POISON AND DISEASE IN ANGLO-SAXON MEDICINE AND METAPHOR

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

CLAIRE LENORE WHITENACK

MAY 2019

POISON AND DISEASE IN ANGLO-SAXON MEDICINE AND METAPHOR

Claire Lenore Whitenack, Ph. D.

Cornell University 2019

Poison and Disease in Anglo-Saxon Medicine and Metaphor bridges a gap between scholarship on medieval medicine and literary analysis of Anglo-Saxon literature by examining the relationship between beliefs about disease causation in medical recipe-books and the use of extended metaphors of illness in Old English poetry and other non-medical works. Chapter 1 takes a novel approach to identifying beliefs about the causes of disease by analyzing preventive prescriptions in the Old English *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, two recipe-books that have traditionally been considered practical rather than theoretical in content. These texts point toward *attor*, or "poison," as a key concept in disease causation. In the next two chapters, my project explores the role of *attor* and related terms in works of Anglo-Saxon literature that make heavy use of medical metaphor. Chapter 2 performs a detailed study of the Old English poem *Guthlac B*, examining Saint Guthlac's physical and spiritual experience of disease and how it relates to the poem's account of Eve offering Adam a deadly drink in Eden. Drawing on evidence from Chapter 1, I argue that the poem's two primary representations of death, as a battle and as a poisonous drink, are united by the quality of bitterness. While this quality binds Guthlac's individual illness to Eve's cup of death, it also evokes Christ's bitter drink on the cross. The poem uses these associations to emphasize that the bitterness of physical

pain does not have to lead to spiritual embitterment and distance from God. The final chapter examines medical metaphors in the penitentials, using previous scholarship on affective meditation as an interpretive framework. I identify three main categories of medical metaphor in the introductions to penitential manuals and argue that these metaphors, including imagery of poisoning and purgation, provide scripts for the cultivation of emotions crucial in penance. The chapter concludes with an examination of *Soul and Body I*, an Old English poem involving penitential themes that uses imagery of the corrupted body to encourage a spiritually desirable emotional response. Overall, this project argues for the importance of considering concepts of disease in analysis of Anglo-Saxon literature.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Claire Lenore Whitenack earned a B.A. in English from the University of Virginia in 2006, followed by an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Oregon in 2010. Pursuing her interest in medieval literature, she completed a M.Phil. in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic Studies at the University of Cambridge in 2011 before proceeding to the M.A. and Ph. D. in English at Cornell University. She now teaches writing at New York University Shanghai.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by the members of my dissertation committee, including Samantha Zacher, Andrew Galloway, and Andrew Hicks. Their encouragement and advice were essential to the completion of this project. Particularly influential were Samantha Zacher's courses “The Care of the Self of Anglo-Saxon England” and "Love and Ecstasy," which first introduced me to the penitentials and helped inspire the third chapter of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If their surviving literature is any indication, the Anglo-Saxons understood themselves to live in a world of poison (*attor* in Old English).[1] There is the poison of original sin, passed down through humankind since Eve's encounter with the serpent, which brought death and disease into the world. The Devil manifests himself in monsters and apparitions, creatures that poison the land and deploy their venom against heroes and saints. Enemies practice *attorcræft* ("poisoncraft") and serve dangerous drinks. This literary preoccupation with poison is echoed in Anglo-Saxon medical texts, where the term *attor* is often used of disease and other ailments that are severe or dramatic in their manifestations. Poison is swallowed, acquired through wounds, and depicted as flying or shooting through the air, causing sickness and injury. Most importantly, poison possesses an ability to transform what it touches. In the herbals, such contact results in symptoms like pain, rashes, and swelling, but outside the medical corpus, this quality makes *attor* extraordinarily well suited to use as a metaphor for threats to spiritual well-being. It is inexhaustible, unavoidable, and capable of penetrating the fortifications of the soul just as it pierces the body. It is thus a source of particular dread.

Many Anglo-Saxon texts, as this study will show, use poison in extended metaphors as a reminder that all well-being is precarious. In this way, *attor* contributes to the reader's awareness of the transitory nature of worldly things, a theme that permeates Anglo-Saxon literature from widely read texts such as *The Wanderer* and

[1] All of the uses of *attor* mentioned in this paragraph are discussed in later chapters with reference to at least one specific text, but most can be found in a variety of sources.

The Seafarer to material that rarely appears in the classroom. Yet for all this emphasis on mortality and its spiritual consequences, the experience of being sick or dying receives relatively little attention in the surviving texts. There are no autobiographical accounts of illness,[2] and when characters witness sickness in others, they decline to pursue the questions a patient today might expect. The Anglo-Saxon patient is never asked *How do you feel?* or *Where does it hurt?* Even the medical texts of the period are unhelpful in this respect, largely omitting diagnosis and offering little guidance about prognosis, at least as derived from physical markers.[3]

Despite this, understanding how the Anglo-Saxons conceptualized physical illness and suffering is critical to interpreting the many texts that rely upon medical metaphors or medical language more generally, including works of poetry, homilies, saints' lives, and other kinds of writing. Studying beliefs about disease means studying beliefs about the body, the space where diseases make themselves known to the patient or physician and are understood in ways peculiar to any given culture. As Shigehisa Kuriyama writes in *The Expressiveness of the Body*, his comparative study of Chinese and Greek medicine, "The body is unfathomable and breeds astonishingly diverse perspectives precisely because it is a basic and intimate reality. The task of discovering the truth of the body is inseparable from the challenge of discovering the truth about people" (14).

---

[2] There are scattered cases in which an account is related indirectly: for example, Asser records information about King Alfred's health problems, while Bede records some details about Saint Æthelthryth's illness.

[3] Anglo-Saxon prognostics tend to reference the calendar or phases of the moon rather than physical symptoms. For detailed analysis and editions, see Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900–1100.*

The Anglo-Saxon body and its discomforts do not correspond neatly to the body of Western biomedicine today, with its structures and processes observable inside and out. In his *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault writes:

> For us, the human body defines, by natural right, the space of origin and of distribution of disease: a space whose lines, volumes, surfaces, and routes are laid down…by the anatomical atlas. But this order of the solid, visible body is only one way—in all likeliness neither the first, nor the most fundamental—in which one spatializes disease. There have been, and will be, other distributions of illness. (3)

In looking for evidence of Anglo-Saxon beliefs about disease, one finds not an anatomical atlas but hints—in prescriptions, poetry, and other texts—of a body that is vulnerable and defensible in ways that are inaccessible to what Foucault calls the "clinical gaze." There is no "exact superposition of the 'body' of the disease and the body of the sick man"; disease cannot be localized and tracked as it distributes itself through the patient's anatomy. The body hinted at by these Anglo-Saxon texts also exists largely outside the reach of classificatory medicine, the form of medical thought that Foucault identifies as immediately preceding the clinical. Rather than a "fundamental system of relations involving envelopments, subordinations, divisions, resemblances" (5), the reader of Anglo-Saxon medical texts encounters assumptions—for example, a belief that remedies capable of healing the body can also protect the home—that are not systematized to aid in diagnosis or treatment but are nonetheless suggestive of how the body was understood to exist in relation to the outside world.

Anglo-Saxon medicine retains only traces of classical humoral theory, mixed with non-humoral prescriptions and charms, and this lack of systematization makes it impossible to construct a singular, Anglo-Saxon theory of disease, much less to pursue

the implications of such a theory for poetry and other literature that uses medical imagery or metaphors. It is clear that the translators, editors, and compilers of the medical texts took a syncretic approach to earlier traditions, blending material originating from classical medicine with popular beliefs and scriptural elements. It is, however, possible to identify key vocabulary in the medical corpus that assists in bridging these traditions, as Chapter 1 of this work shows. While these key terms, including *attor*, do not combine to create a system formalizing medical knowledge and guiding practice, they do give the modern reader access to certain beliefs about the body and methods of disease prevention and treatment.[4] They also make it possible to identify material outside the medical texts that draws on such beliefs, opening up that content to reinterpretation. This is the project of Chapters 2 and 3, which analyze the use of medical language in poetic and penitential texts.

Although it is not always possible to distinguish between literal and metaphorical references to disease and healing in Anglo-Saxon literature, medical metaphors are certainly widespread, the "basic and intimate reality" of the body[5] ensuring that metaphors grounded in human physicality are broadly relevant to readers. The absence of systematized medical knowledge makes disease—its presence

[4] These beliefs are of course those that have been preserved in writing, which likely differ to some degree from the beliefs and practices of the non-literate. Regarding the possibility that women may have practiced medicine in these other contexts, Cameron notes: "I have described the physician as 'he', because there is no evidence that women practiced medicine. Yet it is most unlikely that Anglo-Saxon society differed in this respect from most others and that there were no women practising some form of medicine … But there is not a shred of evidence for their existence" (22). This is an exaggeration, but not by much. Even in areas of medicine where one might expect more female practitioners, such as midwifery, the textual evidence is minimal and mostly in the form of terminology that etymologically suggests an association with women. For a brief review of words for "midwife" in Old English, see Wright, "Anglo-Saxon Midwives" (3–4). There are also a few mentions of women engaging in inappropriate healing practices in the penitentials. For a summary, see Smith ("Healing").

[5] Kuriyama 14.

or possibility—more evocative rather than less so. As Susan Sontag observes in *Illness as Metaphor*:

> Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using it as a metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things. The disease becomes adjectival. (58)

While Sontag is writing about "master illnesses," a term she applies to tuberculosis and cancer, "murky" causality is commonplace in Anglo-Saxon medicine, and the treatments indicated for serious problems such as paralysis and seizures would not have been effective, at least in a pharmaceutical sense,[6] which likely did make them a subject of dread. As Sontag's assertion would suggest, the "murkiest" medieval illnesses—conditions that are very grave, sudden, or difficult to identify visually on the flesh—tend to acquire significance beyond the strictly medical, most often through vocabulary that also has religious or spiritual implications. This vocabulary facilitates the invocation of disease as metaphor in non-medical literature, where its connections to spirituality or other experience can be exploited to many different ends.

In the spiritual context, the horror of disease becomes, most often, a mirror for hell, with the body manifesting infernal heat, poison, gnawing pains, and other signs. Rather than Foucault's exact superposition of body and disease, Anglo-Saxon literature often presents an unstable arrangement in which the distinctions between body and soul, symptom and sin, can collapse and be reasserted through regimens and

[6] Though some remedies for minor ailments may have been more useful than early scholars assumed. For some examples, see Cameron 117–129.

rituals, such as confession, penance, or even attentive reading. Rather than being the object of observation, the patient in this context must be actively engaged in his own healing or purification. In texts that attempt to shape this engagement, by offering lessons in behavior or imagery intended to stimulate a useful emotional response, the reader is often effectively the patient, the actor these lessons are meant to heal. Speaking only from my own perspective as a reader, the potential of medical language in these texts to transform literature into treatment—to help one feel an imagined body as one's own and take action to heal oneself—is a source of fascination and a powerful impetus for undertaking a study of poison and disease in Anglo-Saxon medicine and literature.

With that in mind, I want to pause to offer a modest counterpoint to Kuriyama's musings on concepts of the body as differing so greatly between cultures that "the very idea of truth becomes suspect" (7). Most of this introduction has acknowledged differences between modern and medieval understandings of the body, but to undertake an analysis of Anglo-Saxon concepts of health and disease is to commit to the belief that these concepts are in fact accessible—that the culture that produced them is not so alien as to be beyond the reach of modern interpreters. In the introduction to her recent book,[7] Rachel Fulton makes this point with respect to other themes in Anglo-Saxon literature. While acknowledging the possibility that we may "read too much of ourselves into the scattered traces of past lives that we call our historical record," Fulton nevertheless strongly advocates the attempt, pointing out that to do otherwise "is to presume that human beings of the historical past are (were)

[7] Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200*.

so irredeemably "Other" that there is no possibility of empathy in our encounter with them other than of the most reductive kind" (2–3).

Since, unlike medical anthropologists studying present-day cultures, we cannot interact with the Anglo-Saxons, it could be argued that a belief in the possibility of this empathetic encounter is an article of faith as much as a hypothesis capable of being tested. Despite all the differences between modern and medieval understandings of the body, however, many of the medical metaphors I have examined in Anglo-Saxon literature still *work*—that is, they still provoke an emotional response in readers today, though it may not be identical in quality or degree to that experienced by medieval audiences. *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, for example, both of which repeatedly characterize grief in physical terms, still evoke sadness, and for a reason (the inevitability of loss) that is also recognizable to a modern audience. Such moments of empathetic recognition have helped motivate me as a researcher to make this "interpretive leap" into medieval medical thought, even if the chapters that follow attend more explicitly to the divergences between Anglo-Saxon and modern concepts of the body.

The Anglo-Saxon Medical Corpus:
A Brief Overview and Some Trends in Scholarship

Medicine, sickness, and the maintenance of good health are nearly ubiquitous as themes in Anglo-Saxon literature, appearing not only in works intended to assist in the treatment of patients but also in historical accounts (such as the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle and Bede's ecclesiastical history),[8] saints' lives, rules for monastic life, penitentials, computus texts,[9] and many other works. The medical corpus, as this dissertation uses the phrase, is much more limited and is dominated by herbal recipe-books, some of which include hundreds of recipes and survive in multiple manuscripts. The major Old English herbals include the *Herbarium* complex (including the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*), *Bald's Leechbook* (comprised of *Leechbook I* and *Leechbook II*), *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*.[10] The herbals consist almost entirely of recipes that can be used in medical treatment, most of which include a list of ingredients, information about how the remedy should be applied, and identification of one or more conditions for which the recipe is effective. Discussion of sources has traditionally been a major concern of scholarship on the recipe-books. These texts are influenced to varying degrees by Mediterranean source material, the *Herbarium* most so and *Leechbook III* the least, and Latin analogues to many of the vernacular recipes have also survived.

The herbals, having survived in pre-Conquest Old English manuscripts, are perhaps the most clearly "Anglo-Saxon" of the surviving medical works.[11] The Anglo-Saxons, of course, did not wake up after the Battle of Hastings as an entirely new

---

[8] Though outdated in some other respects, Bonser's 1963 book, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England*, includes a helpful chart of references to epidemics in various annals as well as in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. See 59–63.

[9] Such as components of Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*. For an example, see Jolly 110–111. There is also a passage on the humors in Bede's *The Reckoning of Time*, translated by Wallis (100–101).

[10] Chapter 1 contains more detailed information about these texts, their contents, and their possible sources. Note that I use the terms herbal and recipe-book interchangeably; with the exception of the short *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, all of the recipe-books are herbals.

[11] While a purist might point to the foreign (Mediterranean) source material as disqualifying, all of the literature commonly considered Anglo-Saxon, from Bede to Beowulf, shows outside influence—there are no wholly local works.

culture with fresh understandings of the body and disease, and many scholars have considered medical material from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries to be Anglo-Saxon as well. By this more generous definition, the medical corpus also includes some prognostic texts—those focused on health outcomes rather than, say, weather forecasting—and a variety of minor works on bloodletting, diet, and the humors. Many of these shorter texts survive in two compendia dating from around 1100, known by their modern titles as the *Canterbury Classbook* (Cambridge University Library, Gg. 5. 35) and the *Ramsey Scientific Compendium* (Oxford, St. Johns College 17). Individual recipes and charms, some quite early, can be found scattered across many different manuscripts, appearing on flyleaves, in margins, and between larger works.

The twelfth century sees explosive growth in the number and variety of medical texts, as classical works and works falsely attributed to classical authors re-emerge in the insular context; these are often preserved in large miscellanies that also include copies of the previously mentioned major herbals. Another herbal handbook, called the *Peri didaxeon* by modern editors, translates large portions of the Latin *Practica* of Petrocellus into very late Old English.[12] Texts on cautery, diagnostic uses of urine, and gynecology—topics largely neglected in the earlier medieval material—also survive in insular manuscripts from this period. While the *Canterbury Classbook* and the *Ramsey Scientific Compendium* are often treated as Anglo-Saxon despite their post-Conquest date, these other texts have generally been excluded (as in the case of the late *Peri didaxeon*) or simply ignored. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus on

[12] Or early Middle English; this has been a subject of some debate.

earlier material—the major Old English herbals and their Latin analogues—while placing progressively less emphasis on later works. This approach avoids an artificial cut-off date for what is considered Anglo-Saxon while also acknowledging that works such as the *Peri didaxeon* may have only a tenuous connection to the literate culture of pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon England.

Given the central importance of the herbals to this project, I want to review some of the major historical trends in scholarship on these texts before proceeding to the detailed analysis of their content in Chapters 1 and 2. The work of some early editors has continued to exert a strong influence in the field, often by provoking the vehement disagreement of later scholars. Two early yet persistent trends are particularly worthy of note. The first is a tendency to judge the value of the herbals—both as objects of study and as examples of learning—relative to the great works of classical medicine, many of which are highly systematic or theoretical in nature. Predictably, this leads to negative evaluations of the Anglo-Saxon medical texts. The second tendency is that of scholars to excerpt recipes that are particularly ritualized, "magical," or otherwise strikingly odd from a modern perspective and to analyze these recipes apart from the rest of the material, ignoring the majority of the content. A casual reader can come away from these accounts unaware that the herbals are primarily concerned with more mundane ailments: failing eyesight, dental problems, indigestion, and so forth. Both of these problematic trends in scholarship can be traced back to early criticism that builds on the editorial work of Thomas Oswald Cockayne, a Victorian-era scholar who can reasonably be called the father of the field.

Though there are scattered publications on Anglo-Saxon medicine preceding that

of Cockayne, none have had anything approaching the influence of his *Leechdoms, Wort-Cunning and Starcraft of Early England*, published between 1864 and 1866. It could easily be argued that his book has remained the single most important publication on the subject to the present day, as nearly all scholarship on an Anglo-Saxon medicine draws on his work to some degree. The multi-volume compendium includes Anglo-Saxon texts and modern (for Cockayne's day) translations of the major vernacular medical works of the period, including the *Herbarium*, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*,[13] *Bald's Leechbook* (containing *Leechbook I and Leechbook II*), *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*. Cockayne also provides the text of the late *Peri didaxeon* and several minor works and offers some limited commentary on plant names and other word origins relevant to the remedies. While later scholars have sometimes sharply critiqued Cockayne's work,[14] particularly his prudishness in refusing to translate material related to sexuality or gynecology, his editions made the medical recipe-books readily available to those without easy access to the manuscripts.

Despite the impressive range of Cockayne's work and the opening it created for scholarship in the field, the response it received was fairly limited at first. Early researchers' tendency to evaluate medieval medical texts on the basis of their relationship to classical medicine no doubt contributed to this initial lack of enthusiasm, as it is evident even in the work of the scholars who did edit or comment upon the material. Payne, in a lecture of 1904, bemoans the "lamentable apathy" of his

[13] Generally considered part of the *Herbarium* complex.
[14] Van Arsdall is especially scathing, dedicating her first chapter to "Oswald the Obscure: The Lifelong Disappointments of T.O. Cockayne" (1–34).

countrymen with regards to the history of English medicine (4) and suggests that Anglo-Saxon medical texts might be of more worth and interest than previously believed. Yet Payne himself was susceptible to the same system of values that he blamed for this apathy. As C. H. Talbot points out, Payne ranks the *Peri didaxeon* above *Bald's Leechbook* because of its connection to the Salernitan, Greek-based tradition of healing (157).[15] Far more egregious examples are available from other scholars' work. Take, for example, this passage from Henry Wellcome's 1912 *Anglo-Saxon Leechcraft*, describing the introduction of classical learning to the Anglo-Saxons:

> Their early religious belief consisted fundamentally of a rude, fearsome worship of the forces of Nature, but with the introduction of Christianity into English, by Augustine in the year 597, they commenced to emerge from this state, and the Anglo-Saxons, revivified and relieved from disquietude, began to develop a literature of their own. The northern runes…were superseded by the Roman alphabet…. Thus were the foundations of the age of Anglo-Saxon learning laid, and the Christian missionaries, coming from the more civilized Roman Empire, doubtless brought with them some knowledge of the medicine of their country. From Greece also, the fountain-head of the medical art in Europe, learning filtered through, and although the Anglo-Saxons were but slow to absorb the knowledge of the more cultivated Greeks, we know from the works on the healing art that have survived, that it exercised a certain influence upon their practice of medicine. (12)

It may be no surprise to encounter such attitudes in scholarship from the 19th and early 20th century, but they prove to be remarkably persistent: classical medicine is continually held up as the height of scientific learning, and other medical texts are assigned value based on their fidelity to known sources in Latin and especially Greek. Perhaps the best example of this—certainly the most often quoted in disagreement by

[15] The definition and context of "Salernitan" medicine have been subjects of debate; see Green 3-14.

later scholars—occurs in the edition of *Lacnunga* published in 1956 by J. H. G. Grattan and Charles Singer.[16] Singer's introduction to the book makes it clear that the text's relationship to classical medicine is the standard by which he judges its value. He notes that "only very occasionally, and perhaps by scribal accident, do A.S. medical texts preserve even a remnant of medical theory" and declares that "A.S. medicine is the last stage of a process that has left no legitimate successor, a final pathological disintegration of the great system of Greek medical thought" (94).

Even scholars who disagree with Singer's assessment of the texts' merit may end up validating his method for judging their worth. C.H. Talbot, for instance, takes on both Singer and Payne in his 1965 "Some Notes on Anglo-Saxon Medicine," comparing passages from *Bald's Leechbook* to passages by the Salernitan writer Gariopontus and demonstrating that the Anglo-Saxon scribe was well-educated in classical medicine, just like the Salernitan.[17] He also shows how the scribe drew together information from multiple sources and edited it in a rational way, rather than copying blindly. Talbot concludes that England was "in no way inferior to its continental neighbours in the assimilation of classical medicine" (169). However, as Pettit points out in his edition of *Lacnunga*, Talbot's very emphasis on proving Anglo-Saxon medicine's close connection to the classical places him squarely in the tradition of using Greek medicine as the basis for judgment of the Anglo-Saxon material (133). To some degree, this is to a risk inherent in a source study: to publish an account of a

[16] *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine: Illustrated Specially from the Semi-Pagan Text 'Lacnunga.'*

[17] Talbot focuses on the *Passionarius* of Gariopontus (providing large excerpts), but with some attention to its influence on the *Peri didaxeon*; his intention is to show that the material in the *Passionarius* was familiar to the Anglo-Saxons well before the composition of the *Peri didaxeon.*

text's relationship to a source is generally to suggest that the relationship matters, which is not far off from arguing that the text has value at least in part because of its connection to that source. Other researchers, though, have managed to analyze the sources of Anglo-Saxon medical texts while avoiding this pitfall, among them Pettit himself, J.N. Adams and Marilyn Deegan in "Bald's *Leechbook* and the *Physica Plinii*," and Anne Van Arsdall in her commentary on the *Herbarium*.

Often, critics who judge Anglo-Saxon medicine relative to earlier Mediterranean material also base their judgment on a non-representative sample of recipes. This sampling sometimes occurs at the level of whole texts, as in the case Grattan and Singer, who choose to edit *Lacnunga* rather than the *Herbarium*, which has obvious Mediterranean antecedents. The negative opinions that Singer expresses in his introduction are based to a significant degree on this relatively eccentric text, a disorganized 11th-century herbal that collects earlier charms and other apparently magical material.[18] In other words, Singer's work shows both a bias in favor of classical learning and selection bias with respect to his Anglo-Saxon evidence.

The more common issue, however—especially in more recent scholarship—is a tendency to analyze content excerpted from one or more herbals without taking a more comprehensive look at the texts and how the excerpts relate to the rest of the

[18] Cameron, in his overview of scribal error and carelessness in *Lacnunga*, defines the text as "a commonplace book in which things were entered higgledy-piggledy" (45–46); elsewhere, he describes it as "a type of collection still being made by untrained and undiscriminating individuals whose chief interest to historians of medicine is that they keep alive a folk medicine which would otherwise have disappeared" (35).

material.[19] The excerpted content, as one might expect, almost always consists of charms or otherwise atypical material that has caught the attention of critics precisely because it stands out. Numerous works take this selective approach. There is nothing inherently wrong with studying only a small subset of prescriptions. The above works (and others not mentioned) make valuable contributions to the study of the items that are their focus. Being highly selective in choosing which prescriptions to discuss can also assist critics in making connections between texts that might seem unrelated at first glance: Allen Frantzen, for instance, has identified a few parallels between medical practices described as sinful by penitential manuals and actual prescriptions present in the herbals, while a recent article by Sarah Burdorff draws on the metrical charms to analyze the role of Grendel's mother in *Beowulf*.[20] This selectivity, however, comes with risks, even if Frantzen and Burdorff are deft enough to avoid them. Most significant is the risk of overgeneralization, or making broad claims about Anglo-Saxon medicine on the basis of atypical evidence. A related problem is the risk of coming to see the selected evidence as somehow more "authentic" than the other medical material, especially the content that has an obvious relationship to Mediterranean sources.

Even very useful modern works of scholarship sometimes slip into this territory. In her study of the elf-charms and popular religion, Jolly presents a valuable critique of "a modern scale of rationality that sets classical learning as the standard

[19] "More comprehensive" is not to say "utterly comprehensive." Obviously, all works of scholarship have to set some parameters; claims should be calibrated to those parameters as far as possible.
[20] Burdorff, "Re-Reading Grendel's Mother: *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charms"

and then measures the distance between the classical and the popular," thereby placing a higher value on *Bald's Leechbook* than *Lacnunga* (107). She then follows up with a claim that *Lacnunga*, "in all its perceived barbarousness, reflects more of actual practice *because* of its diverse mixture and simple approach to medicine." The text's "comparatively unscholarly nature," according to Jolly's alternative scale, is a mark of its value, a sign that it is "more representative of Anglo-Saxon medicine" (107). [21] The parameters that Jolly sets for her study—excluding "classical" texts like the *Herbarium* and privileging the others according to their lack of scholarly qualities—are not necessarily unreasonable, given that her work focuses on popular religion. However, Jolly attempts to justify her choice of material by making overarching claims about representativeness and practice that cannot be supported without additional evidence beyond what *Lacnunga* itself provides (including consideration of the texts that she excludes from her study as too learned).

These under-supported claims stand out in a book that is otherwise critically sophisticated, meticulous in its handling of the charms themselves and thoughtful in the distinctions it draws between formal and popular Christianity. More than anything, they suggest that we as critics should be transparent about the reasons behind our selection of medical material for analysis and resist the temptation to obscure or shore up those selection criteria with broad value judgments, regardless of whether what is valued is classical learning, folklore, or something else altogether. This is especially

[21] Van Arsdall, critiquing the tendency of scholars to dismiss the *Herbarium* as useless for understanding Anglo-Saxon medicine, picks up on Jolly's work as a recent example of scholarship in which "what is called 'rational' or 'classical' medicine in the *Herbarium* is contrasted unfavorably with what is considered to be useful 'native' material in the *Lacnunga* and *Bald's Leechbook* (50).

important now that scholars are publishing overviews, translations, and commentary intended to reach more general audiences, non-medievalist readers who may not have the historical background or familiarity with other herbals that would encourage them to question these judgments. Works in this relatively new category of scholarship include M.L. Cameron's *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, Anne Van Arsdall's *Medieval Herbal Remedies: The Old English Herbarium and Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, and Stephen Pollington's *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plant-Lore and Healing*. Given the excitement surrounding the field today, the number of books on Anglo-Saxon medicine for non-specialist readers is likely to keep growing, if not as explosively as new works for academic audiences. An awareness of historical biases and transparency about methods are valuable in writing for either group.

With such transparency in mind, I want to lay out briefly the reasoning behind my own selection of texts, particularly with respect to the study of the major herbals in Chapter 1. While the herbals are not the only source of information about disease and healing in the Anglo-Saxon period, they offer a number of advantages for the modern researcher. As relatively lengthy texts, some possessing more than a hundred chapters each,[22] they make a large quantity of information from the same "genre" of medical text available for examination. This allows for a greater variety of analytical approaches than might be possible, for example, with an individual prognostic for

[22] The term "chapter" has become conventional in scholarship on the recipe-books; the manuscripts simply provide numbering (and in some cases a table of contents). A chapter can consist of anything from a single prescription of the most basic type—"For ailment X, take herb or animal part Y, apply to body part Z"—to a collection of ten or more prescriptions that are intended for a similar problem or have an ingredient in common. The inclusion of incantations, directions related to ritual actions, or background information on an ingredient (such as the best time to harvest a plant) sometimes substantially increases the size of a chapter.

bloodletting or cosmological diagram: among other options, the features of a prescription (from ingredients to ritual elements) can be discussed relative to other content from the same herbal, recipes for a particular ailment can be compared across texts, and preventive prescriptions can be considered next to treatments for the same health problems. The herbals are also appealing as a focus for study because of the evidence they offer for Anglo-Saxon engagement with their content. All of the major recipe-books have survived in the vernacular, allowing for comparison with Latin analogues where those exist, and in some places, they also show deliberate editing of source material. For these reasons, among others, most researchers working on the recipe-books today agree that, despite containing references to foreign plants and animals, these texts served a practical purpose to some degree rather than just preserving earlier beliefs from other parts of Europe.[23] This does not guarantee that the beliefs about disease preserved in the herbals have relevance for understanding other Anglo-Saxon literature, but it does increase the likelihood.

