irish Sea, though the narrative deployments and creative reuse of those reference points might vary according to the needs and concerns of the individual author.

The relative degree of influence of the Gregorian *Dialogues* is more varied. The English Benedictines knew it and sometimes refer to it, but occasionally misquote it, as in Goscelin's misattribution of the obvious Gregorian condemnation of cursing to one Saint Eutychius.⁹⁸ The English Cistercians used it intensely, as shown in the predilection of Walter, John, and Jocelin to construct entire episodes with a Gregorian theme. In the Irish sources the influence of the *Dialogues* is less obvious, though in the Tripartite Life there are some hints. A pair of episodes in the *Dialogues*' Life of Benedict, in which the Devil breaks the bell of Benedict out of spite and later returns in the form of a blackbird to try to tempt him from the wilderness, may be an inspiration for the demonic blackbirds which torment Patrick and cause him to break his bell during his fast upon the Rick.⁹⁹ Similarly, the fatal curse by Boniface of Ferentino against a secular entertainer who caused him annoyance at a nobleman's feast, coupled with the saint's insistence that the cursed man nonetheless be treated kindly and given a last meal before his impending death at the night's end, might stand behind another episode in the Tripartite Life and *Vita tertia*, in which Patrick secures food for a group of arrogantly demanding jesters at a royal feast, before they are either swallowed up by the earth or struck by poison for their rebellious arrogance.¹⁰⁰ The episode certainly seems to have

⁹⁵ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 46 (*VSHP*, 2:308); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 47 (*VSHP*, 2:159).

⁹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.2.3 (Migne, Col. 0203D; trans. Hoare, 104-6): '...satisque intellexisse quam eosdem ipsos vivos absorbere terra potuisset...'

⁹⁷ The biblical episode more properly applied the consumption of fire as the punishment for the (clerical) rebellion of Korah and the swallowing up of the earth for the (secular) rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, but the two episodes were often confused in the Middle Ages. See Little, *Benedictine maledictions*, 65-8.

⁹⁸ Goscelin, *Translatio Edithae*, 14 (Wilmart, 282; trans. Wright, 80). As noted by Wright, *ibid.*, fn. 24, the protagonist of the original Gregorian episode was in fact the Florentius we have earlier seen in Chapter II, at 100, whereas the disciples of Eutychius were the antagonists and victims of that curse.

⁹⁹ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.1-2 (Moricca, 75-79; trans. Zimmerman, 57-60); *Vita tripartita*, 2.114 (Mulchrone, 71-2; trans. Stokes, 1:115); Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 150 [172] (*AASS*, Col. 0575A; trans. O'Leary, 320-1).

¹⁰⁰ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 1.9 (Moricca, 54; trans. Zimmerman, 38); *Vita tripartita*, 3.202-4 (Mulchrone, 122-3; trans. Stokes, 1:203-5); *Vita tertia*, 61 (Bieler, 160); *The tripartite life of Patrick: with other documents relating to that saint*, ed. and

been recognised as such by the Cistercian Jocelin, who we saw in Chapter III paraphrasing Gregory's moralising conclusion as his own conclusion to the episode.¹⁰¹ But though the Gregorian *Dialogues* were evidently available and might have formed a common currency for authors and audiences on either side of the Irish Sea, that currency seems greater among the English authors studied. Though perhaps an accident of surviving sources, it may also be that part of the reason for this lies in the kinds of religious life and audience predominant in England and Ireland. The Gregorian *Dialogues* derived a large part of their significance from their inclusion of the Life of Benedict: they would thus have been of paradigmatic importance as models for life absorbed meditatively by the Benedictines and especially by the Cistercians, who saw themselves as returning to live out the primitive Benedictine spirit most fully. One can contrast this with the Irish case, in which the Benedictines were neither the dominant form of monasticism nor the principal proponents of the hagiographical genre. The *Dialogues* might also have acquired a heightened significance in an English context on account of Gregory's remembered status as 'apostle of the English.'¹⁰² Conversely, the Martinian Life is firmer as a common reference point and perhaps even more pervasive on the Irish side. The Life of Martin in an Irish context may have acquired its 'national' significance from the traditions current in the eleventh century that Martin was maternal uncle to Patrick whom he had personally tonsured; while retaining universal applicability to both monastic and episcopal interests at either end of the Insular world as a model of an exemplary monk-bishop.¹⁰³

IV

These models, and the formulaic nature of hagiography as a whole, provide precedent for the common form of similar miracles across the regional clusters and account for the relative stability of those themes across regions and across time. Nonetheless, sources and terminology alone cannot account for all theological convergences in this material, or for why a particular theme or motif might be chosen or used in a particular way over other available alternatives by a single text or group of texts. Shared authorial interests and imperatives must therefore also be sought alongside shared sources in order to explain common thematic representations in the material. As seen from the case studies, narrative representations of vengeance, inflicted suffering, and punitive miracles might be constructed according to any number of

trans. W. Stokes, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 89, 2 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 1:cli-i, clerical disapproval of secular entertainments generally.

¹⁰¹ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 66 [75] (*AASS*, Col. 0556C; trans. O'Leary, 220-2). The passage has already been quoted in Chapter III, at 124.

¹⁰² On the cultivation of this aspect of the saint and his memory in high medieval England, see esp. P.A. Hayward, 'Gregory the Great as "Apostle of the English" in post-conquest Canterbury', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55.1 (2004), 20-2 [19-57].

¹⁰³ *The tripartite life of Patrick*, 1:xliv, 1:cxxii, 1:xciv. M. Herbert, 'The Life of Martin of Tours: a view from twelfth-century Ireland', ed. M. Richter and J.-M. Picard, *Ogma: essays in Celtic studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), 78-9, 81-2, 83-4 [76-84].

thematic ‘paradigms’. The focus might be on the vindication of a transgressed order; on the role of demonic agents in temptation and testing; or on the internal state of the sinner (regressive ‘deformation’; and progressive ‘reformation’). These common themes will be considered in turn, with a view to both common sources and shared authorial imperatives.

The dominant narrative ‘paradigm’ or model of divine vengeance is that of vindication, whether of the saint or of his community. Such vindications can be enacted through the spoken word of the living saint, visceral chastisement in visions of the departed saint, or the more abstract operation of divine justice. As argued, a large part of this vindictory mentality is rooted in the appeals of the Psalms, in the Christology of the New Testament, and in the supporting precedents in early medieval hagiography: as in the horses transfixed and the throne set alight in the Severan *Dialogues*, or the vision narratives of early medieval hagiography. In terms of sociological imperatives, the eager appropriation and adaptation of these models and precedents can be readily explained by the author’s attachment to a particular landed community or to the memory of a particular saintly patron. Such treatment may vary according to the degree of local pressure appropriate to each Life’s context.

In cases of saints connected with particular monastic communities and monastic audiences, miracle narratives of vindictory punishment by God or the saint might be directed inward within the monastic community and serve to maintain and encourage regular monastic discipline, both during and after the saint’s earthly career.¹⁰⁴ The fault vindicated could be that of insufficient liturgical devotion: as for instance in Goscelin’s Translation of Mildrith, in which the departed saint twice appears in a vision to chide and strike a sleeper during the night office;¹⁰⁵ or in his Miracles of Ivo, when the departed saint similarly chastised a monk of Ramsey for neglecting the Psalms.¹⁰⁶ The fault could alternatively be that of failing to show sufficient reverence to the saint himself: as with the nun of Wilton chided in a vision for doubting the power of Eadgyth in Goscelin’s *Translatio*;¹⁰⁷ the monks Helias and Samuel, struck twice by the departed saint for having their backs turned to his shrine in Eadmer’s Life of Bregowine;¹⁰⁸ or a certain bed-ridden monk of Malmesbury, slapped in the face in a vision after slandering the departed saint as powerless to cure his illness in William’s Life of Benignus.¹⁰⁹ The fault could even be for those within the saint’s community who confronted the saint in his lifetime. These ranged from the simple miraculous

¹⁰⁴ B. Ward, *Miracles and the medieval mind: theory, record and event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Wildwood, 1987), 192-3, 194, 196-7.

¹⁰⁵ Goscelin, *Translatio Mildrithae*, 19-20 (Rollason, 179-81).

¹⁰⁶ Goscelin, *Mir. Ivonis*, lxiv-v.

¹⁰⁷ Goscelin, *Translatio Edithae*, 22 (Wilmart, 298-9; trans. Wright, 90-1).

¹⁰⁸ Eadmer, *Vita Bregonini*, 12-13 (Scholz, 145).

