

WRITING MIRACLES IN TENTH-CENTURY WINCHESTER

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines a number of miracle collections and hagiographies written by Winchester monks in the late tenth century. It compares three different accounts of the cult of Swithun by Lantfred, Wulfstan and Ælfric, as well as comparing Wulfstan's and Ælfric's *Vita Æthelwoldi*. There were two main objectives to the thesis. The first was to examine whether an analysis of miracle narratives could tell us anything important about how a monastic community perceived itself, especially in relation to the wider world? This was tested by applying approaches used by Thomas Head and Raymond Van Dam to an Anglo-Saxon context. It does seem that miracle narratives can be used to analyse power relations, for instance, and that cults could be used to reconcile secular clerks with the new monastic community. The second aim was to examine why churchmen wrote about saints' cults in the way they did. One noteworthy finding was the fact that Ælfric seemed to significantly alter or omit instances of dream visions involving women in his hagiography. The thesis also tests a conclusion of Mechthild Gretsch that Ælfric generally omitted instances of posthumous miracles in his hagiographies, and found that the evidence supported her findings.

To Mum, Dad and Liam: for their encouragement and support.

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My dad told me while I was finishing off this thesis that he dedicated his Master's thesis to Thomas the Tank Engine, for keeping me and my brother quiet whilst he worked! However, the dedication to my parents and brother Liam is a reflection of the great support and affection they have given me over this and many years.

Greatest thanks, however, goes to my supervisor, Simon Yarrow. His suggestions on my methodology and further reading have been invaluable, and I have benefited immensely from his thoughts and input.

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Abbreviations

Ælfric LS: Ælfric of Winchester, ‘Life of St Swithun’, in Lapidge, M. (ed. & trans.), *The Cult of Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 575-610.

Ælfric VA: Ælfric of Winchester, *Vita Æthelwoldi*, in Winterbottom, M., and Lapidge, M. (eds. & trans.), *Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St Æthelwold* (Oxford, 1991).

ASC: Swanton, M. (ed. & trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000).

EHD: Whitelock, D. (ed. & trans.), *English Historical Documents I, c.500-1042*, 2nd edn. (London, 1979).

Epitome: *Epitome Translationis et Miraculorum S. Swithuni* (probably by Ælfric), in Lapidge, M. (ed. & trans.), *The Cult of Swithun* (Oxford, 2003).

Lapidge: Lapidge, M. (ed & trans.), *The Cult of Swithun* (Oxford, 2003).

Narratio: Wulfstan of Winchester, *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithuno*, in Lapidge, M. (ed. & trans.), *The Cult of Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 335-552.

TMS: Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni*, in Lapidge, M. (ed. & trans.), *The Cult of Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 217-334.

Wulfstan VA: Wulfstan of Winchester, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* in Lapidge, M., and Winterbottom, M. (eds. & trans.), *The Life of Saint Æthelwold* (Oxford, 1991).

Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of some miracle narratives written in the late tenth century. The bulk of it concerns three accounts about the miracles of Saint Swithun, which were written by three monks of Winchester between c972 and c998. Lantfred wrote the first of them, and then two other monks, Wulfstan and Ælfric, adapted Lantfred's version for their accounts of Swithun's miracles. Both Wulfstan and Ælfric also wrote a *Vita Æthelwoldi*, and these hagiographies will also be compared.

Two questions will be addressed by this thesis. The first of these is: can an examination of miracle narratives tell us anything important about how a monastic community perceived itself, especially in relation to the outside world? Secondly, why did churchmen write about saints' cults in the way they did?

It is worth investigating the first of these questions because very few Anglo-Saxon historians analyse the social and cultural context of miracles. Instead, most analyse hagiographies so as to see if there is a certain type of sanctity that exists,¹ to analyse royal or secular power,² or to extract empirical data from these texts. For instance, some use hagiography to reconstruct histories of monastic communities or the chronology of monastic reform, such as David Knowles who used the 'Life of Oswald' to determine which communities Oswald founded and when.³ They tend to be sceptical of the truthfulness of the miracle stories in these hagiographies, which Susan Ridyard described as often being 'not only unoriginal but also far from plausible'.⁴ David Rollason wrote that miracle cures can

¹ For instance, David Rollason analyses the concepts of sanctity that can be found in the 'Lives' of Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald and compares them to notions of sanctity on the continent in: Rollason, D., *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 164-174.

² Ridyard, S., *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults* (Cambridge, 1988).

³ Knowles, D., *The Monastic Order in England: a history of its development from the times of St. Dunstan to the fourth Lateran Council, 940-1216*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge 1963), pp. 53-54.

⁴ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints*, p. 10.

often be explained by the rudimentary state of medical knowledge in the Middle Ages, or alternatively, ‘in other cases a sort of faith healing may have been involved’.⁵ Such rationalist approaches would therefore find little of value from Lantfred’s work, which is a text made up entirely of ‘far from plausible’ miracle cures.

This is reflected by the bulk of the existing scholarship on Lantfred’s *Translatio*. Most of it refers not to the miracles that he recorded, but to his account of a trial by ordeal undergone by a slave of a merchant named Flodoald.⁶ Dorothy Whitelock discussed its implications for Anglo-Saxon law,⁷ Patrick Wormald included it in his handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits,⁸ and more recently it has been analysed by Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe.⁹ It is not the intention of this thesis to discuss Anglo-Saxon law, only to examine the miracle narratives, which has been done by fewer historians. David Rollason is the only Anglo-Saxonist to discuss in any depth the social significance of the miracles in Lantfred’s *Translatio*.¹⁰ The implications of this will be discussed in Chapter 1.

Interpreting miracle narratives

It is therefore worth examining the miracles in these texts to fill a gap in the historiography, but how does one construct a methodology to try and get some worthwhile information from these sources? As Raymond Van Dam has argued, since miracles by definition defy the natural order of events, they ‘seem to challenge a genuine historical analysis’.¹¹

Stephen Justice has recently highlighted the problems that historians have had when writing about miracle stories. He argues that historians have adopted two different

⁵ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 95-96.

⁶ TMS Ch. 25.

⁷ This can be found in Whitelock, D., *History, Law and Literature in Tenth- To Eleventh- Century England* (London, 1981).

⁸ Wormald, P., ‘A handlist of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), pp. 247-281, at p. 269.

⁹ O’Brien O’Keefe, K., ‘Body and law in late Anglo-Saxon England’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 27 (1998), pp. 209-232.

¹⁰ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 182-188.

¹¹ Van Dam, R., *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1992), p. 84.

approaches to explain the medieval belief in the miraculous: the ‘didactic’ and the ‘perceptual’. According to the ‘didactic’ explanation, the miracle stories written about by hagiographers or chroniclers are fictionalised accounts with a moral message. On the other hand, the ‘perceptual’ approach asserts that people living in the Middle Ages saw miraculous occurrences in events that our ‘rational’ modern minds can explain as something else.¹² Rollason’s explanation that was mentioned above would be an example of this approach.

Justice uses Walter Daniel’s ‘Life of Ailred of Rievaulx’ to highlight the problems of the above two approaches. Walter wrote that after he composed the ‘Life’, two prelates queried the truthfulness of the miracles and requested names of witnesses. He therefore gave witnesses for all the miracles apart from one, which he calls ‘a miracle, or maybe the likeness of a miracle’. This miracle involved Ailred cursing an abbot who later collapsed and died. Walter did not provide details of any witnesses, and instead wrote that ‘it may have happened that the cause of the abbot’s death was not what it seemed – although it did turn out for him as it is written in the book’. Justice comments:

He does not abandon his report of the facts...which clearly means that Ailred did utter the curse and the abbot did die. What he abandons is the assertion that they are causally related...If the “perceptual” explanation really explained his initial report of the miracle, recantation should have been impossible. But if the “didactic” explanation really explained it, recantation would have been unnecessary.¹³

Justice does not provide an alternative paradigm for how historians should treat these miracle stories. Instead, he wishes medievalists to examine whether people in the Middle Ages really believed the miracles that they wrote about.

¹² Justice, S., ‘Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?’ *Representations*, 103 (2008), pp. 1-29, at pp. 4-5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

If historians do try and examine whether miracles really happened, however, this approach can be reductionist. One instance of this is Ronald Finucane's *Miracles and Pilgrims*,¹⁴ which attempts to explain the occurrence of miracles in terms of medical matters: that cures to pilgrims occurred because of better diet, for instance. Although this explanation makes the miracles comprehensible to us, this approach ignores the cultural value of the miraculous and reduces the belief of medieval people 'to a series of misunderstandings about illness.'¹⁵

Historians cannot look at whether the miracles written about in their sources are true. Ultimately that question is a theological issue and will not be addressed in this thesis. As Patrick Geary has argued, 'Historians, like anthropologists, must accept their subject's system of viewing reality'.¹⁶ The miraculous power of saints will thus be accepted, but not uncritically, and the following paragraphs will discuss how I intend to read the miracle narratives discussed in this thesis.

Scholarship on saints' cults has moved in the past forty years 'from Edward Gibbon to Mary Douglas'.¹⁷ In other words, rather than seeing cults as vulgar manifestations of popular religion, historians influenced by anthropologists such as Mary Douglas have emphasised the 'functional' aspects of the cult, such as their psychological benefits and their ability to give communities identity. The key functionalist text is Peter Brown's *The cult of the saints*.¹⁸ Brown argued that cults were actively promoted by elites such as nobles and bishops, who used them as an alternative patronage network. Historians of saints' cults have spent the past three decades refining Brown's paradigm.

¹⁴ Finucane, R., *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977).

¹⁵ Yarrow, S., *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006), p. 11.

¹⁶ Geary, P., *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978), p. 4.

¹⁷ Hayward, P., 'Demystifying the role of sanctity in Western Christendom', in Howard-Johnston, J., and Hayward, P. (eds.), *The cult of saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: essays on the contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 115-143, at p. 115.

¹⁸ Brown, P., *The cult of the saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981).

The discussion of miracle narratives in this thesis has been heavily influenced by the works of Raymond Van Dam and Thomas Head. Van Dam analysed Gregory of Tours's accounts of the miracles of St Martin. He takes a functionalist approach similar to Brown's, discussing the functions of St Martin as a defender of his community and the psychological impact of cults on both Gregory and visiting pilgrims. On the other hand, Head examines a wide range of hagiographies and miracle narratives from various monasteries in the Orléannais from c800-1200.

Both Head and Van Dam write that historians can use miracle narratives in order to analyse a monastic community's relationship with the outside world. Head puts this very explicitly, describing miracle narratives as 'works of historiography' which record the interaction of human society with the miraculous.¹⁹ Van Dam uses the miracles of Gregory of Tours to investigate various power relations between the monastery and the outside world, such as local nobles. This thesis will therefore discuss whether an Anglo-Saxon miracle narrative can be used both to analyse a community's relationship with the outside world, as well as to investigate power relations.

This can be achieved partly by examining the kinds of miracles that are written about. As Simon Yarrow has argued, miracle narratives are the product of an elite and that they are therefore 'selective and manipulative of the raw material that they record'.²⁰ Put simply, monastic writers would have written about particular types of miracles for particular reasons. Often this is related to the role of community identity, that in writing these narratives the monks of Winchester were negotiating their identity. It would therefore be interesting to look at the different types of miracles that Lantfred chose to write about so as to see what that could say about the community at Winchester.

¹⁹ Head, T., *Hagiography and the cult of saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 136-137.

²⁰ Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, p. 22.

The decision to examine the second question – why did churchmen write about saints’ cults in the way they did? – is an attempt to test how personal the bond could be between monastic writer and saint. This is a point made by Thomas Head in his work.²¹

This thesis will only look at how saints were promoted through the medium of miracle narratives. There were other means by which this happened, such as artwork or architecture, but there is insufficient space in a Master’s thesis to examine these in detail. The emphasis will therefore be on how saints were written about and why authors wrote about them in this way. It will also not consider the question of why Swithun was chosen by Æthelwold to be promoted and translated. As Gretsch has written, such a question would be pointless to speculate about, since the motives are untraceable.²²

A feature of this newer approach to the cult of saints, as highlighted above, is its use of anthropology. For instance, Head uses the concept of gift exchange, which is a concept pioneered by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss. A collection of essays on pilgrimage written by anthropologists highlighted two concepts that could be useful for this thesis. The first is that of the difference between diseases and illnesses, which is one also emphasised by Van Dam.²³

The second is the idea of competing narratives. In his essay, John Eade highlights the competing ideas between pilgrims, lay helpers and the Hospitallers.²⁴ As Simon Yarrow argues, ‘within the written narrative...we might detect other narratives...more “up for grabs” by the very nature of the means by which their content was constructed.’²⁵ As well as looking for competing narratives *within* a text, there is also a chance to examine them *between* texts.

²¹ Head, *Hagiography and the cult of saints*, p. 287

²² For a brief discussion of the various motives Æthelwold might have had for promoting Swithun’s cult see: Gretsch, M., *Ælfric and the cult of saints in late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 192-193.

²³ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, p. 85.

²⁴ Eade, J., ‘Order and power and Lourdes: Lay helpers and the organisation of a pilgrimage shrine’, in Eade, J., and Sallnow, M. (eds.), *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London, 1991), pp. 51-76.

²⁵ Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, p. 17.

Van Dam has argued that more comparative studies in hagiography are needed.²⁶ A comparison of the different miracle narratives, so as to see how they differ, and to try to explain why, could be very interesting.

By recording the miracles of a particular saint, these miracle narratives were establishing a case for their subject's sanctity, and thus publicise the saint's cult to both ecclesiastics and the wider population. The words 'population' or 'wider population' will be used in this thesis to refer to a section of society that was lay, non-monastic and usually of a low social standing. Usually it will refer to people residing in Winchester, although occasionally reference will be made to those from elsewhere.

Hagiographies and miracle collections can offer an insight into a community during an important part of its history. In the case of the *Translatio* this is the Winchester community shortly after the translation of Swithun. By recording the interactions of lay society with the miraculous, these miracle narratives can provide information on popular religion that cannot be found in other ecclesiastical sources. However, it must also be borne in mind that hagiographies are partial and selective in respect of the events that they record. A hagiography did not, by definition, intend to be an exhaustive biography of its subject, and was instead written usually to glorify its subject and prove the case for their sanctity. Any information in the miracle narratives therefore has to be taken with extreme caution, but there are ways to interrogate these narratives so as to extract worthwhile conclusions, which have been outlined above.

Lantfred's *Translatio*

The first account of the cult of Swithun, the *Translatio Miraculi S. Swithuni*, was written by a monk called Lantfred. The *Translatio* is preserved in four manuscripts, but one is

²⁶ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, p. 151.

incomplete.²⁷ Lantfred came to the Old Minster from overseas – most probably Fleury – to write the *Translatio*.²⁸ He was not the only continental scholar who visited England in the tenth century to write hagiographies. Abbo of Fleury spent some time at Ramsey, and whilst there wrote a *Passio* of the ninth-century martyr-king Edmund, which Canterbury later asked him to turn into verse.²⁹ Also, a Germanic monk named Frithegod adapted a ‘Life of Wilfrid’ at Christ Church, Canterbury, at some point in the 950s.

Lantfred was obviously learned. The *Translatio* is written in the hermeneutic style.³⁰ He wrote in rhyming prose, often distorting the grammar in a sentence so as to make the text rhyme.³¹ It can be inferred from the *Translatio* that Lantfred had a deep knowledge of the Bible, and he can be assumed to have read, amongst others, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Isidore and Bede, as well as other more recent accounts of translations and miracle collections, such as those by Adrevald of Fleury.³²

Swithun was translated on July 15, 971, and Lantfred wrote of the number of healings in the year afterwards. The *Translatio* was also probably written before Edgar’s death in 975,³³ which has led Michael Lapidge to conclude that it was written in late 972 or 973. The *Translatio* starts with a few very lengthy chapters, and then has a succession of shorter ones. A reasonable assumption is that Lantfred had a very ambitious conception of the work at first,

²⁷ For more information on these manuscripts see Lapidge pp. 238-248.