A more compelling piece of evidence for the relevance of the herbals to understanding disease and medicine elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon corpus is the considerable overlap between the vocabulary used to discuss disease and healing in the herbals and the language that appears in other Old English literature featuring medical metaphors or imagery. This is generally not the case with the theoretical material found in later Latin compendia. The short works on the humors that appear in the *Ramsey Scientific Compendium*, for example, feature specialized vocabulary

[23] On the practicality of the herbals, see Voights 250–259 and Van Arsdall 74–92. For an example of editing of source material, see Cameron's analysis (77–83) of a chapter from Bald's Leechbook.

related to humoral medicine that does not have an Old English equivalent or appear elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon literature.[24] The reason for this isolation is not entirely clear; it may be related to the computistical nature of the compendia or to the apparent incompatibility of the theory of the four humors with biblical explanations of disease and healing.[25] Regardless, these Latin collections, though fascinating in their own right, are less useful than the major Old English herbals for understanding references to disease and medicine in other kinds of literature from the period. Chapter 1 of this study therefore focuses on the herbal recipe-books, identifying key vocabulary related to disease causation.

I have tried to avoid making value judgments about these texts based on their relationships to source material or their apparent cultural roots. This does not mean that I ignore such relationships—there are, after all, many other reasons to examine sources and analogues—just that I do not reflexively consider apparent Mediterranean origins to be a sign of foreign sophistication or apparent Germanic origins to be a sign of native authenticity (regardless of whether "native" beliefs are characterized as folk knowledge, popular religion, or by the old-fashioned term "magic"). I apply "Anglo-Saxon" to all of the pre-Conquest herbals rather than considering the material derived

[24] Such as *colera rubea*, the "choleric" humor or red bile (Wallis, "1. Medicine I: 1. Humours," *The Calendar and the Cloister*). Old English does have a term sometimes used to translate humor in the herbals (*wæta*), but it is unclear whether use of this word comes with any understanding of theory; it is simply used to describe harmful fluids. This is discussed later, in Chapter 1. As far as I have been able to determine, OE does not modify *wæta* to distinguish between the four humors.

[25] Wallis points out that many of the medical items in the Ramsey compendium (such as dietary calendars, prognostics, and a text on the classification of fevers) are related to the computistical collection's emphasis on time and measurement. She writes: "Looking at these medical texts from a computist's viewpoint also explains their non-technical character: they are enhancements to or extensions of the lore of time, not in the first instance manuals for professional study or work" ("1. Medicine I Overview," *The Calendar and the Cloister*).

from Mediterranean sources to be permanently excluded or separable from the culture that imported it. Similarly, I have tried to take an inclusive approach to selecting prescriptions for analysis. Rather than starting out by choosing only remedies that stand out for their unusual features, I employ selection methods that result in a relatively large sample of recipes, featuring more diversity in their ingredients and applications than the charms, amulets, or lapidary prescriptions are able to offer as independent groups. When I use charms, I acknowledge their atypical features and consider their relationship to their broader context in the herbals. This provides a more stable foundation for discussion of Anglo-Saxon medicine and its implications outside the medical corpus.

Chapter 1 seeks to uncover beliefs about disease causation in the herbals, particularly the Old English *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, which have been excluded from analysis by some previous scholars (such as Jolly). I begin by questioning the traditional classification of the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* as works of humoral medicine. These texts, like the other Anglo-Saxon herbals, are recipe-books rather than theoretical treatises, and uncovering the beliefs about disease that they contain requires an indirect approach. Through a survey of all of the recipes in these two works, I identify a large group of prescriptions that are intended to prevent harm to the body and analyze those defensive measures for evidence of how the texts conceptualize disease in the abstract (rather than within the body, where disease tends to become *a* disease, defined by the symptoms it provokes). This analysis reveals that the Old English *Herbarium* and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, regardless of their Mediterranean source material, are not governed

by a humoral understanding of health. Instead, the texts suggest a concept of disease as *attor*, "poison," or *yfel*, "evil." The chapter concludes with a brief overview of *attor* as it is used in the other major herbals, with a particular emphasis on "flying poison."

For the next two chapters, the focus shifts from the medical corpus to other kinds of Anglo-Saxon literature that make heavy use of medical language, including references to *attor* or poison. Chapter 2 performs a detailed study of the Old English poem *Guthlac B*, examining Saint Guthlac's physical and spiritual experience of disease and how it relates to the poem's depiction of Eve as offering Adam poison or a "little cup of death" in Eden. Drawing on evidence from the medical corpus, I argue that the two primary representations of death in the poem, as a defensive battle and as a drink, are united by the experience of bitterness. This bitterness binds Guthlac's individual illness to Eve's cup of death and to human mortality more generally, but it also evokes the moment in the Crucifixion when Christ is offered and refuses a bitter drink. This suggests that tasting bitterness does not have to mean becoming embittered and distant from God.

Chapter 3 examines the use of medical metaphors in the penitentials, using previous scholarship on affective meditation in Anglo-Saxon literature as an interpretive framework. I identify three major categories of medical metaphor in the introductions to the penitentials and analyze how each anticipates or responds to particular pressures a confessor may face in his task. This includes discussion of imagery related to poisoning and purgation as a representation of sin and confession. I argue that all three categories of metaphor, and the introductions in which they are embedded, provide confessors and penitents with powerful scripts for the cultivation

of empathy and remorse, emotions that are crucial in the context of private penance. The chapter concludes with an examination of *Soul and Body I*, an Old English poem involving penitential themes. In the poem, as in the penitentials, vivid imagery of the body engages the reader's imagination and encourages a spiritually desirable emotional response.

Chapters 2 and 3 both aim to demonstrate that the study of Anglo-Saxon medicine is relevant not just to medical historians but to medievalists working in other areas of Anglo-Saxon literature, including both prose and poetry. The two chapters are, in this sense, case studies: each offers an example of how a stronger understanding of language and imagery related to disease can facilitate analysis of texts outside the medical corpus. This does not mean that the medical material should be considered worth studying or not based only on its usefulness for interpreting other literature; I strongly believe that the medical texts are important in and of themselves, for what they can tell us about fundamental concepts of the body, health, and disease in the period. It is my hope, however, that research drawing connections between the medical corpus and other literature will encourage medievalists who do not specialize in Anglo-Saxon medicine to explore the herbals and other medical texts, and that dialogue between historians of medicine and literary scholars will prove productive for both groups in the long term.

CHAPTER 1

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE AND POISON IN TWO ANGLO-SAXON RECIPE-BOOKS

Despite a strong interest in medicine, as suggested by the many surviving texts on the subject, the Anglo-Saxons did not subscribe to a single system of belief about the causes of disease or the logic behind the treatments they copied or translated. The medical corpus, as mentioned in the preceding introduction, features a wide variety of texts, among them herbals, tracts about the humors, bloodletting calendars, prognostics, and other material. The ideas that these works express about disease causation and treatment can be difficult to reconcile with each other: the theory of the four humors seems a world apart from a belief in the disease-causing powers of devils, at least at first read. Moreover, the medical texts do not explicitly attempt such a reconciliation, suggesting that their variety was seen as a virtue or at least as unobjectionable. In some cases, preserving the "authenticity" of a text may have seen as more important than adapting it to local needs and beliefs, particularly in the case of works attributed (accurately or otherwise) to Galen and other distant authorities.

Given the diversity of the Anglo-Saxon medical corpus, analyzing texts for evidence of beliefs about disease—its origins, means of transmission, and the reasoning behind recommended treatments—will never produce a unified system of belief from this time period. There are other uses, however, for such an analysis. Metaphors involving disease are widespread in non-medical literature, often appearing repeatedly or in extended form within individual texts. Without studying the evidence

of beliefs about disease causation and treatment in the medical corpus, we risk misinterpreting these metaphors and their effect upon the works in which they appear. This raises the question of which medical texts to analyze. While all of surviving texts are worthy of study in their own right, humoral and astrological theories of well-being play little role in metaphors of health and disease outside the medical corpus, whether due to their specialized terminology or the difficulty of connecting concepts like humoral balance to biblical accounts of illness.[26] As the following analysis shows, the herbals, despite their practical recipe format, can offer insight into beliefs about the causes of disease, revealing key terminology and concepts that also feature in extended metaphors in other kinds of Anglo-Saxon literature. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the uses of these metaphors in poetry and penitential works.

This opening chapter surveys preventive medicine in two recipe-books, the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, with the goal of answering several related questions: What beliefs about the causes of disease could the Anglo-Saxons have accessed through these texts? How do those beliefs relate to humoral medicine or other ways of thinking about the body's relationship to its environment? What role does religion play in disease prevention and how might that relate to the causes of disease? A survey of this kind is overdue: the herbals contain little discussion of etiology, making indirect approaches to the subject essential, and despite a recent surge of scholarship on Anglo-Saxon medicine, researchers have not yet recognized the significant role played by prophylaxis in these two texts. Despite their apparent

[26] This does not mean that non-medical texts make no mention of the humors or the effect of astrological conditions on health, only that these mentions tend to be brief and in passing rather than integral to the development of these texts.

Mediterranean origins, the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* have a great deal to offer readers interested in the range of medical ideas available to the Anglo-Saxons. They survive in multiple Old English copies, suggesting relatively broad circulation, and the existence of complete Latin analogues allows study of the translation of key medical terms into Old English.

A better understanding of how Old English vocabulary is repurposed for medical use can assist analysis of the rest of the Anglo-Saxon remedy-books, as well as the interpretation of literary texts that use such language metaphorically or call upon the words' complete range of meaning. As noted, later chapters of this dissertation will explore some of these applications. In this chapter, I analyze preventive measures in the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* for evidence of beliefs about the causes of disease. In the process, I challenge the traditional classification of the texts as humoral in their understanding of health and suggest that the preventive recipes reveal a different perspective. Rather than blaming illness on an imbalance of humors—substances natural to the body—the texts point toward the internalization of a hostile, external force, "poison" or "evil," as the cause of disease. Traces of language related to humoral medicine remain in the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, but this vocabulary has acquired new meaning through the translation of Latin medical terminology into less specialized Old English.

Two major challenges have discouraged scholarly interest in the theoretical underpinnings of these two texts: their practical, recipe-book format and their status as translations of surviving Latin texts. The practical nature of the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* has led even researchers deeply interested in Anglo-

Saxon medical theory to exclude the texts from consideration or address them only glancingly. Consider, for example, two surveys that have particularly informed (or provoked) this chapter. In "The Anglo-Saxon View of the Causes of Illness," published in 1992 and still the most useful treatment of the subject, Audrey Meaney explains her devaluation of the medical complex that includes the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*: "I have only used the Apuleius complex,[27] as it appears in British Library MS. Vitellius C.iii and its cognates, as corroboration. It is not much concerned with causes, and since so much of it is a literal translation from Latin we cannot tell how far its ideas were assimilated into Anglo-Saxon thinking" (12). Similarly, in "Old English *waeta* and the medical theory of the humours," Lois Ayoub notes the limited evidence of humoral medicine in the two texts but explains that "the practical orientation of the remedy-book format probably accounts for the scarcity of theoretical concepts such as the humors" (338). This is a reasonable hypothesis, and Meaney's corroborating evidence from the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* does indeed support her claims about other Old English medical texts. In both essays, however, a tiny number of recipes, exceptional rather than representative, is used to make claims encompassing the Old English medical corpus as a whole (including the apparently non-theoretical *Herbarium* complex). This process allows each author to circumvent the texts' "practical orientation," but leaves the vast majority of the recipes unexplored.

The survival of fairly complete Latin analogues from the pre-Conquest period has presented a different kind of challenge to research on these texts. Meaney's view,

[27] For an overview of the *Herbarium*'s structure, see pages 37–38.

that the Old English texts' status as translations makes it impossible to determine whether or not their content was meaningfully assimilated into the culture (or at least its literate subculture), is not an uncommon one. Karen Jolly, in explaining her exclusion of the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, writes (105):

> These texts cannot reflect much common practice in England because they were transmissions from outside England. The compilers and copiers of these manuscripts, while demonstrating an appreciation of the scholarly worth of classical learning, rarely sullied these texts they were copying with native medical knowledge. While these texts are of interest to modern scholars who value the preservation of classical learning, they are not as interesting to those who want to study actual medical practice or popular culture in late Saxon England.

This logic is problematic in several respects, most fundamentally in the claim that texts transmitted from outside England could not affect practice there—it is clear that in other domains, most notably religion and law, outside texts did change Anglo-Saxon beliefs and behaviors. Jolly offers no evidence why medicine must be an exception. Moreover, it has been well established, most forcefully by C. H. Talbot, that the texts Jolly considers adequately native are heavily influenced by and at times analogous to Mediterranean works themselves, edited and combined with material for which we have no surviving source. In fact, the *Herbarium* itself makes a contribution to at least one of the sources that Jolly does use, *Lacnunga*. Finally, as Jolly acknowledges, "native" in the context of Anglo-Saxon medicine usually means "Germanic" rather than Anglo-Saxon specifically. While the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* may lack the elf-charms that are Jolly's special interest, it is strange to remove these texts from more general conversation about Anglo-Saxon medical

practice in favor of those that have survived in fewer copies and cannot be said to reflect particularly Anglo-Saxon beliefs.

Rather than viewing the recipe-book nature of the texts and the presence of analogues as disadvantages, I have taken an approach that exploits these qualities to investigate the etiology of disease in the *Herbarium* and *Medicine de Quadrupedibus*. Preventive medicine is key to this process. First, prophylactic measures comprise a large and diverse subset of recipes, offering a better overall picture of these two texts than, say, recipes featuring the rare term *wæta*.[28] Second, they provide information that recipes responding to symptoms generally do not: the cause of the ailment and a means of prevention. While the cause is rarely described as clearly as the modern reader would wish, the details of how a preventive recipe is made and put to use can offer additional insight into the nature of the anticipated threat. The practical format actually facilitates analysis of beliefs about the causes of disease. As for objections to the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* based on their status as translations, this chapter's analysis is not intended to uncover a "native" tradition of medical practice, but focuses instead on how the texts communicate beliefs for which Old English does not offer precisely defined vocabulary. The analogues thus offer essential evidence. More broadly, this dissertation is concerned not so much with medical practice as with linguistic practices and the possibility that common Old English words and phrases had medical meaning—meaning that would have been familiar to the Anglo-Saxon reader and should be taken into consideration by readers today.

[28] See pages78–79 for a discussion of this term, which is sometimes associated with the humors.

Before proceeding to the survey of preventive recipes, a few notes on methodology and terminology are in order. The survey results are limited to prescriptions that meet a conservative definition of "preventive": the prophylactic function must be stated explicitly, except in prescriptions against ailments defined by repeated episodes (as in malarial periodicity) and those intended to provide protection against animals. An amulet that makes snakes flee, for example, can reasonably be considered a means of preventing harm from snakes. A more liberal interpretation of "preventive" would include many more recipes, since the texts' language is frequently ambiguous.[29] Determining whether a prescription meets the stricter definition is an interpretive act open to challenge, and I have tried to be as transparent as possible about my reasons for including individual prescriptions in the survey results. My intent is to open the subject of preventive medicine in the Anglo-Saxon context to further exploration rather than to provide a definitive account of it.

Throughout this chapter, I use the terms "prescription" and "remedy" as well as "recipe" to refer to preventive measures. In general, I have preferred "recipe" for those that involve multiple ingredients or steps in preparation. While the term "remedy" might suggest treatment, I use it to refer to preventive material in this chapter, since prevention requires remedying an existing vulnerability or threat. In addition, I often use the somewhat antiquated word "ailment" rather than terms such as "disease" or "disorder," which suggest distinctions not necessarily present in the medieval texts.[30]

---

[29] Particularly vague is the use of "against" (*wið*) to open prescriptions (often translated as "for"). A measure "against poison," for example, could be intended either as treatment for poisoning or to prevent someone from being poisoned.

[30] While these terms overlap in everyday usage, “disease” still often implies the presence of a pathogen, while “disorder” may be favored where no pathogen is involved.

Preventive Medicine in the *Herbarium*

The text examined in depth here is the Old English *Herbarium* of British Library Cotton Vitellius C.iii (de Vriend MS V). It is believed to date from the first half of the eleventh century.[31] Though there are multiple surviving Old English manuscripts,[32] the Vitellius version has been the focus of scholarship ever since its early edition and translation by T. Oswald Cockayne. At this time, the standard scholarly edition remains that of Hubert Jan de Vriend, published in 1984 for the Early English Text Society; his work is the source of all Old English quotations from the *Herbarium* included in this chapter. For the manuscript's illustrations in their context, my source is the 1998 facsimile edition with commentary by M.A D'Aronco and M.L. Cameron.[33]

Cotton Vitellius C.iii preserves what de Vriend calls the "enlarged" *Herbarium*, which consists of the *De herba vettonica liber* of Antonius Musa, the *Herbarium* itself (attributed to Apuleius), and two works partly derived from Dioscorides, *De herba femininis* and *Curae herbarum*.[34] There is no break in chapter

---

[31] See Voights, especially 41-42. For a brief summary of scholarship on the manuscript's date, see the introductory material in D'Aronco and Cameron's facsimile edition.

[32] The others are: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 76 (DeVriend MS B); London, British Library, Harley 585 (MS H); London, British Library, Harley 6258 B (MS O). The letters used by de Vriend to designate manuscripts do *not* correspond in all cases to the older naming system used by Howald and Sigerist, among others (for whom de Vriend's MS V is MS A). De Vriend, following Singer and ultimately Howald and Sigerist, describes MS V as belonging to the α recension of pseudo-Apuleius and containing the A version of Sextus Placitus (*Medicina de Quadrupedibus*). For more details, see Howald and Sigerist (v-xiv) and de Vriend (xi-xiv, 1). Note that all Old English versions of the *Herbarium* are bound with other material, some medical and some not.

[33] Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[34] The attributions to Antonius Musa and Pseudo-Dioscorides in DeVriend's summary of the manuscript's contents are editorial: no mention of either author is made in this version of the *Herbarium* complex, though these can be found in other versions. The Cotton Vitellius

numbering to indicate that these components were meant to be considered separate works, and they are elsewhere preserved together. In the Harley 6258 B version, for example, remedies from all three sources are presented together in alphabetical order by Latin herb name rather than being grouped by source (de Vriend xxviii-xxix). Accordingly, references to the *Herbarium* in this chapter are to all the material included in the "enlarged" *Herbarium*, not only the middle part.

What follows is a list of remedies in the *Herbarium* that—judging by the previously discussed criteria—serve a preventive purpose. The Latin and (where available) Old English plant names are provided, followed by a description of the problem to be prevented, summarized in brief in modern English, along with the recipe's chapter and subsection numbers, following de Vriend's edition. While the quantity of text involved makes it impractical to include the Old English for each recipe in full, I have provided excerpts below that contain the vocabulary for the ailments themselves. Where there has been significant dispute about the identification of an ailment, I have provided translations by Cockayne (C), Van Arsdall (VA), and Pollington (P) for comparison. In several places, there are also references to Boswoth-Toller (BT).[35]

---

manuscript does include a title on 19v, which DeVriend restores as: (H)ERBARIU(M) *APUL(EI P)LAT(ONIC)I QUOD AC(CE)PIT AB ESCOLAPIO ET (A) CH(I)RONE CENTAURO MAGISRO ACHILLIS.* This directly precedes *De herba vettonica liber*, suggesting that the material on betony was considered part of the *Herbarium*. The attributions to all three authors are fictitious (DeVriend lvi-lx). For further analysis of the illustration on 19v, see Voigts 42-44.

[35] Van Arsdall and Pollington both attempt to make the *Herbarium* accessible to a general audience without sacrificing the accuracy required by a more scholarly readership. While they are not entirely successful in this regard (Anglo-Saxonists are likely to be disappointed by the limited footnoting, at the least), their translations are very useful as a representation of the range of possible readings: Van Arsdall tends to be quite liberal in translation, while Pollington is more word-for-word.

Table 1

Plant	Use	OE Entry (Excerpt)
betonica/biscopwyrt	dreadful night-visitors, [36] terrifying visions and dreams (1.1)	unhyrum nihtgengum...egeslicum gesihðum 7 swefnum
betonica/biscopwyrt	drunkenness (1.14)	Gif man nelle beon druncen (1.14)
arniglosa/waegbraede	return of quartan fever (2.12)[37]	feorðan dæges fefer getenge (2.12)
arniglosa/waegbraede	fever that comes after a day (2.15)	fefore þe ðy æftran dæge to cymeð (2.15)
pentafolium/fifleafe	a sore spreading (3.9) [38]	cancer ablendan (3.9)
uermenaca/aescerote	snakebite (4.7)	nædran slite (4.7).
ueneria/beowyrt	bees swarming (7.1).	beon...ætfleon (7.1)
artemesia/mugcwyrt	harm to house (13.1)	ænig man þam huse derian (13.1).
centauria maior/eoregealla or curmelle seo mare	a sore spreading (35.2)[39]	sar furður wexe (35.2).
polion/ –	lunacy (58.1) [40]	monoðseoce (58.1)
asterion/ –	epilepsy (61.1)	fylleseocnysse (61.1)
dictamnus/ –	snakes (63.4)	næddran (63.4)
peonia/peonia	return of lunacy (66.1)	monoðseocnysse...næfre seo adl him eft genealæceð (66.1)
peristereon/berbene	dogs' barking (67.1) [41]	hundum...borcen (67.1)

[36] *Unhyrum nihtgengum*: C=monstrous nocturnal visitors; VA=dreadful nightmares; P=dreadful night-goers

[37] The person preparing the remedy is instructed to administer it two hours before the sick person (or possibly the preparer) expects the fever to return, *syle him drincan twam tidum aer [he] hym þaes feferes wene*.

[38] *Gif ðu wille cancer ablendan*: C=If you wish to blind a cancer; VA=If you want to stop an ulcerous sore from spreading; P=If you wish to prevent a canker spreading.

[39] *Wið wunda 7 wið cancor genim þas [ilcan] wyrte, cnuca hy, lege to þam sare, ne geþafað heo þæt ðæt sár furður wexe*: C=...it alloweth not that the sore further wax; VA=...It does not allow the sore to spread; P=...it does not allow that the pain should spread out.

[40] MS V has *innoð*: de Vriend takes *monoðseoce* from the table of contents entry for this chapter. MS B has *monoðseoce* within the chapter. Latin MS Ca has *lunaticos*. *Monoðseoce*: C= lunatic; VA= insanity; P=monthly sickness. VA notes, "The moon was believed to cause "lunacy," and the Old English word for it is 'month-sickness,' months being measured in moons" (footnote 186). See also recipe 66.1, for which translations differ in a similar manner.

[41] The second section of this chapter claims that the dust of the plant, consumed in a drink, drives away all poison: *(ea)lle a(tr)u heo to(drifð)*. Because it is impossible to determine whether this refers to poison that has already been ingested or poison that may be encountered afterward, the recipe does not appear in the list of preventive measures.

crision/claefre	soreness of the throat (70.1)[42]	gomena sare (70.1)
uerbascus/feltwyrt	fear, harm from wild animal, evil (73.1)	ne bið he breged mid ænigum ogan, ne him wildeor ne dereþ, ne ænig yfel geancyme (73.1)
heraclea/ –	harm while traveling (74.1)[43]	Se þe wylle ofer langne weg féran...ne ondrædeþ he hym ænigne sceaþan, ac heo hy flygeþ (74.1)
millefolium/gearwe	every kind of snake (90.14)[44]	æghwylcum næddercynne (90.14) (12.1).
pollegium/dweorgedwosle	return of tertian fever (94.5)	fefore þe þy ðryddan dæge on man becymeþ (94.5)
peucedana/cammoc	snakes (96.0)	Ðeos wyrt...mæg nædran mid hyre swæce aflian (96.1)
hedera nigra/eoreifig	headaches, head pain (100.8)[45]	Wiþ þæt heafod ne ace for sunnan...eac hyt fremaþ ongean ælc sár þe þam heafode dereþ (100.8)
carduum silfaticum/wudueistel	evil (111.2)[46]	swa lange swa ðu hy mid þe byrst nanwiht yfeles þe ongean cymeð (111.2)
basilisca/naedderwyrt	snakes (131.1)	gyf hwylc man þas wyrte mid him hafað wið eall næddercyn he biþ trum (131.1)
lichanis stephanice/læcewyrt	scorpion (133.1)[47]	gyf hy man ofer þa scorpiones gelegð þæt heo him unmihtignesse 7 untrumnysse on gebrincge (133.1)

[42] It is unclear exactly what anatomical area is indicated. C=sore of the jaws *or back of the mouth*; VA=sore throat; P=pain of the gums. Bosworth-Toller defines *goma*: "The palate; in pl. the fauces" or "the jaws." MS Ca has *faucium dolorem*.

[43] C=he dreadeth not any robber; VA= he...does not have to fear any robbers; P=he will not dread any attacker

[44] C=every serpent kind; VA=every kind of snake and spider; P=any kind of adder. VA includes spiders because spiders and other animals besides snakes are referred to as *næddercynn* elsewhere. I have chosen the more restrictive translation based on the mention of snake-bite, *naddran slite*, at the start of the sentence.

[45] This is clearly preventive, but 100.8 also concludes, *eac hyt fremaþ ongean ælc sár þe þam heafode dereþ*: C=It also is of benefit against every sore that vexeth the head; VA=It also prevents any other pain that bothers the head; P=also it takes effect against each pain which harms the head. I have followed the more conservative translators and left this prescription off the list, since it is unclear whether it should be read as preventive.

[46] *nanwiht yfeles þe ongean cymeð*: C=naught of evil cometh against thee; VA=no evil will come to you; P=no evil thing will come towards you. As in 100.8, the ambiguity of *ongean* leads to different translations, though the amulet-style recipe here is clearly preventive.

[47] It is possible that the drink indicated earlier in 133.1 as helpful against snakes and scorpions' stings is also meant to be preventive.

abrotanus/sueernewuda	poison and snakebite (135.3)[48]	eac þæt sæd þysse wyrte stranglice afligeþ gindstred oððe onæled (135.3)
tribulus/gorst	fleas (142.6).	Flean
conize/ –	snakes, gnats, midges, fleas, epilepsy (143.1)[49]	þy(s)sa wyrta stela mid þam leafum gindstred 7 onæled nædran afligeþ...7 heo gnættas 7 micgeas 7 flean ácwelleþ...heo on ecede geseald fylleseocum helpeð (143.1)
samsuchon/ellen	onset of dropsy (148.1)[50]	Wið wæterseocnysse...heo gehnæceþ ða anginnu þam wæterseocum (148.1)
polios/ –	snakes (151.3)	ðeos sylfe wyrt on huse gestred oþþe onæled nædran aflígeþ (151.3)
acantaleuce/ –	snakes (153.4)	heo næddran aflygeþ (153.4)
delfinion/ –	lingering episode of quartan fever (160.1)	gif þu him þis syllest toforan þære genealæcincge þæs fefores wundorlice hrædnysse he bið alysed (160.1)
aecios/ –	snakebite (161.1)	Wyþ nædrena slitas...hyt fremað ge ær ðam slite ge æfter (161.1)
aglaofotis/ –	tertian or quartan fever (171.1)	Wið þone fefor ðe þy ðriddæn 7 ðy feorðan on man becymeþ (171.1)
aglaofotis/ –	evil things (171.3)	gif hy þonne hwa mid him bereþ ealle yfelu hyne ondrædað (171.3)
ricinus/ –	hail and storms (176.1)	Wið hagol 7 hreohnysse to awendenne...heo awendeð hagoles hreohnysse (176.1)
priapisci/ –	devil-sickness, snakes, wild animals, poison, any threat, envy, terror, anger (179.1)	to manegum þingon wel fremað, þæt ys þonne ærest ongean deofolseocnyssa 7 wið nædran 7 wið wildeor 7 wið attru 7 wið gehwylce behatu 7 wið andan 7 wið ogan...yrsunge (179.1)

[48] As VA mentions (footnote 235), the manuscript does not indicate what is driven off; C supplies "snakes" based on the Latin. MS Ca has *serpentes*. P offers "disease" instead, without explanation, but "snakes" seems like the most reasonable reading, especially considering that *nædran* appears in very similar prescriptions in 143.1 and 151.3.

[49] *gnættas 7 micgeas 7 flean*: VA identifies *micgeas* as mosquitoes, but I have followed C and P in the closer "midges." MS Ca mentions only two insect types, *pulices et culices*.

[50] *wæterseocnysse*: C=water sickness, *that is, dropsy*; VA=dropsy; P=watersickness. 148.1 as a whole seems to indicate use of the plant to prevent worsening of dropsy in the already dropsical.

gorgonion/ –	evil person (182.2)	æghwylce yfele fotswaðu him ongean cumende he forbugeþ; ge forðon se yfela man hyne forcyrreþ oððe him onbugeþ (182.2)
milotis/ –	dimness of eyes (183.1)	ahoh to ðinum swyran, þy geare ne ongitst þu dymnysse þinra eagena (183.1)

Unlike *Bald's Leechbook, Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*, which are for the most part organized by the afflicted part of the body, the *Herbarium* is organized by plant. Each plant is illustrated and labeled at the beginning of the chapter containing recipes dependent upon it. D'Aronco and Cameron point out that, in naming the plant illustrated at the beginning of each chapter, "the translator chose as the key name first on the list [of plant names in different languages] not the name in his own language but the Latin, or sometimes the Greek, term for each plant. The Anglo-Saxon plant name was always inserted in last place" (44). Within the text of each chapter, the translator "always uses the first, classical names and never the Old English term. Generally, therefore, the Greek or Latin name is preferred for plant recognition to the vernacular. The choice is an obvious one as the translator did not always have a native name available" (45). In the Vitellius manuscript, unlike the later, alphabetical Harley 6258 B version, the plants do not appear to have been listed in any particular order, but there is still something to be learned from the distribution of preventive material across the text.