¹⁰⁹ William, *Vita Benigni*, 363-5.

protection of the saint from those who wished to do him harm,¹¹⁰ to miraculous punishment of those who attempted to do so: as in the fatal pronouncement upon the aforementioned monk of Ferns who threw Máedóc into a spring,¹¹¹ or upon the vituperative abbot who hurled abuse at Aelred.¹¹² All these vindications served to uphold appropriate hierarchical deference and discipline within a monastic setting, though it will be immediately noted that the thematic emphasis of these vindication narratives varies across the case studies.

Notably, the Benedictines seem to place more emphasis on posthumous miracles and on the importance of maintaining liturgical and cultic devotion. This much is unsurprising, as the Benedictine houses were linked with major shrines and the spirit of the order placed key emphasis on the practice of the liturgy.¹¹³ As these houses underwent expansion and the performance of the liturgy was increasingly divided among their members, the degree of effective supervision within the monastery may have decreased, while the community remained collectively responsible for intercession for its donors.¹¹⁴ Thus, stories of miraculous retribution by a long departed but ever-present saint served to remind such an in-house audience of the individual burden of the monastic duties that they shared. The Cistercians for their part also emphasised the continuing protective presence of their more recent saints,¹¹⁵ and even gathered posthumous miracle collections when several generations had passed.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, they also favoured a simplified liturgy,¹¹⁷ maintained that devotion to the saints was important for those on earth but not essential to the glory of those in heaven,¹¹⁸ and moreover saw the practice of maintaining shrines and cultic devotion as something of a distraction from the primary duties of monastic life.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, the imperatives served by posthumous punitive miracles (as opposed to healing miracles) within the Benedictine cloister were of comparatively lesser importance or absent in a Cistercian context. Instead, the recorded vindications serve to defend the recently departed saint from lingering critics and to enforce

¹¹⁰ As in the protection of Dunstan and Aelred from spiteful opponents within their communities: see eg. B., *Vita Dunstani B.*, 6 (Winterbottom et al., 20-5); Osbern, *Vita Dunstani Osb.*, 11 (Stubbs, 81); Eadmer, *Vita Dunstani Ead.*, 9 (Turner et al., 62-3); Walter, *Epistola ad Mauricium*, 79-80.

¹¹¹ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 46 (*VSHP*, 2:308); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 47 (*VSHP*, 2:159).

¹¹² Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44-5).

¹¹³ J.E. Burton, *Monastic and religious orders in Britain, 1000-1300*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 137-8, 158, 161-3.

¹¹⁴ S.A. Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: legend and ritual in medieval Tours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 127-9, 141-3.

¹¹⁵ See eg. Aelred, *De anima*, 3.51 (Talbot, 754; trans. idem, 149).

¹¹⁶ See eg. the second book of Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 2.1.92-133 (McFadden, 163-97; trans. idem, 313-53).

¹¹⁷ Burton, *Monastic and religious orders in Britain*, 163.

¹¹⁸ See Aelred, *Sermones*, 25.2-4, 26.4 (Raciti, 204-5, 210-1; trans. Berkeley, 346-7, 355).

¹¹⁹ See eg. the decision of abbot William to restrict access to the saint's tomb in Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 2.8.120 (McFadden, 186-7; trans. idem, 340-1).

deference to the abbot, as in the Life of Aelred. For Irish hagiography, posthumous vindictory miracle collections were also recorded in the case of churches which maintained major shrines. The texts which form the bulk of the present study however largely lack such posthumous episodes. This may largely be down to the nature of the evidence and the form of its survival. The sagas were often exemplary and allegorical narratives, whose main conceit often involved timelessly evoking a distant past without explicit reference to subsequent events or to the present they might be reflecting upon. The texts contained in the Salamanca and Dublin collections of Lives, meanwhile, were gathered as part of a 'national' collection of hagiography.¹²⁰ Accordingly for such national collections, the specific local contexts served by recording posthumous miracles on behalf of a particular shrine or institution were different from those held by the collectors and redactors. As such, the Lives represented are concerned more with the career of the saint during their lifetime, and typically conclude with an outline of the saint's death, exemplary virtues, and feast day. Though miracles of vindication do take place within the main narrative and serve similar function as for their Benedictine counterparts, the threat of what the saint might do in death is left to rest almost wholly on what he did in life.

Perhaps the most prevalent concern however for maintaining monastic discipline was that of prospective defection from the monastery.¹²¹ The theme of monastic stability vindicated is one which appears notably in the Severan *Dialogues* and Gregory's Life of Benedict, which afforded narrative precedent.¹²² The concern must have been universal to any monastery of reasonable size, and the institutional expansion of the monastic houses of the eleventh and twelfth centuries seems to have brought with it increased anxiety as 'the watchful gaze of the community' became less immediately evident in the daily lives of the monks.¹²³ Such concerns appear notably in Osbern and Eadmer's *Miracles of Dunstan*, in which the departed saint confronts three times at his shrine the monk Edward who had conspired to leave the monastery. On the third persistent occasion, Dunstan is forced to strike him with his staff, deliberately leaving the monk with a progressively deteriorating illness that kept him within the monastery until his death.¹²⁴ The concern for monastic stability appears also in the case of the wayward nun in Aelred's *De quodam miraculo*, who similarly vacillates upon the threshold and is later punished for her crime, and in that of the unstable monk in Walter's Life of Aelred, who has to be thrice prevented from departing the monastery until his death and absolution.¹²⁵ It is prominent too in the Life of Máedóc, where one of the

¹²⁰ Sharpe, *MISL*, 216, 240, 341, 363-7.

¹²¹ It was also, arguably, the most stable in terms of narrative representation, as the following discussion illustrates.

¹²² Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.22 (Migne, Col. 0197C-8C; trans. Hoare, 94-5); Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.25 (Moricca, 117; trans. Zimmerman, 94-5).

¹²³ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 127, 132-3.

¹²⁴ Osbern, *Miracula Dunstani*, 23 (Stubbs, 155-6); Eadmer, *Miracula Dunstani*, 23 (Turner et al., 194-201).

¹²⁵ The latter episode combines elements both of the Gregorian episode (the monk leaving the monastery, with invisible miraculous powers in play) and the Severan episode (the desire of the monk to return to his family).

four promises between God and Máedóc is that no defective monk should be with him in heaven, and where one monk in a hundred who did conspire to leave is identified by the saint as a man of the Devil.¹²⁶

In each case the stakes are high and nearly immediate: literally and spiritually, they are those of life and death. The sociological imperative for such writing may be the increased social anxieties above. An additional theological imperative for such stark narratives was the belief that the failure of a single member led all members to suffer, but that the fear of judgement fell ultimately upon the individual rather than on the community as a whole.¹²⁷ At the same time, the graphic imagery of the early hagiographical texts afforded both form and precedent that could be creatively reworked in the service of such concerns. In the Severan *Dialogues*, the renegade is afflicted with an immediate demonic possession after failing to heed the remonstrations of his abbot, requiring him to be brought back in iron fetters. In the Life of Benedict, the world beyond the cloister is presented as that of an invisible dragon waiting to devour the fallen monk the moment he entered it, with the miraculous intervention of the saintly abbot as all that stood between. Forsaking the protective blessing of the cloister exposed one to all the dangers of the outside world, which the hagiographers fully represented.¹²⁸ In the Miracles of Ivo, a boy who fled the abbey is imminently struck by madness and demonic visions, much as in the Severan model.¹²⁹ In the Life of Máedóc, the defective monk is ‘permissibly slain’ (‘iugulatus’) within a week of his departure, and by the saint’s promise is kept from heaven.¹³⁰ In the Life of Aelred, the saint receives a prophecy of the unstable monk’s death within a week of his third attempted departure, and insists on him remaining within the monastery until that time;¹³¹ while in the Miracles of Dunstan, the monk’s frustrated departure and ultimate death within the cloister all take place within the space of about three weeks.¹³² The prospect of imminent death in these episodes underscores the absolute necessity of maintaining monastic stability and ensuring that death fell within the cloister. Indeed, this corresponded with the contemporary attitude

¹²⁶ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 33, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:304, 2:305-6); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 33, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:153-4, 2:155).

¹²⁷ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 136-8, 141-3.

¹²⁸ L.K. Little, ‘The separation of religious curses from blessings in the Latin West’, in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 51/52 (2006/2007), ‘Separation of blessings from curses’, 34 [29-40].

¹²⁹ *Mir. Ivonis*, lxxiv, in which the visions force his return.