²⁸ A letter originally from the archives of Christ Church, Canterbury c900-1000 addressed to Dunstan from a certain ‘L’ requests the return of several texts belonging to ‘L’. One of these was possessed by abbot Osgar, a contemporary of Lantfred’s at Winchester who had spent time at Fleury. This letter, like the *Translatio*, was written in rhyming prose. There was an English scribe named Leofnoth who was at Fleury around this time. However, the other circumstantial evidence suggests that it is Lantfred who wrote this letter and who can be identified as ‘L’. (Lapidge p. 221 n. 40). When one adds the fact that England and Fleury had extensive contact in the tenth century – Nightingale, J., ‘Oswald, Fleury and Continental Reform’, in Brooks, N., and Cubitt, C. (eds), *St Oswald of Worcester: life and influence* (Leicester, 1996), pp. 23-45 – it seems most likely that Lantfred was a monk of Fleury.

²⁹ Wormald, P., ‘Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast’, in Yorke, B. (ed), *Bishop Æthelwold: his career and influence* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 13-42, at p. 23.

³⁰ For more information on the hermeneutic style see Lapidge, M., ‘The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 (1975), pp. 67-111.

³¹ Lapidge pp. 228-230.

³² For a full list of texts that Lantfred would have been acquainted with see Lapidge p. 234.

³³ Lapidge p. 236.

but was forced to rein in his ambition, possibly so as to finish the work for the community as soon as possible.³⁴

Lantfred says that the community of Winchester, and by extension its head Æthelwold, requested the *Translatio*.³⁵ It seems that Æthelwold had some input in the document. For instance, he tells Lantfred about one of the dream visions that he includes in the *Translatio*.³⁶ It is written in quite complicated Latin, and would therefore have been unintelligible to those outside a small, literate elite. Lapidge argues that the text would not have been used for liturgical purposes, and instead asserts that Lantfred aimed to inform a wider audience about Swithun's miracles.³⁷ This wider audience would not only have been the monastic audience that either read the *Translatio* or had it recited to them on St Swithun's day. Even if the immediate audience was the monks of Winchester, we cannot disregard the fact that parts of this would surely have been passed on to the laity. In the *Narratio*, Wulfstan writes that Æthelwold addressed the Winchester laity in a sermon the week before Swithun's translation, in which he spoke in the vernacular.³⁸ It is possible that he told this audience some of Swithun's miracles that Lantfred recorded.

It seems probable that Lantfred was also writing an account that could be used as a model for aspiring English monastic writers. The available evidence suggests that standards of Latin at this time were not very high. Alfred's notorious complaint from the 890s that there were very few men below the river Humber who could translate a letter from Latin into English³⁹ was found justified by Susan Kelly, based on the available palaeographic evidence.

³⁴ Lapidge p. 66.

³⁵ TMS pp. 252-253.

³⁶ TMS Ch. 35.

³⁷ Lapidge pp. 104-5 and TMS p. 267 n. 75.

³⁸ *Narratio* i. 4.

³⁹ Keynes, S., and Lapidge, M. (eds. & trans.), *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 123.

She concluded that standards of Latin in southern England were poor in the ninth century.⁴⁰ Even so, Simon Keynes argued that ‘royal government in the tenth and eleventh centuries depended to a very considerable extent on the use of the written word’.⁴¹ However, we must differentiate for our purposes between, as Patrick Wormald put it, ‘cultural literacy’ – where one can read or write a prose document – and ‘pragmatic literacy’ – where people could read their names and perhaps write a formal document.⁴² The evidence suggests that Anglo-Saxon officials and churchmen had a good deal of pragmatic literacy, but lacked cultural literacy. Perhaps this is why continental scholars such as Lantfred were invited to England and wrote hagiographies. The *Translatio* was certainly used as a model by Anglo-Saxon writers at Winchester. Ælfric and Wulfstan both used the *Translatio* as the basis for their account of Swithun’s miracles. Wulfstan also used it as the template for his *Vita Æthelwoldi*.⁴³

The key chapter that suggests Lantfred was writing for the monks of Winchester concerns Swithun appearing in a dream vision to voice his displeasure at the monks of Winchester.⁴⁴ Æthelwold had sent a directive to the latter instructing them to stop what they were doing whenever Swithun performed a miracle cure, and give thanks to God. Some monks, however, did not obey this demand, particularly when they were being woken up in the night with reports of a miracle. Swithun appeared to someone in a dream vision requesting that they inform Æthelwold of this breach in discipline. He is supposed to have said that if the monks did not to repay God for the miracles that took place at his tomb, then the miracles would stop occurring. According to Lantfred, Æthelwold imposed a penance on

⁴⁰ Kelly, S., ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word’, in McKitterick, R. (ed.), *The uses of literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 36-62, at p. 53.

⁴¹ Keynes, S., ‘Royal government and the written word in Anglo-Saxon England’, in McKitterick, R. (ed.), *The uses of literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 226-257, at p. 255.

⁴² Wormald, P., ‘The uses of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its neighbours’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)*, 27 (1977), pp. 95-114, at p. 95.

⁴³ See below pp. 13-14.

⁴⁴ TMS Ch. 10. This incident is explored in more detail in Chapters 1 and 2.

any monk who did not give due thanks to God after a miracle was performed, and after that the monks were fulsome in their praise of God.

This story indicates that some monks at the Old Minster were becoming lax in their veneration of Swithun – understandably perhaps, as it seems that they were being woken two or three times in the night with reports of a miracle. Lantfred was therefore seeking to eradicate such laxity. He is also clearly linking the miracles performed by Swithun to the presence of the monks. Swithun’s cult was obviously very popular in Winchester. Lantfred could also be trying to link the monastic community with Swithun’s popularity in order to gain popular acclaim.

Wulfstan’s *Narratio*

The *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithuno* was written roughly two decades after the *Translatio*. It refers to Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury between 990 and 994, as someone who was still alive, indicating that it was originally written before his death in 994. However, it was revised after this, since the text also includes miracles that Æthelwold performed after his translation on September 10, 996. It cannot have been revised long after 996, since the *Narratio* refers to the impending millennium.⁴⁵ Very few alterations are made to Lantfred’s original text, and any significant alterations will be considered in Chapter 2.

The writer of the *Narratio* adapted the *Translatio* into lines of hexameters. At 3400 lines it is the longest Anglo-Latin poem that survives from before 1066. Although written anonymously, it seems ‘beyond reasonable doubt’⁴⁶ that this uncredited author was Wulfstan. At the beginning of the *Narratio*, the writer refers to himself as *ultimus Anglorum seruulus ymnycinum* (‘the least little servant of English hymn-singers’).⁴⁷ The word *ymnycinum* is glossed by one of the manuscripts of the *Narratio* which was written very soon after

⁴⁵ Lapidge p. 336.

⁴⁶ Lapidge p. 335.

⁴⁷ *Narratio Epistola*. pp. 372-373.

Æthelwold's translation in 996 as *cantorum*: in other words as 'cantors' or 'precentors'. We know that Wulfstan was precentor at the Old Minster when the *Narratio* was written, which implies that he was the author of the *Narratio*.⁴⁸ There is other stylistic evidence that suggests that Wulfstan was the author, as well as the fact that miracles from his *Vita Æthelwoldi* also appear in the *Narratio*. We know little of Wulfstan's life, except that he was born around 960, entered the Old Minster as a child oblate and eventually became precentor there. He was a prolific author before dying at some point in the eleventh century.⁴⁹

Since Wulfstan wrote in Latin, it again seems likely that the monks of Winchester were his intended immediate audience. He gives many details not found in the *Translatio* about the architecture of Winchester after it was rebuilt in the late tenth century. Perhaps Wulfstan wrote the *Narratio* in order to commemorate this rebuilding.

Ælfric's *Epitome* and 'Life of Swithun'

Before writing his 'Life of Swithun', Ælfric wrote the *Epitome Translationis et Miraculorum S. Swithuni*. It is an abbreviation of Lantfred's text with some alterations and additions. The *Epitome* itself is anonymous, but it seems most likely that its author was Ælfric.⁵⁰ Little attention will be paid to the *Epitome* in this thesis, but it is important to note that such a text exists.

Ælfric is one of the most studied of Anglo-Saxon writers. We know that he was born c955 and, like Wulfstan, entered the Old Minster as a child oblate in the 960s. After being taught by Æthelwold at Winchester, Ælfric became a chaplain at Cerne Abbas, in Dorset, before being made abbot of Eynsham in 1005. He held this post until his death, the date for which is unknown. In addition to his *Lives of Saints* he wrote two collections of *Catholic Homilies*, as well as other pieces of prose. Ælfric's 'Life of Swithun' forms part of his *Lives*

⁴⁸ Lapidge pp. 336-337.

⁴⁹ Lapidge pp. 337-339.

⁵⁰ For the evidence of this see Lapidge p. 558.

of *Saints*, which can be dated to between 992 and 998. Unlike the *Translatio* or the *Narratio*, the ‘Life of Swithun’ is written in Old English, which could suggest that the intended immediate audience was not a monastic one. Instead, the aim of the *Lives of Saints* was to ‘produce a breviary Latin legendary, to be used by laymen in the way that monks might use a Latin legendary’.⁵¹ The ‘Life of Swithun’ was produced in three manuscripts⁵² and mainly based on two sources: the *Epitome* and Lantfred’s *Translatio*.

Wulfstan and Ælfric’s *Vita Æthelwoldi*

Wulfstan wrote his *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* very shortly after Æthelwold’s translation in 996.⁵³ There has been some debate as to whether Ælfric’s or Wulfstan’s *Vita* was written first.⁵⁴ As Lapidge and Winterbottom demonstrate, it is far more likely that Wulfstan’s *Vita Æthelwoldi* was written first.⁵⁵ Given the fact that Ælfric would often abbreviate longer texts, it seems more logical that it is his *Vita* which is a later abbreviation of Wulfstan’s. We can date Ælfric’s *Vita* precisely, as it is dedicated to Cenwulf who was bishop of Winchester for a short time in 1006.⁵⁶

Five manuscripts survive of Wulfstan’s *Vita Æthelwoldi*,⁵⁷ and it consists of forty-six chapters, which is possibly an allusion to Bede’s ‘Life of Cuthbert’.⁵⁸ Most interestingly for our purposes, his *Vita* also owes a considerable debt to Lantfred’s *Translatio*. Wulfstan’s account of Æthelwold’s translation is modelled on Swithun’s: Æthelwold appears in a vision to a certain Ælfhelm and instructs him to go to the Old Minster and tell Wulfstan about the vision. Ælfhelm is cured of his blindness before the translation, and miracles occur afterwards too, confirming that Æthelwold approves of the translation. The parallels with the

⁵¹ Lapidge p. 577.

⁵² For more information see Lapidge pp. 579-582.

⁵³ LWA p. clxxxvii.

⁵⁴ LWA p. cliii n. 36.

⁵⁵ LWA pp. cl-cliii.

⁵⁶ LWA p. cxlvii.

⁵⁷ For more information see LWA pp. clxxxvi-clxxxviii.

⁵⁸ LWA pp. cv-cvi.

smith's vision in the *Translatio* are obviously apparent. Again, this reinforces my earlier assertion that one of the reasons that Lantfred wrote the *Translatio* was to provide a model of hagiographical writing for aspiring scholars such as Wulfstan.

The *Vita Æthelwoldi* is our principal source for details of Æthelwold's life, especially of his childhood and early career. It also has fewer miracles than one would expect to find in a hagiography, and could have been based on a copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that may have been at Winchester in the tenth century.⁵⁹ As well as detailing Æthelwold's achievements at Winchester, Wulfstan also provides us with details of the other monasteries that Æthelwold established and of his counsel to Edgar.

Lapidge and Winterbottom speculate that Wulfstan was largely responsible for Æthelwold's translation and cult promotion. For instance, when Æthelwold appeared to Ælfhelm he instructed him to report his vision to Wulfstan. Æthelwold also appeared to Wulfstan himself expressing his wish to be translated.⁶⁰ By writing the *Vita Æthelwoldi* Wulfstan was helping to promote Æthelwold's cult, and as precentor he would have been responsible for preparing other liturgical material for Æthelwold's cult.⁶¹

Ælfric reduced Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* quite considerably: in the edition of the texts by Lapidge and Winterbottom Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* takes up thirty-four pages and forty-six chapters, whereas Ælfric's is eight pages long and twenty-nine chapters. Ælfric removed Wulfstan's more verbose prose, drawing a 'red pencil' through several passages of Wulfstan's work.⁶² Ælfric often condensed several of Wulfstan's chapters into one: only six of Wulfstan's chapters have no parallel whatsoever in Ælfric's account. However, these omissions are rather significant, and will be analysed in Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ LWA p. cviii.

⁶⁰ Wulfstan VA Ch. 43.

⁶¹ LWA p. c.

⁶² LWA p. cliii.

There are some small alterations that Ælfric makes that do not relate to wording or style. The monk who stole and then was paralysed was not named by Wulfstan in his *Vita*,⁶³ but is named by Ælfric as Eadwine.⁶⁴ Also, the location of Ælfhelm, who had the initial vision of Æthelwold, is different in each text. Wulfstan writes that Ælfhelm was a citizen of Wallingford,⁶⁵ whereas Ælfric writes that he resided in Oxford.⁶⁶ This is a curious alteration by Ælfric, given that we know that Wulfstan had personal knowledge of the event: after all, Ælfhelm went directly to Wulfstan with his report of Ælfhelm's vision; but the alteration is of untraceable significance.

All these sources relate to cults at the Old Minster in the late tenth century, and the influence of Æthelwold can be seen behind all of them. The only other monastic community examined in this thesis is that of Ely, which is briefly touched on in Chapter 3, and that was refounded by Æthelwold himself around 970. Æthelwold's activities were only one part of the movement in late tenth-century England that is generally known as the 'Tenth-Century Reformation', when he, as well as fellow bishops Dunstan and Oswald, sought to establish Benedictine monasticism.⁶⁷ As a number of studies by Alan Thacker have shown, Æthelwold was a far more enthusiastic promoter of saints' cults than Oswald, and especially Dunstan.⁶⁸ There is insufficient space in a Master's dissertation to do a comparison of saints' cults all

⁶³ Wulfstan VA Ch. 33.

⁶⁴ Ælfric VA Ch. 22.

⁶⁵ LWA p. 42 and p. 65.

⁶⁶ Ælfric VA Ch. 27.

⁶⁷ The two main accounts of the Tenth-Century Reformation can be found in Stenton, F., *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn. (Oxford 1971), pp. 433-469, and Knowles, D., *The Monastic Order*, pp. 31-56. A more modern account can be found in Campbell, J. (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd edn. (London, 1991), pp. 160-191. For an account of the tenth-century reform in its European context, the best summary is: Wollasch, J., 'Monasticism: The First Wave of Reform', in Reuter, T. (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol. 3: c900-c1024* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 163-185; whilst an excellent summary of the relationships between English and European monasticism is: Wormald, P., 'Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts'.

⁶⁸ These three articles are: Thacker, A., 'Cults at Canterbury: Relics and Reform under Dunstan and His Successors', in Ramsey, N., Sparks, M., and Tatton-Brown, T. (eds.), *St Dunstan: his life, times and cult* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 221-246; Thacker, A., 'Saint-making and relic collecting by St. Oswald and his communities', in Brooks, N., and Cubitt, C. (eds.), *St Oswald of Worcester: life and influence* (Leicester, 1996), pp. 244-268; Thacker, A., 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', in Yorke, B. (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: his career and influence* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 43-64.

across England in sufficient depth, but I hope to show now that a comparison of the writings of Lantfred, Wulfstan and Ælfric is both necessary and useful.

Mechthild Gretsch, as part of her investigation of Ælfric's attitude to the cult of saints, made some insightful comparisons between Lantfred's and Ælfric's texts.⁶⁹ She was especially perceptive in highlighting the different attitudes which the two authors had to themes such as criminals and dream visions, as well as in her comments on the *Translatio*'s structure. Gretsch wrote of how Ælfric used Lantfred's text as the basis for his 'Life of Swithun'. She concludes that Ælfric pared down Lantfred's exuberance with regard to Swithun's miracles, and bowdlerised them 'so as not to lead astray the simple-minded among the audience'.⁷⁰ However, there were other themes that Gretsch did not discuss, such as the treatment of miracle cures performed by Swithun. There was also no detailed discussion of Wulfstan's *Narratio* in Gretsch's work. This omission is understandable, since her focus was on Ælfric, but a critical examination of all three accounts would be welcome.