Preventive recipes appear throughout the *Herbarium*: in the main "Apuleian" body of the text, but also in the first chapter's treatise on betony (from *De herba vettonica liber*) and in the section partly derived from pseudo-Dioscorides (chapters

134-185).[51] The Latin versions of the *Herbarium* supplied by de Vriend include close analogues to all but one of the preventive prescriptions identified in the pseudo-Apuleian section: the use of *millefolium* in 90.14 to drive off every kind of serpent (90.6-16 are all absent from the Latin). Similarly, the two preventive recipes found in the Vitellius version of *De herba vettonica liber* (1.1, 1.14) are both present in MS Vo,[52] the Latin text de Vriend supplies as an analogue to the Old English for chapters 1-21. Of the chapters containing preventive recipes in the pseudo-Dioscoridian section of the *Herbarium*, all but four have analogues in the Latin versions of the *Herbarium* examined by de Vriend. He argues that one of these four, chapter 151 (on *polios*) is translated directly from the Latin Dioscorides' *De materia medica*, rather than arriving indirectly through *Ex herbis* and the Latin *Herbarium*.[53] One might expect to find

[51] Riddle notes of the Old English *Herbarium*: "Chapters numbered from 134 through 175 are mostly derived from *Ex herbis*, often freely translated and modified...New herbs are added. In one case, even where the same herb is in *Ex herbis*, the Old English version has a completely different text" (71). De Vriend lists chapters 134-185 rather than 134-175 as derived from pseudo-Dioscorides; Riddle's assessment is likely influenced by an error in his chart of analogues, where 171 is listed as the *Herbarium* chapter focused on *Stavis agria* (the correct chapter number is 181). In either case, calling that section of the *Herbarium* "mostly" derived from *Ex herbis* is an overstatement, since according to Riddle's analysis, not much more than half the chapters between 134 and 185 correspond to *Ex herbis* chapters in more than herb name; at least ten of the remaining chapters, however, correspond to chapters in the other work attributed to pseudo-Dioscordes, *Curae herbarum*. See Braccioti's edition 61–102.

[52] MS Vo=Leiden, Bibliothek der Rijkuniversiteit, Vossianus Latinus Q 9. De Vriend dates this to the sixth or seventh century and says it is "by far the oldest extant Latin manuscript of the *Herbarium*" (xlviii) Note that not all Latin versions of *De herba vettonica liber* are so closely analogous to the OE MS V version; see, for example, the version edited by Howald and Sigerist, which differs dramatically and leaves out the preventive material found in MS V 1.1.

[53] The textual traditions of the Latin sources of the *Herbarium* are very complicated, involving numerous unedited manuscripts, and a detailed consideration of their contributions to the Old English *Herbarium* is outside the scope of this study. I have, however, very briefly and tentatively surveyed the most readily available information on *Ex herbis* and *Curae herbarum* for analogues to the preventive material in the Old English. My sources for *Ex herbis* are the 1896 edition and 1897 supplement by Käster, which have been criticized by Riddle and others for drawing on only three texts, and Riddle's own analysis and chart of analogues. For the *Curae herbarum*, I have used Braccioti's paper, lacking a complete edition. Based on these sources alone, it appears that, at the very least, MS V chapters 135, 142, 143, and 161 have

material corresponding to the remaining three chapters (171, 176, 183) in *Ex herbis* or *Curae herbarum*, since not all of those texts' content was incorporated into the Latin *Herbarium*, but this is not the case. Nevertheless, these chapters are more likely to have Latin sources—lost or simply not yet edited—than to be original to the Old English: all three herbs are identified by Latin name only, with no Old English equivalent, and illustrated with images that do not appear to match their labels,[54] suggesting some confusion in transmission.

While we may not be able to trace every remedy to the Latin *Herbarium* or earlier Latin sources, it is clear that preventive medicine in the Old English version is not an innovation of Anglo-Saxon translators and that it is not specific to any single component of the enlarged *Herbarium*. In addition, since the translators included these recipes while omitting other material present in Latin analogues or sources, they must have found the content valuable, or at least unobjectionable in its presentation of herbs as having preventive powers. The large number of preventive recipes, scattered across many chapters rather than clustering in a few, indicates prophylaxis as a potential application of many different plants. There is some indication that the plants believed to have this potential were also believed to be especially powerful in treatment; that is, their ability to protect from illness or injury was believed to be an extension of their ability to treat these things, not a separate virtue. Two examples of this are below: 63.4, on the herb *dictamnus*, and 66.1, on *peonia*.

---

partial analogues in *Ex herbis*, while 179 and 182 correspond to chapters in *Curae herbarum*. See also Cameron 61.

[54] Cockayne's footnotes and marginal notes on these chapters raise questions about the relationship between these images and the accompanying text; Van Arsdall responds to some of his comments in her own footnotes.

> Gyf hwa attor þicge genime þysse ylcan wyrte wós, drince on wine, witodlice swa mycel ys þysse wyrte strengð swa na þæt án þæt heo mid hyre andweardnysse næddran ofslyhð swa hwær swa hy hyre gehende beoð, ac forþon of hyre stence, þonne he mid winde ahafen bið, swa hwær swa hy beoð 7 hy þone swæc gestincað, hy sculon sweltan. (DeVriend, 106)
>
> If someone ingests poison, take the juice of this same plant, drink it in wine. Certainly this plant is so powerful that not only does it kill snakes with its presence but also any that are near it, because of its smell. When it is lifted up by the wind, wherever snakes are and smell that odor, they die.
>
> Wið monoðseocnysse gyf man þas wyrte peoniam þam monoðseocan ligcgendon ofer alegð, sona he hyne sylfne halne up ahefð, 7 gyf he hig mid him hafað næfre seo adl him eft genealaceð. (DeVriend, 108)
>
> For lunacy: if one lays the peony plant over an insane person when he is lying down, he will soon raise himself up healthy, and if he has it with him, the illness will never again come near.

The first passage is an example of an environmentally or communally protective remedy; everyone in the area is at risk of snake-bite, and the smell of the plant protects not just one person, but anyone exposed to it. The second, which also includes both treatment and prevention, is of the more common individually protective type. In both cases, however, the plant's preventive power is an extension of its curative power. This suggests similarity between the mechanisms of treatment and prevention. It is possible, for example, that the herb in 63.4 drives poison from the body through purgation in the same way the snakes are driven off by the herb's odor; indeed, the preceding remedy, 63.3, states that juice of *dictamnus*, ingested with wine, will carry off (*tofereð*) poison. More tellingly, at the end of chapter 63, animals are described as eating the plant after being hurt by hunters, since the herb will eject the

arrow (*flane ut adeð*) and heal the wound.[55] The same expulsory power accomplishes both treatment and prevention. Likewise, in 66.1, the wearing of the peony plant cures insanity as well as preventing its return.

Types of Ailment Considered Preventable

Healing and prophylaxis may work in a similar manner against preventable ailments, but prophylactic options are only supplied for certain kinds of ailments. An examination of the *Herbarium*'s preventive remedies as a group reveals that many are intended for use in similar circumstances. This is not surprising: while the causes of disease may not have been understood in ways consistent with modern explanations, recognizing that certain situations come with an increased risk of harm from illness or injury requires only common sense. In the *Herbarium*, these situations include contact with potentially troublesome animals (such as dogs and snakes), travel (which comes with dangers like robbery and bad weather), and the presence of existing wounds or conditions. There are also remedies that aim to prevent what must have been fairly common household problems, such as physical damage to the home and the swarming of bees. Perhaps as interesting as which types of ailment are considered preventable is which types are not. Eye problems (often "dimness of the eyes") are a common concern in the *Herbarium*, but appear only once in a preventive remedy (183.1). Rashes and other skin ailments, often difficult to identify precisely, also appear frequently in the text, and they too receive little attention in the preventive material: they are mentioned in just two remedies intended to prevent a sore from spreading, in

[55] This chapter is also notable for the expulsatory function described in 63.1, perhaps the most explicit reference to abortion in the Old English medical corpus.

which the real concern seems to be what we would call today a secondary infection, rather than the original skin problem (3.9, 35.2).

Overall, ailments for which little or no prophylactic material is provided tend to be chronic, non-episodic, and relatively commonplace. On the other hand, those considered preventable are generally more acute and sudden in their onset or episodic return. Of these, by far the most common in the *Herbarium* are animal attacks and bites. The text has an especially strong preoccupation with snake-bite; the phrase *nædran slite* (with some variation in number and spelling) is used more than thirty times in the index alone.[56] The text does not distinguish between different types of snake—even between poisonous and non-poisonous—though in her study of the illustrations, D'Aronco identifies a sand viper, a water snake, and grass snakes.[57] The images are not original to the Old English or even the Latin *Herbarium* and cannot be used to supply information missing from the text, such as the type of snake affected by prophylactic measures. Presumably, the Anglo-Saxon leech would have used these remedies for snakes found in his region, the only poisonous one of which is the adder. In addition, the survey list shows that preventive recipes for snake-bite are sometimes described as being effective against harm from other animals, including dogs, insects,

[56] The Latin texts of the *Herbarium* consistently use *contra morsum serpentis* where the Old English has *wið nædran slite*; there is no additional specification. Examples can be found throughout de Vriend.

[57] D'Aronco notes similarities between the snakes and scorpions in the Vitellius manuscript (copied from a Latin model of the southern Italian α rescension) and illustrations in the pseudo-Apuleian material of Montecassino 97, as well as the similarities between the Vitellius snakes and scorpions and those accompanying Nicander's *Theriaca*, as previously described by Zoltán Kádár. These connections indicate that the illustrations are descended from a common model, no longer extant (D'Aronco 40–41).

and unspecified wild beasts (141.3, 173.4, 179.1). The herbs in these chapters defend against external attacks big and small, not just venom.[58]

Aside from animal threats, preventive medicine in the *Herbarium* addresses acute ailments that have no visible cause, including malarial fevers, devil-sickness, epilepsy, and insanity. The survey list includes prescriptions against the recurrent paroxysms of quotidian fever (2.15), tertian fever (94.5, 171.1), and quartan fever (2.12, 160.1).[59] While retrospective diagnosis is never simple, the periodicity of these fevers, combined with the Mediterranean origin of the *Herbarium*'s contents, strongly indicates malarial infection.[60] All the preventive measures against fever in the *Herbarium* are against the return of episodic malarial fevers; as well, there are recipes to treat malarial fevers that lack explicitly preventive language (2.14, 42.1, 72.3, 98.2, 152.2). Fevers not identified by periodicity appear less frequently in the text, sometimes with other symptoms or identifiers, such as "cold" or "dry," and sometimes without description (12.5, 37.2, 114.1, 138.1, 143.4, 145.1). A special case is 20.2 (on *herba aristrolochia/smerowyrt*), which is not prophylactic but has intriguing similarities to recipes that do appear on the survey list:

> Wið þa stiþustan feferas genim ðas sylfan wyrte 7 gedrige hy, smoca þonne þærmid, heo afligð nalæs þone fefer, eac swylce deofulseocnyssa.

---

[58] The question of whether the Anglo-Saxons differentiated between animal venom, plant poison, and the "poison" of infected wounds (all of which are termed *attor* at various points in the medical corpus) is taken up later in this chapter.

[59] Note that 160.1 does not prevent the return of quartan fever, only the fever lasting for a long length of time.

[60] For background, see Dobson's "History of Malaria in England," which concentrates on records of malaria in later periods but provides useful general information about geographic distribution of infections and the most likely mosquito vector (*Anopheles atroparvus*). Dobson concludes: "It seems likely that *Plasmodium vivax* and *P. malariae* were the endemic English forms rather than the more fatal *P. falciparium*...Malaria acted as a great debilitator (4–5).

> Against the strongest fevers, take the same plant and dry it, fumigate the person with it; it puts to flight not only the fever, but likewise devil-sicknesses.

Devil-sickness is mentioned less frequently in the *Herbarium* than malarial fevers, and this is the only place in the text where it appears with fever in a remedy.[61] It appears twice in preventive recipes (11.0, 179.1), each time in a list of other threats averted by the same herb, some definitely physical and others more mysterious ("evil medicines," "eyes of evil men," and harmful emotions). But it is a non-preventive remedy (132.4) that comes closest to offering a definition of devil-sickness, listing mandrake as effective "against witlessness, that is, against devil-sickness."[62] Chapter 96.3 refines that definition, with *peucedana/cammoc* described as useful "against the illness that the Greeks call *frenesis*, that is, witlessness of the mind in our language, that is, when the head is very hot."[63] While devil-sickness cannot be equated with feverish delirium to the exclusion of everything else—terminology in the *Herbarium* is rarely that specialized—it certainly includes that condition and likely extends to other forms of delirium, or other ailments that may cause "witlessness of the mind."[64]

---

[61] Van Arsdall notes without further explanation, "The hallucinations often associated with high fevers and similar conditions could be described in such a way [as devil-sickness]" (footnote 140).

[62] *Wið gewitleaste, þæt is wið deofulseocnysse* (132.4).

[63] *Wið þa adle þe Grecas frenesis nemnað, þæt is on ure geþeode gewitlest þæs modes, þæt byþ ðonne þæt heafod áweallen byþ* (96.3). "Very hot" is more literally "swollen," which is in line with the Greek understanding. Isidore (trans. Barney) provides this view of *frenesis*: "Frenzy (*frenesis*) is named either from an impediment of mind—for the Greeks call the mind φρένες—or from the sufferers' gnashing their teeth, since *frendere* is grinding of teeth. It is a disturbed state, accompanied by agitation and dementia, caused by an onslaught of bile" (IV.vi2).

[64] Devil-sickness also figures rather prominently in some non-medical Old English texts; the relationship between the medical and spiritual afflictions will be dealt with later in this dissertation. It is important to note that in the medical context, the term is a fairly literal translation from the Latin *Herbarium*: in de Vriend's MS Ca, the devil-sick in the analogue to 132.4 are *daemoniacos*.

Two ailments that may fall into that category are epilepsy and insanity, both susceptible to prophylactic measures in the *Herbarium*. In 132.4, where the Old English has "witlessness, that is devil-sickness," as just mentioned, the Latin of MS Ca describes the prescription as effective *ad epilempticos, hoc est daemoniacos et qui spasmum patiuntur*: "for epileptics, that is, demoniacs and those who suffer a convulsion." Later, in the MS Ca analogue for 143.1, *epilepticis* are equated with *caducos*, "those who fall," rather than with those who lose their wits; *caducos*, in the Old English 143.1 (and 61.1), are those who suffer from *fylleseocnysse*, "falling-sickness." As even this brief look at synonyms and translations reveals, there is no clear differentiation between these various ailments in Old English or in the Latin: epilepsy, for one, can be identified with witlessness, *frenesis*, falling-sickness (in both languages), devil-sickness (in both languages), and those who suffer a convulsion. It is worth noting that fever delirium is also associated with seizures; indeed, it is tempting to think of devil-sickness as a term specific to seizure-like symptoms[65] but general as to the conditions that elicit them. This reading is in line with the *Herbarium*'s overall lack of attention to diagnostic processes.

Following this hypothesis, *monoðseocnysse*, "month-sickness" or "lunacy," might be expected to overlap with these other terms in definition and translation, as well as to share their vulnerability to prophylaxis. As one might guess from its name, "month-sickness" and similar terms can be found in references to menstruation as well as madness, according to the term's Bosworth-Toller entry. In the *Herbarium*, however, the reader can be confident that *monoðseocnysse* refers to lunacy and not

[65] Not only the seizure itself, but pre- and postictal symptoms, such as emotional outbursts, hallucinations, and confusion.

menstrual difficulties. Where the Old English has *monoðseocnysse*, the Latin has *lunaticos*; even more specifically, where the Latin gives *ad profluvium mulieris*, the Old English consistently offers *wiþ wifes flewsan* or the substantive adjective *monoðlican*, "monthly."[66] While month-sickness does not overlap with devil-sickness and related terms in this text, it does appear on the survey list: two of the three references to month-sickness in the *Herbarium* are in prescriptions that are certainly preventive in nature (58.1, 66.1). The ritual for described in 10.1—a plant amulet hung from a person's neck with red thread while the moon is waning in April and early October—is ambiguous as to whether it offers treatment, prevention, or both.

In summary, most of the ailments considered preventable in the *Herbarium* are, as logic would suggest, also predictable, either as a result of a recognized threat in the environment, such as snakes, or as a result of their recurrent, harmful nature. They are generally but not exclusively dramatic or disabling and sudden in their onset. The first, mostly animal-related category of ailments includes measures that protect not just one individual but also the surrounding area, while prescriptions in the second category affect only the individual, never the environment. Preventable ailments in this second category are identified by their observable manifestations—symptoms, severity, periodicity—which is likely one cause of the terminological confusion that survives into the Old English from Latin versions (different conditions, after all, can present with similar symptoms). There is no distinction made between what modern medicine would identify as diseases caused by pathogens and other kinds of illness.

[66] Menstrual remedies are much more common than prescriptions for *monoðseocnysse* in the *Herbarium*. *Wiþ wifes flewsan* (or variations of it) appears in 60.1, 89.2, 128.1, 178.6; *hyt þa monoðlican astyreþ* (and variations) appear in 150.1, 152.1, 158.2, 164.1, 165.4, 173.1.

However, the Old English vocabulary used to identify some of these ailments reflects an openness to the idea that outside forces such as demons and heavenly bodies have the power to cause disease without any visible physical contact. This openness does not amount to a single, systematized understanding of health, though it likely reflects traces of earlier belief systems.

One obvious question raised by these points is the nature of the connection, if any, between the two broad categories of ailment susceptible to prophylaxis. A look at how the preventive recipes are meant to be made and used offers some insight into this issue.

Preparation and Employment of Preventive Measures

Unlike many of the remedies in the other Old English medical texts, the recipes in the *Herbarium* generally require few ingredients. The recommendation of a particular part of a plant for use in a recipe often seems practical, with relatively durable parts, such as roots, being carried on the body while the easily swallowed juice and berries are ingested. A few plants have names (Latin, Old English, or both) related to the problems for which they are recommended, including at least two plants that appear on the survey list: *ueneria/beowyrt* prevents bees swarming (7.1) and *basilisca/nædderwyrt* prevents snake-bite. In the former case, the Old English name probably derived from the recommended use,[67] since the Latin is not related to bees;

[67] *Beowyrt* is also provided as a name for *acanton* in 154; this chapter contains no references to bees. It is possible that the Anglo-Saxon translator was familiar with *beowyrt* as a name for this plant and applied it to *ueneria* on the basis of its use for retaining hives.

the latter herb, on the other hand, has a Latin name connected to serpents and is also described as having snake-like physical characteristics.

The preparation and application of remedies, where specified, is usually simple; at some points, the text omits instructions for making a remedy altogether, assuming that the user has the requisite experience. This simplicity is not universal, however, and the exceptions tend to occur in chapters featuring prophylactic material, which also recommend some methods of application that are unusual in non-preventive contexts. All methods indicated for prophylaxis in the *Herbarium* are listed below, broken down by basic category. Note that some prescriptions fall into more than one category and that this list covers only the physical application of the plant (other ritual elements will be discussed shortly).

> internal (drink/food): 2.12, 2.15, 148.1, 160.1, 161.1
> external application to affected body part (e.g. poultice): 3.9, 35.2, 58.1, 100.8, 171.1
> affixed to object (e.g. house): 7.1, 11.0, 13.1, 133.1, 176.1
> dispersal (odor, scattering, smoke): 63.4, 94.5, 135.3, 142.6, 143.1, 151.3
> amulet: 4.7, 11.0, 58.1, 66.1, 67.1, 70.1, 73.1, 74.1, 90.14, 111.2, 131.1, 153.4, 171.3, 176.1, 179.1, 182.2, 183.1

As this list shows, most preventive recipes are not used internally. Of the five exceptions, three (2.12, 2.15, 160.1) are intended to protect against the return of malarial fevers; one against the worsening of dropsy (148.1); and the last against snake-bite (161.1). While the assignment of internal remedies to these particular ailments cannot be explained neatly by any single shared quality, the first four are similar in that they appear to offer protection against the return or further development of symptoms that have already manifested themselves. The fevers are recurring (and in

2.12, at least, the prescription is explicitly provided for use before the fever comes again) and 148.1 is indicated to thwart a process that has already begun: the herb *aizon*, it says, *gehnæceþ ða anginnu þam wæterseocum*, "restrains the onset of the water-sickness" or dropsy, in addition to treating the retention of urine.[68] Internal preventive medicine, then, is more likely in (though not exclusive to) contexts where the affliction is an extension of an existing ailment: the user already "has" or contains the illness, making the choice of an internal treatment a logical one. Thus, the paroxysms of malaria—unlike, say, devil-sickness—were likely understood as the reemergence of an ailment from within, not as repeated attacks from outside the body.

The external application of remedies to afflicted body parts is perhaps the most straightforward of the categories: a poultice is applied to a sore to prevent its spread (3.9), a bruised plant is laid on a wound or sore to prevent its spread (35.2), and leaves pounded in vinegar are smeared on the face to prevent headaches (100.8). Recipe 58.1, less specifically, recommends rubbing the juice of *polion* mixed with vinegar on a person who has suffered month-sickness (lunacy) in the past to prevent to condition from returning. In fact, all three mentions of month-sickness in the *Herbarium* occur in recipes intended to be applied externally, either directly to the skin (as in 58.1) or in the form of an amulet (10.1, 66.1). This presents an interesting contrast to the measures the text provides against malaria and hints at belief in an external cause. While the *Herbarium* never states that phases of the moon contribute to illness or injury, some chapters do indicate that herbs should be picked while the moon is in a

[68] De Vriend, ed.: *...heo gehnæceþ ða anginnu þam wæterseocum; eac swylce heo fremaþ wið þa unmihticnysse þæs migðan 7 wið þæra innoða ástyrunga*. The Latin of MS A (provided by de Vriend instead of MS Ca for much of the "Dioscorides" section) has: *Decoctio eius pota principia hydropicis reprimit, [urinae] difficultati et intestinorum tortionibus prodest.*

particular phase or astrological house, tying these things to the plant's healing or protective virtue (e.g. 8.1, 10.1, 61.1, 179.1).[69] Evidence in the *Herbarium* for a belief that the moon harms human health is indirect at best, but what does seem clear is the distinction between recurring ailments understood as manifesting from within—as in the case of malaria—and those understood as catalyzed from outside the body. The presence of a harmful outside force may well be the connection between the two categories of preventive recipe identified in the previous section: the first category is dominated by remedies for wounds caused by hostile animals, and the second category (with the exception of the malaria remedies) features preventive prescriptions for other ailments caused by a harmful external force or entity.

The "dispersal" category of prescription can be broken down into two subtypes: those in which a person is fumigated with the smoke of a plant or wafted with its odor and those in which the plant (as smoke or seeds) is dispersed through the surrounding area or someone's home. The former includes one preventive measure (94.5) and several non-preventive (8.1, 20.2, 20.6, and possibly 173.4).[70] All but one of the prescriptions in the *Herbarium* that fall into the latter subcategory are preventive. That one (171.2) turns back rough weather; it is in a chapter otherwise dedicated to preventive material and bears some resemblance to the preventive use of

[69] Some chapters (e.g. 183.1) also instruct the reader to pick herbs during specific months of the year, but this may be tied to harvest seasons rather than astrological conditions; the winter months are notably absent. It is important to note that the lack of explicit discussion of the moon's effect on health in the Old English *Herbarium* does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons were unaware of such theories. Bloodletting calendars and instructions suggest otherwise; see, for example, some of the prognostic material edited by Liuzza in *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics*.
[70] 173.4 is unique in that it specifically instructs that the plant should be applied in such a way that the patient is not aware of its odor. Since the plant is also said to have a good smell (*godes swæces*), it seems that the goal is not to hide an unpleasant odor from the patient but to allow the odor to have some effect that can only be accomplished without the patient's attention.

ricinus in 176.1, only with more ambiguous phrasing: in 171.2, the user is already enduring a storm, whereas in 176.1, the herb appears to both turn back an approaching storm and calm one that has arrived. The distinction is fine; it is possible to read these chapters as being both preventive and not. Perhaps the key point with respect to dispersal-type prescriptions is that the spreading of smoke or seeds through an environment potentially offers protection to more than just one individual against problems or threats that are themselves widely distributed.

Herbal amulets are an especially common method for the application of preventive medicine, even though they appear only rarely in non-preventive material. Amulets differ from other externally applied prescriptions in that they are not applied to a specific body part with the intention of preventing harm to that part—as in the case of poultices applied to sores to stop them from spreading—but are meant to shield the wearer against threats affecting the whole body or parts of it other than what is in physical contact with the amulet. The distinction between the two types of externally applied preventive medicine (specific to a body part and whole-body amulet) is usually fairly clear,[71] in part because they are recommended against different threats. Greater overlap can be found between "dispersal" prescriptions and amulets: just as smoke and scattering are effective against snakes and insects, amulets protect against snakes, dogs, and other animals.[72] The power of amulets, however, extends from harmful creatures to harmful people (11.0, 82.2), month-sickness and devil-sickness (58.0, 66.1, 179.1), unpleasant or dangerous emotions (73.1, 179.1),

[71] 70.1's amulet for sore throat, applied to the outside of the throat, is an exception.
[72] Even here there is some similarity to dispersal: a non-preventive remedy, 171.2, suggests burning an herb to drive away a storm suffered by someone rowing.

and evil in various forms (73.1, 111.2, 171.30). The same plant virtues are effective against what we might consider to be physical, psychological, and spiritual threats: here, the distinction seems to be of degree of power more than of kind, with many herbs capable of protecting the wearer against physical threats but only a few of those also powerful enough to shield against the more immaterial dangers. No amulet is effective only against the immaterial: just as certain herbs' ability to prevent harm is an extension of a powerful ability to treat harm (as discussed earlier), their ability to protect against unseen or abstract threats is an extension of their power to protect against material threats such as snakes.

If the types of danger warded off by amulets suggest a spectrum of threats rather than distinct categories, there are still some details in the use of amulets that set them apart from other types of prophylaxis. Of the prescriptions that require the use of an amulet, the majority merely instruct the user to "have it with you" or to "carry it." Some, however, specify the part of the body in contact with the plant or the method for attaching it, almost always by suspending it around one's neck (as in 58.0, 70.1, 153.4, 183.1). More rarely, the amulet is kept off the body, in a house (11.0, 13.1) or ship (176.1),[73] protecting its surroundings.[74] Perhaps due to the need to overcome the lack of direct contact between amulet and threat (even in the dispersal remedies, the effective range of an herb is limited by the distance its smoke or odor can travel, or the area over which its seeds are scattered), merely wearing an herb is not always enough

[73] 176.1 indicates that the plant is effective when kept in a person's possession or when hung within a house or ship.

[74] 133.1 is a special case: the plant is applied not to a patient or to a place requiring protection, but directly to the threat (a scorpion), which it makes weak and sick. In effect, the herb does to the scorpion what the scorpion would do a person.

to make it effective. Chapters describing prophylaxis by amulet may identify the type of string used for hanging the amulet, lay out a ritual or special conditions for harvesting the herb, or include a Latin incantation with Old English translation. The incantations found in the preventive material (176.1, 179.1) each address an herb directly, requesting protection by its power:[75]

> þæt is þonne on ure geþeode: wyrt ricinum, ic bidde þæt þu ætsy minum sangum 7 þæt ðu awende hagolas 7 ligræsceas 7 ealle hreohnysse, þurh namen ælmihitiges Godes se þe het beon acenned (176.1)
>
> that is in our language: I beseech you, *ricinum* plant, that you be present at my song and that you turn away hail and lightning bolts and all roughness, through the name of almighty God who commanded that you be made
>
> þæt ys þonne on ure geþeode, ic bidde þe, uica peruica, manegum nytlicnyssum to hæbbenne, þæt ðu glæd to me cume mid þinum mægenum blowende, þæt ðu me gegearwie þæt ic sy gescyld 7 symle gesælig 7 ungedered fram attrum 7 fram yrsunge (179.1)
>
> that is in our language, I beseech you, *uica peruica*, having many uses, that you come to me gladly, with your powers blossoming, that you make me ready so that I may be protected and always happy and unharmed by poison and by anger

The invocation of God's power acting through the herb in 176.1 is the most explicit religious reference in the *Herbarium*; while classical gods (and other mythological figures) are mentioned elsewhere in the text, it is usually in the context of astronomy or the etymology of herb names (e.g. 175). As noted earlier, chapter 176 is not present in the Latin analogues or, as far as I have been able to determine, in *Ex*

[75] The Latin within the Old English text reads: *Herba ricinum, precor uti adsis meis incantationibus et auertas grandines, fulgora, et omnes tempestates, per nomen omnipotentis Dei qui te iussit nasci* (176.1); *Te precor uicaperuica multis utilitatibus habenda ut uenias ad me hilaris florens cum tuis uitutibus, ut ea mihi prestes, ut tutus et felix sim semper a uenenis et ab iracundia inlesus* (179.1).

herbis or *Curae herbarum*, but its similarities to 179.1, which has both a Latin analogue and corresponding *Curae* chapter (23), are significant enough to make an explanation of the anomalous Christian language with a "native" Anglo-Saxon source quite difficult. This is especially the case when one considers the language in the rest of 179.1: *gesælig*, which I have translated as "happy" here, can also have the more specific meaning "blessed," and the reader is told that someone who has *uica peruica* with him "has grace" (*gife hæbbe*). Both chapters also require that the person harvesting the plant be "clean" (*clæne*). Chapter 131 has a similar requirement; for the plant to be effective as an amulet, it must be picked by someone who cleanses himself (*he hyne sylfne clænsie*) and follows a ritual requiring gold, silver, horn, and other items to be arranged around the herb.

Jolly, writing generally about Anglo-Saxon charms, notes that "those remedies with special words and rites were usually for ailments associated with the Devil or other unseen evils requiring a special appeal to those good powers that can give strength to the herbs" (103). This is true of the most complex preventive material in the *Herbarium*, though as noted, the herbs that are the subject of the rituals are also effective against more ordinary problems.[76] It also suggests that the *Herbarium*, rather than being a practical handbook grounded in humoral medicine, shares some theoretical underpinnings with works generally considered more representative of Germanic or "native" beliefs.

[76] For an example of ritual in non-preventive material, see the detailed chapter 132 on mandrake.