¹³⁰ *Vita Maedoc V.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:306); *Vita Maedoc M.*, 36 (*VSHP*, 2:155). It has been elsewhere suggested that the Hiberno-Latin usage of ‘iugulatio’ and ‘occisio’ reflects the distinction in Irish vernacular law between justifiable and non-justifiable homicide; for which see N. McLeod, ‘The blood-feud in medieval Ireland’, in *Between intrusions: Britain and Ireland between the Romans and the Normans. Papers from the 2003 Melbourne Conference*, ed. P. O’Neill, Sydney Series in Celtic Studies 7 (Sydney: Celtic Studies Foundation, University of Sydney, 2003), 114-133; and M. Meckler, ‘The assassination of Diarmait mac Cerbaill’, *CSANA Yearbook* 7, 54-7 [46-58].

¹³¹ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 28 (Powicke, 35-6).

¹³² Eadmer, *Miracula Dunstani*, 23 fn. 46 (Turner et al., 198). Eadmer notes that the events took place between the feasts of the Assumption and the Birth of the Virgin Mary (15th August and 8th September respectively).

that a good death was the monk's definitive saving act.¹³³ That lesson was naturally directed toward the Latinate monastic audience. Eadmer noted that a young monk who had conspired to leave the monastery with Edward was inspired to repentance by the example of his punishment and deathbed confession, and most likely intended the figure of the young monk as an exemplary audience stand-in for would-be defectors. Walter, writing of an expanding monastery which had evidently known its fair share of instability and tension between the abbot and his charges, similarly exhorted his audience to frequent reflexion upon the miraculous episode in terms both of the danger of defection and the proper devotion due to the saint.¹³⁴

For the secular world beyond the cloister, the vindictory punishment of insufficient reverence to the saint is more prominent than for the protagonists within the saint's community.¹³⁵ Such miracles often concern doubters and scoffers toward a particular cult, particularly cults which were relatively new or unfamiliar.¹³⁶ It may be noted for instance that of the saints to have a collection of posthumous miracles, Ivo of Ramsey offers by far the most dramatically vindictive, fittingly accompanying the saint with one of the shortest attested traditions and the highest apparent levels of scepticism. The tale which accompanied the invention of his cult – a previously unknown Persian bishop buried in Roman times, and unearthed in the eleventh century at Ramsey abbey shortly after its founding – was one which seems naturally to have elicited scepticism.¹³⁷ Consequently, about a third of his miracles are punitive. As S.B. Edgington has observed, 'the savage way in which St. Ivo jealously guarded his shrine and his reputation, and the way these punishing miracles are recorded perhaps suggest an underlying lack of confidence. [...] Goscelin betrays the weakness of the eleventh-century cult even as he portrays Ivo's miracles of power.'¹³⁸ It may be notable that when Goscelin wrote his *Life and Miracles of Ivo*, his patron Herbert Losinga was attempting to establish Ramsey and Slepe as new cult centres; an overriding concern of the hagiographer's case therefore was to answer and pre-empt such sceptics and critics.¹³⁹ Similarly, within the same diocese

¹³³ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 135-6, 138-41.

¹³⁴ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 22 (Powicke, 32): 'Legant hoc sepius miraculum qui specialius amant Alredum' ('Let those who specially love Aelred read this miracle often').

¹³⁵ The examples which follow include some monastic antagonists alongside other clerical and lay antagonists, though for present discussion these are included in the broad category of 'secular' because their role is essentially that of the figure from outside the saint's community. The texts cited support the general argument even when these monastic strangers are excluded.

¹³⁶ R. Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?: saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 405-7; Ward, *Miracles*, 69-71; S.B. Edgington, *The life and miracles of St Ivo* (St Ives: Friends of the Norris Museum, 1985), 9-11.

¹³⁷ Edgington, *The life and miracles of St. Ivo*, 9-11.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32, 38, quoted at 38.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24-6; but cf. P.A. Hayward, 'Translation-narratives in post-Conquest hagiography and English resistance to the Norman Conquest', *ANS* 21 (1998), 84-5 [67-93], for the opposite view.

in the middle of the twelfth century, dramatic episodes of vindication seem to have deliberately accompanied the attempts of Thomas of Monmouth to promote the controversial new martyr-cult of William of Norwich and to silence his numerous critics. Thus ‘the saint is invoked to increase the glory of his own shrine and to defend his veneration’ in a cult which was having difficulty in gaining traction.¹⁴⁰ Vindictiveness and vindication, albeit on a smaller and more circumscribed scale, mark the miracles of other saints contemporary to their hagiographer who were being established as new saints: Eadmer’s Anselm,¹⁴¹ Coleman/William’s Wulfstan,¹⁴² Walter’s Aelred,¹⁴³ and John’s Wulfric.¹⁴⁴ These men each had bitter opponents and critics in their lifetimes, and the recording of the miraculous punishments of those who confronted or slandered them over the course of their careers might have been similarly intended to pre-empt and silence those who might have spoken out against their claims in death to sanctity.¹⁴⁵ From these cases, it may also be possible however to make the tentative case that their vindictiveness became more muted over time. If one excludes the special personality of Anselm, the path from Wulfstan to Wulfric is one of the recently-departed saint becoming less confidently vindictive and more abstract in the vindications during their lifetimes, perhaps as shifting models of living sanctity seemingly preferred miracles other than those of retribution to demonstrate a saint whose sainthood was not yet universally accepted.¹⁴⁶

Concern for doubters and sceptics seems also to have affected local cults which were long-established but unfamiliar to a foreign audience.¹⁴⁷ The monk miraculously punished for failing to bow to Ivo for

¹⁴⁰ Ward, *Miracles*, 68-9, 70-1, quoted at 69. Ibid., 70, notes that the cult was evidently ‘neither spontaneous nor universally acceptable.’ Some discussion of the lukewarmness toward the cult is outlined by Yarrow, *Saints and their communities*, 131-3, 138-40, 166.

¹⁴¹ The notable instance of the detractor thrown from his horse has already been cited at the beginning of this chapter, at 197.

¹⁴² William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 1.8, 2.14, 2.18, 3.3, 3.16 (Winterbottom et al., 34-9, 86-9, 96-9, 110-3, 130-3).

¹⁴³ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 37 (Powicke, 44-5).

¹⁴⁴ Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 42-4.

¹⁴⁵ A. Orchard, ‘Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ’, in *St. Wulfstan and his world*, ed. J. Barrow and N. Brooks, Studies in Early Medieval Britain 4 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 55-7 [39-57]; Matarasso, ‘Introduction’, 40-2; F.M. Powicke, ‘Introduction’, in Walter Daniel, *Vita Aelredi*, lxxv-i [ix-lxxxix]; A. Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: a study* (London: SPCK, 1969), 61-2; Dutton, ‘Introduction to Walter Daniel’s “Vita Aelredi”’, in Walter Daniel, *The life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, trans. F.M. Powicke, ed. M.L. Dutton, CFS 57 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 78-9 [1-88].

¹⁴⁶ Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 407-8; Little, ‘Separation of curses from blessings’, 35-36.

¹⁴⁷ Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 405-6. See also however Hayward, ‘Saints and cults’, in *A social history of England, 900-1200*, ed. J. Crick and E. van Houts (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 314-5, 317 [309-20], for the more complex factors behind the argumentative space for which hagiography was used for the post-conquest elites.

instance is specifically identified as Norwegian,¹⁴⁸ while another foreign monk is forced to repent for criticising the saint's well. William in his *GP* reported the king Cnut being knocked unconscious by Eadgyth of Wilton for taunting the saint and ordering the opening of her tomb on account of 'enmity between the two races';¹⁴⁹ and posited that the Norman Thomas of York was struck with a fatal illness for failing to pray and fast in solemn reverence before opening the tomb of Oswald of Northumbria at Gloucester to confirm the martyr's presence there.¹⁵⁰ Aelred in his account of the Hexhamite pilgrims recorded the miraculous punishment of the foreign priest who mocked Acca as a local figure unknown in the universal calendar of the saints. Much has been made of native English anxiety in the wake of the Norman conquest driving the creation of historical and hagiographical productions, in order to defend the reputation and power of native saints against the sceptical members of a new elite to whom they were unfamiliar.¹⁵¹ While it may be far from a total explanation for the expansion of literary production in the period, and a complex range of factors seem to have been in play in the active literary promotion of cults at the time, the specific identification of the ethnic status of those who display irreverence or doubt does seem to suggest that such concerns motivate or colour at least a number of important episodes of miraculous vindication.¹⁵² Moving across the Irish Sea, a post-conquest environment can also partly explain the manner of Jocelin's *Life of Patrick*. Here the saint was not quite so unfamiliar to the new conquerors: John de Courcy seems already to have had a personal devotion to Patrick, and the saint was known in Britain, Normandy and Brittany.¹⁵³ What might have been comparatively unfamiliar to the post-conquest audience was the specific form of miracles which had developed in relative isolation within the Irish Patrician hagiographical tradition, and thus a large part of Jocelin's enterprise was taking the episodes and miracles which already existed in his Hiberno-Latin sources and framing them in ways that were credible and acceptable to the conqueror: hence placing a large emphasis on explicit biblical parallels and precedents.