Chapters 1 and 2 intend to build on Gretsch's work on Ælfric and the cult of Swithun. By examining the sources in the light of Gretsch's conclusions it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the historiographical debate by testing some of her conclusions, and amending them if appropriate. These two chapters will also see if the methodological approaches of Thomas Head and Raymond Van Dam can be applied to an Anglo-Saxon miracle narrative.

Chapter 1 will solely analyse Lantfred's *Translatio*. It will begin with a statistical analysis of which pilgrims he writes about, their location, and the miracles that happened to them. Then it will look at what themes arise from his work, and what different discourses can be seen.

⁶⁹ Gretsch, *Ælfric and the cult of saints*, pp. 185-187.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 236

Chapter 2 will examine how Wulfstan and Ælfric each reworked the *Translatio* in their accounts of Swithun's miracles. Again, the emphasis will be on finding different discourses. In other words, the aim is to find alterations, or omissions, that either Wulfstan or Ælfric made when rewriting Lantfred's original work, and then to try and explain these differences. By doing this, the question of why different reformers wrote about saints' cults in the way they did can be better answered. The way in which both Wulfstan and Ælfric treat the themes that were important to Lantfred's work, as seen in the analysis of Chapter 1, will also be discussed, with reference to Gretsch's work. This is both in order to see if any new interpretation can be made of the themes Gretsch discussed, and also to analyse other themes that may have been neglected by Gretsch.

Chapter 3 will be an examination of how Wulfstan and Ælfric wrote their *Vita Æthelwoldi*, and has two main aims. The first is to test a conclusion that Gretsch made. She did not wish to attribute to Ælfric a uniform approach to the cult of saints, but did make some tentative conclusions. One of these concerned his attitude to posthumous miracles:

Ælfric preferred to record miracles performed by living saints, and, if possible, kept discussion of posthumous miracles to a minimum...it may be worthwhile to test such results, obtained from an examination of the five Lives, within the wider perspective of Ælfric's hagiography.⁷¹

As we know that Ælfric was adapting Wulfstan's *Vita*, and that Wulfstan included details of posthumous miracles performed by Æthelwold in this *Vita*, it would be interesting to see how Ælfric treats these posthumous miracles and see whether Gretsch's conclusion is corroborated.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

As well as looking at the issue of posthumous miracles, Chapter 3 will also examine how Wulfstan and Ælfric treated the themes arising in their accounts of Swithun's miracles in their *Vita Æthelwoldi*.

Chapter 1

In 971, the remains of Saint Swithun were translated into the Old Minster. In the two or three years that elapsed between his translation and Lantfred's writing of the *Translatio*, it can be estimated that thousands of pilgrims visited Swithun's tomb in Winchester. Based on this extrapolation, Lantfred's text records only a small fraction of the total number of pilgrims who visited Winchester in that time. As mentioned in the Introduction, the most profitable way to analyse miracle narratives is to see what consistent themes a text has, and in particular to look for instances of competing discourses. To this end, the first part of this chapter is an analysis of the pilgrims whom Lantfred wrote about in the *Translatio*: looking at their location and social standing to see if there was a particular group which Lantfred wished to highlight. Next, some themes arising from Lantfred's work will be considered, since they seem to suggest why Lantfred wrote the *Translatio* and how he regarded the cult of Swithun. For instance, Lantfred seems to include a lot of miracles relating to criminal justice and to dream visions, and these need to be explained and put into context. Two other major themes that will be discussed are the use of Swithun's cult as a point of reconciliation and Lantfred's treatment of illnesses.

Numbers

According to Lantfred, eight people were cured at Swithun's tomb in the fortnight before the translation ceremony on July 15, 971, and four or five were cured in the three days after the ceremony.¹ For the next five months there was 'rarely a day' when no pilgrims arrived at Swithun's tomb: sometimes there were sixteen or eighteen, occasionally only three or five, but more often seven to fifteen pilgrims a day.² There is no reason why Lantfred should greatly exaggerate these figures. He was a witness to the events which he was describing: in

¹ TMS Ch. 3.

² TMS Chs. 4 and 5.

one instance Lantfred wrote that he ‘saw more than two hundred sick people cured through the saint’s merit in twelve days.’³ Lantfred was also writing for other Winchester monks who were also present at the Old Minster when these miracles occurred. It is therefore reasonable to assume that hundreds, if not thousands, of pilgrims had already visited Swithun’s tomb in the short time between his translation and Lantfred’s writing of the *Translatio*.

Lantfred gave more detailed accounts of another forty-nine people for whom Swithun performed miracles. Forty-one of these are pilgrims cured at his tomb; one is cured in France, whilst help is also given to four slaves and three criminals, usually by the removal of manacles. One of the four slaves was also undergoing a trial by ordeal, and so could also be counted along with the three criminals.

Of these forty-one pilgrims to Winchester, Lantfred gives the place of origin for thirty-seven. This figure is greatly inflated by the inclusion of a story that sixteen pilgrims from London were cured in a single day. Three others were cured from areas that Lantfred does not name, apart from to say that they were ‘from the faraway areas to the west’⁴ or ‘from the remoter parts of England’.⁵ Given that we know that hundreds of pilgrims visited Swithun’s tomb, for Lantfred to give only the location of so few could imply that most of those cured were of Winchester origin, and that Lantfred gives the location of only those who came from far away, and whose location was worth noting.

It is instructive to plot the (very) rough locations of these pilgrims on a map (see Appendix) to get some idea of the geographical range of Swithun’s cult a short time after his translation. Only pilgrims from England have been plotted, and therefore omitted are the instances of the woman from Northern France who went to Swithun’s tomb, and the

³ ‘Vidimus plusquam ducentos in decem diebus aegrotos per meritum sancti curatos’. TMS Ch. 4, pp. 286-287.

⁴ ‘ex longinquis occidentalium’. TMS Ch. 21, pp. 304-305.

⁵ ‘ex longinquis Anglorum finibus’. TMS Ch. 29, pp. 316-317.

Englishman returning from Rome. Lantfred mentions one pilgrim from an unidentified area called 'Hunum'.⁶ The map clearly shows the considerable distances which pilgrims were willing to travel, especially when one takes into account the fact that many of them would have been in severe pain. It also shows the geographical limitations of Swithun's cult, as there are no recorded pilgrims from either Northern England or the Midlands.

The fact that Swithun's cult seems to be a phenomenon mainly restricted to Southern England at the time at which Lantfred was writing is at odds with the portrayal of it that Lantfred was trying to convey: that Swithun was a saint for all of England. In his 'Prefatory Letter to the Old Minster Monks', Lantfred wrote that, 'the miracles, which the omnipotent author of miracles has deigned to bestow *on the peoples of England* through the merit of most holy Swithun, are fully known through nearly all of Europe[my italics]'.⁷ Lantfred also wrote that Swithun was a gift from God to the English comparable to the archangel Raphael⁸ and that this gift is a reward for the English converting to Christianity without bloodshed.⁹ It is natural, however, for a monastic patron to exaggerate the success of the cult he was writing about, and Swithun's cult would soon become hugely popular, both in England and on the Continent.¹⁰

Popular access to shrines

Lantfred gives many examples of miracles performed on non-noble people for the first time in Anglo-Saxon miracle narratives.

⁶ TMS Ch. 18, pp. 300-301. Lapidge speculates that this location could be Huntingdonshire, and so I have plotted this pilgrim as being from Huntingdonshire, but in a different colour on the map so as to highlight the uncertainty of this location.

⁷ 'Licet, karissimi atque affabiles adelphi, per uniuersam ferme Europam sint diuulgata penitus miracula quae prepotens auctor miraculorum dignatus est largiri gentibus Anglorum per sanctissimi Suuithuni meritum'. TMS *Epistola.*, pp. 252-253.

⁸ TMS Ch. 3.

⁹ TMS 'Preface'. Perhaps Lantfred was influenced by Æthelwold's veneration of Bede when he wrote about the conversion of the English.

¹⁰ For more on this see Lapidge pp. 25-61.

Lantfred gives us the social standing of eighteen pilgrims. As well as the three criminals and four slaves mentioned above, three were land-owning women, one was a noble, two were sons of ealdormen, two were members of a monastic community, one is called a poor woman and one was a guide.

The other twenty-three pilgrims to Swithun's tomb are not given a specific social status, and it is likely that they were of a lower social standing. Catherine Cubitt has argued that peasant testimony was often ignored since the value of someone's testimony depended on their status. Writers of miracle collections therefore usually noted if the pilgrim was of a higher social rank, since his testimony was of more value if he was a noble.¹¹

Not mentioning rank therefore implies that the pilgrim was of a lower social standing. Furthermore, the vast majority of the pilgrims not given a rank by Lantfred were suffering from ailments such as blindness, lameness or paralysis. Finucane has hypothesised that those suffering from such diseases were most probably from the lower classes because these groups were more likely to suffer from poor diet and live in cramped, poorly-sheltered living conditions, which would increase the chances of them getting such diseases. Alternatively, Finucane has argued that the reason so few nobles receive miracle cures is because those of a higher social rank would not travel to a shrine to receive them, since this could bring shame on their family.¹²

The fact that Lantfred feels that miracles performed on poorer people from the lower strata of society are worth mentioning at all is therefore particularly interesting. David Rollason has argued that visiting shrines in the pre-Viking age was predominantly the preserve of an ecclesiastical and secular elite, and that if poor people were visiting shrines

¹¹ Cubitt, C., 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in Thacker, A., and Sharpe, R. (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 423-454, at pp. 428-429.

¹² Finucane, R., *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), pp. 147-148.

then it was not regarded as important. Furthermore, no attempt seems to have been made to encourage mass appeal in the cult of saints in that period.¹³

Certainly if one reads between the lines, one can infer that those of a lower social standing were indeed visiting shrines in the pre-Viking age. For instance, in Bede's 'Life of Cuthbert', Cuthbert instructs the monks of Lindisfarne to regulate who visits his tomb:

If you feel you must go against my plans and take me back there [to Lindisfarne], I think it would be best to make a tomb in the interior of the basilica – then you will be able to visit it yourselves whenever you wish and *also to decide who else from outside may do so* [my italics].¹⁴

Presumably there would be no need for any regulation of visitors if a multitude of poor people were not trying to visit shrines, and that it may simply be that pilgrimage by those in the lower orders was discouraged.

Perhaps, then, what is interesting is that Lantfred's *Translatio* involves all classes of lay society. The fact that Swithun appears in visions to ordinary people of Winchester, including a smith, would appear to be significant.¹⁵

Consequently, what is most interesting for the purposes of this study is that Lantfred's *Translatio* is one of the first miracle collections in England where peasant participation is recorded and, judging from the very public ceremonies associated with Swithun's translation, even encouraged. As Rollason has also argued, this involvement of lay society is not atypical

¹³ Rollason, D., *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 104.

¹⁴ Bede, 'Life of Cuthbert' in Farmer, D., and Webb, J. (eds. & trans.), *The Age of Bede*, 2nd edn. (London, 2004), Ch. 38, p. 93.

¹⁵ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 186.

of tenth-century cults.¹⁶ Perhaps this could be connected with the ‘rise of the crowd’ that Robert Moore wrote about happening in the late tenth century.¹⁷

Dream visions (*visione*)

Another way in which the cult of Swithun involved the wider population of Winchester and beyond was by Swithun appearing in dream visions. His miraculous properties were first revealed when he visited a smith three times in a vision¹⁸ and Swithun also appeared to a slave in a vision, as mentioned above.¹⁹ There is also a lengthy description of a vivid dream vision had by a nobleman in Sussex. Lantfred makes it clear that he learned of this dream vision from Æthelwold. Presumably Æthelwold told Lantfred this with the intention of it appearing in the *Translatio*, and so we can assume that the preponderance of dream visions in the *Translatio* was at least partly at the instigation of Æthelwold himself.²⁰

One particular dream vision is very significant. As it is so important it is worth quoting in full:

[T]he venerable bishop Æthelwold...sent at that time a directive to the monks who were living [in Winchester] that, whenever any sick person received the desired cure for his body through the power of the Lord and the merit of the holy bishop, all the monks for that place were immediately to drop whatever of importance they had in their hands, to go to the church, and to magnify God appropriately. Now it happened that certain monks, seduced by the tricks of devils, bore it ill that they were so frequently awakened from their night-time sleep – that is, sometimes three, sometimes

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

¹⁷ Moore, R., ‘Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)*, 30 (1980), pp. 49-69.

¹⁸ TMS Ch. 1.

¹⁹ TMS Ch. 20.

²⁰ TMS Ch. 35.

four times in one night; and they perversely persuaded others to abandon that which had been dutifully commanded of them by their bishop.²¹

These actions continued for two weeks. Swithun became distressed because the monks ‘were not obeying the commands of their bishop nor rendering due praise to God’. He therefore appeared in a vision to a woman telling her to inform Æthelwold of this breach in monastic discipline:

For it greatly displeases God...that every day He performs countless miracles before their very eyes – and they behave so ungratefully that they do not repay God with praise...If on the other hand they do not stop praising the heavenly king, He the lord of all things shall perform so many and such great miracles in that place, that no-one alive will recall such miracles ever having been performed hitherto.²²

We are told that Æthelwold was ‘slightly disturbed’ by this news, and imposed penance on anyone who did not give due thanks to God after the occurrence of a miracle. From then on there were no further problems.

A more comprehensive discussion on Lantfred’s use of dream visions will take place in Chapter 2, but for now it is important merely to appreciate that they must have formed an important part of Swithun’s cult.

²¹ ‘presul uenerabilis Aðeluuoldus (qui Wintoniensi praeerat dyocesi) in illis diebus imperauit fratribus ibidem commorantibus, quod quandocumque quispiam aeger per uirtutem Domini et meritum sancti antistitis medelam corporis optatam perciperet, protinus omnes illius loci fratres necessaria relinquerent queque in manibus tenerent, ecclesiam adirent, et condigne Deum glorificarent. Accidit autem ut quidam illecti demonum fraudibus grauius ferrent, quod tam sepe excitarentur de nocturnis quietibus (scilicet aliquando tribus, aliquando quattuor in una nocte uicibus); ac suaderent ceteros prae relinquere quod illis pie imperatum fuerat ab eorum pontifice.’ TMS Ch. 10, pp. 292-295.

²² ‘Valde etenim displicet omnipotenti Deo acutori miraculorum, quod cotidie miracula facit innumerabilia coram oculis eorum – et ipsi tam iniuste agunt, quod Deo laudes non referunt, sed caduca (malum!) studia – quod nefas est dictu! – diuinis operibus praeponunt...Si uero non desiuerint caelestem manificare regem, tot et tanta Dominus omnium patrabit ibidem miracula, quot et quanta a nemine recordantur uiuente super terram peracta hactenus uspiam, postquam diuinitas’. TMS Ch. 10, pp. 294-295.

Crime and Punishment

Lantfred also records many miracles in which Swithun causes criminals' manacles to fall off. Although some of the criminals whom Swithun helped were innocent, one was guilty of murdering his own kinsman²³ – obviously a very serious crime. As his punishment, he had to wear chains and go on pilgrimage for nine years. Swithun caused two iron rings which had cut into the man's skin to fall off and ease his suffering.

In his work on the miracles written about by Gregory of Tours, Raymond Van Dam argues that in the Merovingian era illness and healing could be linked to authority, influence and power. Gregory frequently wrote of illnesses as crimes and judgements, which could have 'quasi-judicial overtones'.²⁴ He was also writing at a time when Catholic Christianity was challenging the Merovingian kings' authority. For instance, bishops were carrying out some secular duties.²⁵

It is important to appreciate, therefore, the political context in which Swithun was performing miracles. The tenth-century reform in England could also be seen as an attack on local secular authority. In his excellent essay 'The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation', Eric John paints monastic reform as being a 'tenurial revolution' that 'entailed a swingeing attack on entrenched and traditional local interests as part of the effort to enforce the strict observance of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*'.²⁶ Hence, Swithun intervening in the legal process in this manner could be interpreted as an effort from a newly-formed monastic community to attempt to have influence over areas such as justice.

Van Dam also argues that because the process of healing acquired quasi-judicial status, it was especially attractive 'for those who otherwise had little legal recourse, such as

²³ TMS Ch. 24.