Preventive Medicine in the *Herbarium*: Conclusions

The preceding sections have offered some specific conclusions regarding preventive material in the *Herbarium*, but the survey also offers some more general insights into beliefs about disease causation and transmission in the text. First, there is no explicit discussion of illness as passed from person to person: the text does not describe symptoms appearing in multiple people, measures taken to prevent the spread of disease, or even any awareness of connections between locations (e.g. swamps) and certain types of illness. What does appear is a belief in the ability of amulets and other preventive measures to turn back harmful outside forces that would otherwise cause illness or injury. In some cases, the possible external attack is by an animal, but in others, it is by something invisible, immaterial, or overwhelmingly powerful (as in the case of storms). In the vast majority of these situations, there is no possibility of direct contact between the preventive measure and the threat: the "interaction" in which the remedy wards off the threat is not a physical one, meaning that that the prescriptions must repel harm by other means. Later sections of this chapter will explore some of those possible methods.

These survey results challenge Jolly's claim (and others like it) that the *Herbarium* falls firmly into the category of humoral medicine. She writes: "Herbs, animals, and other natural objects also fit into the humors scheme as having one or more of the four elements, and hence healers used them to counterbalance an excess of one of them. The *Anglo-Saxon Herbal* and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* list these functions for each item" (109).[77] In fact, neither of the texts does so, despite the fact

[77] The *Anglo-Saxon Herbal* is Jolly's preferred term for the *Herbarium*.

they that draw upon sources that include such information. While the humors may receive some mention (as *yfelan wætan* in 125.1 and 181.1),[78] this is very rare; treatments involving purgation offer evidence of a belief in restoring health by removing harmful substances from the body, but nothing more specific than that.[79] While the means by which amulets and other remedies prevented harm may once have involved a counterbalancing of elements, in source material or influences on those sources, there is no indication in the *Herbarium* that the function of the prescriptions should be understood in this way. Instead, the preventive material in the text suggests hostile outside forces rather than an imbalance of humors as a cause of severe disease.

Preventive Medicine in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*

The *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* immediately follows the enlarged *Herbarium* in the Vitellius manuscript and forms another part of the *Herbarium* complex. In this manuscript, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* is separated from the *Herbarium* by approximately 14 blank lines at the top of the A column of folio 75r, but this space, which roughly corresponds to the area dedicated to illustrations on preceding folios, was likely meant to hold an image. The real demarcation is the line in capitals that follows it, the opening of *De taxone liber*, the first component of the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus.* Like the *Herbarium*, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* consists of several elements that are not distinguished by titles or spacing in the manuscript: *De taxone liber* is followed by a short treatise on the medicinal properties of the mulberry,

[78] I return to these examples in more detail in the General Conclusions section.
[79] The final section of this chapter discusses some content in the other herbals that may reflect a humoral understanding of the body, though this is also fairly superficial.

and following that, the short version of Sextus Placitus,[80] which includes chapters on the healing properties of four-legged animals but omits the chapters on birds and other creatures found in the longer version.[81] De Vriend notes that "the date of composition of *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* in the form recorded in the earliest extant Latin manuscripts cannot have been much earlier than the fifth century" (lxiii).

The *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, like the enlarged *Herbarium*, is generally organized by primary ingredient rather than by ailment, and contains chapters on the medicinal uses of the badger, mulberry, hart, fox, hare, female and male goats, ram, boar, wolf, lion, bull, elephant, and dog. Cockayne's edition provides Latin headings that indicate the animal that is the focus of each chapter, but these are borrowed from Latin manuscripts, and the Vitellius Old English merely numbers the chapters. It should be noted that Cockayne and de Vriend do not entirely agree regarding chapter numbering: Cockayne, perhaps trying to fit the treatise on the mulberry into the larger animal-by-animal scheme of the text, labels it as part of the first chapter, the originally separate work *De taxone.* The numbering used in citations here corresponds to de Vriend's edition but the chapter number in Cockayne can be determined by simply subtracting by one (with the exception of the first chapter).

---

[80] This third component of the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* is known in Latin versions as the *Liber medicinae ex animalibus* of Sextus Placitus, an otherwise unknown author. The name may well be invented. See D'Aronco's "The Botanical Lexicon of the OE *Herbarium*" (19n22).

[81] Outside of Cockayne's work and that of some subsequent Anglo-Saxonists, the version of Sextus Placitus found in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* is known as the α or short version. All the surviving Old English manuscripts feature this version. De Vriend prefers to term it the A-version, noting that α in this context can be mistaken for a taxonomical assignment. Since there is no mention of Sextus Placitus in the Vitellius manuscript and "A-version" can be misleading for the same reason as "α," I have continued to use Cockayne's title for the whole three-part work and "short version" for the Sextus Placitus component. For more detailed discussion of differences between short and long versions, see de Vriend lxiv–lxvi.

The results of a survey of preventive medicine in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* appear below. My methodology here is the same as for the *Herbarium* survey. I have relied on de Vriend for the Old English; there have been no recent full translations of the text into modern English (neither Van Arsdall nor Pollington include it with their translations of the *Herbarium*), but I have provided Cockayne's interpretation where it differs significantly from my own reading.[82] I have again included the Old English that identifies the threat or ailment; the complete passages are too lengthy to provide in full.

Table 2

Animal	Use	OE Entry (Excerpt)
Badger	harm from heavenly body, hail, strong storm, evil man, anything bearing pestilence, any evil (1.2)	OE: ne sceþþeð þe ne tungol ne hagol ne strang storm ne yfel man ne wolberendes awiht; ne þe æniges yfeles onhrine dereþ (1.2)
Badger	defeat in conflict (1.3)	þonne on swa hwylcum geflite oððe gefeohte swa ðu bist sigefæst
Badger	danger from fire (1.7)	byþ lytel frecne fram fyre (1.7)
Badger	disease in dogs and other four-footed animals, discomfort in person's feet (1.8)	Cuþ ys eac þæt his hyd is bryce hundum 7 eallum fiþerfetum nytenum wið woles gewinne on to donne...ne gefelest þu gewin on þinum fotu(m) (1.8)
Hart	snakes (3.6)	Nædran...hi fleoð sona onweg (3.6)
Hart	swollen glands (3.12) [83]	ne ariseð þe cyrnlu (3.12)
Hart	snakes (3.19)	hit afligeþ ða nædran (3.19)

[82] Also available is Joseph Delcourt's edition of the Harley 6258 *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, published in 1915. The Harley 6258 text is similar (though not identical) to that of the Vitellius manuscript; rather than present an original translation, Delcourt uses Cockayne's, making mostly minor modifications to accommodate textual differences.
[83] C=kernels

Hare	miscarriage (5.4, 5.5) [84]	Ðam wifum þe him hyra beorðor losie...þam þonne þe hyt oft oðfealleþ (5.4–5.5).
Goat [*caprea*]	epilepsy, encounter with apparition (6.12)	Þy læs cild sy hreosende, þæt is fylleseoc, oþþe scinlac mete (6.12)
Goat [*hirco*]	return of swellings (7.22)	Wið swylas gate tord...hyt hy todrifð 7 gehæleþ 7 gedeþ þæt hy eft ne arisaþ (7.22)
Boar	epilepsy (9.9) [85]	Wið fylleseocum men (9.9)
Wolf	devil-sickness and visions of evil, apparition (10.1)	Wiþ deofulseocnysse 7 wið yfelre gesihðe...þa scinlac þe him ær ætywdon, ne geunstillað hy hine (10.13)
Wolf	harm from wolf on journey (10.3)	Gif þu gesyxt wulfes spor ær þonne hyne, ne gesceþþeð he þe, gif ðu hafast mid þe wulfes hrycghær (10.3)
Wolf	regrowth of ingrown hair (10.6)	Wið wiþerweard hær onweg to adonne...ne geþafað seo smyrung þæt hy eft wexen (10.6)
Wolf	soreness from teething (10.8)	gif ðu gelome cilda toðreoman mid smyrest & æthrinest, butan sare hy wexað (10.8)
Wolf	male impotence (10.13) [86]	Warna ðe þæt ðu ne mige þær se hund gemah...þæt he 'ne' mæg, þonne he cymeþ to his wife, hyre mid gerestan (10.13)
Wolf	return of dwarf (10.17) [87]	Dweorg onweg to donne, hwites hundes þost...ær þær tide hys tocymes (10.17)

[84] The inclusion of this prescription is more than usually conjectural, thanks to the ambiguity of the OE in 5.3–5.4 and differences with the Latin provided by de Vriend (MS L). The Latin prescriptions for repeated episodes of falling-sickness (to be taken in wine for seven or thirty days) appear to have been altered in transmission to prescriptions to prevent miscarriage that befalls (*oðfealleþ*) women repeatedly, also taken in wine for seven or thirty days. It is likely that the OE has incorporated the *mulieres* of the next prescription (5.6 in MS L) into the preceding material on falling-sickness.

[85] This recipe is not explicitly preventive; it has been included in this list for the same reason that treatments for malaria appeared on the list of preventive measures in the *Herbarium*: epilepsy is episodic, so that a treatment may involve prevention of the ailment's return.

[86] Of this chapter, C. notes, "Arts. 12 to 18 are not in the Latin" (1:363). De Vriend, however, finds analogues in MS L (Lucca, Biblioteca Governativa, no. 296).

[87] C= "These are the dwarves of the old mythology of the Gothic races. The disease meant is convulsions" (1:365). No explanation is offered for his identification of *dweorg* with convulsions. It is worth noting that both 10.14, for the prevention of apparitions, and this recipe (10.17) recommend consuming the dung of a white dog for protection. This is an extremely rare ingredient; besides these two recipes, it is only found in *Leechbook I* 4.6, in a remedy for *sweorcoþe*, disease of the neck (or throat).

Lion	return of apparitions (11.1)	ne þrowiað hy ofer þæt ænig scinlac (10.1)
Bull	snakes (12.1)	Wið næddrena eardunge 7 aflygennysse...hy fleoð onweg (12.1).
Dog	sores (14.1)	ne ongitest þu ænig sár (14.1)
Dog	dog attack or disobedience (14.14).[88]	se þe hafað hundes heortan mid him, ne beoð ongean hine hundas cene (14.14).

Analysis of these survey results, detailed below, finds no overt acknowledgment of the humors—the text lacks even the few mentions of *yfelan wætan* found in the *Herbarium*—and little indirect evidence of a humoral approach to understanding the causes of disease. Instead, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, like the *Herbarium*, characterizes ailments not caused by animal attack according to the symptoms they elicit; in addition, this text recognizes (if only rarely) communicability as a defining trait. Based on examination of the types of ailment believed to be preventable as well as instructions for the preparation and employment of prophylactic measures, I conclude that the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* is not humoral in its understanding of disease, but that the text features language suggestive of a different belief: that an actively antagonistic force exists outside the body, waiting for the opportunity to strike and cause disease. This is similar to the view previously identified in the *Herbarium*, though the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* places a greater emphasis on apparitions and other visible manifestations of this hostility.

[88] Note that this is 14.3 in C.'s edition.

Types of ailment believed to be preventable

The preventive recipes identified in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* can be sorted into the same two general categories as those found in the *Herbarium*: those that are both personally and environmentally protective (often warding off dangerous animals and people) and those intended for individuals with recurring illnesses, with no effect on the larger environment. Analysis of both categories, with an emphasis on the types of ailment considered preventable, offers evidence of a non-humoral understanding of health and sickness in this text. In the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, much of the preventive material falls into the first, "environmental" category, protecting the user against attacks by snakes, dogs, wolves, and evil men (3.6, 3.19, 10.3, 12.1, 14.13). As in the *Herbarium*, the preventive material makes no distinction made between types of snake; both texts do sometimes distinguish mad dogs (*wedehund*) from dogs generally, but the recipes that address harm from mad dogs offer treatment, not prevention. Chapter 1.8, on the hand, provides instructions on preventing harm *to* dogs and other animals rather than harm from them: the hide of a badger is described as protective against pestilence (*wol*) for dogs and other animals (as well as preventing sore feet in people).

Wol, perhaps the word most immediately evocative of communicable disease in the Old English medical corpus, does not appear in the *Herbarium* at all; indeed, it appears only in the first chapter of *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, which, as noted earlier, is believed to have originated as a separate treatise. It appears four times in this chapter, always where a Latin analogue (de Vriend MS L) has *pestilentia*. The context in which *wol* appears suggests it may have overlapped in meaning with "evil" (*yfel*),

which does appear in the *Herbarium* and other recipe-books. For example, chapter 1's complicated, ritualistic recipe featuring the teeth of a badger worked in precious metals is said to protect a person against "anything bearing pestilence" (*wolberendes áwiht*) as well as against "evil men" (*yfel man*), and the "touch of any evil" (*æniges yfeles onhrine*). Any evil already afflicting a person will be torn apart (*hyt byð tosliten*). The two ailments are also paired in 1.5, which recommends badger's blood mixed with salt for the treatment of pestilence or any evil (*on wole...oþþe on ænigum yfle*). This does not necessarily mean that *yfel* and *wol* are interchangeable in meaning—and given the rarity of *wol* in the medical corpus, any conclusion about the term's precise medical meaning has to be cautious—but they are similar enough in nature to respond to the same preventive measures and treatment. *Wol* is characterized by its communicability (at least as far as it is a translation of *pestilentia*), which raises the possibility that *yfel* may also be used to characterize disease as it exists outside the body, as opposed to defining it by symptom (as in "falling-sickness"). In other words, *yfel*, like *wol*, may constitute a concept of disease, as something that can exist outside the body and move between bodies. This is consistent with the possibility implicit in terminology like "devil-sickness," found in both the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*.

The second category of recipe—only individually protective, addressing recurrent ailments—is reduced in scope in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, which makes no mention of the malarial fevers that concern most of the recipes in this category in the *Herbarium*. The text only provides two recipes for fever altogether, and these are neither preventive nor specific regarding periodicity. The recurrent,

apparently overlapping illnesses described as falling-sickness and devil-sickness in the *Herbarium* appear in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* at 6.12 and 9.9 (falling-sickness) and 10.1 (devil-sickness). The connection between these illnesses and visual disturbances, hinted at the former text, is made much more explicit here by the introduction of a threat, *scinlac*, not mentioned in the *Herbarium*. Though the precise meaning of *scinlac* is far from clear, the prefix *scin*-, "shining" suggests something seen; Bosworth-Toller, drawing on non-medical sources, offers "magic, necromancy, sorcery" (833), but the medical sources are less specific in their implication of the supernatural. The Latin analogue provided by de Vriend for 10.1 (MS L) is especially instructive:

> Wiþ deofulseocnysse & wið yfelre gesihðe, wulfes flæsc wel getawod & gesoden syle etan ðam þe þearf sy. Þa scinlac þe him ær ætywdon, ne geunstillað hy hine.
>
> Ad daemoniacos vel umbrosos carnem lupi conditam qui ederit, a daemonibus vel umbris quae per fantasma apparent non tam inquietantur.

The Latin suggests that *daemoniacos* and *umbrosos* are synonymous, sufferers afflicted by demons and shades that make themselves known through visual disturbances, "phantasms." The grammar of the Old English differs, emphasizing the ailment rather than the sufferer, but cause and effect remain in place: *scinlac* is responsible for devil-sickness and visions of evil. As is the case with *wol*, *scinlac* implies motion, an attack from outside the body or at least an encounter, as in 6.12:

> Þy læs cild sy hreosende, þæt is fylleseoc, oþþe scinlac mete, fyregate brægen teoh þurh gyldenne hring, syle þam cilde swelgan ærþam hyt meolc onbyrge.

> Lest a child be epileptic, that is, falling-sick, or meet with a phantasm (*scinlac*),[89] draw the brain of a goat through a gold ring, give that to the child to swallow before it tastes milk.

The three other occasions of *scin-* in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* draw connections similar to those formed in the passages quoted above: falling-sickness and phantasms are paired again in 10.14, where *caducos* in the Latin analogue is rendered as *scinseocum men*, and in 11.1, Latin *fantasma* is twice translated as *scinlac*. While acknowledging the small number of references to *scinlac* in the text, it is reasonable to conclude that the word is being used in the medical context to describe unwelcome visions, those which might communicate evil, much as *wol* is said to do. These two terms together suggest a second way of defining disease, less common than the symptom-based identifications so prominent in the *Herbarium*: disease defined by communicability, in the broadest sense. Rather than distinguishing, for example, airborne illnesses from those spread by touch, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* sets apart those threats visible to the afflicted but not to the well.

Preparation and Employment of Preventive Measures

In the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, as in the *Herbarium*, the methods by which preventive recipes were put to use reveal the blurring of certain distinctions that a modern reader might take for granted: between treatment and prophylaxis, cause and symptom, and the individual and the environment. Humoral medicine is known for finding reflections of the macrocosm in the microcosm of the body, with changes in

[89] C="dream of an apparition," translating *mete,* "encounter," as *mæte*, "dream." Given that both verbs can take the neuter accusative *scinlac* and the use of *experiatur* in analogue MS L, I do not see a compelling reason to follow Cockayne's translation here.

the former producing imbalances—symptoms—in the other. But in both Old English texts, the attenuation of the boundary between the body and its surroundings encourages the reader to understand disease, not as a product of humoral imbalance, but rather as a violation of personal space. This space can be that of the body itself or of the larger environment a person inhabits, and the recipes vary accordingly in their methods of preparation and employment.

As in the *Herbarium*, the remedies in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* are either single-ingredient or focused on one of only a few ingredients; this dominant ingredient determines the chapter in which the remedy is placed. Different kinds of meat are not combined, though multiple products of a single animal—such as grease and blood—often are. The preventive remedies, like the non-preventive ones, vary considerably in their choice of animal part and method of preparation: teeth, feet, hide, horn, and marrow are among the parts used in these remedies, and their preparation ranges from raw use to burning (3.6) to burial at significant places (1.7). There is no body part associated exclusively with prevention, just as no plant in the *Herbarium* is assigned only preventive uses. Prevention is again just one sign of an ingredient's healing power, not a virtue that is separate from the treatment of existing problems.

Generally, the methods by which the preventive recipes in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* are meant to be applied are similar to the methods recommended in the *Herbarium*: most recipes are supposed to be consumed in food or drink, applied to the body externally, dispersed through the environment, or worn as an amulet. The proportion of preventive recipes falling into each category, however, differs considerably. In the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, one finds:

internal (drink/food): 5.4–5.5, 6.12, 9.9, 10.1, 10.14, 10.17, 11.1, 14.1
external application to affected body part (e.g. poultice): 3.12, 7.22, 10.6, 10.8, 1.8
affixed to object: 1.7
dispersal (odor, scattering, smoke): 3.6, 3.19, 12.1
amulet: 3.19, 10.3, 14.14, 1.2, 1.3, 1.8
avoidance: 10.13

While the *Herbarium* includes numerous amulet-type preventive measures, the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* contains far fewer. Common sense suggests that this may be due to the unpleasantness of wearing (generally raw) animal parts over time; though the text does instruct patients to carry the heart of a dog (14.14), the other amulets feature relatively durable parts, such as wolf's hair and badger's teeth in cloth (10.3, 1.2).[90] On the other hand, recipes that are meant to be consumed are much more common in the preventive material of the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. It is tempting to attribute this to the nutritional value of meat and organs; some of the recipes, however, feature products not normally considered food, even in a less squeamish period than ours (dog's dung, for example). A look at the ailments believed to be preventable by the consumption of animal ingredients reveals a surprising pattern: all but two are related to epilepsy, visions, or both. Despite being considered the result or evidence of external attack, for which one might expect an externally-worn amulet to be appropriate, both ailments are addressed internally. This might indicate an understanding of these problems as the product of illness—recipes taken internally for an ailment that the person already possesses, or has internalized—but the details of

[90] Recipe 3.19 is more ambiguous: it instructs the user to carry *heortes mearh*, "hart's marrow," to drive off snakes, but does not say whether the marrow should be extracted or left in bone.

some of the recipes suggest instead a confusion of symptom and cause. Take, for example, 10.17's prescription for preventing the return of *dweorg*:

> Dweorg onweg to donne, hwites hundes þost gecnucadne to duste & gemengen wið meolowe & to cicle abacen syle etan þam untruman men ær þær tide hys tocymes, swa on dæge swa on nihte swæþer hyt sy, his togang[91] bið ðearle strang. & æfter þam he lytlað & onweg gewiteþ.
>
> To do away with *dweorg*, [use] dung of a white hound ground to dust and mixed with meal and baked to a cake. Give it to the sick man to eat before the time of the *dweorg*'s arrival, whether it be by day or by night. Its access is exceedingly strong, and after that it diminishes and departs away.

This recipe occupies a linguistic middle ground: the word *dweorg*, literally "dwarf," appears in glossaries as the Old English equivalent of the Latin *nanus*, a person or being rather than a disease or its symptom. Yet Cockayne in his early edition identifies *dweorg* as "convulsions." In his more recent study of the word, Conan Doyle argues that there is a "perceptible shift in the meaning of the Old English term *dweorg*, from a supernatural or magical creature that could cause disease, as fossilized in the narrative charms of the *Lacnunga*, to a term denoting the disease itself, with a wholly physical aetiology, as seen in the *Peri didaxeon* and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. It is not necessarily a temporal factor that denotes the shift in semantic sense, but rather a factor of the register of the text in which it occurs" (117). He adds that the translation of *febrem* as *dweorg* in these two texts indicates that *dweorg* there indicates a medical condition, not a "supernatural pathogen." A similar argument could be made

[91] Note that there is an error here in the electronic corpus entry, a digital version of de Vriend's edition: de Vriend (as well as C. and BT) have *togang*, while the online version has *togan*. Regarding my translation: I have followed Cockayne in translating *togang* as "access," but BT offers "access, approach." This definition itself echoes the blurring of the distinction between external and internal discussed in this section.

regarding *scinlac* and perhaps even the devils of devil-sickness. The notable finding here is a lack of a clear distinction between symptom and external cause, which is in line with the prescription of many of the same recipes for treatment and prevention, as well as the use of *yfel* as a term for illness both inside and outside the body. Despite the interaction of body and environment in the humoral understanding of medicine, recipes such as this one cannot reasonably be read as humoral in their action: a white hound, after all, should be no different humorally from a hound of any other color, but would have been understood to offer protection against hostile forces, as in 10.14 (against *scin*).

Given the confusion of internal and external in the preventive material in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, it should be no surprise that the text includes recipes that are environmentally as well as personally protective. As in the *Herbarium*, one finds instructions for driving away snakes by burning ingredients; in the case of 3.19, both the dispersal by smoke and physical possession of *heortes mearh*, "hart's marrow," are recommended for putting snakes to flight. An amulet carried on the body, unlike an ingredient that is burned, can be carried while traveling, as in 10.3's suggestion of a wolf's hair for protection from wolves while on a journey. Note that the hair is said to protect the wearer from injury and fear—its effect is outward and inward at once. In addition, the negative emotion is displaced onto the wolf, which the reader is told will feel sorrow (*sorgað*). This prescription's degree of emphasis on feelings other than physical suffering is unusual for the herbals, but its claim to affect threats at a distance is not, as we have seen in the dispersal recipes from both the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* and *Herbarium*.

The most elaborate example of a prophylactic measure influencing the wider environment as well as the individual user appears in 1.2, which includes the use of an amulet and two incantations to protect against the harmful effects of a heavenly body (*tungol*) and dangerous weather (its effect on pestilence and evil has already been discussed). The amulet is made by knocking out the teeth of a badger while it is still alive, then winding the teeth in cloth and working them in gold or silver.[92] While the badger is being killed, the following is to be said: *On naman þæs ælmihtigan Godes ic þe ofslea 7 þe þine teþ of abeate*, "In the name of the Almighty God,[93] I slay you and I beat your teeth from you." Alternatively, the right front foot of the badger may be kept for protection, after it is claimed with the words, *On naman þæs lifigendan Godes ic þe nime to læcedome*, "In the name of the living God, I take you as a leechdom." There is some resemblance here to the incantation in *Herbarium* 176.1 (mentioned earlier):[94] both are in the form of a direct address to the future ingredient, call upon God, are meant to be performed at the time of harvesting, and are supposed to be effective against storms. Such complicated procedures are not representative of either text, but it is not difficult to find recipes that include at least one of these elements, especially if protection against evil or evil things is included in the list. The first chapter of the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, then, despite its origin as a separate text, represents an especially dramatic intersection of features without departing in any fundamental way

[92] One also finds a reference to a precious metal in 6.12, which requires the user to draw the brain of a goat through a gold ring.
[93] My translation. Cockayne omits both invocations: "There is no need to imitate the irreverence of the text" (1:327).
[94] "I beseech you, *ricinum* plant, that you be present at my song and that you turn away hail and lightning bolts and all roughness, through the name of almighty God who commanded that you be made" (176.1, my translation).

from the beliefs that govern the rest of the recipes—its irreconcilability with humoral medicine is merely more exaggerated, the body protected from the environment by vividly non-humoral means.

The *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*: Conclusions

The *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, despite its relatively short length, includes prophylactic material that seems to be in line with views of prevention expressed in the *Herbarium*: that it is possible through a wide variety of processes involving a wide variety of ingredients, and that while certain ailments may be most often described as susceptible to prevention, there is considerable variety among these as well. The preventive recipes, like those of the *Herbarium*, include those that are individually or environmentally protective and those that prevent the return of recurring illnesses. The latter category is dominated by recipes intended to prevent apparitions—effectively, visual communication of illness—and also features *wol*, "pestilence" or communicable disease. In these recipes, especially, it is clear that the modern distinctions between cause and symptom, and individual and environmental protection are not at work: apparitions may be a product of illness or beings that cause it, while *yfel* may be a quality of a substance in the body, a descriptor for men against whom the user requires protection, or an abstract force with the potential to manifest itself in a body as illness. The preventive recipes derive their power from an ability to transcend the same boundaries that these illnesses do. Recipes taken internally have external effects and *vice versa*, and amulets' reach extends beyond their wearers. Most significantly, there

is no indication that these preventive measures are based upon a humoral understanding of health.

Prevention and Disease Causation: General Conclusions

The evidence of the preventive recipes in the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* suggests that, contrary to previous scholarship (most notably Jolly), neither text should be considered a work of humoral medicine in its Old English versions. However explicitly humoral the source texts, the Old English translations—and for the most part, the Latin analogues offered by de Vriend—rarely mention humors and do not frame the effectiveness of their ingredients in terms of humoral adjustment. This does not mean that, for example, a recipe involving purgation cannot be understood in humoral terms, merely that the reader is generally given recipes without any instruction as to systems of medical thought that might explain their effectiveness. In the absence of such a framework, the preventive material (the ailments identified as preventable, as well as the distribution, preparation, and employment of prophylactic measures) provides some evidence of how disease might have been conceptualized in the abstract, outside the body that would define it through symptoms. This chapter's survey of preventive medicine in the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* suggests a developing concept of disease as *attor*, "poison," or *yfel*, "evil." These terms appear in relation to both concrete external threats, such as snakes and mad dogs, and in relation to devil-sickness and apparitions, connecting two seemingly unrelated categories of harm by pointing to a belief in a hostile force capable of motivating attack or appearing in visions. At the very least, the

two texts made such a belief available to their Anglo-Saxon readers; more ambitiously, I would argue that their language, the result of translation, helped generate this concept rather than merely transmitting it.

Besides the scarcity of explicitly humoral language, two textual conditions in particular facilitate conceptualization of disease as poison or evil: blurring of the distinction between harmful substances and their sources (generally creatures or other beings), and the related collapse of the distinction between preventive medicine's internal and external effects. These characteristics are especially clear in the first of the two previously established categories of preventable ailment (animal-related, both individually and environmentally protective). Both texts pair snakes with *attor*, the *Herbarium* repeatedly (47.2, 135.3, 163.2, 179.1); less frequently, they also describe dogs as poison-bearing. Healing after an attack requires removal of *attor*, as in the following examples:

> Wið nædran slite, sceaf gate horn on þry scenceas & þare ylcan gate meolc wið wine gemencgede on þry siþas drince. Syllice hyt þæt attor tosceadeþ.
>
> For snake-bite, shave off shavings of a goat's horn into three cups, and let *the man* drink at three times milk of the same goat mingled with wine; it separates out the poison wonderfully.
>
> Wid wedehundes slite, hundes heafod gebærned to acxan & þæron gedon, eall þæt attor & þa fulnysse hyt ut awyrpeð & þa wedendan bitas gehæleþ.
>
> For the bite of a mad dog, [use] a dog's head burnt to ashes and applied there; it casts out all the poison and the foulness, and heals the maddening bites.

In these non-preventive examples, the action of the remedy is described in terms of expulsive movement, and as already discussed, the mechanisms of treatment and prevention are the same. Just as remedies expel the poison delivered by animals,

prophylactic measures drive the animals themselves away. In such a context, it is easy for the threat (*attor*) to become detached from the creature bearing it, and for prevention to involve the expulsion of something characterized only by its status as a danger to human beings: *attor* becomes an abstract manifestation of a menace that had previously been embodied and subject to the physical constraints of its carrier. One is thus able to encounter it, for example, in *Herbarium* 179.1's list of dangers warded off by the herb *priapisci*: devil-sickness, snakes, wild animals, poison, "any threat," envy, terror, and anger.