Other vindications however concerned cults which were both familiar and long-established without any particular foreign presence. William for his part records an instance at Malmesbury in which a local joker mooned the saint's shrine and farted at it, and was punished accordingly by Aldhelm.¹⁵⁴ Some doubt was unavoidable. What was of concern in these cases however was that the many might become complicit by

¹⁴⁸ *Mir. Ivonis*, lxvi.

¹⁴⁹ William, *GP*, 2.87.7 (Winterbottom, 1:298-9): '...pro gentilitiis inimicitiiis...'

¹⁵⁰ William, *GP*, 3.121.2 (Winterbottom, 1:398-401).

¹⁵¹ P.A. Hayward, 'Translation-narratives in post-Conquest hagiography', 84-5.

¹⁵² For this complex range of factors, see again Hayward, 'Saints and cults', 314-20.

¹⁵³ M.T. Flanagan, 'Jocelin of Furness and the cult of St. Patrick in twelfth-century Ulster', in *Jocelin proceedings*, 47-9 [45-66].

¹⁵⁴ William, *GP*, 5.275 (Winterbottom, 1:656-7).

association in the culpability of the few.¹⁵⁵ The episode comes not long before the concluding chapter of *GP*, in which a blind woman in neighbouring Calne is cured before the shrine of the saint, and is noted as still alive in 1125, ‘a year of bad weather, thunder and lightning each day and every month, downpours going on and on with hardly a dry day, rain and mud even in the summer months.’¹⁵⁶ As seen in Chapter I, William’s conclusion, picking up a thread that can be seen to run through the largely vindicatory miracles of his work, is to suggest to his audience that they have been blind and insufficient in their devotions to the saints, on whose account such troubles have been caused. His work is thus an appeal for a return to proper reverence and devotion as the surest course to ameliorate such punishment.

The paradigm of vindication can be broadened out from the defence of the honour of the saint to the defence of his devotees, servants and dependants. In the Miracles of Ivo, a master falls ill after beating a servant for attending the shrine;¹⁵⁷ while in Eadmer’s *Life of Bregowine*, the departed saint protects schoolboys from their masters.¹⁵⁸ In Aelred’s *Hexham Lives*, the Virgin Mary vindicates a servant raped between two churches; and other servants receive the saint’s protection in the *Irish Lives*. The general theme is that of Psalm 85:2, ‘Save your servant that trusts in you, Lord’, with the protective power transposed from God to that of the saint. The above examples moreover show that such miracles were not solely confined to clerical personnel, and are thus designed to show that the saint’s protection extended to the secular laity. Contiguous with such wider defences are perhaps the most important theme of vindication in the secular arena, concerning material encroachment upon the lands, rights, and sanctuary protections of the saint’s church and community. The punishment of those who might violate ecclesiastical protections or property features in the *Lives* written by Goscelin, William, Aelred and Jocelin, and of course is an overriding concern of the *Lives* of Máedóc and Ruadán. The theme is not one which features in the early *Lives* of Antony, Martin, or the *Dialogues*, which are concerned more with the personal sanctity and power of their subjects than with lands under their protection, though it features in other patristic and early medieval hagiography, such as Paulinus the Deacon’s fifth-century *Life of Ambrose of Milan* and the *Life of Samson of Dol*.¹⁵⁹ More important than any generic source however are the contemporary social practice of sanctuary and the immediate social imperatives of recording the

¹⁵⁵ This point of culpability by association is developed by Augustine of Hippo in *De civitate Dei*, and will be discussed in further detail below.

¹⁵⁶ William, *GP*, 5.278 (Winterbottom, 1:660-3).

¹⁵⁷ *Mir. Ivonis*, lxxii.

¹⁵⁸ Eadmer, *Vita Bregovini*, 9 (Scholz, 143); see also B.W. Scholz, ‘Eadmer’s *Life of Bregwine*, archbishop of Canterbury, 761-764’, *Traditio* 22 (1966), 133 [127-48].

¹⁵⁹ Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii*, 20-1 (Pellegrino, 78-80; Hoare, 163-5); and *Vita Samsonis*, 32 (Flobert, 191-7; trans. Taylor, 35-7). The cult of the latter became important both in Brittonic-speaking areas and among the Anglo-Saxons under Edward the Elder and his son Athelstan, the latter of whom acquired relics of the saint; for which see T. Taylor, ‘Introduction’, in idem, *The Life of St. Samson of Dol* (London: SPCK, 1925; repr. Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991), xiii, xxxvi-i [v-xli].

miraculous defence of that sanctuary in the face of perceived immediate external risk, as we saw in Chapters II and IV in particular. Hagiography might seek to reinforce the deterrent effect of such pre-existing arrangements as graded fines with miraculous examples. Thus the importance of demarcation is adverted to by Aelred in his *Life of Ninian*, in which the saint demarcates his protection of his livestock with his staff, and by William in *GP*, where he notes the royal ditch of Bury ‘designed to protect the saint’s lands from all disturbance’.¹⁶⁰ The immediate motivation for recording such miraculous protection however might vary. For Goscelin and William, the emphasis is on theft and despoliation of church lands or reliquaries per se, often projected onto Danish plunderers. This may be reflective of a fear of despoliation by the new Norman elite whom the Latin Lives sought in part to address. Another notable concern is for the removal of the saint’s relics by foreign clerics or rival houses, which is frustrated in the *Life of Bregowine* and the *Hexham Lives*.¹⁶¹ Such concerns may partly underlie the recording of the punishments of those who more generally conspire to open the saint’s tomb in *GP*,¹⁶² while permitting such opening to those of simpler intention.¹⁶³ For Aelred however, the emphasis of the protective power of sanctuary is more generally instead on the protection of livestock (as in the *Life of Ninian*) or of the local lay community (as in the *Hexham Lives*). Here the exposure of the north to cattle-raiders and sporadic warfare brings out a broader social anxiety comparatively absent amidst the kind of risks faced by monastic houses in the south. The miraculous defence of church sanctuary on exposed borders ultimately underlies a similar episode in the *Life of Máedóc* already noted, taking place at Clonmore in the exposed northern part of Leinster, and it may also be suggested that the recounting of the punitive miracles in Jocelin’s *Life of Patrick* partly reflects concerns for similar instability in the wake of the conquest of Ulster. These points may serve to reinforce the social explanation invoked by Gerald of Wales that church sanctuary, divine protection, and saintly vengefulness were most important and prone to be invoked in exposed areas where brigands outnumbered castles.¹⁶⁴

In the course of all these vindications, the degree of direct saintly agency (for non-posthumous miracles) and the ultimate outcome depend on the character and circumstances of the transgressor: in particular, whether the transgressor is pagan, whether the threat is perceived as being of particular contemporary immediacy, and whether there are other ethnic factors at play. Unsurprisingly, saints positioned in an imagined past of hostile paganism are more likely to be directly agentive and their vengeance upon their opponents is more likely to be fatal. The same is true also with imminent threats by a perceived other

¹⁶⁰ William, *GP*, 2.74.28-29 (Winterbottom, 1:246-7).

¹⁶¹ Eadmer, *Vita Bregovini*, 14 (Scholz, 146-7); Aelred, *Hexham*, 18 [2.16] (Pezzini, 108; trans. Freeland, 106-7).

¹⁶² William, *GP*, 2.87.7-9, 3.121.2, 4.183.4-7, 5.256 (Winterbottom, 1:298-301, 1:398-401, 1:488-91, 1:610-3).

¹⁶³ William, *GP*, 2.82.4-6 (Winterbottom, 282-5).