²⁴ Van Dam, R., *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1992), p. 94.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁶ John, E., *Orbis Britanniae and other studies* (Leicester, 1966), p. 176.

women and people treated as slaves'.²⁷ There is evidence of this in the *Translatio*, as Swithun performs many miracles in favour of women and slaves. A prime example is the slave girl of Theodic the bell-founder. After being freed from the chains that bound her feet, the slave ran straight to Swithun's tomb, her hands still in shackles.²⁸ Another woman, who was punished by her lord and had her hands in manacles, also headed to Swithun's tomb and, after praying, 'straightaway the manacles, which had been fastened with a bolt, fell from her hands to the ground'.²⁹ Lantfred gives a further example of a slave bound in shackles who managed to escape and visited Swithun's tomb. While he was praising God before the tomb, 'these shackles were miraculously released as if someone had undone them with a key'.³⁰ To these examples we should add the slave of Floadoad, whom Swithun helped to spare from death after his trial by ordeal.³¹

Lantfred would be comfortable writing about miracles involving criminals because similar stories were written about by his community in Fleury. In Adrevald of Fleury's *Miraculi S. Benedicti*, written in the late ninth century, a criminal was transported to Fleury monastery from his cell. This has a parallel in Lantfred's *Translatio* of a slave girl who, seeing Swithun in a vision, is instantly taken by him to his tomb.³² There are many other similar examples written about by monks of Fleury involving criminals, often where manacles fall off, going right up to the eleventh century.³³

²⁷ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, pp. 100-101.

²⁸ TMS Ch. 6, pp. 289-291.

²⁹ 'Quo cum peruenisset et ante eius reliquias cum gemitu Deum oraret, quatinus per sancti meritum a diris eam uinculis liberat, ilico manicae pessulo obseate in terram de eius ceciderunt manibus'. TMS Ch. 38, pp. 332-333.

³⁰ 'Qui dum flexis genibus ante sacri pontificis tumulum exposceret cuncticreantis Dei omnipotentiam, confestim de compedibus prosiliuit pessulum; et sic compedes ipsae diuinitus sunt reseratae, quasi aliquis eas resolveret clauē.' TMS Ch. 39, pp. 332-333.

³¹ TMS Ch. 25.

³² TMS Ch. 20.

³³ Head, T., *Hagiography and the cult of saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 182-183.

Swithun therefore seemed to have acquired a reputation as a just saint, who helped the poor and needy. That is presumably why he was a focal point for many slaves, as many seem to have escaped and headed straight for his tomb when they had the chance. It is natural that Lantfred would write about some of these miracles in the *Translatio*, especially as he would be familiar with these types of miracle stories from his time at Fleury.

Reconciliation

The Winchester community seem to have used Swithun's cult as a point of reconciliation with members of the old community of secular clerks whom they expelled. This is most evident in Lantfred's account of the *Inventio* or discovery of Swithun's miraculous power, in an account that is obviously modelled on Lucian's *Epistola*.³⁴ The *Epistola* was written in 415 and widely circulated from Greece across Western Europe. In Lucian's original account, he saw a vision of an elderly man who told him to report the vision to the local bishop. The saint appears three times before Lucian finally told the local bishop of this vision. Lantfred's version is very similar, except that it is a smith who receives the vision, and who is told not to report it to Æthelwold but to Eadsige, one of the canons formerly expelled from the Old Minster in 964. Eadsige was Æthelwold's kinsman – a detail provided by Ælfric³⁵ – and after Eadsige returned to the Winchester community he became the sacrist at Swithun's shrine.³⁶ It would therefore seem that the cult of Swithun was being used to effect a reconciliation between the two kinsmen. Lantfred seems to have changed the account in order to take Winchester politics into consideration.³⁷ Eadsige was not the only member of the old community who rejoined the monastic community. Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* tells us of

³⁴ Lapidge pp. 232-233.

³⁵ Epitome Ch. 5.

³⁶ TMS Ch. 20.

³⁷ Lapidge p. 260, n. 43.

two other secular clerks, named Wulfsige and Wilstan, who also converted to monasticism and joined the community.³⁸

It is interesting that these secular canons were reconciled with the monastic community that expelled them, given the rhetoric that later reformers used to describe them. In 964 Æthelwold expelled the clerics at the Old Minster, helped by Edgar's military support, and replaced them with monks. Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* says that the canons married illicitly, were 'involved in wicked and scandalous behaviour', were too drunk to celebrate mass and even tried to poison Æthelwold.³⁹ The fact that Eadsige as well as two other former canons later took up the monastic habit after being expelled is perhaps further evidence that the reformers exaggerated the decadence of the clerks in the minsters whom they displaced. Antonia Gransden has shown that whilst the reformers were scathing of clerks' behaviour and morals in their writings, in practice many clerks were kept on by the new regime. As we have seen, Æthelwold retained some clerks in his reformed community at Winchester, Oswald kept on the clerks in the cathedral of Worcester and Dunstan never replaced the community at Christ Church at Canterbury with Benedictine monks.⁴⁰ This was not a phenomenon restricted to English reform monasticism. For instance, Patrick Wormald has written that tenth-century reform movements on the Continent as well as in England also 'gave too desolate and/or dissolute an impression of pre-reform conditions' and gives the example that at Gorze a charter was issued despite the fact that later reformers claimed the minster was full of dung.⁴¹

³⁸ Wulfstan VA Ch. 18, p. 33

³⁹ Wulfstan VA Ch. 16, p. 31; Ch. 19.

⁴⁰ Gransden, A., 'Traditionalism and continuity during the last century of Anglo-Saxon monasticism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40 (1989), pp. 159-207, at pp. 167-173.

⁴¹ He concludes that 'For this Reformation, as for others, reformers are not always the best authorities'. Wormald, P., 'Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast', in Yorke, B. (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: his career and influence* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 13-42, at p. 28.

This does not mean that there is no invective by Lantfred whatsoever against the clerks. He wrote of the ‘evil and impure customs’⁴² that the canons had been practising, but there is much less rhetoric against the secular clerks than in, say, Æthelwold’s ‘An account of King Edgar’s establishment of monasteries’⁴³ or the *Regularis Concordia*.⁴⁴ Perhaps because Lantfred was an outsider unfamiliar with the local politics of reform, and was writing a work which was not about ‘reform’ as such but was glorifying a saint, through the miracles he performed, he had little reason or inclination to supply such rhetoric.

Related to this idea of reconciliation is how Lantfred portrays Swithun as being a unifying figure, both for families and for the English population generally. The most telling example of this occurs when Swithun transports a slave girl from the house where she was imprisoned by her greedy owner to his tomb at the Old Minster. Lantfred writes that on hearing this miracle, ‘the crowds of people who were there *from various parts of England*... marvelled greatly and praised Christ the Lord omnipotent [my italics]’.⁴⁵ In this miracle, Swithun managed to unify a group of people from all over England into collectively praising God. This possibly shows how saints’ cults could well be useful for giving English society some spiritual unity. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Lantfred was ambitiously trying to portray Swithun as a saint of all England, and this episode is also attempting to establish Swithun as a unifying figure for all the peoples of England.⁴⁶

⁴² ‘nefandis moribus ac spurcissimus utentium’. TMS Ch. 1, pp. 264-265.

⁴³ EHD No. 238.

⁴⁴ Symons, T. (ed. & trans.), *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (London, 1953).

⁴⁵ ‘Cumque haec audirent turbae populorum quae presentes aderant ex diuersis partibus Anglorum, admiratae nimium, glorificauerunt Christum omnipotentem Dominum, regem omnium ac saluatorem hominum, qui tam inaudita dignatus est facere miracula per sancti gloriosa sacerdotis sui merita’. TMS Ch. 20 pp. 304-305.

⁴⁶ As Rollason says, ‘To some extent lay interest in the cult of saints was no doubt spontaneous, deriving from piety and the desire to invoke the assistance of the saints, but it is possible to interpret the phenomenon in terms of the church’s seeking further to increase the influence of the cult of saints as a means of integrating the lives of the laity into the machinery of the church’. He goes on to write that, ‘the church, in alliance with the kings, may have used the cult of saints to influence the behaviour of the laity. This is apparent in legislation which, from the ninth century onwards, sought to regulate the rhythm of the laypeople’s lives by reference to saints’ festivals.’ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p.188.

Swithun could also help unify families. If a person fell sick, the duty of caring for them usually fell on the family. In the example of the innocent man sentenced to a gruesome punishment, after his mutilation his kinsmen brought him to his own house, took care of him for nine days, looked for medical assistance and prayed for him. They then carried him to Swithun's tomb at Winchester.⁴⁷ Three blind women on the Isle of Wight asked their kinsman and neighbours to take them to the mainland, where they found a guide to take them to Winchester.⁴⁸ There are three further examples of people aiding their sick kinsman in a similar fashion.⁴⁹

When the afflicted parties were cured, they ceased to be a burden for their kinsmen. This is usually presented as the pilgrim racing ahead of the party. A typical example is the paralytic who asked his kinsmen to put him on a litter and take him to Swithun. On the way to Winchester he was cured and 'arrived safely at the remains of the holy bishop, whereas his companions were still a long way behind, even though they were benefiting from equine conveyance'.⁵⁰ Van Dam sees similar episodes in Gregory of Tours' account of the cult of St Martin.⁵¹

The different themes that arise from the *Translatio*, then, are popular access to shrines, dream visions, criminals and reconciliation. Now we shall discuss how, reading between the lines, we can find examples of different discourses.

⁴⁷ TMS Ch. 3.

⁴⁸ TMS Ch. 5.

⁴⁹ TMS Chs. 7; 11; 33. For a more in-depth look at the bonds between family members in the Middle Ages, see Althoff, G., *Family, Friends and Followers: political and social bonds in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁵⁰ 'et uolucris gressu ad uenerandas almi reliquias episcopi peruenit incolumis, adhuc sodalibus longe remanentibus canterinis licet aminiculis suffragantibus.' TMS Ch. 7, pp. 290-291. For a similar example see also TMS Ch. 2.

⁵¹ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, pp. 91-93.

Different discourses on spiritual and medical benefits

A key feature of Lantfred's *Translatio* is his emphasis on the spiritual, and not just the medical, benefits of pilgrimage. He tries to show that visiting Swithun's tomb is not just about curing an illness, but cleansing oneself of sin. However, it is clear from reading between the lines in the *Translatio* that not all pilgrims shared this view of pilgrimage.

Very early on in the *Translatio* Lantfred states explicitly that physical infirmity is linked to spiritual disease:

He is worried that he would require medicines so that he might first admit and realise that he was *diseased through sin*; and thus at length he could obtain the health of his soul, since the omnipotent creator of angels and men does not desire the death of sinners but anticipates the conversion of wicked hearts for the better [my italics].⁵²

Disease, therefore, is caused by sin, and a substantial part of the *Translatio* looks at how pilgrims can relieve themselves of sin by making pilgrimages to Swithun's tomb:

If someone shall thus desire to purify his soul from sin, just as that sick man was cured in his body, he will without doubt deserve to inherit the blessedness of the heavenly kingdom.⁵³

This explicitly links curing physical illness to mending one's soul from sin.

This explains in part the numerous partial or temporary remissions that pilgrims receive at Swithun's tomb. For instance, Æthelsige the hump-backed cleric is cured in stages, from being completely lame to being able to travel to Swithun's tomb on crutches to being

⁵² 'Commonetur ut medicinam requirat, quatinus se infirmum prius peccatis confiteatur et intelligat; et sic demum sanitatem animae percipiat, quoniam omnipotens angelorum creator et hominum non desiderat mortem delinquentium sed expectat nefandarum in melius conuersionem mentium'. TMS Ch. 3, pp. 282-283.

⁵³ 'Qui si ita studuerit a uitiiis purgare, quemadmodum ipse curatus est somate absque dubio merebitur hereditare felicitatem caelestis patriae.' TMS Ch. 3, pp. 284-285.

cured fully the following day.⁵⁴ The pilgrim is not cured immediately, but instead has to ‘earn’ his remission, by holding vigils at Swithun’s tomb and praying. Only then do they receive a cure. A further example is the man who goes to St Augustine’s, Canterbury, to be cured of lameness in one foot, and who must visit Winchester to be cured in the other.⁵⁵ Usually this sort of temporary remission is represented in time delays. For instance, of the sixteen blind people who came from London, fifteen were cured on the first night. The sixteenth had to wait overnight for his blindness to be cured.⁵⁶ Another pilgrim had to spend three days in vigil and prayer before being ‘found worthy’ to receive a cure.⁵⁷ Twenty-six people visiting Winchester were cured over the space of three days.⁵⁸

On many occasions, Lantfred writes that pilgrims were cured only when they were ‘found worthy’. He writes that the twenty-five sick persons from all across England were ‘found worthy to receive the cure of the Lord through the glorious intercession of the eminent bishop’.⁵⁹ A blind man, who was originally from England but had been praying in Rome for five years, was ‘found worthy to receive his eyesight on the very same night’ that he arrived.⁶⁰

As Lantfred portrays it, after the pilgrims had been cured of their afflictions, they were supposed to leave the Church praising God. For instance, when a lame man from London was able to walk again, ‘without delay he returned home on foot, praising God in everything he said’.⁶¹ There are several other instances of this.⁶² Often this is coupled with

⁵⁴ TMS Ch. 2.

⁵⁵ TMS Ch. 13.

⁵⁶ TMS Ch. 12.

⁵⁷ TMS Ch. 17.

⁵⁸ TMS Ch. 22.

⁵⁹ ‘omnes per gloriosam egregii sacerdotis interuentionem a Domino meruerunt recipere curationem’. TMS Ch. 14, pp. 298-299.

⁶⁰ ‘Quo cum perueniret, eadem nocte lumen meruit recipere pristinum, et a Domino mundi creatore illuminatus’. TMS Ch. 16, pp. 298-299.

⁶¹ ‘et confestim laetus rediit domum pedibus, magnificans Deum sermonibus’. TMS Ch. 13, pp. 298-299.

⁶² TMS Ch. 19, pp. 302-303; Ch. 21, pp. 304-305; Ch. 22, pp. 306-307; Ch. 32, pp. 322-323.

showing the pilgrim to be in a state of emotional turmoil before being cured by Swithun. After a land-owning lady fell seriously ill, ‘her illness became more intolerable day by day and she was put in a state of despair about this life’. After her illness was finally cured, ‘she returned home in sound health...giving the most well-deserved thanks to the omnipotent Lord’.⁶³ Lantfred also wrote of a powerful lady from Bedfordshire, who ‘went home in high spirits – she who had come to the saint’s tomb in a state of depression’.⁶⁴ Pilgrimage, in Lantfred’s view, is literally good for the soul.

However, it does not seem that all pilgrims shared Lantfred’s vision of pilgrimage being a mostly spiritual matter. On several occasions he writes that pilgrims visited Swithun’s tomb because they had ‘heard’ of Swithun’s miraculous power.⁶⁵ This implies that uppermost in the pilgrim’s mind was becoming cured of their physical illness, not necessarily cleansing their soul of sin. This difference is made more explicit by two further examples. In one instance, a man lame in both feet visited Swithun’s tomb, supporting himself on crutches. ‘As soon as he came to the tomb of the saint, he received the health of his body; *but he remained spiritually infirm*, since he did not repay thanks to God the creator as other such people did [my italics]’.⁶⁶

We do not know if any ill befell this man in consequence of his remaining spiritually infirm. However, Lantfred does provide us with a more cautionary moral tale. A powerful lady (the same one who had been in a state of despair in an example above) promised Swithun that she would visit his tomb with many gifts if he cured her of her illness. Lantfred writes that ‘she obtained the health of her body; but she apparently lost her mental faculties

⁶³ ‘Cum autem languor intolerabilis augetur diebus singulis, posita in desperatione istius uitae’; ‘Postera uero die incolumis ad supradictas reuersa est nuptias, omnipotenti Domino gratias referens iustissimas’. TMS Ch. 9, pp. 292-293.

⁶⁴ ‘domum rediit laetissima, quae ad sancti monumentum pontificis accessit mestissima’. TMS Ch. 8, pp. 290-291.

⁶⁵ TMS Chs. 5; 13; 16.