A similar if somewhat more complex shift happens with *yfel*. In the phrase *yfelan wætan*—rare in the *Herbarium* and not found in the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*—it is usually translated by modern scholars as "evil humors." The Latin of De Vriend's analogues suggests a more basic meaning of "accumulated fluids" for the Old English, which is used to translate several different terms: for 125.1's *Wið ealle gegaderunga þæs yfelan wætan of þam lichoman*, MS Ca has *Ad apostema*, while 181.1's *Wið þone yfelan wætan þæs lichaman*, corresponds to MS A's *corpus humoribus per vomitum purgat*.[95] In 169.1 and 173.3, *yfel* is used in what appears to be the same sense, only without *wætan*, as though the word, with its sometimes humoral connotations, is no longer necessary:

> Wið cyrnlu & wið ealle yfele gegaderunga genim þysse wyrte sædes gecnucudes an elefæt ful & twegen bollan fulle wæteres, mengc tosomne, syle drincan. (169.1)

[95] One might expect *yfelan wætan* and *wæterseocnysse*, usually translated "dropsy," to overlap in translation, but remedies *ad ydropicam* are consistently translated as for *wæterseocnysse*.

> For hard swellings and all evil accumulations, take the seeds of this plant pounded in one oil jar and two cups of water, mix them together, give this to drink.
>
> Wið þæra breosta geswel genim ðas ylcan wyrte to clyþan geworhte, lege to ðam breostan. Ealle þa yfelan gegaderungæ onbutan þa breost heo tofereð. (173.3)
>
> For swelling of the breasts, take the same plant made into a poultice, and put it on the breasts. It will dispel all the evil accumulations from the breast.

Note especially 169.1's *wið ealle yfele gegaderunga* in comparison to 125.1's *ealle gegaderunga þæs yfelan wætan of þam lichoman*. Outside an explicitly humoral framework, *wætan* means (as its non-medical usage suggests), "wetness" or "moisture," a term sufficiently vague that it can be left implied. In 169.1 and 173.3, it is clear even without *wætan* that *yfel* is not being used primarily in a moral sense, but in the sense of "abnormal" or "diseased."[96]

This brings us back to the evidence of the preventive recipes. The phrase y*felan wætan* may not appear in the context of prophylaxis, but as the earlier sections of this chapter show, *yfel* does feature in preventive medicine in both the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. It is used to describe both ailments and dangers—there are evil men, evil eyes, and evil medicines—and it is not always possible to tell when evil is a quality of beings or substances and when it is a *motivation*, a force or entity that manifests itself externally in men or other threats, and internally in the form of disease symptoms.[97] It should come as no surprise, then, that *yfel* appears in

[96] Indeed, Van Arsdall translates *yfelan gegaderungæ* in 173.3 as "diseased matter" (in this context, "matter" would refer to pus or other fluids responsible for swelling rather than to something solid).

[97] In the *Herbarium*, for example, one finds *yfel* used to describe, among other things, a bad smell (100.6), a wound (122.2), boils (141.1), bruises (153.3), and swelling (158.3, 182.1). In

prescriptions that also target devil-sickness and visions or apparitions: conditions in which the sick person occupies a strangely intermediate state, in contact (visual or otherwise) with what is not ordinarily perceptible. This potential to signify both physical conditions and immaterial or typically invisible threats is not a product of *yfel*'s historical use in humoral medicine; in fact, the lack of a specifically humoral context encourages such interaction of the word's physical and spiritual-moral meanings.

Like *attor*, then, *yfel* is used to characterize harmful substances and is able, as a noun, to represent those substances on its own; in the abstract, *yfel* like *attor* can represent disease outside the body, illness in its pre-symptomatic (and thus pre-definable) state. The vocabulary of expulsion is at least as prominent in prescriptions involving *yfel* as in those addressing *attor*. This is especially obvious in treatments for swellings and similar ailments—which favor verbs of dispersal such as *toferan* and *tolisan*—but is also evident in measures targeting less clearly physical evils, as in *Herbarium* 132.6:

> Gyf hwa hwylce hefige yfelnysse on his hofe geseo genime þas wyrte mandragoram onmiddan þam huse, swa mycel swa he þonne hæbbe. Ealle yfelu heo ut anydeð.
>
> If anyone perceives any serious evil in his house, take the mandrake plant, as much as one has of it, to the center of the house. It will expel all evil.

Given their similarities in usage, one might expect to find *attor* and *yfel* confused in the text, or at least targeted by the same remedies. Chapter 73.1 in the

---

treatment, the connection to unwanted fluid accumulation tends to remain even without the presence of *wætan*.

Herbarium, which recommends *uerbascus/feltwyrt* against both wild animals and evil, offers one example; *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* 1.2 might be considered another, as it is protective against evil men, evil generally, and disease in animals. But such overlap is surprisingly rare. Rather than identifying disease outside the body as *attor* or *yfel*, the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* offer both terms as possibilities without making them synonymous: *yfel* still retains an association with liquids and swelling, while *attor* is remains much heavily associated with animals than *yfel*. Note that the terms are most distinct in their most clearly material contexts, while in their disembodied form, both can be said to mean "disease," even if *yfel* carries a stronger connotation of active hostility. It is likely that the fact that each text was copied in its entirety from the Latin helped prevent a more complete collapse of the distinctions between the terms (*venenum*, for example, is more specific in meaning than *attor*, which is generally used to translate it).

In conclusion, neither the *Herbarium* nor the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* presents disease as a problem with the balance of the humors: diet and bloodletting, staples of most humoral medicine, are generally ignored, and there is little suggestion of environmental factors (such as wind) causing disease by affecting the humors. Without these elements, the reader is left to divine beliefs about the causes of disease from the recipes themselves: their ingredients, preparation, employment, and intended effects. Analysis of the preventive recipes suggests that disease was understood to exist outside the body and could be witnessed by those who were already sick (through delirium, dreams, visions). Those manifestations, however, like any other symptoms, were products of disease, not disease itself. To speak of disease in the

abstract—outside the body, before it produces any symptom by which it can be diagnosed—the Old English offers *attor* and *yfel*, words with powerful roles outside the medical corpus, especially in the religious context.

Poison Across the Herbals

Since the later chapters of this study explore the importance of medical language outside the herbals, drawing especially upon the concept of poison, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of *attor* in the remaining herbals before concluding. This overview is based on a survey of *attor* that I conducted across the recipe-books, gathering basic information about every use of the term in these texts. The results can be found in the Appendix. The survey found remedies or rituals related to *attor* in all of the major herbals, and the vast majority of these measures respond to one of four categories of poisoning: animal bites and stings, ingestion, "flying poison" (*fleogendum atre*), and poison not otherwise specified. Since *Bald's Leechbook*, *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga* do not add much to the limited information about ingested poisons available through the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, the analysis below focuses on the other three categories, in particular, the relationship between animal poisons and flying poison. It demonstrates that, despite sometimes drastic differences in vocabulary, the five major herbals share an underlying concept of poison as an immaterial or at least invisible force that is able to produce disease or injury in the flesh. While *attor* makes people sick, certain animals serve (to borrow a modern term) as carriers, delivering disease through bites. Such direct contact, however, is not always required: in *Bald's Leechbook*, *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*,

flying poison is described as a threat that can cause harm both directly and through animals. The *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, which do not refer to flying poison, nevertheless present evidence of an immaterial threat capable of material harm, using *yfel* and other terms.

Besides the obvious snakes, the herbals mention a variety of other animals as potential threats with respect to *attor*. Sometimes these animals appear in lists, with the same prescription said to be effective protection against all of them. A good example of this is a prayer or charm that appears in both chapter 45 of *Leechbook I* and chapter 76 of *Lacnunga*, as well as outside the herbals.[98] Since the animals in this "all creatures" charm[99] are grouped together because of their poisonous nature, they can be tentatively categorized as poisonous elsewhere in the herbals, even when the word *attor* does not appear. As it turns out, this vocabulary is almost exclusive (within the medical corpus) to the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*.

"Tentatively categorized" is a key phrase here: this passage is unusual in several respects, including its length and extended use of Latin. In the *Leechbook I* version, it follows a series of more straightforward remedies for poison and consists of

[98] For example, it appears in the additions to the Durham Ritual manuscript (Durham, Cathedral Library, A.iv.19), where the Latin text has been glossed in Old English. The Old English, unavailable in the herbals, reads: *In god min & fæder & svnv & gast halig ðæm alle vnderðiodded aron & ðæm ælc giscæft giheres & ælc onwæld vnderbeged is & onscynað & ondredað & se dræcca fleeð & svigað sio hætt'ne & sceomiende ða ðio is acvoeden tosca gilattia ðio nedre se gidrysnad f'cummen sie æc spilæg se ætt'ne noht sceððende' givyrca & alle ða ætt'na & geet ł ða rifista feerræsenda æc netna sceðend' sie aðiostrado & alle wiðirweardo hæles mennis' wyrttrvm' giscrinca hia ðv gidrysne ðis ætt'ne attor voercdedo his deaðberendo & ætt'no ða in him hæfeð giidla ðu & sel in onsione ðinvm allvm ða ðv gisceope ego þætte hia gisii eara þætte hia gihera hearta & micilnise ðin hia ongette* (Thompson and Lindelöf 125).

[99] Unlike some of the other charms and prayers, this one has not acquired a standard editorial title; I generally refer to it as the Latin "all creatures" charm.

a *gealdor*, an incantation or charm, that the user is instructed to sing three times in Latin. The text reads, in part, as follows:[100]

> Deus meus et pater et filius et Spiritus Sanctus, cui omnia subiecta sunt, cui omnis creatura deseruit et omnis potestas subiecta est, et metuit et expauescit et draco fugit et suit uipera et rubeta illaque dicitur rana quieta torpescit, et scorpius extinguitur et regulus uincitur et spelaius nihil noxium operatur et omnia uenenata et adhuc ferociora repentie et animalia noxia tenebantur et omnes aduerse salutis humane radices arescunt. Tu, domine, extingue hoc uenenatum uirus extingue operationes eius mortiferas et uires quas in se habet euacua et da in conspectu tuo omnibus quos tu creasti oculos ut uideant aures ut audiant cor ut magnitudinem tuam intellegunt… (Deegan 78)
>
> My God and Father and Son and Holy Spirit, to whom all things are subject, whom every creature serves and to whose power each is subject and [whose power] the dragon fears and dreads and flees, and the viper and the toad are accustomed to [flee], and that [creature] called the quiet frog grows numb, and the scorpion is destroyed and the basilisk is conquered and the *spelaius* spider works nothing harmful, and all venomous things and ferocious crawling things and harmful animals are afraid and all things adverse to human health wither at their roots. You, Lord, destroy this venomous poison, destroy its death-bearing works and [purge] the powers that it has within it, and to all things in your sight that you created, give eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to understand your greatness…

In this passage, poison or venom is not restricted to snakes but appears to be the characteristic by which snakes and certain toads, frogs, and spiders are grouped together (along with whatever plant life is meant to wither at its roots). There is also an implication of unity among these things, which are described as the "death-bearing works" of a singular "venomous poison" that has powers within itself. The text does not go so far as to attribute awareness to this *virus*, yet it is clearly something understood to exist not just in the individual body of a creature but in the world at large, as if living things draw it from a reservoir.

[100] I have used Deegan's edition for this quotation rather than Cockayne's, since the latter adds his own notes to the passage. The translation is my own.

While these two quoted passages are atypical in many of their features, several of these creatures do appear together with snakes elsewhere in the herbals. The *Herbarium* repeatedly pairs snakes (or *næddercynn* more generally) with scorpions in remedies,[101] at one point prescribing a healing drink "for bites of the snake that is called a scorpion," *wið þære nædran slite ðe man* scorpius *hateþ* (117.5), an identification also found in the Durham Ritual analogue to the *Leechbook I* charm, where the Latin *scorpius* is glossed *nedre.* Even more expansive is a prescription in the *Herbarium* intended "for bites of the snakes that are called *spalangiones* spiders and scorpions," *wið þæra nædrena slite þe man* spalangiones *& scorpiones nemneð* (135.4).[102] Similarly, the table of contents entry for chapter 174 of the *Herbarium* mentions *wyrma spalangiones hataþ*. Another word for a spider, *attorcoppe*, appears in both the *Herbarium* (4.8) and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* (5.10). Finally, and more unexpectedly, these two recipe-books also associate dogs with poison-bearing creatures: specifically, the "mad dog," *wedehund* in Old English and *canis rabidus* in Latin analogues.[103] *Herbarium* 173.4 recommends the herb *eringius* for "sting of a scorpion and for all bites from snakes and mad dogs," *wið scorpiones stingc & wið ealra næddercynna slitas & eac wið wedehundes slite*.

---

[101] See also *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* 5.15, a remedy for treating bites from snakes and scorpions.

[102] This collapse of the distinction between snakes and scorpions is also evident elsewhere outside the medical corpus, perhaps most strikingly in Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*, where the month of November is identified with "*scorpius*, *næddre*" (Baker and Lapidge, 2.1.327).

[103] While the herbals do not describe the symptoms of rabies, aside from being *wede,* hydrophobia (the characteristic symptom of rabies for classical authors like Celsus) is mentioned in one of the Latin versions of the *Herbarium.* It is absent in the Old English text. Treatment for rabies in Celsus is focused on overcoming the hydrophobia (5.27), but only one of the Old English *Herbarium* remedies for the bite of mad dogs is taken in liquid form. This is more likely due to a focus on treating the external injury than to any concern about hydrophobia, as the other remedies involve salves and plasters.

These prescriptions suggest that the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* group creatures together as poisonous if they are considered inherently harmful or hostile to humans, even if they are not necessarily venomous in the modern sense of the word. Such a grouping is sometimes indicated by the use of the term *næddercynn*, which appears repeatedly in the *Herbarium*—usually with *eal*, to emphasize its breadth—but is almost entirely absent from the other major herbals.[104] *Nædder-*, understood this way, is not a snake but a quality that can manifest itself in many different forms, like the *venenatum virus* of the Latin charm with its deadly works.

Before proceeding to discussion of animal poisons in the remaining three recipe-books, I want to mention one final example of poison as both an abstract threat and a specific one embodied in animals. It can be found in chapter 179 of the *Herbarium*, which lists the virtues of the herb *priapisci* or *uicaperuica* (identified by Van Arsdal as "greater periwinkle," 227).[105]

> Ðeos wyrt þe man priapisci & oðrum naman uicaperuica nemneð to manegum þingon wel fremað, þæt ys þonne ærest ongean deofulseocnyssa & wið nædran & wið wildeor & wið attru & wið gehwylce behatu & wið andan & wið ogan & þæt ðu gife hæbbe; & gif ðu þas wyrte mid þe hafast ðu bist gesælig & symle gecweme; ðas wyrte þu scealt niman þus cweþende: te precor uicaperuica multis utilitatibus habenda ut uenias ad me hilaris florens cum tuis uirtutibus, ut ea mihi prestes, ut tutus et felix sim semper a uenenis et ab iracundia inlesus; þæt ys þonne on ure geþeode, ic bidde þe, uica peruica , manegum nytlicnyssum to hæbbenne, þæt ðu glæd to me cume mid þinum mægenum blowende, þæt ðu me gegearwie þæt ic sy gescyld & symle gesælig & ungedered fram attrum & fram yrsunge.

[104] It also appears in *MDQ* 7.4 and in *LB2* 66, an anomalous chapter dedicated to enumerating the protective powers of the stone called *gagates*. Meaney notes that, while *gagates* is translated as "agate" by Cockayne, it is clear from descriptions in other Anglo-Saxon sources that the stone is actually jet ("Alfred" 73).

[105] An excerpt from this passage was briefly discussed earlier for its preventive element.

> This plant, called priapisci or uicaperuica, is beneficial against many things, first against devil-sickness and against snakes and against wild animals and against poison and against every threat and against malice and against terror, and [with that plant] you may obtain grace; and if you have this plant with you, you are happy and always content. You must pick this plant speaking thus…which is in our tongue: I beseech you, uica peruica, you having many useful properties, that you come to me gladly with your powers blossoming, that you make me ready so that I may be protected and always happy and unharmed by poison and by anger.

While the term *næddercynn* does not appear in this chapter, the text combines material threats—snakes and wild animals—with a remarkably wide range of immaterial ones. These includes emotions that might motivate harm, so that human hostility, fear, and anger are placed in parallel to *attor*. In a sense, people themselves have the potential to become *næddercynn* if they become "possessed" by dangerous emotions, and those who wish to defend themselves against such poison can employ the same measures used for protection from snakes.

The vocabulary used to talk about poisonous creatures in *Bald's Leechbook*, *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga* differs considerably from that employed in the two texts just discussed. The terms *scorpius*, *spalangiones/spelaius*, and *attorcoppe* do not appear in these other herbals (except in the previously quoted Latin incantation).[106] Scorpions are absent altogether and spiders are identified as *hunta*, *swiðre*, and *gangelwefra*. These terms appear, for example, in the table of contents entry for chapter 68 of *Leechbook I*, where they are used synonymously. While these spider-words do not appear in remedies with snakes or *attor*, chapter 68 describes treatments for spider-bite that involve rituals intended to protect against *yfel*: these instruct the user to draw blood from near the bite wound and throw it across the road, thus

[106] There is also only one reference to mad dogs outside the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, in LB1 69.1.

symbolically expelling the *yfel* from the environment, not just the body itself. This is suggestive of a threat that is both immaterial and material, like *attor* in the *Herbarium* manifesting itself in *næddercynn*.

The absence of *næddercynn* as a grouping term in *Bald's Leechbook*, *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*[107] raises the question of whether the same concept (or some aspect of it) might be present in those texts under a different name. This brings us to another category of poison identified in the survey: flying poison, *fleogendum attre.* It appears in *Leechbook I* (5 out of 45 mentions of *attor*), *Leechbook II* (2 of 4), and also in *Lacnunga* (7 of 28). Though some of these remedies lack any herbal ingredients, others do contain plants, so the absence of flying poison from the *Herbarium* cannot be attributed to a belief that herbs are ineffective in preventing or treating problems associated with this form of *attor*. In fact, the greatest concentration of references to flying poison occurs in *Lacnunga*'s Nine Herbs Charm (chapter 76), which evokes the powers of various plants against poison and "flier(s)," *wið attre 7 onflyge*, a pairing that is repeated four times with some variation in spelling and number.[108] The first three times, an additional item is added to the list—the charm is said to be effective against "the harmful one (*laðan*) that travels throughout the land." Elsewhere, the charm is described functioning against snakes, the hand of the devil, and bewitchment by vile beings (*minra wihta*),[109] as well as against worm-blisters,

[107] With the exception of the "all creatures" charm.
[108] Pettit translates *onflyge*, a word unique to this charm, as "flying disease," a reading that captures the sense of an oncoming threat. In his commentary, he also offers the more literal "a flight/flier on or against (mankind)" (2:125–126).
[109] Like much of the vocabulary in this charm, the meaning of *minra wihta* is not entirely clear. See Pettit for some examples of *minra* elsewhere in Old English, referring to devils and murderers (2:153).

water-blisters, thorn-blisters, thistle-blisters, ice-blisters, and poison-blisters. This list suggests a broad understanding of "poison and fliers" that encompasses immaterial (or at least unseen) threats as well as the more material and specific snakes and blisters—a range of meaning similar to that of *næddercynn* in the *Herbarium* and Latin charm.

The Nine Herbs Charm, like the Latin "all creatures" charm, is atypical in many of its features and uses the two-part *attre 7 onflyge* rather than the *fleogendum attre* found elsewhere in the herbals. Yet flying poison has similar characteristics in the other passages where it occurs. In chapter 18 of *Lacnunga*, it appears in a remedy for a salve against "flying poison and sudden rashes," *fleogendum attre 7 færspringum*,[110] a pairing similar to that of the "fliers" and blisters. In *Leechbook I*, amid chapter 45's long list of poison-related prescriptions, one finds a description of a ritual effective against "flying poison and every poisonous swelling," *fleogendum atre 7 ælcum æternum swile* (45.5).[111] It is also said to work for deep wounds, reinforcing the notion that poison is susceptible to the same measures whether in the air or in the body and blurring the distinction between prevention and cure.[112] The same chapter

[110] Pettit translates this unique compound as "sudden eruptions" The component *spryng*, associated with water and rising up, suggests a wet rash of some kind. Bosworth-Toller suggests "sudden pustule, ulcer of a rash."

[111] Grendon translates *fleogendum atre* as "infectious disease" here (197). While it is tempting to update the language this way, doing so imposes a modern understanding of disease on the medieval material. Meaney takes a middle road and translates this literally as "onflier" while speculating elsewhere that the evidence of flying poison in the Old English medical texts points to "bacterial infection, which is indeed airborne in dirt and dust, and makes some wounds turn bad but not others" ("Causes" 16).

[112] This ritual, which immediately follows the previously quoted "all creatures" charm against poison, includes a variety of apparently magical elements, including butter from a one-colored animal and a nonsensical incantation (falsely identified as Scottish in the table of contents).

may also connect poison to another invisible threat in the air: it describes a drink said to be effective for treating snake-bite and for "whatever comes from shots" (45.1).[113]

On the evidence of the prescriptions against flying poison discussed thus far, it would be reasonable to conclude—as Charles Singer does, with his "doctrine of specific venoms"—that the mention of flying poison is a reliable predictor of a remedy's Germanic or "Native Teutonic" origin (13). These passages contain no obviously Mediterranean elements such as references to desert animals or classical gods; in addition, the Nine Herbs Charm mentions Woden, the ritual in *Leechbook I* 45.5 references Scottish or Gaelic, and there is at least an indirect connection between flying poison and elf-shot ("the doctrine of the elf-shot" being another one of Singer's four doctrines). There are, however, two more occasions of *fleogendum atre* in the herbals, and these passages complicate the picture by specifically indicating their debt to Mediterranean or Middle Eastern sources. Whether or not these references are historically accurate—and we may never know—they show that flying poison was considered appropriate to a wider variety of contexts than Singer's doctrine would indicate.

The first of these two passages, found in chapter 72 of *Leechbook I*, recommends against bloodletting during a period when "all poisonous things fly and harm people greatly." If someone does let blood or drink a medical potion that might put a strain on the body, the text indicates that he should follow the custom of the Romans and stay indoors, avoiding the air while it is "boiling [hot]" and

[113] Cockayne, ed.: *Hwæt hwega þæs þe fram scottum come* (45.1). More literally, "Whatever of that which comes from shots."

"poisonous."[114] Meaney, while noting that this passage "must be ultimately from a Mediterranean source," adds that "the same idea appears in the [Nine Herbs Charm] in *Lacnunga*…where the terms *attor* 'poison' and *onflyge* 'flier' are complementary" ("Causes" 16). While there is a greater emphasis on the seasons in this case, the idea that the body is vulnerable to unseen poisons in the environment—poisons that may affect the body materially, through the blood or humors—is consistent with the other passages that offer defense against flying poison.

Something similar happens in chapter 64 of *Leechbook II*, which presents itself as a letter to King Alfred from "Dominus Helias, patriarch in Jerusalem."[115] The first part of the letter has been lost, but the remainder includes the only mention of theriac in the herbals; strangely, this does not include any mention of poison, just "internal weaknesses."[116] The text does, however, warn twice against the dangers of being exposed to the wind after consuming theriac, even mixed with water and strained through cloth, a warning that is similar to the one in *Leechbook I*, chapter 72. Next, the chapter describes a "white stone" as effective "against a stitch and against flying poison and against all strange afflictions," *wiþ stice 7 wiþ fleogendum attre 7 wiþ eallum uncuþum brocum*. This brings together the external, invisible threat of flying poison with the physical experience of the stitch, all while acknowledging the need for comprehensive protection.

---

114 Cockayne, ed.: *ealle æterno þing fleogaþ 7 mannum swiðe deriað; lyfte wylme 7 æternesse* (LB1 72).

115 It is unclear whether this is genuine. Cameron notes: "According to Asser, Alfred's biographer, Elias sent letters and gifts to Alfred; from Asser and Alfred himself we also learn that Alfred suffered from some distressing but undiagnosed ailment. It is likely that among the letters and gifts from the patriarch were medicines and directions for their use" (73). This is somewhat speculative but not unreasonable.

116 Cockayne, ed.: *innoð tyndernessum* (LB2 64)

Taken collectively, the evidence related to flying poison—from the Nine Herbs Charm to the uses of the white stone—suggests that this type of poison is defined by its ability to exist outside the body as an abstract threat and to manifest itself in a variety of forms, from snakes to the devil. This definition is also consistent with poison as it is depicted in content that is apparently Mediterranean in origin or influence, such as the *Herbarium* chapter on the properties of periwinkle and the Latin "all creatures" charm with its non-native animals. While the terms *fleogendum atre* and *næddercynn* do not appear in the same texts, they overlap in meaning: the former emphasizes poison in its disembodied state and the latter emphasizes its embodiment in animal form, but both describe a threat that can shift between immaterial and physical states to violate the human body.[117]

The combined evidence of the preventive prescriptions and the remedies for poison demonstrates that the five major herbals, despite differences in vocabulary and emphasis, have more in common than scholars have traditionally recognized. The *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, set aside by Jolly and others as "classical," "humoral," or otherwise foreign to Anglo-Saxon medicine, are not in fact governed by a humoral understanding of health and disease. They show little concern for the balance of fluids in the body, and their consideration of effect of the larger environment on health (in terms of seasons, weather, and astrology) is generally limited to its influence on the plant life used in medical treatment. Instead, like *Bald's Leechbook*, *Leechbook III*, and *Lacnunga*, these two texts feature a combination of straightforward recipes—those that simply recommend a plant or animal part for a

[117] There is evidence of shared meaning outside the medical corpus as well, such as the metaphor of flying arrows as "war-snakes" in line 222 of *Judith* (ed. Dobbie).

particular application—and prescriptions that involve ritual elements such as incantations and prayers. Items in the latter category are most often (though not exclusively) intended to treat or prevent ailments that are dramatic in their symptoms, difficult to localize on the body, or mysterious in their cause.

The analysis of preventive medicine in the *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* suggested a concept of disease outside the body as *attor* (or less commonly *yfel*). My survey of *attor* across the herbals indicates that all five texts feature a concept of poison as an immaterial force that is nevertheless able to corrupt or wound the body. Whether acting through intermediaries such as animals or striking patients directly—provoking otherwise inexplicable symptoms—poison is especially frightening because of its reach and its inexhaustibility. These qualities are exactly what make *attor* so valuable in medical metaphors throughout Anglo-Saxon literature: among many other functions, it is used to characterize hell with its endless torment, demons assaulting saints, sin spreading through communities, and the damaging effects of grief. The chapters that follow explore some of these examples.

CHAPTER 2

BITTER WINE FROM A BITTER VINE: DEATH AND DYING IN *GUTHLAC B*

The reader encountering the poem *Guthlac B* for the first time is likely to be struck by the imagery in its opening scene, which offers an account of the Fall. While familiar for the most part, this retelling stands out for its transformation of the forbidden fruit into a drink. As the poet writes: "The drink was prepared that Eve brewed for Adam at the beginning of the world. The Enemy first poured it for that woman, and she afterward gave Adam, her own dear husband, that bitter cup to drink."[118] Having swallowed death, so to speak, Adam and all his descendants are condemned to the miseries involved in mortal life, including suffering from disease. The poem emphasizes the universality of this suffering, pointing out that even wise and holy men are doomed to physical torment. On this fatalistic note, the poem shifts abruptly to praise of the healing miracles of Saint Guthlac—a jolting transition, considering that the previous lines have stressed the inevitably temporary nature of all worldly healing. At this point, one might expect a reference to Christ and the hope of eternal life, but the poem instead plunges into a detailed account of Guthlac's battle against the demons assaulting his fenland hermitage. This battle, which comes to

[118] 980b–985a: *bryþen wæs ongunnen, þætte Adame Eue gebyrmde æt fruman worulde. Feond byrlade ærest þære idese 7 heo Adame, hyre swæsum were, siþþan scencte bittor bædeweg* (Roberts 112). This is a restatement of the idea from later in the poem. Note that I do not impose line breaks on translations from this poem—the word order in the translations differs enough from the Old English that the positioning of breaks cannot accurately reflect the OE edition.

represent the saint's struggle with his final illness, presents a second metaphor for death: rather than drinking from a bitter cup, one fights a war that cannot be won. Both metaphors persist throughout the poem, suggesting that they are intended to work together. But what do these two representations of death accomplish together that either could not manage alone?

This chapter looks to the poem's medical language to answer that question. Previous scholarship considering *Guthlac B* in light of Anglo-Saxon medicine has tended to be concerned with retrospective diagnosis rather than with the linguistic or thematic features of the poem; as a result, mainstream scholarship on *Guthlac B* has proceeded without detailed consideration of the poem's medically meaningful language and its possible implications for our reading. While nearly all scholarship on the poem addresses the theme of death to some degree—its representation in the poem or the characters' attitudes and responses to it—few papers have examined death in *Guthlac B* with reference to medicine, except for occasional speculation that Guthlac's illness is malarial. Contributing to this omission is the tendency of modern scholars to consider Guthlac's death apart from his illness and the language of illness, in support of arguments about the poem's theological message. These arguments, for all their value, center scholarship on *Guthlac B* on the final, incomplete fitt, with less attention to the first three. One notable exception is a series of papers on the *poculum mortis* tradition in medieval literature and its manifestation in *Guthlac B*; but even this scholarship tends to pass over the second fitt, with its depiction of the saint's suffering, in favor of the "drink of death" passages from the first and third.

This chapter proceeds on the premise that illness has meaning in *Guthlac B*

beyond satisfaction of a hagiographic requirement of suffering—that the language used to describe the saint's physical and spiritual experience of disease is distinctive and significant for interpretation of other aspects of the poem, including the *poculum mortis*. It argues, on the basis of evidence from the medical corpus, that the two primary representations of death in the poem, as a defensive battle and as a drink, are united by the experience of bitterness; the poem exploits the dual nature of bitterness in medieval tradition, as both poison and curative, to advocate a specific approach to dying. In this view, a proper death is marked by patience, and more specifically by refusal: Guthlac's suffering, a result of Eve's serving of the bitter cup of death, evokes the moment in the Crucifixion when Christ is offered and refuses a bitter drink, and medieval commentaries on this event. To die well is to embrace the physical bitterness of death—pain, figured in terms of taste—while rejecting spiritual bitterness. Similarly, survivors should feel the physical effects of grief—compassion—while rejecting spiritually poisonous reactions to loss. The poem's medical language is uniquely suited to conveying this message.