¹⁶⁴ Gerald, *Topographia*, 2.55; cited in Bartlett, *Why can the dead*, 404-5. This kind of functional argument is similar to that deployed by P. Brown, ‘The rise and function of the holy man in late antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 99-100 [80-101].

eliciting vengeance which is more likely to be fatal, as with the deaths of the Angevin mercenaries in the south, the Scots in the north, and the pagan Danes who generally stand in for external invaders. It was also possible that the pagans of the past could stand for the 'honorary pagans' of the present, those who stood against the reformers and were thus painted as anti- or sub-Christian, which would have provided a rhetorical image equally viable for hagiographers in England and Ireland alike.

V

A second paradigm of vengeance is the 'demonic' paradigm: those miraculous punishments in which the agent is neither saint nor abstract divine or natural justice, being carried out instead by intermediate demonic agents. Such punishments might overlap with other categories such as the aforementioned model of vindication, as for instance in the demonic torment of those who unworthily placed themselves in the saint's place of rest,¹⁶⁵ or the demonic punishment of those who leave the cloister. Nonetheless, where the paradigm of demonic vengeance does have a distinct character, three variations on the theme can be briefly sketched: the handing over of the transgressor to Satan for the chastisement of the flesh; the Devil in the cloister; and demonic trial and instigation in the secular arena. These models and their use depend on the saint and audience in question.

The most basic theme is that of demonic punishment as purgative chastisement. The theme can be traced back to the biblical foundation text of excommunication, Corinthians, in which the transgressor is handed over to Satan for the chastisement of the flesh. Although the spiritual value of suffering and miraculous punishment did not have to be solely confined to demonic punishment specifically, the biblical text afforded a powerful imaginative role that could be readily assigned to demonic agents. Hence the power of the Devil in the madness and demonic visions which strike the boy who fled the abbey in Goscelin's *Miracles of Ivo*;¹⁶⁶ and the dramatically smoking limbs of the excommunicant and reprobate in William's *Life of Wulfstan* and Jocelin's *Kentigern*.¹⁶⁷ The theme of demonic purgation is taken up in the Severan *Dialogues*, in which a holy man unable to banish hidden pride prayed that the Devil might be granted power over him for five months so that he could be purged of his vice.¹⁶⁸ In similar fashion, the struggle amidst demonic trial and temptation could be conceived of as a dynamic path toward the progressive perfection or degradation of the individual. The former is the case in John's *Life of Wulfric*, in which the holy man is 'given into the Devil's hands' and embraces the demonic torments thrown at him in the

¹⁶⁵ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 2.51 (Southern, 128-30); Eadmer, *Vita Bregovini*, 10 (Scholz, 143-4).

¹⁶⁶ Goscelin, *Mir. Ivonis*, lxxiv.

¹⁶⁷ William, *Vita Wulfstani*, 2.15.5 (Winterbottom et al, 90-3); Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 210; trans. idem, 85-6).

¹⁶⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi Martini*, 1.20 (Migne, Col. 0196B-7A; trans. Hoare, 91-2).

manner of Job 24:19.¹⁶⁹ In so doing, he is purified and perfected over the course of the first book (that which is most directly concerned with a monastic audience and with the spiritual life) through constant engagement in the struggle. These arguments for the individual seem representative of the twelfth-century concern with the ‘reformatio’ of the individual, as will be discussed below.¹⁷⁰

Beyond general purgation, a dominant model within the paradigm is that of the Devil in the cloister, going back to patristic hagiographical models. The constant demonic presence in the monastic life features near the outset and throughout all three of the major patristic hagiographical texts.¹⁷¹ The theme is notably introduced at the beginning of Martin’s monastic career, with the Devil’s promise to the saint that ‘wherever you will go, and whatever you attempt, you will have the Devil against you.’¹⁷² The Devil could create misleading illusions or take the form of terrifying animals, as in the Life of Antony especially; could present the monk with spiritual or fleshly temptations, as in the Lives of Antony, Martin, and Benedict; and could even inflict violence or death upon the monastic community.¹⁷³ These texts formed a key basis for the mentality of demonic trial, temptation and chastisement in the monastic sphere, which later hagiography could draw on in a direct or indirect fashion. The theme of demonic trial is notably prominent in the hagiographical tradition of Dunstan, in which the Devil variously torments Dunstan in the form of barking dogs, a distracting fox, and a bear to be beaten back by the saint, to the point of breaking his staff in the process;¹⁷⁴ but the Devil taking animal form can also notably be seen for instance in the Lives of Anselm and Waltheof.¹⁷⁵ The role of the Devil as a tempter to be overcome can be seen notably in the Lives of Anselm, Aelred, and Waltheof, where the focus is on the weakness of monks under the saint’s charge and the power and mercy of the saint’s intercession.¹⁷⁶ Finally, the chastisement

¹⁶⁹ John, *Vita Wulfrii*, 22 [1.22] (Bell, 41; trans. Matarasso, 127-8)

¹⁷⁰ B.T. Coolman, *The theology of Hugh of St. Victor: an interpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 12-17.

¹⁷¹ Evagrius, *Vita Antonii*, 5-7 (Bertrand, 161-3); Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 6 (Migne, Col. 0164A; trans. Hoare, 18); Gregory, *Dialogi*, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 2.8-11 (Moricca, 31, 78-9, 86-8, 94-8; trans. Zimmerman, 18, 59-60, 66-7, 73-7).

¹⁷² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 6 (Migne, Col. 0164A; trans. Hoare, 18). C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his hagiographer: history and miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 228-30: ‘The Devil harassed Martin throughout his life, abusing him, arguing with him, slaying one of his peasant dependants, and tricking him into panic when awoke midst flames so that he got burnt; finally he turned up at Martin’s death-bed.’

¹⁷³ The Devil’s role could even be fatal: eg. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 21 (Col. 0172A-C; trans. Hoare, 36); Gregory, *Dialogi*, 1.10, 2.11, 2.16 (Moricca, 60-1, 97-8, 103-4; trans. Zimmerman, 43-4, 76-7, 81-2).

¹⁷⁴ Similar attacks on the saint and his supporters can be found in Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.15, 1.25, and are attributed

¹⁷⁵ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.15, 1.25 (Southern, 24-5, 42-3); Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 1.18.65-6 (McFadden, 142-4; trans. idem, 281-3).

¹⁷⁶ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.14, 1.34 (Southern, 23-4, 60-1); Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 45 (Powicke, 51); Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 2.4.100-4 (McFadden, 170-5; trans. idem, 322-8).

of hidden spiritual faults, again focusing on the weakness of individuals within the monastic community and on the importance of the saint's intercessory protections, can be seen in the demons who destroy the milk vessels in the Life of Ruadán and in the demonic torment of a monk who lapsed into crypto-Judaism in a vision of hell in the Life of Waltheof.¹⁷⁷

These narratives of hidden faults punished respond to a problem which Sharon Farmer has identified as particularly emergent from eleventh-century monasticism onwards. Whereas earlier monasticism under the influence of the Rule of Benedict had assumed external behaviour as reflective of interior spiritual disposition, from the eleventh century there was a growing sense that words and outer deeds are fallible signifiers, and that only God and the miraculous can perform the final test of intention and sincerity.¹⁷⁸ For their audience, these exemplary narratives thereby serve simultaneously to illustrate pedagogically the dangers of monks succumbing to hidden faults and temptations, while underscoring the importance of appealing both to other members of the community and to the power of the saint for support in that struggle. Such appeals could otherwise be deeply embarrassing to the sinner, as the Life of Anselm notes.¹⁷⁹ Viscerally underscoring the imminent demonic dangers thus served to commit them in that struggle and to allow the community function in the shared pursuit of a common spiritual life. On the whole however, the theological terms of that struggle were conceived primarily as a simple static defensive struggle against temptation. Sin and temptation occur in relative isolation and are to be resisted, and the single act of resistance, with saintly intercession, allows those temptations to be definitively overcome. The Life of Benedict presented the single correction of an errant monk as sufficient to prevent him being bothered again by the tempter, which theme is continued in the Life of Anselm.¹⁸⁰ In the Life of Aelred, the emphasis is on the fear of giving way even slightly in the face of temptation.¹⁸¹ In the Life of Ruadán, the demons chastising the sinful monk are simply banished: there is no revisit of the sinner's aftermath.

The third paradigm of demonic punishment involves that of demonic trial and instigation in the secular arena. We have seen it already in B.'s tenth-century Life of Dunstan, in which the Devil is not only the agent of Dunstan's miraculous trials within the cloister, but is additionally the principal architect of any fall from favour with the secular royal court experienced by the saint. From there the theme is unsurprisingly carried over into the later Lives of Dunstan by Osbern, Eadmer and William. Across the

¹⁷⁷ *Vita Ruadani S.*, 8 (*VSHH*, 162); *Vita Ruadani D.*, 10 (*VSHP*, 2:242-3); Jocelin, *Vita Waldevi*, 2.4.100-4 (McFadden, 170-5; trans. idem, 322-8).