⁶⁶ ‘Is confestim ut ad sancti tumbam accessit antistitis, recepit sospitatem somatis; sed mente permansit debilis, quoniam conditori Deo grates non retulit sicut ceteri fecerunt egri.’ TMS Ch. 30, pp. 318-319.

since, being forgetful of God's bounty to her, she did not observe the promises to which she had committed herself, and did not repay to God the thanks which were due – as would have been appropriate'.⁶⁷ On the way to a wedding the lady was struck down again by the same illness, and only by visiting Swithun's tomb and 'giving the most well-deserved thanks to the omnipotent Lord'⁶⁸ did she fully recover from the disease. There was therefore more to being a pilgrim than merely turning up and getting cured: they had to hold vigils or bring gifts.

Raymond Van Dam has argued that Gregory of Tours, when writing about pilgrims' illnesses, was very interested in 'placing these ailments in a moral or religious context'.⁶⁹ For instance, someone might end up being blinded or crippled for working on a saint's day, or a man who reneged on an oath might feel the fingertip of the hand which made the oath throb painfully.⁷⁰ Van Dam therefore argues that 'Illnesses therefore presupposed a strong sense of personal guilt'.⁷¹

Lantfred is not as explicit as Gregory of Tours, but the examples above show that a similar attitude was part of his belief system. There are other examples of this. For instance, a woman who 'on a particular night...yawned and did not make the sign of the holy cross of the world's Saviour on her mouth – was so violently seized by a foul demon that her jaw was disconnected from her lower lip'.⁷² Making the sign of the cross or putting one's hand on one's mouth when yawning was meant to prevent the soul from leaving the mouth, and also stop demons from getting in. It does not seem too far-fetched to suggest that the woman may

⁶⁷ 'Quod dum promitteret, potita est sanitate corporis; sed amisit uigorem mentis, quoniam quidem Dei beneficiorum inmemor, promissiones quibus sese obligauerat non obseruauit et gratias Deo debitas (sicut condignum erat) non rependit.' TMS Ch. 9, pp. 292-293.

⁶⁸ 'omnipotenti Domino gratias referens iustissimas.' TMS Ch. 9, pp. 292-293.

⁶⁹ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, p. 86.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷² 'quedam muliercula – dum quadam oscitaret nocte nec sanctam mundi crucem saluatoris in eius figeret stomate – in tantum percussa est ab impurissimo demone, ut inferius labium dissoluta penitus mandibula a labro disiungeretur superiore.' TMS Ch. 33, pp. 322-323.

have felt ‘a strong sense of personal guilt’ at possibly letting a demon into her body.⁷³ Gregory of Tours refers to people being afflicted with demons in his miracle narratives.

It seems that although Lantfred wished to emphasise the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage, most pilgrims wanted to visit Swithun’s tomb to cure themselves of an illness. In the case of the person who left without praising God, he was not interested in the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage at all. This mirrors the findings of some anthropologists from studies of contemporary cults, who found that there are many different discourses present at a pilgrimage, and that often the ‘official’ version of events was not shared by the pilgrims.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Lantfred only chose to write about a small sample of pilgrims who had visited Swithun’s tomb. The fact that so many ordinary people are written about, and not just a small elite, is therefore very significant. It seems that the Winchester community were trying to encourage popular access and popular enthusiasm for Swithun’s cult in order to give their newly established community some public support. This was aided by portraying Swithun as someone who stood up for the poor and disadvantaged, even criminals, and as a unifying figure. Lantfred also was portraying Swithun’s cult as a place where pilgrims could rid themselves of sin, not just of their illnesses. He was also, naturally, trying to increase the prestige of Swithun’s cult to make it look as impressive as possible.

There is also evidence of different discourses when it comes to the question of healing. Lantfred emphasises the need of the pilgrims to cleanse their soul from sin; whereas they often seem to be interested only in curing their physical, rather than their spiritual, ailments.

⁷³ Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, p. 89.

⁷⁴ Eade, J., ‘Order and power and Lourdes: Lay helpers and the organisation of a pilgrimage shrine’, in Eade, J., and Sallnow, M. (eds.), *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London, 1991), pp. 51-76.

In the next chapter, two later adaptations of Lantfred's work will be looked at to see how other members of the Winchester community treated the cult of Swithun.

Chapter 2

In the 990s, two monks of Winchester adapted Lantfred's *Translatio* in differing ways. Wulfstan adapted it into rhyming verses in his *Narratio*, whereas Ælfric used the *Translatio* as the basis for his 'Life of Swithun' (having first abbreviated it in the *Epitome*). Both were young members of the Old Minster when Swithun was first translated in 971, and had probably been studying Lantfred's work for three decades. How each of them altered the document to fit in with his own view of the cult of Swithun is therefore potentially very significant. As was shown in the last chapter, Lantfred wrote about many different areas: about popular access to shrines, about dream visions, about criminals, and about reconciliation; and it would be interesting to see how both Ælfric and Wulfstan treat these areas. As will be seen, Ælfric's treatment of areas such as dream visions and popular access is more cautious than either Wulfstan's or Lantfred's. This chapter will examine the evidence for this and then discuss some possible reasons for this caution.

The translation of Swithun and popular access to shrines

One significant difference between Wulfstan's *Narratio* and Ælfric's 'Life of Swithun' is in their treatment of Swithun's translation and of the ordinary population of Winchester who participated in the translation and also visited Swithun's tomb. Wulfstan was seemingly more encouraging of this sort of participation by the lower classes in visiting Swithun's tomb than Ælfric was.

It seems that Lantfred was not at the Old Minster when Swithun's translation took place on July 17, 972. He mentions the ceremony only in a single sentence:

After these events had taken place, the holy and venerable remains of the bishop were exhumed from his sepulchre on the 15th of July [971] – at the command of the glorious and blessed King Edgar – by the venerable bishop Æthelwold and by the distinguished abbots Aelfstan and Aethelgar, and by the monks leading the heavenly

life in both monasteries; and the remains were placed with honour in the above-mentioned minster.¹

This implies that Lantfred probably arrived in England only shortly after the translation ceremony so as to write the *Translatio*. Wulfstan's account of the ceremony, including its build-up and aftermath, shows just what an important role he thought that the community of Winchester had in the translation ceremony.

Wulfstan writes that after receiving permission from King Edgar for the translation, Æthelwold spoke to the population of Winchester at mass on the Sunday before the ceremony (probably July 9, 971), telling them of the impending translation and urging them to observe a three-day fast. Oswald tells us that 'the entire populace agreed with unanimity; they declared that they wished to follow the precepts of their teacher and to obey his admonitions with willing assent'.² From Thursday to Saturday the entire populace fasted; Wulfstan tells us that he too observed the fast. On the day of the translation monks were present from both Old and New Minsters, as were ordinary citizens of Winchester: Wulfstan records that tents were set up around Swithun's tomb 'so that the people would not rush from everywhere upon the very holy place with their pressing din'.³ Prayers, chants and vigils were held, with everyone who was present chanting. We are told that: 'As soon as the holy body was brought forth into the light, a wonderful odour, surpassing cinnamon and balsam in its sweetness, filled the entire town'.⁴ The population of Winchester, and the town itself, therefore had a prominent role in Wulfstan's account of the translation ceremony.

¹ 'Quibus transactis, Idus Iulii sanctae ac uenerabiles antistitis reliquiae sublatae sunt de monumento – imperante glorioso rege Eadgaro atque beatissimo – a domno presule Æþeluuoldo uenerabili atque abbatibus Ælfstano necne Æþelgaro preluibus et a fratribus Olympicam in utroque coenobio ducentibus uitam; et decentissime in basilica sunt reconditae superius commemorata.' TMS Ch. 4, pp. 284-285.

² 'Prebuit assensum populus concorditer omnis; proclamat se uelle sequi precepta magistri'. Narratio i. 4, pp. 454-455.

³ 'et circa tumulum celeres tentoria tendunt ne populus supra nimium ruat undique sanctum, peruia sed paucis pateat clausura ministris expectetque foras uallante crepidine uulgus.' Narratio i. 5, pp. 454-455.

⁴ 'Protinus in lucem prolato copore sacro mirus odor redolens totam compleuerat urbem, cinnamoma premens et balsama nectare uincens.' Narratio i. 5, pp. 458-459.

Wulfstan also involves the population of Winchester in the miracles that occur before and after the translation ceremony. When the cleric is cured of his lameness a few weeks before the translation ceremony, Wulfstan writes that ‘The affair became well known quickly, as the report flew quickly through the town’.⁵ The bells were rung at Winchester to alert all to the occurrence of a miracle. Wulfstan also mentions two miracles that occurred on the day of the translation and that Lantfred does not. The first concerns a blind woman who had been praying by Swithun’s tomb. After Swithun cured her of her blindness, ‘This became known to the people as all the bells rang together. They assemble happily; they hasten from here and there, and rush to the tomb of the bishop and behold the mighty works of the Lord.’⁶

The other miracle occurred after the ceremony. Swithun cured the paralysis in a young boy’s fingers. Wulfstan says that ‘The miracle becomes known as its report flies around the town. Those who shortly before had withdrawn come together again; the countless people all around behold these mighty events.’⁷ Once again the bells sounded as the populace praised Swithun and Jesus Christ. These miracles which occurred before and after the translation are presumably included by Wulfstan as indications that Swithun approved of the ceremony. All this suggests that Wulfstan saw the population of Winchester as an integral part of the translation ceremony and, by extension, of the cult of Swithun.

It is instructive to compare Wulfstan’s adaptation of Lantfred’s work with the two accounts we have by Ælfric. Ælfric seems to be more reticent than Wulfstan about popular activity at Swithun’s cult. Although, like Wulfstan, Ælfric would have been a member of the community at the Old Minster when the translation happened, he only covers it in two sentences:

⁵ ‘Fit res nota citim, fama uolitante per urbem’. Narratio i. 3, pp. 448-449.

⁶ ‘Fit notum populo, signis resonatibus una. Concurrunt alacres; properant hinc inde, ruuntque presulis ad tumulum; Domini magnalia cernunt.’ Narratio i. 5, pp. 454-455.

⁷ ‘Fit notum signum fama uolitante per urbem. Rursum conueniunt qui illinc paulo ante recedunt; innumeri circum populi magnalia cernunt.’ Narratio i. 6, pp. 462-463.

Then King Edgar – after these miracles – wanted the saint to be exhumed, and said this to Æthelwold the venerable bishop, that he should translate him with dignity. Then Bishop Æthelwold, with other abbots and monks, exhumed the saint honourably with singing of hymns, and carried his remains into the cathedral (namely St Peter’s minster) where he remains in glory and performs miracles.⁸

In this very brief account, Ælfric makes no mention of the population of Winchester attended the translation ceremony – he only reports that Æthelwold with other abbots and monks performed the service.

This omission of any description of the Winchester laity from his account of the ceremony is significant, especially when added to the other evidence from Ælfric’s ‘Life of Swithun’ that he was distinctly uneasy about allowing them access to Swithun’s tomb. The first example concerns some people who were keeping vigil over a dead body:

There was a certain foolish man excessively given over to jokes, and he said to the people – as it were in jest – that he was Swithun: “You ought truly to know that I am Swithun who performs miracles; and I want you to bring your candles to me and to fall on your knees, and I shall grant you that which you are yearning for”.

The budding satirist carried on in this vein until he ‘fell into a swoon as if senseless’ and returned home ‘in utter despair at his life’. His kinsmen carried him to Swithun’s tomb, where he made amends and departed fully healed.⁹

Another of Ælfric’s chapters which is worthy of attention follows on directly from this story:

⁸ ‘Eadgar cyning þa – æfter ðysum tacnum – wolde þæt se halga wer wurde up gedon, and spræc hit to Aðelwolde þam arwurðan bisceope, þæt he hine up adyde mid arwurðnyse.’ Ælfric LS Ch. 9, pp. 594-595.

⁹ ‘Hwilon wacodon menn (swa swa hit gewunelic is) ofer an dead lic; and ðær wæs sum dysig mann plegol ungemetlice, and to ðam mannum cwæð – swilce for plegan - þæt he Swiðhun wære: “Ge magon to soðum witan þæt ic Swiðhun eom, se þe wundra wycrð; and ic wille þæt ge beran eower leoht to me and licgan on cneowum, and ic eow forgife þæt þæt ge grynende beoð.”’ Ælfric LS Ch. 19, pp. 600-601.

It is accordingly to be understood that those men behave unwisely who jest foolishly at the corpses of dead men and perpetrate there with their jesting every sort of wickedness, when they should rather mourn for the dead man and fear for themselves the advent of death, and pray earnestly for his soul without any silliness. Moreover, some men most wrongfully drink all through the night at dead men's corpses and anger God with their buffoonery, whereas no beer-drinking is proper at the corpse, but rather holy prayers are appropriate there'.¹⁰

This incident also illustrates some of the different themes that arose from the study of Lantfred's *Translatio* in Chapter 1. First, and most strikingly, is that of different discourses. There is evidence here of a scepticism towards Swithun's cult (i.e. that it is merely a money-making device). This is usually something that is hidden from our view and not written about by monastic writers. The second instance is that of someone who feels 'spiritually infirm' and of guilt manifesting itself as illness. After insulting Swithun, the man became ill, and could have been in utter despair because he felt he had committed a sin. The third theme is that of reconciliation: his kinsman took the man to Swithun's tomb, where he was reconciled with Swithun.

Perhaps these differences between Wulfstan and Ælfric concerning popular access to shrines reflect their differing attitudes to monastic reform more generally. Pauline Stafford has argued that reform 'centred on the definition, or redefinition, of clerical status, and thus inevitably on lay status'.¹¹ Much reform literature centres on the need for those in monasteries to follow the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and live chastely with all property held in

¹⁰ 'Is eac to witenne þæt menn unwislice doð, þa þe dwollice plegiað æt deadra manna lice and ælce fulnysse þær forð teoð mid plegan, þonne hi sceoldon swiðor besargian þone deadan and ondrædan him sylfum þæs deaðes tocyme and biddan for his sawle buton gewede georne. Sume menn eac drincað æt deadra manna lice ofer ealle þa niht swiðe unrihtlice, and gremiað God mid heora gegafspræcum, þonne nan gebeorscipe ne gebyrað æt lice, ac halige gebedu þær gebyrað swiþor.' Ælfric LS Ch. 20, pp. 602-603. This is not the only instance of Ælfric complaining of drunken revelry at funeral wakes, see Lapidge p. 602 n. 53 and references therein.

¹¹ Stafford, P., 'Queens, nunneries and reforming churchmen: gender, religious status and reform in tenth- and eleventh-century England', *Past and Present*, 163 (1999), pp. 1-35, at p. 6.

common, in contrast to the secular clerks who often took wives and had close contacts with lay society. 'Reform thus aimed to set the clergy as a group, and their property, apart'.¹² If this was the case, it is unlikely that many reformers would be comfortable with opening their churches to a multitude of peasant pilgrims in the same way as Æthelwold did at Winchester.

Dream visions

Another important aspect of Swithun's cult which Wulfstan embraces and Ælfric seems to try to diminish is dream visions. For instance, in Chapter 10 of the *Translatio* Swithun appeared to 'a certain respectable lady' to voice his concern over the fact that Old Minster monks were sleeping when they should have been celebrating Swithun's miracles.

As noted above, this is an important passage of Lantfred's text, reflected in the fact that it is considerably longer than most of the *Translatio*'s later chapters. Its importance is twofold: first, it clearly links the miraculous properties of Swithun to the presence of the monks. This vindicates Æthelwold's decision to expel the secular clerks and install Benedictine monks. Also, it serves as a warning to any monks who were becoming lax at commemorating Swithun's miracles.

Ælfric's version of this chapter is significantly different from Lantfred's. It is much shorter: only twenty lines in Lapidge's edition, compared to forty-nine in Lantfred's. Most significantly, Ælfric changes the gender of the person who had the vision. Instead of Swithun appearing to a 'certain respectable lady',¹³ he does so to a 'certain good man'.¹⁴

This alteration is almost definitely not a scribal error. Lapidge suggests that Ælfric would not have altered the gender 'unless he had personal knowledge of the event'.¹⁵ Gretsch comments that if this is true, it suggests that Ælfric 'took pains to relate the story in as

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³ 'uenerabili matronae'. TMS Ch. 10, p. 294.