There are three parts to this argument. The first section of this chapter, "Illness in *Guthlac B*," analyzes the poem for language related to illness, with special attention to the vocabulary discussed in Chapter 1 as important to Anglo-Saxon conceptualizations of disease. It rejects attempts at retrospective diagnosis and finds that the poet uses language that is both medically and theologically meaningful to bind the description of Guthlac's sickness and death to the Genesis account of the Fall. The second section, "Guthlac and the Drink of Death," considers the poet's handling of Genesis 2-3, including the "cup of death" imagery, through an examination of three

scholarly works on the subject, by Alexandra Olsen, Thomas Hall, and Geoffrey Russom. This section identifies useful elements in each paper as groundwork for the final section's consideration of the bitter drink of the Crucifixion. Drawing upon commentary by Augustine, Pseudo-Jerome, and to a lesser extent Bede, I argue for a layered reading of *Guthlac B*, one that recognizes the bitter drink of the Crucifixion in the bitter drink of the Fall, and the pain of each event in Guthlac's disease. I conclude with a brief consideration of Beccel and the bitterness of worldly loss set against eternal life as Guthlac's final message depicts it.

Illness in *Guthlac B*

The two Guthlac poems survive in the Exeter Book manuscript (Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501), which dates from the second half of the tenth century (Roberts 12).[119] All of the manuscript's contents, aside from first seven folios, appear to be the work of one scribe (Krapp xiii), though there is broad consensus that *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* are not the product of the same author. As Weber notes, "Assessing the relationship of the two poems is complicated somewhat by the fact that neither one can be dated securely. The only absolute limits on the poems' composition are Guthlac's death in 714 (and, for Guthlac B, the composition of Felix's Vita between 730 and 740) and the copying of the Exeter Book sometime in the late tenth century" (202). Despite their position next to each other in the manuscript, the poems differ dramatically: as Calder summarizes, "*Guthlac A* usually receives blame for being abstract, repetitive, and didactic, while *Guthlac B* customarily garners praise for its

[119] Krapp concurs: "The date of the handwriting of the Exeter Book is evidently to be placed in the second half of the tenth century" (xiii). Ker: "s. X^{2}" (153).

clarity, humanity, and poetic power" (66). There is little textual evidence that the *Guthlac B* poet was familiar with *Guthlac A* (Roberts 41), while the influence of Felix's account on *Guthlac B* is clear. As a result, *Guthlac A* is dealt with only briefly in this chapter.[120]

In *Guthlac B*, the saint's physical experience of illness is described in terms that should be familiar from the first chapter of this dissertation. These are not, despite the fenland location, the periodicity-related terms used in remedies for malarial fever in the medical corpus. Though the association of the *Guthlac* poems with malaria mostly appears outside the peer-reviewed literature, it is persistent, driven in part by the description of the demons provided by Felix's *Vita*. They are said to have "large heads, thin faces, a sallow complexion, long necks, shaggy ears, horse teeth, knotty knees, swollen ankles and spreading feet," a description that might apply at least in part to people suffering from chronic malaria.[121] In the 1880 second volume of *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines*, the author of the Guthlac article, C.W. Boase, rather poetically wonders about the real nature of the "British"-speaking demons who attack Guthlac in Felix's account: "Was it that

[120] Varying opinions among early editors as to the division(s) or lack of them within the Guthlac material led to the development of different line numbering systems, at least two of which have persisted into more modern editions and translations. For *Guthlac B*, I follow the consecutive numbering used by Jane Roberts in her 1979 edition, since this is my source for the Old English text, but the non-consecutive numbering favored by Aaron Hostetter, among others, can be derived by subtracting 818. All translations from the Old English are my own unless otherwise noted; for translations from Latin that are not my own, I generally cite a translator in text and give the Latin in footnotes. Note that I do not reproduce footnote numbers or marks indicating emendations when quoting, though quotations within quotations are maintained in their existing form and I generally acknowledge points of particular contention with respect to manuscript editions.

[121] Stedman's Medical Dictionary defines chronic malaria (typically falciparum) as characterized by "profound anemia, enlargement of the spleen, emaciation, mental depression, sallow complexion, edema of the ankles, feeble digestion, and muscular weakness" (284).

Guthlac's memory was haunted with the British of his warrior days? Or were the fens themselves held by a British remnant reduced by malaria to types of demoniacal ugliness?" (825).[122] H.C. Darby, in his 1940 *The Medieval Fenland*, describes the Anglo-Saxons' "horror of the fen," writing that "ague and malaria with their hallucinations made the life of the fenman very miserable; and it is little wonder that St Guthlac 'was greatly troubled about the undertaking he had begun, namely to dwell alone there in the wilderness'" (9).

More recent and influential are a series of publications by M.J. Dobson on the history of malaria in England, with an emphasis on the early-modern period. One of the earliest of these, published in 1989, reaches back as far as 16th century records to argue that "malaria was once indigenous to the coastal and estuarine marshes of England," and more specifically that "it seems likely that *Plasmodium vivax* and *P. malariae* were the endemic English forms rather than the more fatal *P. falciparum*" (4). The disease served as "a great debilitator," increasing the vulnerability of marshland residents to other infections, rather than killing them itself (6).[123] In her 1997 book, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*, Dobson dedicates the sixth chapter (287–367) to expanding upon the evidence for this argument, but she does not attempt to generalize back to the medieval period; indeed, she has suggested elsewhere that malaria was not endemic in England at that time.[124]

---

[122] Dobson quotes several portrayals of residents of malarial areas that are equally vivid (*Contours*, 301–303).

[123] More recently, Hutchison and Lindsay have argued that the higher mortality rate in the marsh regions in this period is attributable to "poor hygiene and sanitation" rather than malaria, resulting in outbreaks of cholera and other illnesses related to water-borne pathogens (1950).

[124] See her 1994 article in *Parassitologia*, "Malaria in England: A Geographical and Historical Perspective."

Nevertheless, her work is often cited by other scholars interested in forms of evidence that precede the surviving written records of births and deaths.[125]

Felix's description of the fenland's inhabitants is also quoted by Justin T. Noetzel in "Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens" as part of his evidence of the region's "cultural coding as the peripheral space of exiles, wanderers, and monsters" (119). Noetzel does not discuss malaria, beyond noting (with reference to Darby) that "the real threats of ague and malaria became associated with the ever-present mists and vapors" in the fens, but he argues more broadly that the dangers of the "rough and pestilential terrain" became "overshadowed by the power of the Anglo-Saxon imagination," rendering the fens "mythically monstrous" (116). While Noetzel's article is compelling and will be referenced at several points later in this chapter, it is heavily focused on *Guthlac A* and Felix's *Vita*, mentioning *Guthlac B* mostly to point out the use of particular landscape-related words (122–123). As in all the articles on fenland disease mentioned so far, Guthlac's own sickness and death are curiously absent, even as the authors acknowledge the impact of malaria and other illnesses on the local population and their view of the fens.

Guthlac B does not make diagnosing the saint with malaria (or any specific illness) an easy task. Anglo-Saxons did have language for a variety of fevers, recurrent

[125] In "Morbidity in the Marshes: Using Spatial Epidemiology to Investigate Skeletal Evidence for Malaria in Anglo-Saxon England (AD 410–1050)," R.L. Gowland and A.G. Western draw upon archaeological evidence to question Dobson's belief that the disease was not prevalent in the medieval fen country. In the process, they quote Felix's description of the fens to depict the environmental conditions residents would have faced there (Gowland 309) This description is a popular one; it is also featured, for example, in "Mapping Malaria in Anglo-Saxon England," a post by Ziegler on the history of medicine website *Contagions*.

and not, and this language does not appear in *Guthlac B*. The relatively "technical" terms that one finds in the *Herbarium*, such as *feorðan dæges fefer* (quartan fever) and *fefore þe þy ðryddan dæge on man becymeþ* (tertian fever), might be burdensome for a poet, yet *Guthlac B* lacks even the basic *fefor*. M.L. Cameron has argued, largely on the basis of similarities with Athanasius' account of St. Anthony's hallucinations, that ergotism is a more likely candidate for Guthlac's disease (154–156). He does not mention the most convincing piece of evidence for this theory, which is the poet's description of the disease as *bancoþa* (1025a). Outside of *Guthlac B*, *bancoþa* appears rarely and only in medical contexts: chapter 39 of *Leechbook I*[126] and chapter 94 of *Lacnunga*, where it refers to a skin condition. Bosworth-Toller suggests "erysipelas" (along with the more general "a baneful disease, a fatal or deadly malady"), though these texts only supply limited information about the symptoms characteristic of *bancoþa*. What is clear is that the condition is associated with a sensation of heat or burning, a symptom characteristic of erysipelas as well as ergotism and other skin ailments.[127] A retrospective diagnosis of Guthlac's illness as either malaria or ergotism might contribute to the poet's depiction of the fens as a menacing environment, but neither offers a more direct explanation of how Guthlac's disease relates to the Genesis material in the poem or to the poet's views on how to die and grieve.

A lack of diagnostic specificity (from the modern perspective) should not be confused with a lack of attention on the poet's part to Guthlac's physical and spiritual experience of terminal illness. On the contrary, the poem explores both in detail,

[126] Two examples can be found in *Leechbook I*, chapter 45, and in *Leechbook II*, chapter 65.
[127] This symptom has remained a cause of confusion between the two diagnoses. See Carleton and Kunkel for a very brief history of the terms and their relationship to "St. Anthony's Fire" (1114–1115).

relying upon two primary metaphors for the dying process: a battle against personified Death and the consumption of death as a drink. In many ways, these metaphors appear incompatible. The former characterizes the threat as something external, while in the latter, the threat comes from within. Correspondingly, the former gives the sick person an active, combative role; in the latter, he is passive, contaminated by what someone else (the ancestral Eve) has had him consume. The two metaphors also, at least at first reading, evoke different literary traditions. Critics have traditionally drawn comparisons between the personified Death of *Guthlac B* and other Old English poetry, while scholarship on the *poculum mortis* has often sought sources or influences in exegetical material. It can even be argued that this split underlies a broader division in scholarship on *Guthlac B*: on the one hand, papers concerned with the poem's fenland location, the *beorg*, monsters in marginal spaces, or physical illness in this environment; and on the other, papers concerned with the poem's theological message, the proper Christian response to death, the separation of body and soul, reunion with God after death, and the parallels between Guthlac's suffering and Christ's.

I want to begin by examining the poem's presentation of sickness and dying through each of these metaphors, with reference to some of the most prominent scholarship in each tradition. Then I will turn to the conceptualizations of disease examined in Chapter 1 to consider how these representations are united by the element of bitterness. My goal is not to argue that any particular medical text influenced *Guthlac B*—the dating of the poem and most of the medical corpus is too uncertain for that—but rather to examine the reconciliation of these representations of death in medicine as a model for analyzing them in the context of the poem. Vocabulary that is

key to this process in the medical texts is also present in *Guthlac B*, where my analysis suggests it serves a similar conciliatory function. The next section of the chapter will consider the two metaphors in the context of the Crucifixion, since Guthlac's death follows the model of Christ, and I will argue that the poem as a whole draws upon the concept of bitterness, with its dual physical and spiritual meanings, to instruct readers in the proper way to grieve and die.

The first representation of the dying process that I wish to consider is that of a battle against personified Death. While Rosier describes the illness, *adl*, as a "precursor" to Death (86), the progression of Guthlac's fight suggests that the two are inseparable. In the first fitt, Death is described in spatial or territorial terms: after the Fall, "death pressed in, the enemy ruled throughout the world" (*deaþ in geþrong/fira cynne, feond rixade/geond middangeard*). The second fitt depicts this oppression in the context of Guthlac's *beorg*, where the saint battles a host of "death-powered demons" (*deofla deaþmægan*) described in language explicitly related to illness (e.g. as "spewing venom"). Death presses even more closely in the next fitt, described now as a singular "slaughter-greedy warrior" rather than as a group, while still retaining "claws." As the poem progresses, the depiction of Death as a violent attacker, complete with penetrative weaponry such as arrows, becomes interspersed with imagery of Death as a thief, someone who enters the violated body as though it were a house. This double figuration is maintained through Guthlac's death at the end of the fifth fitt. Rosier summarizes, "The form and action of Death, with his precursor *adl* (*sar*, *waerc*), is that of a trespasser or alien warrior who seeks to enter, to unlock, the saint's domain (his door, house, and hoard = the body) and plunder the treasure (his

life = the soul)" (86).

The most distinctive feature of the language used for this "form and action" is its retraction of boundaries. Initially, the saint defends an external territory (the *beorg*) from an external threat; as the disease progresses and takes on the characteristics of a "thief," his body becomes the territory that the soul is defending and doomed to lose. The physical body—especially its "insides"—becomes external to the self. In analyzing *Guthlac A*, with its focus on the battle for the *beorg*, Noetzel draws upon two lines from *Maxims II* to help build a picture of the Anglo-Saxon view of the fens, translating lines 42a–43b: "The thief must go about in dark weather. / The demon must dwell in the fen." He writes that, as the second line of each maxim provides more detail on the subject identified in the first, this maxim "show[s] that the thief and the demon or monster are categorized together as peripheral creatures who dwell outside the community and threaten the values that hold Anglo-Saxon culture together…so that the landscape is coded as a haunted and tormented space." *Guthlac B*, depicting the dying process in terms of combat against inhuman forces, translates this torment into the territory of the flesh. Guthlac's disease is stealthy in its access to the body and violent in its painful effects.

As for the vocabulary that facilitates this reconfiguration of boundaries, the medical corpus offers some of the most striking examples of language used to describe the passage of harmful substances or forces from the outer environment to the inside of the body. The preventive recipes discussed in Chapter 1 are a particularly rich source of these examples, often depicting external modes of defense (such as amulets) against internal harm. The blurring of territorial and personal boundaries is also

evident in recipes that are described as effective against both external and internal damage. While these characteristics are fairly common in measures prescribed by the herbals, some recipes contain two features more specifically relevant to the "Death as warrior" metaphor in *Guthlac B*: the description of disease in terms of weaponry and, in describing disease's movement, the use of the word *attor*. Combined, these characteristics facilitate *Guthlac B*'s depiction of the saint's battle against Death as a personal reenactment of Death's conquest of the world after the Fall (described in fitt 1). In the process, they weave together representations of dying as a battle and as an outcome of the "bitter drink" offered by Eve.

Although Guthlac is ill, not wounded, his disease is described in terms of external injury. Early in the poem, as already mentioned, he is attacked by demons in the form of a "dragon" (*wyrmes bleo*, 911). Later, arrows—"war-showers" (*hildescurun*, 1143b) or "fletched force" (*flanþracu*, 1144a)—sink into Guthlac's body, "close to the heart." He is struck by "slaughter-spears" (*wælpilum*, 1154) and "slaughter-arrows" (*wælstrælum*, 1286a). These descriptions represent a significant shift from Felix's account, in chapter 29 of which the saint is shot with a "poisoned arrow of despair," an emotional or spiritual wound rather than a cause of physical symptoms.[128] The arrow sticks "in the very centre of the mind of the soldier of Christ" (97), causing Guthlac to remember all the sins he has committed. The *Guthlac B* poet, while retaining the concept of arrows that do more than physically wound, also relies indirectly upon two relatively minor episodes from the *Vita.* Chapter 35's description

[128] This same passage describes the arrow as pouring in "a potion of black venom," *atri veneni sucum* (96–97), a description that I will return to in the second half of this chapter as part of a discussion of "drink of death" imagery.

of how an evil spirit "entered [Beccel's] heart and began to puff him up with pestiferous arrogance of vainglory (*pestiferis vanae gloriae fastibus*) binds together physical and moral sickness through *pestifer*'s range of meaning; Chapter 41's depiction of a young man made sick by the "pestiferous poison of the deadly spirit" (*pestiferum funesti spiritus virus*) that has attacked him (129) reinforces the association between sickness, poison, and contact with unclean spirits. None of the three above incidents survives into *Guthlac B*, yet the poem still depends upon the reader's ability to make these connections—to recognize the saint's battle against his disease as an internalization of fitt 2's struggle against the fenland demons. The poet assures this by extracting just a few images from Felix that have both medical and moral significance, as suggested by their use in the herbals and other texts.

Depictions of illness featuring the kind of violent imagery found in *Guthlac B* are familiar from the metrical charms of *Lacnunga*, most obviously chapters 65 and 127. Either of these charms would seem appropriate to someone in Guthlac's situation, as they evoke scenes in which a faithful Christian calls upon divine assistance in a largely defensive battle against demons. In chapter 65, these demons strike the body with "shafts" (*flanas/iacula*) and "invisible nails of shafts" (*ungesewenlican slega næglas/inuisibilis sudum clabos*). Chapter 127, even more vivid, is intended to shield against a "stabbing pain" (*færstice*), attributed to "yelling spears" (*gyllende garas*), a "little spear" (*lytel spere*), and similar weapons. The charm attributes this kind of harm to spirits, elves, or witches, and suggests that the user will be able to turn their harm back upon them in the form of a "flying dart" (*fleogende flan*). While chapters 65 and 127 are the clearest examples of sickness described through weaponry, this idea is not

limited to the metrical charms: recipes to help animals who are sick from being "shot," for instance, can be found elsewhere in the herbals.[129] Whether or not such attacks were understood literally at the time *Guthlac B* was composed, the poem clearly draws upon a characterization of disease also available to the compilers and translators of the Old English medical corpus in order to depict the penetration of the body by disease.

Similar parallels can be found between Guthlac's attacker(s) and the hostile figures or forces described in the recipe-books. In Felix's *Vita*, as already mentioned, the demons that beset the saint are described in striking physical (perhaps even malarial) detail: they are, at least for a while, convincingly material in their looks. *Guthlac B* forgoes this specificity in favor of a depiction more easily adaptable to inner warfare. The saint's struggle is initially described as a warrior's fight against a group of enemies whose most notable feature is their mutability, both in appearance and in voice:

> Oft to þam wicum weorude cwomun
> deofla deaðmægen duguþa byscyredes
> hloþum þringan, þær se halga þeow
> elnes anhydig eard weardade;
> Þær hy mislice mongum reordum
> on þam westenne woðe hofun
> hludne herecirm, hiwes binotene,
> dreamum bidrorene. Dryhtnes cempa,
> from folctoga, feonda þreatum
> wiðstod stronglice. Næs seo stund latu
> earmra gæsta, ne þæt onbid long
> þæt þa wrohtsmiðas wop ahofun,
> hreopun hreðlease, hleoþrum brugdon.

> Often a host came to that dwelling-place, a deadly band of devils, shorn of virtues, crowding in a gang where the holy servant, resolute of valor, protected his habitation; there, they variously in mixed tongues/voices raised up a noise in the wasteland, a loud war-cry, deprived of form/color, deprived of joys. The champion of the Lord, strong folk-leader, powerfully withstood the threat of the

[129] Two examples can be found in *Leechbook I*, chapter 45, and in *Leechbook II*, chapter 65.

> fiends. Nor was the hour of the miserable spirits delayed, nor was it a long wait [before] the evil-doers heaved up a cry, the inglorious ones cried out, varied their voices.

Guthlac B's depiction of the demons, along with much of the rest of the second fitt, is "an epitome of certain features of the life of the saint as found in the earlier chapters of Felix," as Gordon Gerould notes (86).[130] The key word here is "certain": not all of the early chapters are represented in *Guthlac B*'s massively compressed account of the saint's holding of the *beorg* against the demons and his miracle-working among the faithful who visit him there. Even the chapters that are represented are drawn upon very selectively, and according to a clear pattern. Details that anchor the account to individuals other than Guthlac are omitted—Tatwine, among other minor characters, disappears entirely, while Beccel, Pega, and even Bartholomew all lose their names—so that Guthlac, Adam, and Eve are the only people named in the poem. The specific miracles mentioned in Felix's narrative are omitted, replaced by a general claim about the saint's healing powers. Given the poem's focus on dying and death, it is natural that the poet turns the reader's attention away from the more performative aspects of Guthlac's saintliness toward his physical experience of disease and spiritual fortitude in facing it (as well as the cause of his mortality, as identified by the *poculum mortis* of Genesis). But the changes from Felix's account, particularly as represented in the passage quoted above, accomplish a subtler task as well: the poet has chosen to retain details that evoke disease's ability to penetrate the body while dropping many that are not consistent with this goal.

---

[130] Though early, dating all the way back to 1917, Gerould's "The Old English Poems on St. Guthlac and Their Latin Source" provides a useful, succinct account of the textual resemblances.

In Felix's account, the demons are repeatedly described as "phantoms": for example, the island is haunted by "phantoms of demons" (*fantasias demonum*), and "phantoms of unclean spirits" (*inmundorum spirituum fantasmata*) there fail to tempt Guthlac into excessive fasting.[131] The *Guthlac B* poet drops this term[132] but also eliminates much of the physical description of the demons. The resulting description's focus on what the crowding devils lack (virtues, stable form, joys, glory) rather than any physical features, combined with the repeated mention of their cry, gives the impression of Guthlac's dwelling as besieged by forces that lack the constraints of a fixed material form. When, in the lines that follow, the devils take human and then dragon shape, they do not actually become either human or dragon (*wyrm*): they take on a *hiw* or *bleo* (909b, 911b), an appearance. This makes them more threatening rather than less so, as does their mutability in number. As they press closer, their weapons of disease and poison breach the saint's physical defenses and the battle shifts from Guthlac's dwelling in the fens to the body in which his soul dwells. In this interior struggle, the threat is singular, Death as warrior or thief, but one that the body cannot overcome. Although the account of the struggle against the devils is separated from the account of Guthlac's final illness by the description of his actions as a healer (lines 916–932a), they are connected not only by similarities in language, but by a structural parallel in the text. In facing the devils, Guthlac is "resolute," "prepared," "prudent of thought," and provides comfort to others despite the devils' threat to his

[131] In chapters 25 and 30, respectively. Colgrave translates the latter phrase as "phantoms and foul spirits" (101).
[132] Old English translates *fantasma* in a variety of ways (e.g. *gedwimor* and several compounds with the *scin-* and *siþ-* prefixes). These do not appear in *Guthlac B*, but *scinlac* is identified as a cause of illness in the medical corpus.

life. Then, during the more deeply invasive test of his disease, he maintains his composure despite his pain and tries to spiritually comfort his servant, who is distressed by witnessing it (fitts 3 and 4). Thus the drama that plays out in larger numbers at the start of the second fitt repeats itself here on a more intimate scale.

While the threat of the devils—and of Death itself—is ultimately spiritual, a test of faith under pressure, that pressure in *Guthlac B* is provided in large part by the physical effects of disease. This makes connections between medical language and spiritual combat especially important. More specifically, the poem makes use of language that reflects characterizations of disease in the medical corpus while also evoking hell. To argue that the poem does more than just reflect these characterizations—that it manipulates them to make connections to the *poculum mortis* tradition—it is necessary to consider Guthlac's perception of his disease, which is described primarily in terms of heat and of constriction or binding. The disease itself is not named, beyond the previously mentioned term *bancoþa*, but we are repeatedly told that Guthlac is burning (e.g. 954b–955a, 978b–979, 1064b–1065a). In both the medical corpus and other Old English texts, *attor*, poison like that spewed by the devils, is associated with fire. Lines 907–912 continue the description of the devils' assault on the *beorg*:

> Hwilum wedende swa wilde deor
> cirmdon on corðre, hwilum cyrdon eft
> minne mansceaþan on mennisc hiw
> breahtma maeste, hwilum brugdon eft
> awyrgde wærlogan on wyrmes bleo,
> earme adloman, attre spiowdon.

Sometimes, raving as wild animals, they cried out in a troop; sometimes, the wicked evil-doers again took on human appearance with the greatest cries;

sometimes the accursed faithless ones changed into the form of a dragon, wretched, fire-crippled,[133] spewing poison]

The demons take on the form of wild animals, humans, and dragons (*wyrm*), all three of which are associated with poisoning in the medical corpus,[134] even if only the dragon-form is explicitly said to spew poison here. In Chapter 36 of Felix's *Vita*, the apparent basis for this description, the demons are said to take the form of a lion, a bull, a bear, and several other creatures specifically identified by the author, all of them tormenting the saint with their noise. The *Guthlac B* poet mentions only the animal that can connect the account of the saint's illness to the story of the Fall: the serpent that Felix describes as "rearing up" to show "its black poison."[135] While the biblical relevance of the serpent is still obvious to modern readers, its connection to disease requires a bit more explanation, though plenty of evidence survives in the medical corpus and other Anglo-Saxon texts. Much like battles against the spears or arrows of disease, defense of the body and home against snakes and other harmful, "poison-bearing" (*attorberende*) creatures appears repeatedly in the herbals, particularly in the preventive material. In some cases, these creatures are also associated with fire. Take, for example, chapter 131 of the *Herbarium*, which

[133] The term *adloman* has been a source of considerable debate. Roberts' endnote 912 provides a useful overview. Interpretations that view *adl-*, "sickness," as the prefix (forming the compound "sickness-lamed") are tempting in the context of the poem, but Roberts' argument for *ad-*, "fire," is slightly more compelling, since it does not require textual emendation. There does not seem to be any simple justification for Hostetter's translation, "plague-clad." The idea of the devils being lamed does seem to be a borrowing from Felix's account, in which they have physical ailments that would affect their gait.

[134] See Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[135] Chapter 36: *coluber quoque, squamea colla porrigans, indicia atri veneni monstrabat* (Colgrave 114). Also note that *coluber* is a type of poisonous snake specifically, not a general term for snake, meaning that the poisonous nature of the serpent is emphasized twice in this passage.

describes the effect of three kinds of basil against a list of snakes (*nædran*). The first kind of snake, the chapter tells us, "blows on" and "sets on fire" whatever it sees (*seo swa hwæt swa heo gesihð heo toblæwð & anæleþ*), while the second and third are said to wither things just by looking at them.

The fact that such creatures are believed to do harm without need of physical contact makes the *wyrm*-form especially suitable to the demons in *Guthlac B*, whose attacks are the preamble to the saint's illness. In her recent study of the word *wyrm*, Haruko Momma argues that *wyrm* is used in a "higher register" than *nædre* and similar terms, to indicate fear, awe, or other strong emotions on the part of the person perceiving the creature. Creatures termed *wyrm* are described as breathing both fire and poisonous fumes in other Old English literature, and sometimes both at once, as in the example Momma pulls from the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*. She quotes Fulk's translation: "Those vermin had three slits of the tongue, and when they exhaled, out of their mouths with their breath came something like a burning torch. The breath and exhalations of the pests were very deadly and venomous, and on account of their pestilential breath, many men died" (Momma 206–207; Fulk 54–55). Similarly, the more famous *wyrm* of *Beowulf* breathes fire but ultimately kills the hero with poison from its "tusks" (described as *biteran banum*, 2692a).[136]

The medical corpus, which generally uses *wyrm* to refer to various types of worms afflicting parts of the body, prefers the term *nædre* (or *næddercynn*, for poisonous creatures more broadly). But the association of *næddercynn* with poison remains, and in fact is the defining characteristic of animals described by the term (see

[136] Fulk 262.

Leechbook I chapter 45.4). As noted in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, *attor* is a favored term for disease outside the human body or in the abstract, and due to this use, as well as its explicit ties to harmful creatures, it can be employed to suggest external attack even when no animals or weapons are mentioned. "Flying poison" is the most obvious example of this, and recipes addressing it are more likely to involve religious or clearly ritualistic elements than recipes for other kinds of ailment.[137] Chapter 45 of *Leechbook I*, a lengthy collection of remedies for various bites and poisons, includes a fairly complex ritual against "flying poison and every poisonous swelling" (*fleogendum atre & ælcum æternum swile*). In chapter 76 of *Lacnunga*, the so-called "Nine Herbs Charm," the power of various plants is invoked by incantation against "poison and flying disease," or "the loathsome one that travels throughout the land." Chapter 126, rather than relying upon plants for protection against flying poison, instead recommends scarification and the throwing of the resulting blood smeared on a stick, along with a song invoking the protection of holy figures.