¹⁷⁸ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 118, 125-7.

¹⁷⁹ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.14 (Southern, 23-4).

¹⁸⁰ Gregory, *Dialogi*, 2.4 (Moricca, 86-8; trans. Zimmerman, 66-7); Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.14, 1.34 (Southern, 23-4, 60-1).

¹⁸¹ Walter, *Vita Aelredi*, 45 (Powicke, 51).

case studies however, the theme appears most prominently in the writings of Eadmer more generally (who plays the theme up from his earlier sources), in *AD*, and in Jocelin's Lives of Kentigern, Patrick and Helena. The power of the Devil over the secular arena and the world beyond the cloister was of course well-established theologically as we have seen, and was in many respects integral to the monastic worldview which all the authors in this dissertation doubtless shared. Nonetheless, the especial emphasis on the Devil as instigator of secular trials and pressures is distinct and particular to these texts just cited. The unifying context for this disparate group of texts is that each coincides with a period of confrontation between the clerical and secular power, which pushed the latter theme to the fore. Eadmer evidently reached for the figure of the Devil as the readiest explanation for the misfortunes which befell his saintly archiepiscopal patron, possibly from his familiarity with the Dunstan material, though also he maintained that he was not the only one of his contemporaries to hold this view.¹⁸² Jocelin too wrote during a time of severe pressure on the Church in both England and Ireland. *AD* for its part was concerned with secular encroachment upon clerical and sanctuary immunities and with the proper subordination of the secular power to the clerical authority.

In these contexts, the role of the demonic instigator served a number of key theological and rhetorical functions. It provided the crucial political motive for the contemporary 'wedge between Church and State, a condition of non-cooperation that is disadvantageous to all involved except, of course, the Devil.'¹⁸³ It resolved the theological problem that while God might chastise a sinful people directly for various faults, the particular misfortunes of an otherwise virtuous clergy required special explanation.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, it served rhetorically to align the contemporary opponents of the Church with demons through historical analogy, while holding out the theological implication that such trials once weathered would be inevitably overcome. Accordingly, Jocelin's exemplary figures in the Life of Helena served to contrast the demonically-inspired persecutors of the Church with their divinely-guided protectors, while also holding out for his audience the hope through the figure of Constantine that such a persecutor could later become a dearly-held protector after weathering the trial. Eadmer's Lives demonstrated too the promise of the ultimate victory of the Church even if the persecutor could not be so saved. *AD* served more as aetiology for present misfortunes, but held out the more tentative hope that through grace and effort such misfortunes could be overcome. In general, these authors all sought to project such concerns for the independence of the Church in the present into the more distant past – whether the time of Wilfrid, Patrick, Ruadán, Kentigern, or Helena. Part of this recourse to the hagiography of long departed

¹⁸² As in his belief in the persistent 'instigation of the Devil and evil men' turning the king against Anselm, reinforced by received opinion cited by Eadmer attributing the archbishop's prolonged exile to 'a device of the Devil'; for which see again Chapter I, 53.

¹⁸³ Wiley, 'An edition', 39.

¹⁸⁴ This had key biblical precedent in the Book of Job, in which the virtuous Old Testament figure undergoes trials inspired by the Devil.

saints may have been because it was safer to comment on contemporary events through historical analogy, but a greater part of it too must have been that the victory of the Church over the demonic secular power in the past allowed the precedent for the inevitable triumph to be more clearly demonstrated.

VI

A third paradigm dispenses with an external divine, saintly or demonic agent almost entirely, and instead interiorises the fault and its punishment. This I have referred to as ‘literalisation’: in which the nature of the miraculous punishment is an outward material manifestation-in-kind of an interior spiritual state. Ranging across the case studies, the paradigm has been introduced and discussed at length as a theme of Goscelin, Jocelin, and *AD*. Each of these develops the theme of the character of the punishment fitting the character of the offence in question, and argues that sin serves as a servitude that is self-proliferating and, for the individual, self-defeating. The episodes of course have biblical and hagiographical precedents for their miraculous markers and motifs, but in their creative addition of rhetorical structure and explicit theological commentary, it may be further suggested that they participate in a common Augustinian and neoplatonist framework.¹⁸⁵ For instance, an integral Augustinian and neoplatonist theme is the idea that gazing upon a particular object conforms and transforms the viewer into the object.¹⁸⁶ This may be the essential idea behind Jocelin’s claims that worshippers of stones became miraculously ‘like unto the gods which they worshipped’, and his theory that carnal and spiritual ailments had common causes and cures.¹⁸⁷ The narrative deployment of these frameworks by these writers seems to coincide further with their individual focus on interior spirituality, personal motivation, and fraternal correction; on the ‘reformatio’ of the individual soul; and on God and the miraculous as the final test of the interior state of the individual.¹⁸⁸ Here we are on tentative ground: some scholars suggest that these emphases on the individual were characteristic of the eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic reformers, but others suggest that the development was less distinct from earlier periods than has been sometimes argued.¹⁸⁹ Without making specific claim to the originality or otherwise of these themes, which would require a future project of its own to deal with fully, it will suffice to draw attention to them in those authors as a potential unifying theme for a set of texts from disparate cultural zones.

¹⁸⁵ In the twelfth century and earlier, such neoplatonism was available through a number of direct and indirect sources (of which the most important for present purposes was Augustine), and is said to have reached its peak of influence in the twelfth century. See J.A. Aertsen, ‘Platonism’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. R. Pasnau, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1:76-8 [1:76-85].

¹⁸⁶ P.J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), 90-2.

¹⁸⁷ Jocelin, *Vita Patricii*, 27 [32] (*AASS*, Cols. 0547A-B; trans. O’Leary, 169-71).

¹⁸⁸ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 117, 122-6.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-4, 127.

An important corollary to the Augustinian/neoplatonist framework for the outward manifestation of sin is that sin could have punitive effects not simply confined to the individual, but that might also become manifest upon the surrounding landscape and on wider society. This framework complemented and reinforced the ideas of a vengeful created order taken from Deuteronomy and Genesis. The self-proliferating and corrupting effect of an initial sin upon wider society, such as pride or falsehood, can be seen in *AD*, where it drew on Augustinian thought. It could additionally impact on the landscape in Deuteronomic terms. As we saw in Chapter III, Jocelin made this point most clearly of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁹⁰ This is a tight exegesis of the biblical episode, in which the interior state of the sinner (the fire of lust) is made to correspond not only with the outwardly manifest form of their punishment (fire and brimstone), but further corresponds with the interior corruption of the landscape (trees bearing ashen fruits). The episode stands as the stark antitype to the theology according to which the progressively reforming individual is constantly being conformed to the image of God,¹⁹¹ and in which the landscape too is miraculously transformed with him. Here in contrast the deforming individual not only conforms himself to the image of the hellish underworld, but miraculously conforms the surrounding landscape in like fashion.

Equally striking is how the ‘literalisation’ paradigm sometimes seems to depart from the symbolist interpretation of phenomena as direct manifestations of the divine will, and attempts instead to explain them in seemingly neoplatonist terms as intermediate agents with their own ‘intelligences’.¹⁹² This can be seen in Aelred’s *Relatio*, in which the earth, the seas and the heavens are said to be withholding their vengeance on the Scots; in Jocelin’s *Life of Kentigern*, in which the natural elements are even depicted as fighting actively against the people following the saint’s enforced departure;¹⁹³ and in John’s *Life of*

¹⁹⁰ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 28 (Forbes, 211; trans. idem, 86): ‘Non solium civitates illas, cum habitatoribus suis, in igne propter ardorem libidinis, et sulphure ob illius abhominabilis vicii fetorem, subvertit; verum etiam in locum horridum visu, sulphure et bitumine et intollerabili fetore plenum, nichil in se vivum recipientem, habentem quidem in ripis suis arbores proferentes poma exterius quasi integra, sed interius fumo et cineribus plena, et quandam infernalis supplicii ymaginem preferentem, convertit’ (‘Not only did it overthrow those cities with all their inhabitants with fire because of their burning lust and with brimstone on account of the stench of that abhorrent crime, but in truth it also turned them into a place horrible to see, filled with brimstone and pitch and an intolerable stench that received no living thing into itself, indeed having trees on its banks which displayed fruit outwardly healthy but inwardly full of smoke and ashes, and manifesting an image of the certain punishments of the lower world’).