¹⁴ 'sumun godum menn'. Ælfric LS Ch. 17, p. 598.

¹⁵ Lapidge pp. 560-561; p. 570 n. 22.

authentic a form as possible'.¹⁶ Ælfric was indeed a member of the Old Minster community when this happened, unlike Lantfred, but Wulfstan would have been too, and yet he does not change the gender of the person who experienced the vision. It seems extremely unlikely that Ælfric would be privy to some inside knowledge on the dreamer's gender that Wulfstan was ignorant of. Therefore, the explanation that Ælfric altered the details because of some personal knowledge is not wholly convincing.

When identifying possible explanations, the nearest parallel seems to be that of 'hagiographical doublets', when the same miracle is attributed to two different saints. These were quite common in the Middle Ages. One such doublet, written about by Katherine Allen Smith,¹⁷ offers an instructive comparison with the instance above, in that she writes about how the perception of a miracle may change depending on the gender of the saint who performed the miracle. The article concerns a miracle called 'The Peril', in which a pregnant woman in Northern France is saved from drowning.

Two different saints were credited with this miracle – the archangel Michael and the Virgin Mary. However, the literary traditions associated with the miracle differed greatly depending on the gender of the saint who performed the miracle. In accounts where Michael performed the miracle, he played the role of the dutiful husband. He took a 'hands-off' approach, often putting up a barrier to protect the woman from the water. On the other hand, the tradition associated with the Virgin Mary has her taking a more 'hands-on' approach – she would often pick up the woman and place her safely back on the shore.

Allen Smith argues that these differing accounts imparted different moral messages. She adds that:

¹⁶ Gretsch, M., *Ælfric and the cult of saints in late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 188.

¹⁷ Allen Smith, K., 'Mary or Michael? Saint-switching, Gender and Sanctity in a Medieval Miracle of Childbirth', *Church History*, 74 (2005), pp. 758-783.

[T]he substitution of one saintly patron for another was not a simple matter of switching names but required a series of subtle shifts in the setting and characters of the narrative...*Seemingly small differences between the content of these two traditions of the story...would have dramatically changed the way the story was interpreted by medieval readers and listeners* [my italics].¹⁸

If perceptions of a miracle changed depending on the gender of the saint performing it, would perceptions of a dream vision change depending on the gender of the person who received a vision? This thesis will argue that the swapping of a female for a male dreamer is a very significant alteration that was intended by Ælfric to have a meaning. The next part of this chapter will try and explore what that meaning might have been.

To discuss this, it seems logical to start with the medieval attitude to dream visions. In the Middle Ages there was a very ambivalent attitude to the interpretation of dreams. This ambivalence has its origins in the Bible. Although there are instances where dreams are divinely-inspired and can be used to predict the future, a passage from Deuteronomy clearly associates dream-visions with other dubious pagan practices:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee, beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations. Neither let there be found among you any one...that consulteth soothsayers, *or observeth dreams* and omens, neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things [my italics].¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 778-779.

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 18:9-12

A fourth-century writer called Macrobius, whose work on dreams was known in tenth-century England,²⁰ said that the same dream could be either divinely inspired or mundane, depending on the context.²¹ Others such as Alcuin had a similar mixed attitude. As well as writing some very evocative accounts of dream visions, he also wrote that ‘those who believe in dreams give themselves up to vanity and folly’.²²

Ælfric in particular seems preoccupied by the subject of dreams. Three of his Homilies touch on the subject. Another chapter added to his ‘Life of Swithun’ reaffirms the ambivalent attitude to dreams found in the Bible:

Now it should be understood that we ought not to put too much store by dreams, because they are not all from God. Some dreams truly are from God, just as we read in books, and some are from the devil, intended as a sort of deception whereby he may bring the soul to disaster; but his deception cannot injure good men if they cross themselves and pray to god. The dreams which come from God are delightful; and those which come from the devil are terrifying; and God himself forbade that we pay heed to dreams, lest the devil might delude us.²³

Dreams are therefore seen as something potentially dangerous that should be handled with care.

On the other hand, Lantfred, as a monk of Fleury, would be more comfortable with including dream visions in his work. Fleury was believed in the tenth century to house the relics of Saint Benedict himself. There was a large literary tradition at Fleury associated with Benedict appearing to people in dream visions. Adrevald of Fleury, with whose work

²⁰ Kruger, S., *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, 1992), p. 58.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²² Dutton, P., *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Nebraska, 1994), p. 44.

²³ ‘Nu is us to witenne þæt we ne sceolon cepan ealles to swiðe be sewfnum, for ðan þe hi ealle ne beoð of Gode. Sume swefna syndon soðlice of Gode, swa swa we on bocum rædað, and sume beoð of deofle to sumum swicdome, hu he ða sawle forpære; ac his gedwimor ne mæg derian þam godum, gif hi hi bletsiað and hi gebiddað to Gode. þa sewfna beoð wynsume þe gewurðað of Gode, and þa beoð egefulle ðe of þam deofle cumað; and God sylf forbead þæt we swefnum ne folgion, þy læs ðe se deofol us bedydrian mæge.’ Ælfric LS Ch. 24, pp. 604-605.

Lantfred would have been familiar, wrote of many such visions.²⁴ John of Salerno in his ‘Life of Odo of Cluny’ reports an incident where Saint Benedict appeared to a monk of Fleury in his sleep.²⁵ It is therefore natural that Lantfred should include some stories of dream visions in his *Translatio*, although Ælfric seems uneasy with them.

Dreams were a crucial part of women’s spirituality in the Middle Ages. A lot of religious women were mystics who had dream visions. Studies of sanctity by scholars such as Andre Vauchez,²⁶ Weinstein and Bell,²⁷ and especially Caroline Walker Bynum,²⁸ found that there were generally two types of sanctity. One was a ‘masculine’ version associated with power and with people holding ecclesiastical and temporal power. The other was an ‘androgynous’ type of sanctity, which some men belonged to and all women saints of the period did. These saints were categorised by mystical ecstasy and supernatural signs including dream visions.

To conclude, this well-known *topos* of a religious woman who had prophetic dream visions was one with powerful connotations, and so was not one that Ælfric wished to include in his ‘Life’, as this might encourage more women to come to the Old Minster and claim that Swithun had visited them in a dream.

Attitudes to criminals

Gretsch noted that there are nine examples of Swithun helping people miraculously to escape from prison, be saved at an ordeal, or have their manacles fall off.²⁹ Of these stories, Ælfric keeps only two, and both are substantially reduced in length in his ‘Life of Swithun’. The first

²⁴ See Head, T., *Hagiography and the cult of saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 39; 141; 147; 183.

²⁵ Sitwell, G. (ed. & trans.), *St Odo of Cluny* (London, 1958), pp. 82-85.

²⁶ Vauchez, A., *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁷ Weinstein, D., and Bell, R., *Saints and Society: the two worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (London, 1982).

²⁸ Bynum, C., *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the religious significance of food to medieval women* (London, 1992).

²⁹ Chs. 6; 20; 24; 25; 34; 38; 39. Note that this includes examples of slaves who have had their manacles removed, as well as criminals being punished.

concerns the slave girl of Theodic the bell founder³⁰ (but Ælfric, unlike Wulfstan, neglects to give Theodic's name). Ælfric emphasises that she had been flogged 'for a very trivial crime'³¹ and adds that Theodic freed the slave girl 'for the glory of Saint Swithun'³² whereas Lantfred wrote that it was through God's constraint that her shackles were freed.

The second instance concerns a man put in fetters 'because of some negligence'³³ whom Swithun later released. Significantly, Ælfric omits the section of that chapter in which Lantfred says that it is remarkable that Swithun should not only heal those suffering from disease, 'but that he even released many who were shackled from powerful bindings, from the head-collar and from foot-shackles, from the dark prison and from severe punishment'.³⁴ It is worth noting that in both cases Ælfric emphasised that the offence for which the offender had been imprisoned was trivial. The one story involving a criminal that Ælfric gives without significantly reducing its contents is that of a man wrongly punished for theft. Ælfric twice stresses that he was innocent.

As well as these examples, Ælfric reports two further instances of people who are punished for some misdemeanours, neither of which have any parallel in Lantfred. He writes of a man who had committed a serious crime, and had his headband broken by Swithun. Gretsch suggests that this could be a cryptic reference to a miracle written about in the *Translatio* about a man who murdered his kinsman.³⁵ This is a possibility, except that Lantfred and Wulfstan both refer to metal rings bound around the man's stomach and never explicitly refer to his being bound around the head. It is not really clear what Ælfric could be

³⁰ TMS Ch. 6.

³¹ 'for swiðe lytlum gylte'. Ælfric LS Ch. 12, pp. 596-597.

³² 'for Swiðhunes wurðmynte'. Ælfric LS Ch. 12, pp. 596-597.

³³ 'for sumere gymeleaste'. Ælfric LS Ch. 25, pp. 604-605.

³⁴ 'Mirum namque hoc est ualde: quod sanctus iste Dei famulus, uenerabilis ac gloriosus, non solum meritis et orationibus medetur languentum doloribus, uerum etiam compeditos soluit multos a ualidis ligaminibus, a columbare et compedibus, a carcere tenebroso et graui tormento.' TMS Ch. 39, pp. 332-333.

³⁵ This story was TMS Ch. 24.

referring to if not this example. The second addition made by Ælfric is that of Swithun punishing the man who jested at his tomb, as mentioned above.

Wulfstan includes all of Lantfred's chapters, including all the instances where Swithun gives help to criminals. He also adds a detail of interest to the story of the man who had a penance imposed on him for murdering a kinsman, writing that it was a bishop – sadly an unnamed bishop – who imposed this penance.³⁶

Ælfric's treatment of Swithun and the law is therefore significantly different from Lantfred's and Wulfstan's. Gretsch summarised Ælfric's portrayal as follows: 'Swithun intercedes with God on behalf of innocent persons, but is ruthless towards those who are guilty'.³⁷ This is obviously a very different position from that of Lantfred and Wulfstan, who showed Swithun as being open to all for justice, even if they had committed an offence. As Gretsch stated, 'it is clear that Ælfric did not wish to join Lantfred in reporting miracles performed on behalf of guilty persons'.³⁸ Again, this could be linked to the issue of popular access to shrines. Ælfric perhaps does not wish to encourage slaves and criminals to make pilgrimages to Swithun's tomb.

Reconciliation

As I argued in Chapter 1, an important theme in Lantfred's work is that of reconciliation. There were five main chapters in Lantfred's work that illustrate this point: the chapter in which the smith is told to visit Eadsige, thus facilitating a reconciliation between the latter and Æthelwold; the chapter on the crowd from various parts of England celebrating a miracle; and three chapters in which families united and helped the ill party to visit Winchester and seek a cure from Swithun.³⁹

³⁶ Narratio ii. 7; Wulfstan based this story on TMS Ch. 24.

³⁷ Gretsch, *Ælfric and the cult of saints*, p. 187.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³⁹ TMS Chs 3; 5; 7; 11; 33.

Neither Ælfric or Wulfstan significantly alters the story of the smith's vision in which he is told to visit Eadsige. Both, however, provide some supplementary details. It is Ælfric who provides us with the fact that Eadsige is Æthelwold's kinsman,⁴⁰ whilst Wulfstan adds a few lines in tribute to Eadsige. Lapidge surmises from this that Eadsige had died in the intervening years between the *Translatio* and the *Narratio*.⁴¹

Ælfric omits the chapter of crowds celebrating the miracle of Swithun transporting a slave girl to his tomb. It is hard to tell if this was done for reasons of space, because Ælfric did not want to write about popular involvement or cases involving people in chains, or perhaps for some other reason. On the other hand, Wulfstan makes very few alterations to the story.

We see the same pattern of alterations by both Wulfstan and Ælfric in their reworkings of the chapters of the *Translatio* that show kinsmen helping their ill relatives. Wulfstan keeps the vast majority of Lantfred's text and, apart from adapting it into rhyming hexameters, makes very few changes. Ælfric omits two of the five examples.⁴² The other two instances he writes about are far shorter, most likely for reasons of space. In his reworking of Chapter 5 Ælfric actually leaves out the fact that the family helped the kinsman.⁴³ He therefore appears less concerned with the use of cults for acting as a point of family unity than Wulfstan and Lantfred were. Given that Ælfric seemed wary of popular involvement in saints' cults, it seems natural that he should not embrace the concept of families using Swithun's cult as a source of unity in the same way that Wulfstan and Lantfred seem to have done.

⁴⁰ Ælfric LS Ch. 5.

⁴¹ *Narratio* ii. 2, See Lapidge's notes for lines 134-150 on p. 499.

⁴² These are TMS Ch. 11 and Ch. 33.

⁴³ Ælfric LS Ch. 11.

Conclusion

It seems that Wulfstan was much more faithful to Lantfred's *Translatio* than Ælfric on themes such as justice, or on using Swithun's cult as a source of family unity. The findings of this chapter suggest that Ælfric was indeed 'bowdlerising' the miracles for a popular audience in his 'Life of Swithun', as Gretsch argued. Perhaps Ælfric felt the need to alter some miracles because his immediate audience was lay, not monastic, seeing as he wrote the 'Life of Swithun' in Old English. It could also reflect a desire for him to keep a fairly strict dividing line between clergy and lay society, one of the features of the tenth-century reform movement as argued by Pauline Stafford.

By studying Wulfstan's *Narratio* alongside the accounts of Lantfred and Ælfric, we are able to get a more complete picture of some aspects of Swithun's cult. The most significant finding is that the alteration of the gender of the person Swithun appeared to in a dream vision cannot be convincingly attributed to Ælfric having had insider information unknown to Lantfred, which was the interpretation put forward by Lapidge and Gretsch. As Wulfstan would also have been a member of the Old Minster community at the same time, this suggests that Ælfric did not alter the gender because of any first-hand knowledge he possessed, as it seems likely that Wulfstan would have had it too. Instead, influenced by Katherine Allen Smith's work on hagiographical doublets, I have argued that Ælfric altered the gender of the person receiving the dream vision so as to impart a moral message. The notorious image of a woman experiencing a prophetic dream vision seems to have been something that Ælfric did not wish to include in his 'Life'. This could still complement Gretsch's argument that Ælfric was bowdlerising the miracles of Swithun that Lantfred wrote about for a popular audience. He may not have wished to encourage women to come to Swithun's cult with reports of dreams they had had.

However, there is still the possibility that Ælfric changed the gender of the person who experienced the dream vision because of a piece of information that Wulfstan did not have. I shall therefore attempt to test this hypothesis in Chapter 3 by looking at Ælfric's reworking of Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* to see if any similar alterations occur to the dream visions that appear in Wulfstan's *Vita*, especially those involving women.

Chapter 3

Rather than focussing on accounts of the cult of Swithun, this chapter will analyse two hagiographies of the cult of Æthelwold. The previous chapter showed some differences between how Wulfstan and Ælfric had adapted Lantfred's *Translatio* when writing their account of Swithun's miracles. One area where this was particularly apparent was that of dream visions, and specifically women having dream visions. Other cases where there were differences include attitudes to the wider population and criminals. This chapter will therefore examine how Ælfric treated these issues when he abbreviated Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*. As well as this, a second aim of the chapter is to test Gretsch's conclusion that Ælfric generally omitted miracles performed posthumously from his hagiographies. Finally, the chapter will end by comparing how Wulfstan and Ælfric wrote about monastic communities outside Winchester, specifically looking at the monastery of Ely.

Women

The most significant difference when analysing Ælfric's adaptation of Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* is in its attitude to women. Wulfstan wrote that Æthelwold's mother had a dream in which an eagle of gold leapt from her mouth and flew away, and its huge wings cast a shadow over Winchester. For an explanation of this dream, she visited a certain Æthelthryth, whom Wulfstan described as a 'servant of Christ...a woman ripe in years and experience, and the nurse of the virgins dedicated to God at Winchester'.¹ Æthelwold's mother appears to have visited Æthelthryth because she often received prophetic dream visions:

¹ 'perrexit ad quandam Christi famulam, nomine Æthelthrytham, moribus et aetate maturam, quae in praefata urbe nutrix erat Deo deuotarum uirginum'. Wulfstan VA Ch. 2, pp. 4-5.