If the devils of *Guthlac B* are associated with a poisonous, traditionally fiery creature and creatures with those characteristics are associated with disease in Old English literature, it is not so surprising that Guthlac's disease is described in language evocative of hell. In Felix's *Vita*, after all, demons drag the saint to the mouth of hell, where he witnesses "the fiery abyss swelling with surging flames" and "sulphurous

[137] As Cameron (*Anglo-Saxon Medicine* 38–39) and others have noted, some Christian elements in Anglo-Saxon remedies appear to be practical rather than spiritual in their intent—for example, recitation of a prayer may serve to measure time. The examples cited in this paragraph are more elaborate and do not seem to fall into this category.

eddies [of flame] mixed with icy hail."[138] The specificity of these connections, however, is remarkable, particularly with respect to depictions of events from Genesis in Old English poetry. Other poetic treatments of the biblical material feature specific combination of details—fire, poison/bitterness, and constraint—that match Guthlac's experience of his disease.[139] In fitt 2, shortly after the introduction of the poison-spewing demons, we are told that "his bone-coffer was kindled in sickness, fixed with inward bands; his body-hoard unclosed. His limbs heavied, persecuted by pains."[140] He is later depicted as "boiling with painful welling" (*soden sarwylmum*, 1150a). The saint uses a very similar phrase to describe the condition of demons to his servant (*sorgwylmum soden sar wanian*, 1073), the poet perhaps drawing upon Felix. This is not unique to accounts of Guthlac: the roughly contemporaneous[141] poem *Christ and Satan* features several passages that describe hell in analogous terms, including these lines spoken by Satan (39–40a): "This is a dark home, bound severely with fast fire-bonds; the floor is ignited in a boil with poison."[142] The hell of *Genesis B* is characterized by bondage, fire, and "bitter fumes" (*biteran recas*, 325b).[143] Bitterness

[138] Chapter 31: *Non solum enim fluctuantium flammarum ignivomos gurgites illic turgescere cerneres, immo etiam sulphurei glaciali grandine mixti vortices, globosis sparginibus sidera paene tangentes* (Colgrave 104).
[139] These accounts pull Satan's punishment into Genesis from other parts of Scripture.
[140] While Roberts (note 960) favors interpreting the *-hagan* of *færhagan* as referring to a "wedge formation of ranks in fighting," the other option that she acknowledges, a sense of "hedging" or enclosure, corresponds both to the preceding behavior of the devils and the feeling of oppression that Guthlac experiences during his illness.
[141] "The manuscript as a whole may be dated…at about the year 1000" (Krapp x).
[142] Krapp's edition of the Junius Book: *Þis is ðeostræ ham, ðearle gebunden / fæstum fyrclommum; flor is on welme / attre onæled*. The Satan character later (95b–96a, 101b–103a) says that hell is a house "kindled with fire," *Is ðes atola ham fyre onæled,* and adds, "Here is the roar of serpents, here worms dwell. Here the bond of torment is firmly bound," *Hær is nedran swæg, / wyrmas gewunade. Is ðis wites clom / feste gebunden.* Krapp's edition also includes the Genesis poetry.
[143] Krapp 13.

and poison are associated in a range of Old English sources, from an entry in the Épinal-Erfurt glossary that gives *atr* for *bile* (Pheifer 9) to Exeter Book Riddle 17, in which the speaker, a weapon, swallows "bitter spear-points, horrible poison-spears"[144] before releasing them. Guthlac's experience of disease resembles hell in its combination of painful confinement (in the body) and painful exposure (to the hostile conditions or forces inside).

Unlike the demons' experience of hell, Guthlac's individual suffering is temporary, as his soul is redeemed and ascends to heaven in rather spectacular fashion. Mankind's collective suffering, however, continues during life, captured by the poet in the landscape of the fens and their evocation of a dangerous spiritual territory that Christians must navigate. In Felix, the relationship between outer and inner worlds is laid out through vivid imagery, as in the passages from chapters 24 and 25 below, the first of which describes the fens and the second Guthlac's progress from worldly to spiritual concerns. Colgrave translates:

> It is a very long tract, now consisting of marshes, now of bogs, sometimes of black waters overhung by fog, sometimes studded with wooded islands and traversed by the windings of tortuous streams (*intervenientibus flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus*). (87)
>
> For just as with a heavenly voice He brought forth, out of the gloomy mist of the error of the Jews, the supreme teacher of the Gentiles when on his way to Damascus…so also He led Guthlac a man of saintly memory from the eddying whirlpool of these turbid times, from the tortuous paths of this mortal age (*obliquis mortalis aevi anfractibus*), from the black jaws of this declining world to the struggle for eternal bliss, to the straight path and to the vision of true light. (93)

[144] Krapp and Dobbie's edition of the Exeter Book: Hwilum ic sweartum swelgan onginne brunum beadowæpnum, bitrum ordum, eglum attorsperum (lines 8b–9a).

A later passage reinforces the idea that the "black jaws" of the world are the mouths of hell: the demons tell Guthlac that "the fiery entrances of Erebus gape for you with yawning mouths…the bowels of Styx long to devour you and the hot gulfs of Acheron gape with dreadful jaws" (107). The *Guthlac B* poet, rather than emphasizing the general decline of the world, chooses instead to use disease to map its effect—the gradual, physical realization of mortality—on one individual. Rather than looking into hell from its gates, as in Felix's *Vita*, the reader "looks" into the saint, witnessing both symptoms evocative of that end and a spiritual response to the struggle that can serve as an example or "straight path."

To sum up, the poem's representation of Guthlac's fatal illness as a battle against enemy forces relies upon language that shifts the contest from a defense of the *beorg* to a defense of the saint's body itself from the position of the soul. It does this by drawing upon the same terminology that the medical corpus uses to represent disease, including *attor* to refer to disease outside the body and animal- and weapons-related imagery to indicate illness' penetration and spread. The physical symptoms that Guthlac suffers are consistent with disease (e.g. fever, difficulty breathing) but also with poetic representations of hell in Anglo-Saxon accounts of Genesis. The poet even provides a devil-serpent, the *wyrm*. The result is that the reader is given a demonstration on an individual scale of the consequences of the Fall: mortality, with temporary physical symptoms that echo those suffered eternally in hell by Satan, as well as forecast the suffering of those who have not been saved. The other major representation of death in the poem, as a drink offered by Eve, makes the Genesis connection explicit, but I believe it also is intended to suggest the bitter drink offered

to Christ on the cross. The remainder of this chapter explores how *Guthlac B* uses the *poculum mortis* tradition to make connections to the Crucifixion and urge a particular understanding of death.

Guthlac and the Drink of Death

As Roberts notes (36), "there is general agreement that the main source for *Guthlac B* is Felix's fiftieth chapter," though the poet does borrow from other parts of the *Vita* as well. Chapter 50 begins with a reference to Adam in the context of comment on the universality of death, then proceeds to describe Guthlac's illness, his final conversations with Beccel, and Beccel's notification of Pega regarding Guthlac's death. These elements, though altered, all survive into *Guthlac B*. In the *Vita*, the brief allusion to Genesis runs as follows:

> Nam sicut mors in Adam data est, ita et in omnes dominabitur. Quisquis enim huius vitae saporem gustaverit, amaritudinem mortis evitare nequit.
>
> For just as death was prescribed in Adam, so it is to have dominion over all. And whoever has tasted the sweet things of this life, cannot avoid the bitterness of death. (Colgrave 152–153)

In *Guthlac B*, the theme of this passage undergoes massive expansion to fill all of fitt 1 and reappear at the end of fitt 2 and the opening of fitt 3. The "tasting" mentioned by Felix is referred to three times in the poem. First, in lines 849b–850, Eve is said to provide Adam with a "death-bearing morsel" (*deaðberende gyfl*) through the devil's craft (*deofles searo*). Shortly afterward (868b–870a), the *gyfl* is recharacterized as a drink: "that bitter drink that Eve long ago gave Adam, that the young bride poured out" (*þone bitran drync/þone Eue fyrn Adame geaf/byrelade bryd*

geong). At the start of the third fitt, after describing Guthlac's suffering from his disease, the poet returns to this image, noting (980b–985a):

> bryþen wæs ongunnen,
> þætte Adame Eue gebyrmde
> æt fruman worulde. Feond byrlade
> ærest þære idese 7 heo Adame,
> hyre swæsum were, siþþan scencte
> bittor bædeweg
>
> The drink was prepared that Eve brewed for Adam at the beginning of the world. The Enemy first poured it for that woman, and she afterward gave Adam, her own dear husband, that bitter cup to drink.

Since this expansion appears "original," in the sense that it owes little beyond its theme to the relevant passage in Felix, it has naturally provoked an extended search on the part of Anglo-Saxonists for other possible sources. The detail of the "drink of death" has been central to much of this research, so much so that several of the most influential publications on the subject of the "drink of death" in *Guthlac B* make very little mention of the rest of the poem, much less its relationship to Felix's *Vita*. These articles are thus hyperfocused with respect to *Guthlac B*, but tremendously wide-ranging in their coverage of the *poculum mortis* tradition across Anglo-Saxon and other medieval literature. (Some of this is no doubt attributable to the presence of such a drink in *Beowulf*, nudging *Guthlac B* into a supporting role for claims about the more famous poem). Since this chapter is interested primarily in the relationship between the two primary representations of death in *Guthlac B*—personified and in the form of a drink—it will draw on work that takes a broader view of the poem and examines how its elements function together, as well as incorporating criticism more

concerned with the *poculum mortis* tradition. Three essays on *Guthlac B* have been particularly useful in framing my analysis; a brief examination of each of these follows, with special attention to aspects of these works that can be brought into conversation with each other to produce a more thorough account of the poem's structure and thematic development.

The first of these critical works is Chapter 3, Section A of Alexandra Hennessey Olsen's book, *Guthlac of Croyland: A Study of Heroic Hagiography.* This section, "The Orosian View of Christian History," responds to previous scholars' classification of the poem as in the Antonian tradition,[145] a view that Olsen suggests has led to the material on the Fall being considered merely a prologue and the poem itself being criticized for its "disjunctive structure" (69–70). While acknowledging that Felix's *Vita* is indeed in the Antonian tradition, Olsen argues that *Guthlac B* reflects an Orosian view of human history rather than the Augustinian view that is evident in Felix. She observes that, in the *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri Septem*, Orosius "is concerned with the means whereby individual lives fit into the recurring patterns of Fall and Redemption which comprise the history of mankind. *Guthlac B* describes both cyclical patterns" (73). The first of these patterns unifies the opening of the poem with the account of Guthlac's sickness and death:

> Like the *Libri Septem*, *Guthlac B* suggests that no one can escape the repeated pattern of the Fall of Man, and in order to understand why Guthlac must live in exile, suffer, and die, we must understand the Fall, because Guthlac suffers and dies "swa him biforan worhton/þa ærestan ælda cynnes" (11. 974b–75b) [as the first of the race of men did before him]. The first 178 lines of the poem accordingly concentrate on Adam and Eve and all their descendants, who are

[145] That is, it follows the basic narrative of a saint pursuing an ascetic life in an isolated hermitage, being tormented by demons, and overcoming them through faith.

typified by Guthlac and his disciple. (Olsen 76)

Both Orosius and the *Guthlac B* poet emphasize the effects of the Fall rather than narrating the story of the Fall itself. As for the second cyclical pattern, Olsen writes that the poet similarly "is interested not in the story of the Incarnation but in its effect on those men, as exemplified by Guthlac, who re-live its pattern in their own lives and choose for themselves eternal "meaht 7 mundbyrd (1.881a) [might and protection]" (81). This too is roughly in line with Orosius' depiction of historical figures, though Orosius is more interested in how the pattern plays out on the scale of whole societies than in the behavior of any one individual.

Considering *Guthlac B* from this perspective, as an account of cyclical falls and redemptions, is useful for several reasons. Most importantly, as Olsen indicates, it effectively explains the function of the material related to the Fall in *Guthlac B* and its relation to the narrative of the saint's sickness and death, rather than attributing the apparent "disjunction" between these to an incompetent execution of hagiography in the Antonian model. Secondly, it offers an explanation for the less than ideal behavior of the anonymous character based on Felix's Beccel. While Guthlac is re-enacting the "redemptive" cycle, his servant serves as "a general representative of fallen humanity" who is "still re-enacting the Fall" (83). The anonymity of the character and the poem's increased emphasis on his grief both make good sense when considered in this light. Olsen's evidence for Guthlac being "so like Christ that he was born to fulfill the Redemptive cycle" (81) is compelling, though not always unique to this work (she makes use of the material related to healing the sick and feeding birds, which is heavily influenced by Bede's *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, via Felix).

Despite these virtues, Olsen's argument does have some areas of weakness. She provides almost no information about the Augustinian worldview, as opposed to the Orosian one, despite framing her argument as a response to critics who have approached the poem from this perspective. The lack of specificity is especially significant considering that Orosius describes the *Libri Septem* as written at Augustine's behest rather than as a critique. The prologue that contains this description is not included in the Old English version of the text, which does pre-date *Guthlac B*, but Olsen engages only with the Latin. There is also an imbalance in the connections she draws between the poem and Orosius, in that specific details in the former are sometimes tied only to much more general information about the latter. For example, Olsen ties details about Guthlac's struggle with the devils to an "Orosian picture of human existence: miserable, chaotic, and constantly filled with war" (78). Although she provides a quotation from Orosius connecting such troubles generally to sin, the idea itself is far from unique to that author. Because Olsen is careful in wording her argument, however, restricting herself to the claim that *Guthlac B* "was influenced by the view of history expressed by Orosius" (72), occasional reliance on generalities with respect to the *Libri Septem* is not a fatal flaw. She remains convincing in her point that approaching the poem from the perspective of historical cycles related to the Fall and redemption finds a coherence in its structure that is in line with poet's skill in other areas.

There is, nevertheless, one significant deficiency in Olsen's argument with respect to other scholars' work on the poem: her handling of the "drink of death" imagery. She addresses this only briefly, noting that Guthlac does not have to fear the

drink because he has "re-enacted Christ's life in his own." She adds, "It is logical that the Orosian *Guthlac B* should describe Eve's legacy to mankind in terms of drinking, because the *Libri Septem* describes many incidents of bloodshed in terms of drinking" (82). Next to the more detailed attempts by other authors to trace the "drink of death," which have found analogues much closer to *Guthlac B* than any Olsen offers, this explanation is plainly insufficient. The images of drinking in Orosius may be roughly thematically compatible with those in *Guthlac B* without being a source or offering the reader any insight into the poem. To find that insight, it is useful to accept Olsen's general framing of *Guthlac B*—as a depiction of cyclical processes of fall and redemption—while looking to other researchers for the significance of the "drink of death" within that context.

The best-known piece of scholarship on the "drink of death" in *Guthlac B* and its relationship to the complicated *poculum mortis* tradition is Thomas Hall's 1993 essay in *The Review of English Studies*, "A Gregorian Model for Eve's Biter Dryne in 'Guthlac B.'" It provides a valuable overview of the previous research on the topic in addition to making its own argument for a particular, Gregorian influence. The article is focused strictly on the "drink of death" passages in *Guthlac B* and their relationship to similar material elsewhere; Hall does not engage with Olsen's work or that of other authors who take a more holistic approach to the poem, instead seeking to position *Guthlac B* relative to the numerous other texts featuring the *poculum mortis*. Hall notes that such imagery is "virtually commonplace" in Anglo-Saxon literature, as well as appearing in many other European and non-European sources, which serves to "make it difficult to speak of a coherent literary tradition and underscore the

possibility that several of these authors simply divined the metaphor on their own" (4). In proposing examples as possible sources for *Guthlac B*, scholars have therefore tended to focus on details of wording rather than the presence of drinking metaphors more generally.

Hall takes a similar approach. His article responds most directly to the theory advanced by Carleton Brown, Jane Roberts, and others that the most likely source for the image in *Guthlac B* is the hymn *Rex aeterne Domini*, in which the devil is said to serve Adam a cup of death from the fruit of the forbidden tree. Hall argues that "Guthlac B twice identifies Eve as dispenser of the drink; and this is the detail that needs to be accounted for if one hopes to align these passages with a specific source or tradition" (5). To accomplish this, Hall turns to Gregory the Great's homily on the Thursday after Easter, specifically Gregory's comments on John 20:18, Mary Magdalene's announcement of the resurrection to the disciples. Hall translates:

> See how the sin of the human race is cut off whence it began. For just as a woman dispensed death to a man in paradise, so from the tomb a woman announces life to men; and she who proclaims the words of the life-giving One related the words of the death-bearing serpent. It is as if the Lord were speaking to the human race not in word but in deeds: 'From the one whose hand offered you the cup of death, from the same one receive the cup of life.' (Hall 6–7)

Hall finds other examples of this contrast in Gregory's work and identifies it as modeled on the more commonplace opposition of the Virgin Mary to Eve, noting: "The interchangeability of Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary in such a formula can best be understood in that by different means, each woman recapitulated Eve's gesture and overturned her sin, thereby ushering in the era of redemption" (8).

Returning to *Guthlac B*, he concludes:

> The Old English poet understandably omits the contrast with Mary Magdalene since it is irrelevant to his account of the Fall and to his development of a theme that anticipates and explains Guthlac's death, but his repeated assertion that it was Eve who introduced death to humanity by serving a drink to Adam is none the less in close agreement with the main tenor of this Gregorian formula. Gregory's homily need not itself be claimed as a source for the poem since the passage in question also circulated in Anglo-Saxon England under the names of Alcuin and Odo. But the close correspondences between the homily and the Old English poem make it possible to argue that the portrayal of Eve's crime in Guthlac B is not indebted to the verses from Rex aeterne Domini, nor to a more vaguely defined theme inherited from Germanic heroic tradition, but was inspired, perhaps at some remove, by this distinctively Gregorian exegetical formula transmitted in homiletic literature from at least the seventh to the twelfth century.

Hall's argument in favor of Gregory's homily as an important influence is potentially problematic in several respects. First, his primary objection to *Rex aeterne Domini* as a possible source is the fact that it describes the devil as dispensing the drink, while *Guthlac B* places Eve in this position. While this is certainly a point of divergence, I would like to suggest that it is less significant than Hall would have us believe, for the simple reason that *Guthlac B*'s depiction of the event is closer to Scripture. In Genesis, the serpent inspires Eve's act but Eve herself chooses to carry it out, an account that would surely be familiar to the *Guthlac B* poet.[146] He could easily bring material in which the devil serves the drink more into line with Genesis without recourse to any other external source. Texts that remove Eve as the dispenser of death in favor of the devil, such *Rex aeterne Domini*, are more in need of explanation than *Guthlac B*'s account. This view does not discount the possibility of Hall's Gregorian

[146] The poem *Genesis B* also offers this version of events, with Eve offering the fruit to Adam, though the vision she experiences after tasting it first does not appear in the biblical account or in *Guthlac B*.

formula as a significant influence, but it does suggest that the presence of Eve as the dispenser of the drink should not be so heavily privileged as a criterion for evaluating potential sources or influences. The presence of a drink rather than food is the real discrepancy from Scripture, and this occurs in numerous sources, as Hall describes.[147]

Regarding the Gregorian formula itself, the distinctive feature of the homiletic material is the opposition of the cup of death to the cup of life; as Hall himself acknowledges, the latter is omitted from *Guthlac B*. While Hall considers this omission understandable—a result of the poem's focus on Guthlac's death—the saint's death and ascent to heaven are in the model of Christ and therefore basically accommodating to the Gregorian formula. This makes the absence of "cup of life" imagery quite striking. Instead of a reminder of redemption, the "overturning" of Eve's sin, one finds a repetition of the "cup of death" imagery, still in relation to Eve. And instead of Mary Magdalene as messenger spreading news of the Resurrection, the poet offers Guthlac's servant, Beccel. Beccel's terrified response to Guthlac's ascension and his distress in delivering the news to Pega are not, as others have pointed out, the reactions of a Christian who understands death as a moment of transcendence, a "reunion with God" (P. Brown 273). While it is certainly possible that the Gregorian formula was known to the poet, Hall's claim of a "close correspondence" between the homily and the poem seems overstated. However, the juxtaposition of a "cup of death" with a "cup of life" would be nicely compatible with Olsen's paired cycles of corruption and redemption. The question is whether there may be evidence for a "cup of life" in *Guthlac B* that is more subtle or implicit than Hall's

[147] Both apple and drink appear in *Rex aeterne Domine*. See Brown, "*Poculum Mortis*," 391.

approach allows him to address.

To begin to pursue this issue, it is valuable to turn to an older work of scholarship, Geoffrey Russom's "The Drink of Death in Old English and Germanic Literature," published in *Germania* in 1988. Like Hall, Russom is writing in part in response to the identification of *Rex aeterne Domini* as a likely source for the "cup of death" imagery in *Guthlac B*, but rather than suggesting an alternative Christian textual influence, Russom explores pre-Christian, Germanic influences that may have informed the image in *Rex aeterne Domini* and other Anglo-Saxon works. More than a few critics have identified "cup of death" references in Germanic sources, but Russom stands out for his focus on the precise meaning of the Old English terms used in such imagery in *Guthlac B*, particularly *deaðweg* and *bædeweg* (found in lines 985a and 991a, respectively). He argues that "the Old English *deaðweg* corresponds to the last drink taken in early Germanic societies by suicides, human sacrifices, and those about to suffer capital punishment" and that "as a literary figure, this cup could well come to represent the sentence of death eventually imposed on us all, or, from a theological point of view, the punishment for man's first disobedience" (179). Russom's examples of drinks taken before death come from outside of Old English, from Ibn Fadlan and Saxo Grammaticus, but he views the custom as a Germanic practice rather than a more regionally specific one, and thus as a possible influence on the *Guthlac B* poet.

Russom's evidence for the meaning of *bædeweg* draws more heavily on Anglo-Saxon sources. Based on Norse cognates, he "suggest[s] that *bædeweg* means 'whetting cup,' a serving of drink that stimulates one to behave in accordance with heroic standards…such heroic virtues as bravery, generosity, and loyalty" (181). He

notes that *Beowulf* offers several examples of this: on nearly every occasion that Wealhtheow serves drinks, she is described as expressing an expectation of action on the part of other characters. For example, she speaks regarding Beowulf's fight against Grendel (625a–628a) and Hrothgar's and Hrothulf's care of her sons after the former's adoption of Beowulf (1175a–1187b). Later, she urges Beowulf himself to treat her sons well (1216a–1231b). *Bæd-* does not appear in these passages, but can be found in a later account of the initial feast at Heorot, in which Beowulf says that Wealhtheow *bædde byre geonge*, "urged on her young sons" (2018a). This suggests that the verb might reasonably be applied to her actions earlier in the text.

In both the *Beowulf* examples and Ibn Fadlan's account, a woman serves the drink, an element in line with Eve's act in *Guthlac B*. This may be the lone commonality, however. *Guthlac B* describes the same drink as both *deaðweg* and *bædeweg*, but Russom's definitions of *deaðweg* and *bædeweg* are wildly different, even contradictory. The former anesthetizes those facing certain death—in effect, encouraging acceptance rather than action—while the latter is intended to encourage action even at the risk of death. The *deaðweg* is given to those who have failed to act heroically, or who lack the standing to do so (as in Ibn Fadlan), while the *bædeweg* promotes behavior in accordance with heroic virtues. There are potential similarities between the use of the two drinks—for example, as instruments of social control or as ways of easing fear in the face of fate. Russom's examples, though, serve to emphasize the differences, especially with respect to the drinker taking action, rather than any overlap in meaning. Since *deaðweg* and *bædeweg* refer to the same thing in *Guthlac B*, it is particularly desirable to locate an example of a drink that both

encourages resignation to death *and* virtuous behavior on the part of a heroic figure.

Such an example is readily available and in fact mentioned by Russom, if only in passing. Regarding the *deaðweg* in *Guthlac B*, he writes: "It would be natural to associate such a bitter cup, which represents God's punishment for sin, with that accepted reluctantly by Christ, who suffered punishment on behalf of man in the form of crucifixion" (178). Russom objects to this possibility by referencing John 18:11, in which Jesus refers to his coming death as "the cup the Father has given me." He notes that this scene may have influenced the *poculum mortis* of Bede's hymn on Peter and Paul,[148] but that the drink is served by the devil in *Rex aeterne Domini*. He concludes that "it looks like these authors have integrated a preexisting image with Christian concepts in significantly different ways" (178). Since he is primarily interested in the possibility of this "preexisting image," Russom does not attempt a reading of *Guthlac B* that considers the poem's "drink of death" in light of the bitter drink of the crucifixion scene. This leaves the reader with an analysis of possible pre-Christian influences on the poem, but without a clear understanding of how those influences, once integrated into Christian concepts, affect the structural integrity of the poem and its attitude toward the proper ways to die and mourn.

In the final section of this chapter, I will explore this neglected reading, drawing upon both the medical material covered in the first section ("Illness in *Guthlac B*") and the contributions of the scholarship discussed in the second section—Olsen's two cycles, Hall's identification of a "cup of life" in other sources, and the dual nature of the "drink of death" in *Guthlac B*, as suggested by Russom's

[148] The relevant passage appears as follows in Dreves' edition: *Praefulgido stolas suas / Agni cruore laverant, / Gustando mortis poculum / Mortis triumphant principem* (109).

consideration of pre-existing imagery. In the process, I will put forward several interrelated claims. First, the dual nature of the bitter drink in the Gospels offers a model for understanding the "drink of death" in *Guthlac B* and its relationship to the biblical Genesis. More broadly, I believe Augustine's commentaries on Genesis (on their own or mediated by Bede) suggest a way to bridge the gap between the poem's biblical and biographical components, a method more aligned with the poem's content than that identified by Olsen in Orosius. Finally, I suggest that the medical language found throughout *Guthlac B* facilitates the style of reading outlined in the discussion of the previous two claims.

Christ's Bitter Drink and Beccel's Mourning

Though Russom elides the incompatibilities between the two types of drinks he describes, a single drink can contain or represent opposite qualities in its literary context. In "The dregs of trembling, the draught of salvation: the dual symbolism of the cup in medieval literature," Joanna Bellis writes that "there are two strands to the biblical imagery of cups: the dominant theme, in which they are the casks of divine fury, and the rarer, rapturous counter-melody in which they represent the kindness and salvation of the Almighty…But they are mutually dependent opposites: impending judgment is a precondition for the possibility of mercy; the reprieve of life relies on the sentence of death" (48). While Bellis does not discuss the bitter drink(s) of the Crucifixion in her article, some medieval commentators recognized a similar relationship between the bitter drink and the forbidden fruit of Genesis. Augustine, Bede, and Pseudo-Jerome all make a connection of this nature, though in slightly

different ways, and their efforts can help provide an interpretive framework for *Guthlac B*. As the following discussion will show, the Genesis sections of *Guthlac B* can be read two ways—historically and prophetically—and when these readings are combined, the "cup of death" is able to represent both the forbidden fruit and the bitter drink that counteracts its poison.

A bitter drink, served by one or more soldiers, appears in all four New Testament accounts of the Crucifixion. The details vary, and there is a long tradition of disagreement in the commentary tradition as to the precise composition of the drink and the intent with which it is offered to Jesus. In addition, the accounts of Matthew and Mark suggest that a drink is offered on two occasions: first, at the start of the process of crucifixion (perhaps as a customary palliative), and again after Jesus has cried out. In the Vulgate,[149] the verses read as follows:

> Matthew 27:34
> Et dederunt ei vinum bibere cum felle mistum. Et cum gustasset, noluit bibere.
> *And they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted, he would not drink.*
>
> Matthew 27:48–9
> Et continuo currens unus ex eis, acceptam spongiam implevit aceto, et imposuit arundini, et dabat ei bibere. Ceteri vero dicebant: Sine, videamus an veniat Elias liberans eum.
> *And immediately one of them running took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar; and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver him.*
>
> Mark 15:23
> Et dabant ei bibere myrrhatum vinum: et non accepit.
> *And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but he took it not.*

[149] Biblical quotations are from the 2009 Ex Fontibus *Biblia Sacra: Libri Novi Testamenti et Psalmorum*, which includes English from the *Douay-Rheims Bible* (ed. Challoner) and Latin from *Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatum Clementinum* (ed. Tweedale). Note that I use the Vulgate numbering for chapter, verse, and psalm number.

Mark 15:36
Currens autem unus, et implens spongiam aceto, circumponensque calamo, potum dabat ei, dicens: Sinite, videamus si veniat Elias ad deponendum eum.
And one running and filling a sponge with vinegar, and putting it upon a reed, gave him to drink, saying: Stay, let us see if Elias come to take him down.

In Luke, there is only one brief mention of a drink, vinegar offered by the soldiers in mockery: *Illudebant autem ei et milites accedentes, et acetum offerentes ei* (23:36). This appears to correspond to the second drink from Matthew and Mark. John similarly mentions only one, but adds detail:

John 19:29
Vas ergo erat positum aceto plenum. Illi autem spongiam plenam aceto, hyssopo circumponentes, obtulerunt ori ejus.
Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth.

The first drink (Matthew 27:34, Mark 15:23) may well be akin to the *deaðweg* described by Russom—a substance intended to prepare the condemned for execution. But Russom makes no mention of the second drink, and both the first and the second are interpreted by medieval exegetes as having significance beyond rejection of a possible narcotic. The offering of a bitter drink is commonly taken as fulfillment of Psalm 68:21, as Bede notes: "Bitter the vine that made the bitter wine, set before the Lord Jesus, so that what was written might be fulfilled, 'They gave me gall in my food, and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.'"[150] In his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 119, Augustine expands upon the bitterness of the drink of John 19:29 with a striking comparison between the vessel and sponge containing the substance and those who are serving it. Rettig translates:

[150] Giles, ed.: *Amara vitis amarum vinum fecit: quod propinat Domino Jesu, ut impleatur quod scriptum est, Dederunt in cibum meum fel, et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto* (240).

> "And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," he said, "I thirst:" as though he were to say, "In doing this you have fallen short; give me what you are." For indeed the Jews themselves were themselves the vinegar, deteriorating from the wine of the Patriarchs and Prophets, and, as it were, filled from a full vessel, from the iniquity of this world, having their heart like a sponge, deceitful, so to speak, in its cavernous and tortuous hiding-places. But the hyssop, around which they put the sponge full of vinegar, because it is a lowly herb and purges the breast, we take appropriately as the lowliness of Christ which they thus surrounded and thought they had come around to thwarting. (Rettig 47–48)[151]

Pseudo-Jerome, in his *Commentary on Mark*, likewise writes that "One of them runs and finds a sponge, something just like themselves, empty, weak, dried up, fit for the fire. He fills it with vinegar, that is with wickedness and deceit" (Cahill 123).[152] As Cahill points out (123n50), Pseudo-Jerome's commentary on Judas' betrayal in Mark 14:43 identifies "giv[ing] the sign of a kiss with the poison of deceit" as part of a pattern of behavior, reaching back to Cain's "deceitful and rejected sacrifice" and forward to explain "why they offer wine with vinegar on the cross." Unlike Augustine, Pseudo-Jerome is willing to characterize the first drink, from verse 15:23, in similar terms to the second rather than explaining Jesus' refusal of it as a rejection of pain relief. First, he explicitly associates the bitter drink of 15:23 with the fruit of Genesis, saying that "by means of this wine-vinegar the deadly apple juice is counteracted"

---

[151] Willem, ed.: *Et in siti mea potauerunt me aceto, Sitio, inquit; tamquam diceret: Hoc minus fecistis, date quod estis. Iudaei quippe ipsi errant acetum, degenerantes a uino patriarcharum et prophetarum; et tamquam de pleno uase, de iniquitate mundi huius impleti, cor habentes uelut spongiam, cauernosis quodammodo atque tortuosis latibulis fraudulentum. Hyssopum autem cui circumposuerunt spongiam aceto plenam, quoniam herba est humilis, et pectus purgat, ipsius Christi humilitatem congruenter accipimus, quam circumdederunt, et se circumuenisse putauerunt* (659–660).