¹⁹¹ A. Hallier, *The monastic theology of Aelred of Rievaulx: an experiential theology*, trans. C. Heaney and H. McCaffery, Cistercian Studies Series 2 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 4-9.

¹⁹² Aertsen, ‘Platonism’, 78.

¹⁹³ Jocelin, *Vita Kentigerni*, 29 (Forbes, 212-3; trans. idem, 87-8).

Wulfric, in which two stolen loaves respectively harden into stone and drip blood.¹⁹⁴ Once again the authors cited biblical precedents for the miracles, but what is striking are the almost agentic terms applied to those elements.¹⁹⁵ Thus John writes of the first loaf: ‘Dedicated to the holy man and destined for his use, it was keeping itself faithfully for him, at once pointing to and punishing the bad faith of the other. Plainly it did not bear to let a thief or reprobate profane or harm it but changed in the traitor’s hand from loaf to stone.’¹⁹⁶ The second loaf, stolen for a starving family, in turn permitted itself to be cut, ‘but because it understood that this work of mercy did not square with obedience, indeed ran counter to it, it began to weep blood, so that even cut it could not be eaten.’¹⁹⁷ Such ideas implicitly align with the ‘Great Chain of Being’, the neoplatonist ‘hierarchical conception’ of the created order. According to this model, ‘the goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails in either part of this twofold task we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected. One or the other it will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in the system... it has made the very nature of things its enemy.’¹⁹⁸ Therefore wicked men find themselves set upon by that which is naturally beneath them (the sea and earth) and that which is naturally above them (in cosmological terms, the heavens; in social and spiritual terms, good men) – agents which manifest the divine will, but do so by fulfilling their proper place within creation rather than under a specific command.

A final point about this paradigm is that it underpinned the theological self-interest and rhetorical necessity of fervently recounting and condemning sins where they arose. In the first book of *De civitate Dei*, Augustine considered those whose sins inspire God in his anger to fill the world with terrible calamities, and reflected as to why the good might also receive temporal punishment alongside the wicked.¹⁹⁹ Augustine posited that even the best of men could not be so free from fault as to deserve to

¹⁹⁴ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 43-4 [2.13-4] (Bell, 59-61; trans. Matarasso, 145-7).

¹⁹⁵ Such biblical precedent included Deuteronomy 28 for the vengeance of the created order, or Psalm 77:44’s transformation of the rivers of Egypt into blood.

¹⁹⁶ John, *Vita Wulfrici*, 43 [2.13] (Bell, 60; trans. Matarasso, 146): ‘Quia nimirum viro sancto consecratus, ei cui et missus est sese fideliter conservabat et infidelitatis ejus quidam index simul et vindex prodibat. Sane a fure et sacrilegio non se pollui vel laedi sustinuit, sed pro pane lapidem in manu praevaricatoris se exhibuit.’

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 2.14 [44] (Bell, 61; trans. Matarasso, 147): ‘Et panis quidem incidi consensit sed, quia misericordiae opus citra oboedientiam immo et contra oboedientiam praesumebatur, sanguine manare coepit; nec ut manducari posset incisus oboedivit.’

¹⁹⁸ Summary quoted from C.S. Lewis, *A preface to ‘Paradise lost’: being the Ballard Matthews lectures, delivered at University College, North Wales, 1941*, Ballard Matthews Lectures (London: OUP, 1942), 73-4. The standard introduction to this cosmology remains A.O. Lovejoy, *The great chain of being: a study of the history of an idea. The William James lectures delivered at Harvard university, 1933*, William James Lectures (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936); and in its ethical dimension, C. Taylor, *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), chs. 1-2.

¹⁹⁹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.9 (Dombart, 1:8-10; trans. Babcock, 1:9-11).

evade even temporal hardships for their failings, but the bulk of his discussion implicated the good in the sins of the wicked for their failure to teach, admonish and rebuke the latter. Though the good might escape having to share in the eternal punishment of the wicked, they could still be scourged along with them here in time: 'It is only right that they should know bitterness in this life, when they are afflicted by God along with the wicked, for it was due to love of the sweetness of this life that they were unwilling to be bitter to the wicked in their sinning.'²⁰⁰ Aelred, who we have seen display the pervasive influence of Augustine in his other works, may have had this same Augustinian outlook in mind in his *Relatio* when he attributed to Walter Espec words concerning the certainty of material suffering if they did not resist the Scots.²⁰¹ Under these circumstances, in addition to the prospective implication of the northerner in the divine punishment of the Scots, one's personal welfare could be damaged *only* by failing to correct the evildoer.

In this way, one can return with clearer understanding from the Anglo-Latin texts to the theological paradigm as embedded and encapsulated in *AD*. The understanding of an individual's sin breeding further sin, corrupting wider society and the surrounding landscape, and ultimately inviting saintly and divine vengeance, suffering, and trial not only upon the offending individual but upon clerical and secular society as a whole, powerfully underpins the saga narrative. It rhetorically motivates the crafting and dissemination of the saga: the dangers it warns of affect not only the individual, but potentially implicate all members of society. It gives urgent impetus and exhortation to its audience to reform themselves and wider society, and to challenge actively members who fall short of that ideal. It can thus be said to capture the 'reforming spirit' shared by Goscelin and the Anglo-Latin Cistercians in particular: with a theology of sin and punishment powerfully focused on the individual, but still bearing potentially far-reaching implications for society as a whole.

VII

This final chapter has shown that despite having little in the way of unambiguous or consistently applied labels for the ritual acts it described, hagiographical narratives of vengeance and cursing nonetheless displayed a kaleidoscope of diverse and overlapping narrative themes, framed and refracted through the individual hagiographer's literary creativity and particular outlook. These narratives did so because there were a broad range of available biblical and hagiographical narrative models and precedents, and a comparable range of theological and thematic paradigms for vengeance and cursing, which existed on both sides of the Irish Sea and might be readily evoked in constructing a narrative in line with contemporary need, hagiographical convention, and historical precedent. That range defined the wide

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 1.9.28-30 (Dombart, 1:8-9; trans. Babcock, 1:9): '...iure istam uitam, quando diuinitus adfliguntur cum eis, amaram sentiunt, cuius amando dulcedinem peccantibus eis amari esse noluerunt.'

²⁰¹ Aelred, *Relatio*, 3.120-2 (Pezzini, 65; trans. Freeland, 257).

scope of what was possible for the hagiographer, while the immediacy of local circumstance and individual outlook determined which models (and indeed subjects) the hagiographer might use to fulfil his rhetorical needs, as well as how he fitted one to the other. Particular texts such as the Book of Psalms, Deuteronomy, and the Severan and Gregorian writings might shape and inform the hagiographer's whole worldview, ranging from the fundamental ordering of creation and the proper disposition of the saint toward God and man, right down to the specific words and images to be evoked and invoked in times of trial and tribulation, leaving detectable but hitherto underappreciated marks upon his narrative. Individual motifs of vengeance from an earlier era, such as the prostrate pleas of Martin for justice or the transfixion of his enemies in punishment, might be used as models to demonstrate the sanctity and power of the more recent subject or to emphasise particular exemplary virtues. Themes such as the vindication of the saint or of his community and the religious life, the demonic trials of the cloister and of the secular arena, and the dangers of the created order for the sinner and wider society by implication, were just as readily available and utilised by writers on either side of the Irish Sea. Their differing usage accorded more with the theological and sociological imperatives of particular local contexts and interests than with regional cultural differences as such. In expanding out from and comparing the narrative representations of vengeance and cursing seen in previous chapters, this chapter thus reveals a comparative unity among the literate culture and tradition of cursing within the Insular world and situates it within the broader culture of Latin Christendom.