Æthelthryth, being a sensible and sharp woman, *and one to whom God at times revalued knowledge of the future*, had many predictions to make of the child who was to be born; and the outcome showed their truth [my italics].²

Wulfstan explained in the following chapter that the golden eagle represented Æthelwold protecting the city of Winchester.

When Ælfric came to write his *Vita Æthelwoldi*, he omitted the incident of Æthelwold's mother visiting Æthelthryth. Instead, he wrote, 'We can easily interpret these dreams, as the event has proved.'³ This use of the past tense by Ælfric suggests that one could only interpret the dream after the event, and could not use it to predict the future. This corresponds with his ambivalent attitude to dreams that was discussed in the previous chapter: that some dreams can be a foretelling of future events, but others may not be.

Wulfstan wrote in a later chapter that when Æthelwold established a community of nuns at the Nunnaminster, he appointed 'Æthelthryth, whom I briefly mentioned above', as its head.⁴ Ælfric also wrote that Æthelwold appointed Æthelthryth as head of a religious community of women.⁵ When Æthelwold's mother is supposed to have consulted Æthelthryth about her dream, she would already have been a venerable woman. She was *aetate matura* – i.e. ripe in years and experience – in Edward the Elder's time. It therefore seems unlikely that she would still have been alive and appointed head of a community between forty and sixty years after that incident.⁶ Sarah Foot has suggested that Æthelthryth could have been the abbess of the Nunnaminster when it was first founded in the reign of Edward the Elder, and that Æthelwold could have restored her to her former position as

² 'At illa, sicut erat animo sagaci prudentissima, et interdum etiam futurorum Domino reuelante praescia, de nascituro infante multa praedixit, quae uera esse rerum exitus indicauit.' Wulfstan VA Ch. 2, pp. 4-5.

³ 'Horum autem somniorum, sicut rei probauit euentus'. Ælfric VA Ch. 2. EHD No. 235, p. 832.

⁴ 'quibus matrem de qua superius paululum tetigimus Æthelthrytham praefecit'. Wulfstan VA Ch. 22, pp. 36-39.

⁵ Ælfric VA Ch. 17.

⁶ Dumville, D., *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 81 n. 120.

abbess so that there could be ‘continuity within the Nunnaminster congregation markedly contrasting with the more violent dislocations of personnel recorded at the Old and New Minsters in the same city’.⁷ However, the name ‘Æthelthryth’ does not appear in the heads of communities listed in the *Liber Vitae* of Hyde Abbey (not that this completely rules out the possibility that she was once head of the community).⁸ David Dumville’s explanation – that Wulfstan accidentally conflated two different women with a same or similar name – seems most likely, especially when one considers that Æthelthryth was not an uncommon name in Anglo-Saxon England.⁹

Alternatively, Æthelthryth may have been no more than a local mystic, even though Wulfstan implies that she was connected to a religious community in a more formal way. Another possible explanation is that she had a less formal connection with a community, perhaps as a widow or vowess of the kind described by Foot as widows who had taken religious vows and who were living under some sort of semi-formal protection from an ecclesiastical institution rather than remarrying and remaining in the world.¹⁰

The reason why Ælfric seems to have omitted the character of Æthelthryth can probably be deduced from Wulfstan’s description of her as ‘one to whom God at times revealed knowledge of the future’.¹¹ As was argued in the previous chapter, Ælfric seems very uncomfortable with the subject of dreams generally, and in particular was troubled by a form of female spirituality in which women could predict the future or have God’s works revealed to them in dream visions. Wulfstan portrays Æthelthryth as the sort of religious

⁷ Foot, S., *Veiled Women Vol. 2: Female religious communities in England, 871-1066* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 246.

⁸ Knowles, D., Brooke, C., and London, V. (eds.), *The heads of religious houses, England and Wales, Vol. 1, 940-1216*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 2001), p. 223.

⁹ Dumville, *Wessex and England*, pp. 81-82, n. 120.

¹⁰ Foot, S., *Veiled Women Vol. 2: Female religious communities in England, 871-1066* (Aldershot, 2000), Ch. 5.

¹¹ ‘et interdum etiam futurorum Domino reuelante praescia’. Wulfstan VA Ch. 2, pp. 4-5.

woman who attained popularity because of her dream visions, and Ælfric would therefore have been reluctant to include her story in his *Vita*.

Presumably the source of this anecdote about Æthelwold's mother was Æthelwold himself. Perhaps this is why Ælfric felt that he had to include a version of it in his *Vita*. His significant reworking of it shows that Ælfric was obviously uncomfortable with it. Furthermore, the removal of a religious woman with a specialism in interpreting dream visions is a similar sort of omission to that seen in Ælfric's 'Life of Swithun', when he changes the gender of a person who saw Swithun in a dream vision. As we saw in the previous chapter, Ælfric does seem to be particularly uncomfortable with women having prophetic dream visions.

Dream visions

In all, Wulfstan writes in his *Vita Æthelwoldi* of five instances where people had dream visions. Ælfric only writes of two of them. Three of them occurred after Æthelwold's death, and so they will be analysed with his posthumous miracles. This section will examine the other two. Both of these were written about by Wulfstan and were omitted by Ælfric.

The first is a dream vision that Dunstan had whilst he was abbot of Glastonbury and Æthelwold was a monk under his abbacy. Dunstan dreamt of a tall, strong tree whose branches had many cowls on them. The tree represented Æthelwold, whilst the branches with cowls represented the many monks who would be instructed by Æthelwold in the ways of the monastic life.¹² Dunstan then gave an account of this to the faithful, and 'As time went on, rumour spread it, and it became known to many; and in the end it came to the knowledge of

¹² Wulfstan VA Ch. 38.

my insignificant self as well'.¹³ The second dream was a vision which Æthelwold had himself. It was of a ship full of fish that then turned into men; this was supposed to symbolise the fact that 'everyone ablaze with the love of God is hurrying to leave the world and lead a monastic life'.¹⁴

Both of these visions were experienced by prominent ecclesiastics, and so it is odd that Ælfric did not mention them at all. When Gretsch analyses Ælfric's 'Life of Swithun', she concludes that Ælfric probably kept in the visions experienced by Benedict, whilst leaving out some of those in Lantfred's *Translatio*, because the people who experienced visions in the *Translatio* were the 'ordinary people of Ælfric's day'. Therefore, 'it is a reasonable deduction that Ælfric did not wish to encourage in any way the production of visions in his contemporaries'.¹⁵ Here, by contrast, we have Ælfric omitting a vision apparently experienced by Dunstan, who was one of the three leaders of the monastic reform movement.

Furthermore, Wulfstan wrote that Æthelwold told 'us' about it, by which he presumably meant the community of Winchester of which Ælfric was a part. If the excessive length of the stories was problematic, then Ælfric could simply have reduced them, as he did for the vast majority of chapters in his *Vita*. The fact that of six chapters of Wulfstan's *Vita* that have no parallel in Ælfric's three are dream visions is significant when added to the fact that Ælfric substantially reduced the accounts of dream visions in his 'Life of Swithun'. Again, it corroborates the attitude found when looking at the omissions which Ælfric made when rewriting Lantfred's *Translatio*. Ælfric does seem rather uncomfortable with dream visions and omits or reduces them where he can.

¹³ 'Quae succedente tempore fama uulgante multis innotuit et tandem ad nostrae quoque paruitatis noticiam peruenit.' Wulfstan VA Ch. 38, pp. 56-57.

¹⁴ 'dum quique diuino feruentes amore festinant mundum relinquere'. Wulfstan VA Ch. 39, pp. 60-61.

¹⁵ Gretsch, M., *Ælfric and the cult of saints in late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 191.

Posthumous miracles

Wulfstan devotes five chapters to reporting miracles that Æthelwold performed posthumously.

The first two concerned dream visions associated with Æthelwold's translation in 996.

In the first, Æthelwold appears to a citizen of Winchester named Ælfhelm. It is very similar to Lantfred's story of the smith's vision, except that Ælfhelm appears to Æthelwold only once, not three times. Ælfric obviously could not leave out this dream vision, as the episode is the revelation that leads to Æthelwold's relics being translated.¹⁶ However, his version is much shorter: he omits the conversations which Ælfhelm had with both Æthelwold and Wulfstan, for instance.

Wulfstan includes a second dream vision connected with Æthelwold's translation. In it, Æthelwold appears to Wulfstan and expresses his desire to be translated.¹⁷ Ælfric leaves this vision out entirely. As Lapidge and Winterbottom say, Wulfstan probably included this vision so as to stress his own important role in Æthelwold's translation. Wulfstan had already received a communication from Æthelwold expressing his wish to be translated, which came from Ælfhelm. It is therefore easy to understand why Ælfric might omit this dream vision. What is less certain is why Ælfric leaves out all mention of Æthelwold's translation in his *Vita*. This is similar to his cursory treatment of Swithun's translation in his 'Life of Swithun', an event which he glosses over.

The other dream vision which Ælfric keeps in his *Vita* is that of a thief to whom Æthelwold appeared and later released from his shackles. This will be covered below when I deal with how Wulfstan and Ælfric both treat criminals.

¹⁶ Wulfstan VA Ch. 42; Ælfric VA Ch. 27.

¹⁷ Wulfstan VA Ch. 43.

Wulfstan also includes two chapters reporting posthumous miracles that Æthelwold performed, both to young children. He cured a sick girl¹⁸ and restored a boy's eyesight 'to the joy of the whole people'.¹⁹ Wulfstan takes pains to emphasise that both these children are from modest backgrounds, writing that the sick girl was the daughter of a house-servant named Æthelweard and the boy was 'son of a gentle and modest man called Ælfsige'.²⁰

Ælfric jettisons both these miracles. It is possible that the fact that both of these were performed to people of low social rank caused him to omit these miracles, but seeing that he does include the miracle in which Æthelwold appears to a thief, this explanation seems unlikely. The most logical explanation is that of the conclusion reached by Gretsch concerning Ælfric's attitude to posthumous miracles. It seems most likely that Ælfric omitted these miracles because they were performed posthumously. It is true that Ælfric keeps two instances in which Æthelwold appears to people in visions posthumously, whilst omitting the two examples of posthumous miracle cures provided by Wulfstan. This implies that Ælfric was more likely to omit posthumous miracle cures from his hagiography rather than visions which occurred after a saint's death. On the whole, however, the comparison of these texts supports Gretsch's findings. When writing his 'Life of Swithun' Ælfric would have had only posthumous miracles to draw on, so would have had no choice but to include them. For Æthelwold, this was not necessary, and so was able to exclude some miracles performed posthumously by Æthelwold whilst still having enough material to write a *Vita*.²¹

¹⁸ Wulfstan VA Ch. 44.

¹⁹ 'omni populo congaudente'. Wulfstan VA Ch 45, pp. 68-69.

²⁰ 'Ælfsini cuiusdam mansueti et modesti uiri filius'. Wulfstan VA Ch. 45, pp. 67-68.

²¹ For more information on Ælfric's attitude to posthumous miracles see Gretsch, *Ælfric and the cult of saints*, p. 109; p. 156; pp. 173-74.

Wider population

An instance of Æthelwold helping the wider population of Winchester was omitted by Ælfric. Wulfstan wrote of a 'bitter famine' that struck Britain, with many dying for lack of food. Æthelwold spent a considerable amount of money on the poor, including breaking up silver vessels from Winchester's treasures so that they could be turned into money for the needy. He bought lots of food for the poor, and according to Wulfstan the needy 'fled to him from every quarter in their longing to escape the danger of starvation'.²² Wulfstan says that in this Æthelwold followed the example of St Laurence, who gave his wealth to the poor. His account does, however, seem based on Bede, who wrote of how King Oswald divided a silver dish to feed the poor.²³ The famine is probably the one that is referred to in the Abingdon version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 976 as 'the great famine in the English race'.²⁴

Ælfric does not mention this incident at all, preferring to write about Æthelwold's dealings with his community at Winchester. He does not seem interested in recording the dealings of Æthelwold with the wider population of Winchester. This is an odd omission that seems to corroborate the fact that Ælfric does not feel the need to write of the wider population.

Criminals

Wulfstan gives two examples of criminals in his *Vita Æthelwoldi*. The first concerns a monk of Winchester who stole a purse and whose hands were miraculously bound together after an angry speech by Æthelwold. After confessing to Æthelwold, and being told that he had his blessing, he was freed. Ælfric adds the detail that the monk in question was called Eadwine, but otherwise changes very little of the story and presents it basically intact. The fact that

²² 'qui periculum famis euadere cupientes ad eum undique confugerant'. Wulfstan VA Ch. 29, pp. 46-47.

²³ This is an observation made by Lapidge and Winterbottom: Wulfstan VA p. 45 n. 5.

²⁴ ASC 976 'C', Swanton, M. (ed. & trans.) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000), p. 122.

Wulfstan does not provide the name of Eadwine, but Ælfric does, is worth dwelling on for a moment. Three possible explanations are provided by Lapidge and Winterbottom. The first is that Wulfstan originally did name the guilty party as Eadwine in the original manuscript used by Ælfric, but his name had somehow ‘fallen out’ of the later versions of Wulfstan’s work that have come down to us. Alternatively, Ælfric knew that Eadwine was the culprit from some personal knowledge of the event that Wulfstan was aware of. A final explanation is that Wulfstan *did* know Eadwine’s name, but that he was still alive when the *Vita Æthelwoldi* was written, and so Wulfstan kept Eadwine’s identity anonymous to save him embarrassment. Perhaps when Ælfric wrote a decade later, Eadwine had died and therefore Ælfric felt no need to suppress his identity.

The second occasion in the *Vita Æthelwoldi* concerning a criminal, which was touched on above, was about a thief who was freed from his shackles after saying, as Ælfric puts it, ‘My lord, I suffer merited punishment and am tormented thus by the just sentence of the bishop, because I did not stop thieving’.²⁵ It is odd that Ælfric should include this miracle. Not only does it refer to a miracle performed on someone who committed a crime, but furthermore the saint appears in a dream vision to this criminal. This is certainly anomalous and requires an explanation. The most likely one seems to be that it is because the criminal confessed to crime and accepted that he merited punishment.

Attitude to outside communities

This final section will examine how Wulfstan and Ælfric wrote about Ely abbey. Ely is a useful point of comparison with Winchester. Æthelwold had a profound influence on both: he was head of the Old Minster community for twenty-four years, and refounded Ely in c970.²⁶

²⁵ ‘Dignas, domine mi, luo poenas, et iusto iudicio episcopi sic torqueor, quia non cessaui a furtis.’ Ælfric VA Ch. 28, p. 79; EHD 235 p. 838.

²⁶ Wulfstan VA Ch. 23.

He appointed his prior from the Old Minster, Byrthforth, as its first abbot. Furthermore, we have a considerable amount of tenth-century source material preserved in the *Liber Eliensis*.²⁷ The *Liber Eliensis* was compiled initially by one monk, and then probably by a number of different monks, at Ely in the twelfth century and aimed, amongst other things, to, ‘exalt the standing of the monks and to protect their interests against the reality or threat of episcopal interference’.²⁸ Its preservation of many charters and lawsuits relating to Ely was probably partly aimed at educating the monks in the legal foundations on which Ely stood. Some of the sources that it preserved were tenth-century documents that are now lost in their original form. The *Liber Eliensis* preserved the *Libellus Æthelwoldi episcopi*, for instance, a twelfth-century compilation of tenth-century charters, as well as the *Liber miraculorum beate uirginis*, a short collection of Æthelthryth’s miracles written by a certain Ælfhelm in the late tenth century.

The charters that the *Liber Eliensis* preserves reveal how Æthelwold acquired land for Ely abbey. Susan Ridyard has written that this source material presents ‘a vivid and not altogether attractive picture of St Æthelwold as a shrewd and successful businessman who worked with the backing of an acquiescent king and an acquisitive saint’.²⁹

By acquiring ‘an adequate and territorially compact landed endowment’³⁰ for Ely, the aim seems to have been to glorify the community’s saint, Æthelthryth, at least in part.³¹ Simon Keynes has written that this scheme seems to have been designed to forge bonds with

²⁷ Blake, E. (ed.) *The Liber Eliensis* (London, 1962). For a translation: Fairweather, J. (ed. & trans.), *Liber Eliensis: a history of the Isle of Ely from the seventh century to the twelfth* (Woodbridge, 2005).