Conclusion

In subject matter and scholarly contribution, this dissertation on divine vengeance and saintly cursing bridges two often separated bodies of scholarship – those concerned with hagiography as a literary and rhetorical genre, and those concerned with cursing as a purposive and regulated ritual practice in its social, legal and theological contexts – so as to offer close and contextualised readings of instances of cursing and vengeance. The emphasis first and foremost has been on the texts themselves, and what they reveal of their individual authors, audiences, agendas and outlooks. From there it broadens out to show how the imagined realities they represented are revelatory in turn of broader patterns and understandings of cursing within eleventh- and twelfth-century religious culture and society. The focused attention on these texts deepens our understanding of a ritual practice which at first sight challenges modern sensibility, and has only recently begun to be appreciated by modern scholars on its own terms.¹ Such scholarship has seen a trajectory from that of the twentieth century which often saw such hagiographical episodes either as examples of pre- or sub-Christian residues or as opportunistic and unedifying fictions, to the work in the last three decades of Little, Wiley and Jaser, among others, who have underscored the firm biblical and canonistic grounding that clerical cursing outside of hagiography displayed.² The dissertation has not only deepened our sense of those biblical and canonistic influences that our writers necessarily hearkened to in individual hagiographical contexts, showing the depth of complex literary weaving intelligible to author and audience alike, but has moreover broadened our understanding by showing the common influence of hitherto unappreciated or underappreciated texts beyond biblical models. Texts such as the Gregorian *Dialogues* and the Severan material were fundamental reference-points in the varied and evolving eleventh- and twelfth-century dialogues between hagiographer and audience regarding cursing and standards of sanctity, and thus can also be expected to have influenced the treatment of cursing in other genres and in practice, as well as eleventh- and twelfth-century religious culture more broadly. The dissertation has highlighted some of those lines of textual and societal influence, and in so doing shows a range of paths which invite future research.

Through detailed close textual reading and analysis of a diverse sample of source material, the dissertation has also been able to illustrate a wide range of themes and to highlight the richness, complexity and variety of the hagiographical material when compared with the more generalising scholarly narratives concerned with cursing as a whole. For example, the claims of Little, Wiley, and Geary that cursing in

¹ Cf. similar remarks in the context of the judicial ordeal, on the alienness of another medieval practice which ‘demands yet resists explanation’, by R. Bartlett, *Trial by fire and water: the medieval judicial ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1-3.

² For the earlier view, see Chapter IV, 205, and fn. 54 in particular; while for more recent scholarship, see Section II of the main Introduction, at 24-9.

both an Insular and Continental context served as a graded conflict management mechanism wielded over all orders of society can be seen to be true through episodes such as the bloodfeuders in the *Life of Wulfstan*, the blasphemous cleric in the *Hexham Lives*, and the curses at Tara and Cloncagh in the *Lives of Ruadán and Máedóc*; but the narrative representation of the living saint's spoken curse might principally serve other varied purposes, such as underscoring the veneration due to the saint, his power, or other Christian virtues. Much the same can be said of claims that as in legal documents and the liturgy, the threatened curses and punitive miracles reported in hagiography served as rhetorical deterrents to defend clerical personnel and property. This could be true for oral tales such as those underlying the *Life of Wulfric*, for vernacular texts such as *Aided Diarmata* and the poems of *Betha Máedóc II*, or for homiletic texts which might tentatively serve as a basis for later vernacular diffusion of the material. Nonetheless, for those texts written in Latin and intended chiefly for in-house monastic or clerical audiences, the principal purpose was to serve more as internal coping mechanisms and helpful meditations for the monastic or clerical community to remain resilient in times of trial and hardship: underscoring the destructive but circumscribed influences of the Devil, the avenging power of the Divinity, and the exemplary model of saintly patience and forbearance until such time as vindication could be secured. It may be said then that while the threat of the curse in a social setting was a first-stage 'deterrent' against the outsider, the narrative representation of such efficacious curses and punitive miracles in hagiography specifically was more often a 'second-stage' internal community-binding strategy for holding up in the face of such oppressions.

The general picture of the ritual curse in terms of its questions of operation, agency, and purpose has been both reinforced and refined by the present study. Little for example highlighted how the curse might be best understood as a performative speech-act, in which the power of the Divinity was invoked through a prescribed set of appropriate circumstances, agents, and actions; or alternatively as a prophecy in which the saint warns and discloses the pre-existing divine will but does not will the punishment which befalls the recalcitrant sinner, rather than as 'magical' imprecations in which the power of the words themselves 'coerce' the Divinity or the natural order.³ In this connexion, we may note the various ways that sensitivities and anxieties regarding saintly culpability for the efficacious curse were defused through similar framing emphases: whether on vengeance enacted without saintly intervention, as in the *Lives* by Goscelin and others; on the foretelling and admonitory prophecy of the saint, as in the *Lives* by Eadmer and Jocelin; or on careful adherence to ritual performance and reintegration, as among the hagiographers in general considered here. At the same time, the efficacy and visceral danger of the irrevocable and sometimes even accidental ex-tempore curse are present in the curses of Aelred upon the vituperative abbot, of Wulfric upon the cellarer of Montacute, and of Ciarán and Ruadán upon Diarmait, showing the implicit power of words and of the saintly charisma independent of other factors. The ritualised aggression of prayer, fasting and self-abasement toward man and the Divinity, as reported by William of

³ See main Introduction, at 33-34.

Malmesbury and the Irish hagiographers whose work is studied here, meanwhile suggest that the words and actions of the saint could even be seen as acceptably coercive upon the Divinity before the century in which the canons of the Second Council of Lyons condemned such practice. The memorable phrase cited as an example of this coercive mentality by Helmholz – the claim of the early twelfth-century Flemish chronicler Galbert of Bruges that certain words could coerce God to act whether he wanted to or not – was thus not an aberrant instance in splendid isolation, but was rather one possible outlook that could be found among educated men in disparate regions of Latin Christendom. The episodes analysed show how hagiography sat somewhere between the rarefied and refined views of the canon lawyers and theologians and religion as it was practised in more local contexts. They do not invalidate the conclusions of earlier scholars working on those other bodies of material, but they demonstrate a much greater degree of complexity and tension underlying the general picture of hagiographical episodes, and show moreover that such tensions as we might now perceive them may have been much more acceptable in their immediate contemporary contexts.

Similarly important scholarly claims derived from theological and legal texts – chiefly that the purpose of the curse is primarily chastising with avenues open for redemption – have been shown to hold true as a general case for the majority of the texts and episodes discussed in this study. At the same time, it has been possible to refine and isolate certain special cases and exceptions which might stand across the range of hagiographers. The perceived alienness of the ethnic other, the hostility of the ancient or figurative pagan, and the obstinacy of the recalcitrant sinner or oppressor might invite less sympathy from the hagiographer and audience and thus be ripe for fatal and perhaps even damnatory vengeance. The local imperatives and rhetorical needs of the hagiographer determined whether such cursed figures might appear in the narrative, while the sophisticated theological frameworks which informed the hagiographer's worldview facilitated such representations without exposing them to unwanted criticism. This notably problematises the views of scholars who hold that such episodes serve always as redemptive or that such episodes that were not problematic deviations from the normative theology. Such theology did exist, and could be deployed in a range of local, political and sociological circumstances.

The material further shows how author-specific agendas might defy any neat chronological progression, such as the shift from *ex-tempore* curses to regulated and sanitised excommunications traditionally argued by Helmholz and Little.⁴ The case studies reveal for instance how an author such as William could be more willing to represent the maledictive propensities of his subjects than some writers of the two generations preceding him; and how particular Irish or English writers might refine their narratives of cursing in line with current thought on appropriate procedure, but still represent the curse's dangers on account of local exigencies as a weapon of the saint and cleric to be feared. What we see then is more in line with recent work by Jaser and Hill: finding overall subtle shifts of emphasis rather than a radical

⁴ *Ibid.*, at 28-9.

change of outlook, variation according more to individual place and context than to broad chronological development, and thematic durability in which the curse lost none of its imaginative dangers.⁵ While one should not over-generalise the claim, it is striking that the case studies thus accord with such recent work emphasising a picture of synchronic diversity rather than diachronic change.

Above all then the picture is one of the richness, vibrancy and diversity of the material on vengeance and cursing and of the complexity of the hagiographical genre. This has been seen in the thematic paradigms which frame episodes of vengeance and cursing: the vindication of the saint or of his community and the religious life, the demonic trials of the cloister and of the secular arena, or the physically manifest literalisation of interior sins – with its perhaps tentative links to broader thought-worlds connected with Augustine, neoplatonism, and the emphasis on the individual. Those themes invite further exploration across the hagiography of the Insular world, being found on both sides of the Irish Sea and varying in selection and emphasis according to individual contexts and circumstances. What emerges as common is the high degree of individual creative engagement shown by each individual writer, and set of writers, within a varied eleventh- and twelfth-century landscape of theological, social, and cultural contexts: a fundamental diversity and dynamism which is crucial to consider in understanding the depiction of vengeance and cursing in this rich and fertile genre.

⁵ *Ibid.*, at 28.

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