²⁸ Keynes, S., ‘Ely Abbey 672-1109’, in Meadows, P., and Ramsey, N. (eds.), *A History of Ely Cathedral* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 3-58, at p. 8.

²⁹ Ridyard, S., *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 192.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

the local noblemen and make them ‘Neighbours of St Æthelthryth’,³² a reference to Barbara Rosenwein’s study of gift exchange between Cluny monastery and the local landowners.³³

Two other tenth-century documents preserved in the *Liber Eliensis* relate to saints’ cults. One is an account of Abbot Byrthnoth leading a relic raid to appropriate Wihtburh’s relics from Dereham and place them in Ely.³⁴ The second is an account of Ælfhelm, a former secular clerk at Ely who later joined its monastic community, which reports some miracles by Æthelthryth and two attempts to break into her tomb, one by a Viking and one by a group of secular clerks (including Ælfhelm) to see if her body was incorrupt.

There was, therefore, a large amount of contemporary sources for Wulfstan and Ælfric to use about Ely, and Æthelwold’s association with it. Accordingly, it is intriguing that this source material is conspicuous by its absence.

Wulfstan devoted five chapters of the *Vita Æthelwoldi* to monasteries other than the Old Minster that Æthelwold founded or helped to provide with endowments: the New Minster, the Nunnaminster, Ely, Abingdon, Thorney and Peterborough.³⁵ Ælfric condensed these five chapters into two.³⁶ Neither mentions in any detail the efforts of Æthelwold to purchase and acquire land for Ely. Wulfstan merely writes that Æthelwold ‘began to revere this place greatly, out of his love for the distinguished virgins, and he paid a large sum of money to buy it from King Edgar’.³⁷ As Lapidge and Winterbottom say, this ‘bland’ sentence belies the contribution that Æthelwold made to the process.³⁸ There is no mention at all by

³² Keynes, ‘Ely Abbey’, p. 26.

³³ Rosenwein, B., *To be the neighbour of Saint Peter: the social meaning of Cluny’s property, 909-1049*, (London, 1989).

³⁴ Fairweather, *The Liber Eliensis*, ii. 53.

³⁵ Wulfstan VA Chs. 20-24.

³⁶ Ælfric VA Chs. 16-17.

³⁷ ‘datoque precio non modicae pecuniae emit eum a rege Eadgaro, constituens in eo monachorum gregem non minimum.’ Wulfstan VA Ch. 23, pp. 38-39.

³⁸ Wulfstan VA p. 39 n. 5.

either of the relic raid of Wihtburh, nor of the miracles performed by Æthelthryth that Ælfhelm wrote about in the *Liber Miraculorum*.

In one sense, it is not surprising that neither Wulfstan nor Ælfric would write much on Ely. Both were writing hagiographies, so as to emphasise Æthelwold's sanctity, rather than compile an exhaustive biography of all his deeds. Furthermore, both were Winchester monks, and wrote far more about Æthelwold's dealings with the Winchester community rather than his activities outside. Wulfstan was also aiming to show himself as being important to Æthelwold's cult and translation, and so would not include a substantial amount of material about Ely. Ælfric was unlikely to add any more information, given that his *Vita* was a reduction of Wulfstan's and included no additional material on any subject.

Winchester and Ely

It is worth briefly comparing how the communities of Ely and Winchester helped promote Æthelthryth and Swithun, respectively. This thesis, for reasons both of coherence and space, is mainly dedicated to analysing miracle narratives from the Old Minster. There is, however, some value to be gained by comparing Winchester and Ely, to see if there was a uniform way in which tenth-century monastic communities promoted their saint. It is particularly interesting to compare Winchester and Ely because, as we have seen, Æthelwold was a major figure in both of these communities. He was very active in promoting Swithun's cult at Winchester and Æthelthryth's cult at Ely, but did so in very different ways.

One major difference is the lack of a translation ceremony for Æthelthryth, compared to the prestigious one that Swithun had at Winchester. This could perhaps be explained by the different local situations of both communities, and their wish to differentiate themselves from the secular clerks whom they replaced. Whereas Wulfstan in his *Narratio* implies that the clerks neglected Swithun by burying him outside the Old Minster, thus necessitating a

translation to inside the building,³⁹ the secular clerks at Ely disturbed Æthelthryth's relics. Ælfhelm in his *Liber miraculorum* writes of how a group of clerks doubted the sanctity of Æthelthryth's relics and so looked inside her tomb. One clerk even poked the relics with a stick.⁴⁰ In this case, perhaps to show that the new community of monks was the most appropriate guardian of Æthelthryth's relics, they chose not to translate her remains. Although there are differences, therefore, in how the two communities promoted the relics of Swithun and Æthelthryth respectively, the actions of the monks at Winchester and Ely show one common theme: an implicit criticism of the secular clerks whom they had replaced.

A second major difference is that both saints were used by their communities for different purposes. Æthelwold does not seem to have used Swithun's cult to acquire land, or to forge bonds with local landowners, in the same way that he seems to have done with Æthelthryth's cult. It is not my intention to speculate on exactly why these differences occur, but noting them is significant as they emphasise the point that what affected the promotion of a cult seems to have been primarily local matters. One possible hypothesis, however, is that because Æthelthryth was a more venerable saint than Swithun, having been canonised in the 'golden age of Bede', Æthelwold felt that her cult deserved a large endowment of land that was worthy of her high status.

Finally, it is worth noting that in both communities saints' cults were used to reconcile former clerks into the community. We have already seen how this happened at Winchester, with the cult of Swithun being used to reconcile Æthelwold and Eadsige. Ælfhelm was one of a group of clerks who disturbed Æthelthryth's relics, as noted above. He wrote that as a result of this, he became afflicted by a terrible illness and was paralysed for eight months. After coming with many gifts and keeping vigil at Æthelthryth's tomb, the

³⁹ Narratio i. 2.

⁴⁰ Fairweather, *The Liber Eliensis*, i. 49.

saint restored Ælfhelm to full health, and he subsequently became a member of the monastic community at Ely.⁴¹

This anecdote illustrates many of the themes that have recurred throughout this thesis: the conflation of guilt with physical illness, and the idea of a saint's cult as a mechanism for family unity and also for reconciling former clerks with the new community. It is possible, although admittedly only conjecture, that Ælfhelm wrote the *Liber Miraculorum* as part of the reconciliation between himself and the community of Ely and its saint. This is more evidence of the use of saints' cults to reconcile monks and former clerks, and it would be interesting to see if this happened at other monasteries in this period.

Conclusion

There were two main aims of this chapter. The first was to see whether similar alterations on issues such as women in dream visions, the wider population and criminals were made by Ælfric in his *Vita Æthelwoldi* to those that occur in his 'Life of Swithun'. It does seem that similar alterations were being made. For instance, in his 'Life of Swithun' Ælfric changed the gender of a woman who had had a dream vision, to that of a man who experienced the dream vision. When reworking Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*, Ælfric again had to deal with an instance of a woman – Æthelthryth – who was noted for her prophetic dream visions. Again, Ælfric significantly altered the story, omitting the character of Æthelthryth altogether. This does suggest that Ælfric was uncomfortable with a particular form of women's spirituality that saw them as being able to have prophetic dream visions. He also omits other examples of people having dream visions that Wulfstan included in his *Vita*, which reaffirms his very ambivalent attitude to dreams that we saw in the previous chapter. Ælfric also omitted instances of Æthelwold engaging with the wider population of Winchester, such as the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, i. 49.

occasion when he helped them in a famine, and he glosses over Æthelwold's translation just as he did Swithun's. Perhaps the only area where it is not clear that a similar alteration of Wulfstan's text occurred is in Ælfric's treatment of criminals. This appears to be because both criminals about whom Wulfstan writes about are repentant of their actions. Indeed, one was a monk of the Winchester community.

The second aim of the chapter was to test a conclusion of Gretsch's about Ælfric's attitude to posthumous miracles. The comparison of Wulfstan's text with Ælfric's does seem to suggest that Ælfric omitted these miracles because he was uncomfortable with including miracles performed posthumously. This therefore supports Gretsch's findings.

Conclusion

In the Introduction I stated that I would be using miracle narratives to discuss two questions. These were: can an examination of miracle narratives tell us anything important about how a monastic community perceived itself, especially in relation to the outside world, and why did churchmen write about saints' cults in the way they did? This Conclusion shall discuss how far these questions have been answered, and what contribution this thesis has made to the historiography.

Lantfred's *Translatio* was the first miracle account in which the actions of ordinary people were viewed as important enough to be recorded. It seems that popular veneration of Swithun's cult was something the Winchester community wished to encourage, as this would mean that more pilgrims visited Swithun's tomb, with the consequence that the Winchester community would receive more money and prestige.

One of the aims of the thesis was to test whether miracle narratives can be used to investigate power relations between the monastic community and the outside world. Van Dam had done this in his analysis of miracles in Merovingian Francia, and I wished to see if this could be applied to an Anglo-Saxon context. It does indeed seem that Anglo-Saxon miracle narratives can be used in this fashion. As Chapter 1 showed, Lantfred was presenting Swithun's cult as appealing to the parts of society that were often excluded from the judicial process, such as slaves and women. Furthermore, there were other examples of Swithun intervening in the judicial process. This could be interpreted as an implicit challenge by the monastic community and its saint to the power of local owners to dispense justice. It would be interesting to look at other 'Lives' of the period, such as those of Dunstan and Oswald, to see if similar challenges can be found in those accounts.

Antonia Gransden has argued that contrary to the ‘propaganda’ put out by the reformers, many secular clerks actually remained in the community once the monastic reformers had taken over. The ‘reformers must have recognised the merits of the old order’, and realised that destroying it would affect the ‘vitality of their own movement’ and that when reformers wished to dispossess a community of clerks, they sometimes acted with ‘moderation and tact’.¹ This thesis indicates the role that saints’ cults could have played in easing the transition from a community of secular clerks to one composed of monks. This is most evident when looking at the reconciliation of Eadsige with his kinsman Æthelwold and the Winchester community. Swithun’s cult seems to have been a useful ‘neutral ground’ where the two parties could effect a reconciliation. By appointing Eadsige as the sacrist to Swithun’s shrine, the role of Swithun’s cult in the process of reconciliation was made more explicit. As noted at the end of Chapter 3, the actions of Ælfhelm in writing the *Liber Miraculorum* could be aimed at reconciling him with the monastic community at Ely. Again, more tests are needed to see if this was happening with other cults in other parts of England.

Another aim of the thesis was to answer the question of why churchmen wrote about saints’ cults in the way they did. This was partly to test Head’s conclusion about the link between individual and saint being an intensely personal one, by looking for instances of different discourses both between texts and within the same text. It does appear that the link a writer had with the cult was a very personal one. What different writers emphasised when writing about a saint depended to a large extent on personal preference.

For instance, a reason why Wulfstan included a significant amount of material about Swithun’s translation in his *Narratio*, whilst Ælfric covers it in just a few sentences, is probably because Swithun’s translation was more important to Wulfstan personally. Also, it

¹ Gransden, A., ‘Traditionalism and continuity during the last century of Anglo-Saxon monasticism’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40 (1989), pp. 159-207, at p. 171.

seems clear that Ælfric treated various aspects of Lantfred's *Translatio*, such as its use of posthumous miracles and its treatment of criminals and popular access to shrines, with a certain amount of unease. He seems uncomfortable with how Lantfred wrote about these themes, and perhaps this is one reason why he felt the need to 'bowdlerise' the stories in his 'Life of Swithun'. Ælfric's treatment of popular access to shrines in his hagiographies could support the hypothesis of Pauline Stafford, who has argued that one of the aims of monastic reform was to put stricter dividing lines between clergy and laity. Perhaps Ælfric felt that by encouraging popular participation in translation ceremonies, these lines would become blurred, hence his discomfort.

By looking at different discourses, and attempting to see how accounts differed and why, some conclusions of value have been found. The most potentially significant is that of the different attitudes of Wulfstan and Ælfric to dream visions involving women. By comparing the three different tenth-century accounts of Swithun's miracles, I have argued that Ælfric did not alter the gender of a woman who had a dream vision to a man because of some piece of information he had that was unknown to Lantfred, as it has previously been interpreted as being, or because of a scribal error. Instead, I have argued, influenced by work undertaken on hagiographical doublets, that Ælfric altered the gender of the person who experienced the vision in order to convey a moral message that would have been understood by his readers. Ælfric seems to omit or significantly alter dream visions, especially those that have been experienced by women, in his hagiography. This seems to be supported by the fact that when reworking Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*, Ælfric omitted the character of Æthelthryth, whom Æthelwold's mother consulted because she had a reputation for experiencing dream visions that could predict the future. This cannot only be explained by the fact that Ælfric was writing in Old English for a lay audience, as could have been the case for his 'Life of Swithun', since the *Vita Æthelwoldi* was written in Latin. Hence an explanation that he was

simply ‘bowdlerising’ the story about Æthelthryth for a popular audience seems unconvincing, as the immediate audience for his *Vita Æthelwoldi* would have been a monastic one. The fact that Ælfric seems to have had an ambivalent attitude to dream visions has been discussed previously by historians, but analysing his attitude to dreams through the issue of gender is not something that has been done. It would be profitable to test the findings of this thesis by analysing other hagiographies by Ælfric in which he writes of dream visions which involved women.

Although Ælfric was obviously uncomfortable with subjects such as dream visions and criminals, he still includes some of these stories involving these subjects in both his ‘Life of Swithun’ and his *Vita Æthelwoldi*. Partly this was done because some of these stories, such as Æthelwold appearing to Ælfhelm in a dream vision, were important to the saint’s cult. These miracles were also included by the monastic community to shape the identity of their new saint. It seems that Lantfred included many miracles involving dream visions and criminals at the instigation of Æthelwold, and they would therefore have been a significant part of Swithun’s cult. It is therefore probably true to say that monastic communities were ‘negotiating identities’ – both of their saints and of their community – by writing hagiographies and by selecting the different kinds of stories which appeared in them. Ælfric could hardly jettison these miracles, but had to write them in a way that he found acceptable.

It seems that hagiographers also wrote about saints’ cults in the way they did to impart moral messages. We have already seen how Ælfric changed the gender of a person who experienced a vision partly to convey a moral message. We can also see similar instances in Lantfred’s *Translatio*, particularly when writing about pilgrims who may have been ‘physically firm’ but were ‘spiritually infirm’. Lantfred was linking physical illness with sin, and in the *Translatio* was writing about how pilgrims had to visit Swithun’s tomb and

venerate God appropriately before they could be fully cured of their ailment. A key passage in the *Translatio* was aimed at the monks of Winchester, instructing them to celebrate Swithun's miracles appropriately when they occurred, or else they would stop happening. Lantfred was trying to instruct his audience in the correct way to venerate a saint, as well as giving moral messages about illness.

A final aim of this thesis was to test Gretsch's conclusions about Ælfric's attitude to posthumous miracles. This was achieved by analysing how Ælfric treated posthumous miracles in his reworking of Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*. The analysis of Chapter 3 broadly supported Gretsch's conclusions. Both of the posthumous miracles that Wulfstan included in his *Vita* were omitted, whilst Ælfric also left out an instance where Æthelwold appeared in a vision after his death. Of course, Gretsch's conclusions could also be tested by examining more of Ælfric's hagiographies.

This thesis has demonstrated that the approach of some historians of saints' cults on the Continent can be applied to an Anglo-Saxon context. By placing miracles in their social, cultural and institutional contexts we can discover important things about how a monastic community perceived itself in relation to the outside world. Analysing miracle narratives can provide us with examples of competing secular and ecclesiastical power, or show how a monastic community was trying to portray itself as a unifying point for families. It can also help us discover more about the mechanisms of monastic reform, for instance by showing how saints' cults could also be used to reconcile former members of the community with the new monastic community. Also, churchmen presented saints' cults in the way they did because they wanted to impart moral messages: for instance, about how pilgrims should behave at shrines. They also wrote about saints' cults in a way that reflected their own personal interests or outlook, as well as taking into account their institutional point of view.

Appendix

Location given by Lantfred of pilgrims to Swithun's tomb



Key

Location of Swithun's tomb at the Old Minster



Approximate location of pilgrims to Old Minster



Possible location of "Hunum"



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