[152] Cahill, ed.: *Currens autem unus ex eis inuenit similitudinem eorum, spongiam cauam, infirmam, aridam, ignibus aptam. Implet aceto, hoc est, malitia et dolo* (76).

(119).[153] He then expands upon this parallel:

> To this tree salvation is transfixed; death was impaled on the first tree. The first tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second tree is for us the tree of good alone, and is the tree of life. The first hand reached out to the tree and grasped death; the second hand reached out and discovered the life that had been lost.

As Cahill explains, "The spread of Jesus' hands on the cross evokes a contrast with Eve's reaching for the fruit. God excluded Adam and Eve from Eden lest they reach for the fruit of the tree of life (cf. Gen 3:22), but now Jesus' crucifixion ensures life" (119, footnote 25). For Pseudo-Jerome, at least, the bitter drink and the forbidden fruit are mutually dependent opposites, in Bellis' sense of the term: each relies on the other for meaning, with sin a precondition for redemption. This interpretation is still at some distance from *Guthlac B*'s "cup of death," however. The fruit and the drink, though symbolically linked by deceit, remain separate objects rather than the fruit becoming a bitter drink itself, and the commentary is, after all, a commentary on Mark, not Genesis. It looks back while *Guthlac B* looks forward, at the consequences of the Fall. For a perspective a little more closely aligned with the poem, it is useful to look at Augustine's commentaries on Genesis, and especially his description of historical and prophetic styles of reading.

The first step in the process is to return to Olsen's discussion of Orosius, especially her positioning of his view of history relative to that expressed by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*. As previously mentioned, she does not provide much detail regarding the Augustinian view, but she does point to Felix as depicting "the

[153] Cahill, ed.: *Hoc aceto sucus loetalis pomi abstergitur* (74).

spiritual pilgrimage of Guthlac after he leaves the City of Man for the City of God," an account of an "inner spiritual journey" in the tradition of Athanasius' *Vita Antonii* (73). She argues—reasonably, since *Guthlac B* picks up late in the saint's life— that the *Guthlac B* poet is less concerned with this inner journey and more with how an individual life fits into historical cycles. Orosius writes that "everyone, whoever sees the human race through himself and in himself, perceives that from the beginning of man this world has been controlled by alternating periods of good and evil, then we are taught that sin and the punishment of sin began with the very first man" (Deferrari 6).[154] In each Orosian historical cycle, from fall to redemption, human behavior is characterized in the model of the Old Testament account of Genesis 2 and 3 and the New Testament accounts of the Crucifixion. While the *Guthlac B* poet does not bother to situate Guthlac as an individual within a historical cycle on the scale depicted by Orosius, the poem clearly connects Guthlac's fate to these textual events. For an understanding of Genesis and how its events relate to those in the Gospels, Augustine is more useful than Orosius, but rather than looking to *De Civitate Dei* for answers, I would like to turn to one of Augustine's other works, *De Genesi contra manichaeos* (hereafter *DGAM*).

In the first book of *DGAM*, Augustine responds to the Manichees' hyper-literal criticisms of Genesis (specifically, the six days of creation and day of rest) by offering a layered reading of the text. As he explains, "this whole discourse must first be

[154] Migne, ed.: *jure ab initio hominis per bona malaque alternantia, exerceri hunc mundum sentit, quisquis per se atque in se humanum genus videt: deinde cum ab ipso primo homine peccatum punitionemque peccati coepisse doceamur* (col. 671C).

discussed according to history, then according to prophecy" (95). Up until Chapter 23, *DGAM* responds to Manichean attacks with a reading of Genesis as a historical narrative; in chapters 23–25, he pursues a "prophetic" reading in which the process of creation in Genesis forecasts the seven ages of each individual man and the seven ages of human history as laid out in the Bible. The first age of human history begins with Adam and the sixth with the advent of Christ (with rest on the seventh day predicting rest in heaven). Augustine's detailed discussion of the Fall, more immediately relevant to *Guthlac B*, is similarly divided into historical and prophetic readings. After commenting on the literal meanings of Genesis 2 and 3, he writes in 2.24.37 that "what was fulfilled as history in Adam signifies as prophecy Christ, who left his Father…not by place, because God is not contained by place, and not by turning away in sin, as apostates leave God, but by appearing to men in a man." Correspondingly, Eve represents the Church, the bride of Christ (132–133) and the serpent prophetically signifies the poisons of the heretics," especially Manichaean heretics (134–137). These significations are not singular and fixed—Augustine later offers another prophetic reading of the same verses—but serve as a demonstration of a method of reading.

Though the historical and prophetic readings of the serpent are closely aligned—the deceitful creature and the heretics share many features—in the case of Adam and Eve, their historical behavior necessitates the events described in the prophetic reading, with Christ's actions opposite to theirs. They presume to a station above their own, whereas Christ "assumed the nature of an inferior" (133). While Pseudo-Jerome explicitly mentions both the apple and the bitter drink, Augustine's

method of historical and prophetic reading finds mutually dependent opposites within singular textual figures: Adam embodies a contradiction, representing death and eternal life at once. In 1.23.40, Augustine finds similar oppositions in human nature, where the body is a "reptile" from the earth that carries the soul, and in the sixth (post-Advent) age of human history, in which the "[carnal] nation is drawing its last breath" and "like the old age of an old man, a new man is born and now lives spiritually" (86). If one applies Augustine's historical and prophetic reading to the fruit of Genesis, keeping in mind the relationship between the fruit and the bitter drink as laid out in Pseudo-Jerome, one finds the bitter drink *in* the fruit—or, as *Guthlac B* has it, the fruit as bitter drink.

Based on the discussion of the exegetes above, I believe that the Genesis sections of *Guthlac B* are meant to be read both historically and prophetically, and that the intended prophetic reading is the one suggested by Pseudo-Jerome's commentary on the bitter drink in Mark. In such a reading, *Guthlac B*'s "cup of death" is both the forbidden fruit (historically) and the bitter drink that counteracts it (prophetically). Guthlac similarly can be read both as Adam after the Fall and Christ on the cross. His disease is an intensely physical experience in either case, but his emotional experience of it is in the model of Christ, humbly accepting the bitter drink of death first poured out in Eden and ultimately served by Adam and Eve's descendants during the Crucifixion. Guthlac's environment, like Augustine's vinegar sponge, represents a concentration of the worldly wickedness made possible by the Fall. Bede, commenting on Genesis 3:17-3:18, writes that "poisonous plants were created for the punishment

and torment of mortals"[155] and that "after sin we see that many wild and barren things spring up" (Kendall 135).[156] Guthlac's sickness is a product of an environment rich in this symbolism. To quote Noetzel again, the Fens are mythologized by the Anglo-Saxons as "as a monstrous entity and an isolating force…a corruption of the gift of life and a reeking and stagnant plague upon the earth" (114). To live in such a setting is to exist in a state of physical and spiritual duress. Guthlac's illness is essentially an invasion of the body by its hostile environment, and the poem suggests that some of his saintliness lies in his acceptance of this "bitter drink" without becoming, like Augustine's Jews, emotionally bitter and deceitful.

The language used to describe the "cup of death" and Guthlac's illness enable the layered, historical and prophetic readings articulated above. The concept of bitterness plays an especially important role, for two reasons: its use in Old English to describe both physical and emotional experience and its association with poison. The poem twice describes the drink offered by Eve as "bitter" (868b, 985a), an adjective used in Old English (as in modern) to describe both a physical quality and an emotional experience: here, the taste of the drink and the experience of suffering as a result. Bitterness is likewise the defining feature of the drink offered during the Crucifixion. The Gospels (and the Old English translations)[157] differ in their identification of the drink's ingredients, pointing to vinegar, gall, myrrh, or some combination, but their defining physical characteristic is a bitter taste that also represents the spiritual state of those who serve it. The onlookers themselves have

[155] Giles, ed.: *Nam et herbae venenosae ad poenam vel ad exercitationem mortalium creatae sunt* (62).
[156] Giles, ed.: *post peccatum autem videmus multa horrida et infructuosa nasci* (62).
[157] See Liuzza, ed.

become vessels of bitterness, capable of serving it to others, much as Eve serves the drink at the devil's behest in *Guthlac B*. Jesus, identified by Augustine as the purifying "hyssop" of John 19:29, tastes their bitterness and transforms it with his humility.

Guthlac himself, as a saintly figure, exists somewhere between these states. His suffering from his disease is bitter, as we are explicitly told in the phrase *bittor bancoþa* (1025a). *Bancoþa*, a term otherwise found only in medical texts, indicates the physical condition that afflicts him, while *bittor* describes his experience of it—that it is severe or hard-fought. But the association of Guthlac's illness with bitterness is more comprehensive that the one use of *bittor* to characterize it would suggest. Disease is often conceptualized as poison in Anglo-Saxon medical texts, as Chapter 1 has shown, and poison and bitterness appear together widely in Old English literature, often in violent contexts reminiscent of the language used to describe Guthlac's struggle. The *Guthlac B* poet was clearly familiar with Felix's *Vita*, in which the serpent of Genesis is said to spew poison in Eden, and the demons of the poem, in their *wyrm* form, do the same in their assault on the saint. As discussed in the "Illness in *Guthlac B*" section of this chapter, the pain of Guthlac's disease is described in terms suggestive of hell, including as burning and binding, but there is no indication that the bitterness of his suffering (a long-term result of Eve's "cup of death") is accompanied by a corresponding spiritual souring. He dies immediately following communion, "humble from that honorable bite" (*eaðmod þy æþelan gyfle*)[158] and the bitterness of disease is replaced by sweet fragrances and brilliant light. Guthlac's body,

[158] Line 1301b (Roberts 122). Note that *gyfl* is the same word used to describe the death-bearing "gift" offered by Eve. Somewhat oddly, Roberts does not comment on this word in her edition of the Guthlac poems but does provide an overview of its use in Old English in her essay "Two Notes on La3amon's *Brut*," 81–83.

like every mortal's, is a bitter vessel, but his faith is transformational. The immediate aftermath of his death, despite its canonical features, is thus integrated into the poem's layered reading of the *poculum mortis*.

This chapter, like the poem itself, concludes with a consideration of Beccel and his response to Guthlac's death. This brings us to Guthlac's servant, Beccel (unnamed in the poem), who reacts to the scene with fear. Biggs argues that the poet uses Beccel "to personify the temporary state of the body after the departure of its master, the soul," while Pega "represent[s] the hope of the final reunification of the body and soul at the end of time." In response, Phyllis Brown writes that Beccel "embodies perception and understanding of the worldly side of death" and "the availability of salvation to all Christians, including those who fall short of Guðlac's sanctity" (275). While Biggs points out the importance of including the Genesis opening of the poem in any analysis of its overall meaning, he leaves out all discussion of the *poculum mortis* in his own argument and has little to say about Guthlac's illness. He views the poem up until the saint's death as a process in which Guthlac "becomes more purely spirit" and his servant "increasingly material" (162). His evidence for the former is taken from the saint's expressions of readiness for death, but he neglects the vivid physical details of the saint's suffering that continue into fitt 5, nearly to the point of Guthlac's death. While the Old English "soul and body" poems depict soulless bodies speaking and lamenting, there is no example in Anglo-Saxon literature, as far as I am aware, of a living character as a "concept" of somebody else's soulless body after death. Augustine, Biggs' favored source, describes the separation of body and soul as a result of the Fall, but not with this sort of displacement.

Brown's argument is more comprehensive, accounting for the content of the poem both before and after Guthlac's death. She writes that "*Guðlac B* sets the Fall, recounted at the beginning of the poem, against the possibility for all men to conquer death as a result of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection" (277). By this account, Beccel represents not a body from which the soul has departed but a soul still developing an understanding of death—someone flawed who may yet be saved. As Brown puts it, "despite the Fall all men, like Beccel, have the potential to transcend sinful nature and through good deeds regain the Paradise that Adam and Eve lost" (290). This is consistent with the historical and prophetic readings suggested above, in which the bitter drink represents death both as a consequence of sin and, through the Crucifixion, as a release from it into eternal life. Beccel's mourning, as Biggs correctly points out, is presented in counterpoint to Guthlac's preparation for death, but it too is a physical experience, characterized in terms not unlike those used of Guthlac's disease: heaviness, constraint, burning, welling, and so on. Beccel is bitter in the face of loss, but despite his apparent spiritual weakness, he does deliver Guthlac's message to his sister—a promise of a joyous reunion in heaven. He tells her:

> 7 þe secgan het
> þæt git a mosten in þam ecan gefean
> mid þa sibgedryht somud eard niman
> weorca wuldorlean, willum neotan
> blædes 7 blissa.
>
> I am ordered to say to you that you two will always be allowed to take a home together in eternal joy with the peaceful brethren, the glorious reward of your deeds, and to enjoy at will prosperity and bliss. (548b-56a)

The poem breaks off a few lines later, with Beccel's restatement of his pain, but the loss of the original ending is, in a sense, thematically fit. Beccel is an ordinary human

being, like us, who has the potential to mature in his understanding of death or to remain merely a message-bearer, articulating faith without fully experiencing it. The reader, having come to the present end of the poem, is offered the same choice and responsibility.

Guthlac B is, as is so often noted, a poem about death. It is also a poem about dying and watching others die. This is nothing unusual in hagiography, and the poem is full of motifs that recur in other saints' lives, from Antony to Cuthbert. What makes *Guthlac B* so remarkable is the poet's use of language that is both medically and theologically meaningful to compress mutually dependent opposites into single figures. Guthlac suffers like Adam and like Christ, and one cup contains both the bitterness of the Fall and that of the Crucifixion. The cup of life is implicit in the cup of death and *vice versa*. More broadly, the poem's message—what Brown calls an "explicitly Christian understanding of death as reunion with God"— involves recognizing worldly loss as eternal gain, the "profit and blissful things" that are the reward for a good Christian life. The poem's portrayal of the saint's illness, in which the territory of the body is slowly and painfully ceded to the poison of disease, highlights the paradox inherent in this view of death: it is to be both fought to the end and accepted, even welcomed, as a beginning. The concept of disease as poison, with its associated bitterness, binds Guthlac's individual illness to Eve's cup of death and the mortality afflicting all of mankind, but it also evokes the Crucifixion scene and suggests that tasting bitterness does not have to mean becoming embittered and distant from God. The centrality of the medical language in this poem to its construction of its message makes *Guthlac B* an extraordinary example of how an understanding of

disease in the Anglo-Saxon context can open up interpretive possibilities. The chapter that follows will consider disease in two additional literary contexts: the penitential manuals and the poem *Soul and Body I.*

CHAPTER 3

MEDICAL METAPHOR AND AFFECTIVITY IN PRE-CONQUEST PENITENTIAL LITERATURE AND *SOUL AND BODY I*

The first chapter of this work examined the ways in which Anglo-Saxon medical texts negotiated earlier, differing beliefs about the body and disease, while the second chapter explored the relevance of such beliefs to analysis of the poem *Guthlac B*. This chapter looks forward instead, considering possible Anglo-Saxon evidence of a practice that medieval scholars commonly associate with literature from the twelfth century and later: affective meditation. In *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, Sarah McNamer defines affective meditations as "quite literally scripts for the performance of feeling—scripts that often explicitly aspire to performative efficacy." She notes that these texts attempt the production of emotion through a variety of means, from grammatical and rhetorical features like use of the "dramatic present" to explicit direction regarding gestures that the reader should perform. In some cases, they "stage detailed, vividly imaged scenes from the Passion and cast the reader as feeling eyewitness and participant" (12). In the texts that McNamer and other Middle English scholars analyze,[159] the aim is generally to perform the love of Christ by meditation on the suffering of the Crucifixion or the grief of the Virgin Mary, producing an intense experience of compassion and devotion that might otherwise be difficult to achieve.

The question of whether affective meditation is a post-Conquest development

[159] See, for example, the texts collected and translated in Bartlett and Bestul's *Cultures of Piety* and Savage and Watson's *Anchoritic Spirituality*.

or derived from earlier practices is a subject of ongoing debate.[160] While there have been some efforts to identify signs of affective meditation or ritual in Anglo-Saxon material, these are rare and tend to focus on Old English poetry. A notable exception is Allen J. Frantzen's essay, "Spirituality and Devotion in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials," which focuses on penitential manuals, handbooks that provide guidance to confessors in prescribing penance for a wide range of sins. Numerous manuscripts of penitentials have survived from before the twelfth century, including Irish, Frankish, and other handbooks along with the Anglo-Saxon penitentials that are Frantzen's particular interest. Though best known for their lists of penances (sometimes referred to by scholars as tariffs), many of the texts also include introductory material instructing confessors on subjects such as preparation for confession, what prayers the penitent should say, and the adjustment of penances to an individual sinner's circumstances or rank.

Frantzen suggests that previous research on the penitential manuals, which has focused on the lists of tariffs rather than the instructional material or *ordo confessionis* introducing the lists, has often regarded these texts as "mechanistic or exclusively external" with respect to spiritual devotion. He argues instead that "when we consult the Old English versions of the *ordo confessionis*, we see that they emphasize the interior disposition of the penitent…and that they describe a spiritual culture that allows for a sense of a 'self' for whom spiritual ideas are a 'felt' experience" ("Spirituality" 121). To support this claim, Frantzen cites passages from the penitentials indicating that "contrition is not something that happens to the penitent

[160] This is discussed in a later of this chapter, "Affectivity in the Three Categories of Medical Metaphor."

but is rather an affect he or she creates" (122). Curiously, despite his valuable attention to the instructional content of the penitentials in this article, Frantzen does not consider the striking medical language that appears in such passages; even in other, much more extensive examinations of the Anglo-Saxon penitentials, he only briefly touches upon the role that medical metaphors play in framing the confessor-penitent relationship.

These medical metaphors are often vivid: penitents must "spew out the poison of their sins" in order to be cured; sins are compared to "boils," "festering sores," and "fractures"; and the confessor-physicians must "participate in the foulness" of the sinner's wounds in order to help heal them.[161] Yet Frantzen is not alone in largely passing over this language. Ludwig Bieler, in introducing his edition and translation of the Irish penitentials[162]—which contribute medical language to later, Anglo-Saxon works—accords medicine a single paragraph regarding mentions of the subject in classical and patristic sources (46). Hugh Connolly, prefacing his analysis of Irish penitentials, offers two paragraphs, the first making general statements about the "goal of druidic medicine" and the second briefly referencing the "principle of contraries" that several early penitentials borrow from Cassian (6-7). John McNeill and Helena Gamer, whose edition covers an assortment of Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and continental penitentials, are similarly brief and abstract. More recently, Sarah Hamilton and Rob Meens have published general studies of penitential practices, Hamilton covering the subject from 900 through 1050 and Meens from 600 through 1200. While making

[161] These descriptions are all quoted in context in the next section of this chapter.
[162] The earliest of these is the *Penitential of Finnian*, which Bieler dates to the last quarter of the 6th century at the latest (3-4).

important contributions to the study of penance,[163] both books are too broad in scope to engage in literary analysis of the medical passages that introduce so many handbooks.

Given the widespread practice of confession and penance in the early medieval period and the possible implications of the confessor-penitent relationship for scholarship on affectivity and related subjects, the medical content of the penitentials requires more thorough examination than it has received so far. In the first section of this chapter, "Three Categories of Medical Metaphor in Penitential Introductions," I reconsider the penitential tradition with special attention to the medical language and imagery found in the manuals' introductory remarks. To assist with this analysis, I divide the medical metaphors in the penitentials into three basic types, each reflecting particular historical concerns about confession and penance. These three types offer varying degrees of evidence for the scripting of affectivity in Anglo-Saxon penitential practices, a topic explored by the second section of this chapter, "Affectivity in the Three Categories of Medical Introduction." The third and final section, "Penitential Themes in *Soul and Body I*," investigates imagery of the disintegrating body as a stimulus for the performance of remorse in an Old English poem that I argue depicts the consequences of failing to experience compunction and confess. Frantzen has suggested the possibility of reading this poem, *Soul and Body I*, as being "informed by principles derived from the practice of penance ("Soul and Body" 77). The article in which he discusses this, however, was published in 1982, well before his exploration

[163] Hamilton, for instance, offers a focus on liturgical evidence, while Meens presents his study in a style that makes information about penitential practices accessible to a more general audience.

of affectivity in the penitentials, and he has not returned to *Soul and Body I* to consider the affectivity of penitential practice as a possible influence on the poem. I analyze the poem from that perspective, incorporating additional evidence related to confession from the penitential manuals. Finally, I conclude by suggesting some avenues for future scholarship, particularly with respect to the relationship between the penitentials and later devotional texts that are better known for scripting emotional performance.

Three Categories of Medical Metaphor in Penitential Introductions

The large number of surviving penitentials and their tendency to be revised and recombined in later compilations make it impractical to analyze their instructional content on an individual, text-by-text basis, even if examination is restricted to introductions containing medical language.[164] Most penitentials that include instructions to the confessor frame their guidance in terms related to the body. There is not, however, a great deal of variety in the medical language that is used, particularly with respect to extended metaphors—metaphors that develop beyond the nearly ubiquitous identification of Christ as a physician. Taking into consideration a wide range of penitentials, I identify three main categories of medical metaphor featured in their introductions, each of which provides guidance on the confessor-penitent relationship and the confessor's responsibilities. Based on their dominant concerns, I term these categories the "diversity," "solicitude," and "purgation" types. The

[164] Note that I use the terms "introduction," "preface," and "explanatory content" interchangeably to refer to the content outside the tariffs in which the penitentials offer general guidance to confessors (I reserve the phrase *ordo confessionis* for extensive introductions that include scripts for gestures and prayers in addition to medical metaphors). These "introductions" are usually, though not always, the first part of their manuals and provide frameworks for understanding the confessor-penitent relationship.

remainder of this section attempts (as far as possible, considering uncertainties of dating) to situate each type with respect to historical concerns about penitential practices, which help to explain the forms that the metaphors take. I also provide a brief initial analysis of the metaphors themselves in preparation for the more detailed examination of these passages with respect to affectivity in the second section of the chapter.

Type 1: "Diversity"

The "diversity" medical metaphor emphasizes the appropriateness of treatment to ailment, pointing out the need for "spiritual physicians [to] treat with diverse kinds of cures the wounds of souls" just as physicians of the body "compound their medicines in diverse types."[165] This metaphor has the longest history of the three types, first appearing in the seventh-century *Penitential of Columbanus*.[166] Meens notes that this penitential "was probably composed in Francia, but it undoubtedly draws on an insular tradition," as demonstrated by its use of a 6th-century Hiberno-Latin work, the *Penitential of Finnian* (55). The *Penitential of Columbanus* is closely related in its content to another work written or authorized by the saint, the *Regula Coenobialis*, which also discusses the importance of confession and penance. The penitential in turn became an important influence on a variety of later continental penitentials and eventually on penitential manuals produced in tenth-century England.

[165] The complete extended metaphor, as found in the B-prologue of the *Penitential of Columbanus*, is quoted later in this section, immediately before its textual analysis.
[166] Regarding the composition of this manual, Meens notes that within its three parts "different layers have been identified, suggesting a composition of the text from loose files, in different stages from 550 to 650" (55). The two surviving manuscripts are from the 10th (possibly 9th) and 11th centuries. See Meens 55n79, Bieler 15.

Frantzen breaks down the pre-tenth century continental penitentials into three groups, the first and earliest of which demonstrate "the early and pervasive influence of the Irish and Anglo-Saxon penitentials on the continent" ("Tradition" 36). This group includes anonymous penitentials associated with Irish centers of manuscript production on the continent, the penitentials associated with Columbanus, Cummean, and Theodore, and several other works. The second group, commonly referred to as the tripartite penitentials, synthesize the penitentials of Columbanus, Cummean, and Theodore and were written mostly before the first quarter of the ninth century (36). These influenced the compilation of the texts in the third group—including the penitentials attributed to Bede, Egbert, and Halitgar—as well as later works. The content of the *Penitential of Columbanus* thus has a long-lasting effect on the penitential tradition, making its distinctive features, including its medical metaphors, particularly worthy of note.

The *Penitential of Columbanus* is interesting both in its use of source material and its departures from it. As Meens points out, "the penitential [of Columbanus] is of particular interest because it is the first text which deals with sins of all Christians: monks, clerics, and the laity" (55).[167] This is a common feature of later penitential works. Bieler points out the text's dependence on the *Penitential of Finnian*, including a shared departure from Cassian. He writes that "both authors know and endorse Cassian's principle *contraria contrariis curare*, but they do not (as does Cummean)

[167] Meens elaborates: "Whereas earlier insular penitentials had penalized only those offenses which had social repercussions…Columbanus went further and demanded that lay people live a life that was modelled on that of a monk and had to perform penance—although a lesser one than was demanded of monks and clerics—if they did not comply to the monastic ideal" (56–57).

make Cassian's ogdoad of capital sins the basis of their classification" (5).[168] More significantly, Bieler notes that the *Penitential of Columbanus* depends on Finnian "not only in numerous provisions concerning particular sins but also in the general concept of penance, which may be described as a transition from the idea of vindictive penance to that of remedial penance" (5). He does not elaborate on the evidence for this transition, but Cassian's comments on penance and the treatment of penitents by the monastic community are suggestive of a more vindictive approach.

In book 2, chapters 15 and 16 of the *Institutes*, Cassian indicates that brothers who have broken the rules of the community must absolve themselves through public penance, and until that penance has taken place, the other brothers are forbidden to pray with them and must consider the rule-breakers to be "delivered over to Satan" (Ramsey 47). Cassian writes that anyone who communicates with a penitent out of kindness "makes himself an accomplice in [the penitent's] damnation, for he willingly delivers himself over to Satan, to whom the other had been consigned for the correction of his fault"—and this, in Cassian's view, is a "much more serious crime" (47). By contrast, the *Penitential of Columbanus*, while prescribing penances that would have been noticeable to others (such as fasting or the imposition of silence), does not assign much importance to the semi-public nature of these behaviors, apparently considering this incidental rather than an essential part of the process.

McNeill and Gamer, discussing the *Penitential of Finnian*, describe the private

[168] Bieler does not cite any particular passage from Cassian, but a statement of the principle can be found at the start of book 12, chapter 8. Ramsey translates: "And so God, the Creator and Physician of the universe, knowing that pride is the cause and source of our maladies, saw to it that contraries would be healed by contraries, so that what had collapsed through pride would rise again through humility" (258).

nature of penance at the time in terms that can be equally applied to the Columbanian text:

> The acts of satisfaction according to the penitentials were ordinarily private, though not always necessarily secret. Finnian, it is true, clearly authorizes secret penance, and his language suggests the intention that it should normally be secret; but the nature of many of the penalties precluded the possibility of complete secrecy in their performance. Penance was, however, now in general wholly private in the sense of being dissociated from the assembled church. There was no public exomologesis and no corporate knowledge of the matter on the part of the congregation. (28–29)

This privacy, in line with remedial rather than vindictive penance, was a shift from earlier, more public forms of penance.[169] McNeill and Gamer, in their overview of the subject, write that "throughout the ancient period of the church the acts of satisfaction enjoined in penance were prevailingly public in character, and reconciliation was regularly a public rite" (13). This change in perspective regarding the means by which penance could be performed would certainly have raised questions about the proper mindset for confession and the assignment of penance. I want to suggest that the introductory remarks found in many medieval penitentials—often featuring medical metaphors—represent attempts to address these questions and elucidate an increasingly interior process.

There is also evidence for increased attention to the mind in the tariffs themselves. In common with the *Penitential of Finnian*, the *Penitential of Columbanus* addresses the desire or intention to sin as well as sinful actions themselves. The first penance described by the text is for anyone who has "sinned in

[169] Note that this shift was not absolute. For a discussion of public penance in Anglo-Saxon England, see Bedingfield (223–255).

thought" or has been "ready in his heart" to commit sins,[170] and the manual concludes with a command that confessions "be made carefully, especially of disturbances of the mind"[171] before going to mass, because "it is necessary to abstain from and wash away interior vices and the sicknesses of the weakening soul before the covenant of true peace and the bond of eternal salvation."[172] Penance for sins of the mind or heart do not appear in earlier Irish Latin texts, even those with fairly lengthy lists of tariffs, such as the *First Synod of St. Patrick* or the *Preface of Gildas on Penance*. Explicit consideration of such sins is consistent with an increased emphasis on remedial rather than vindictive penance, on spiritual purification rather than the strict behavioral regulation involved in managing a monastic community. This does not mean that behavioral regulation became less important—the vast majority of tariffs in both the Finnian and Columbanus manuals address actions rather than desires—but instead suggests an extension of that discipline into the realm of the mind, mediated by the confessor.

Given the shift toward remedial penance and the broadened scope of the *Penitential of Columbanus*, it is understandable that the compiler of the text felt a need to add introductory material defining the confessor-penitent relationship and describing the proper administration of penance. This penitential, as a relatively early text, focuses on adjusting the severity of the penance to the severity of the sin rather

---

[170] See Bieler's edition (96). The Latin phrases are: *per cogitationem peccauerit* and *paratus ad haec corde conplenda fuerit*.
[171] *Confessiones autem dari diligentius praecipitur maxime de commotionibus animi* (Bieler 106). I follow Bieler in translating *animi* as "mind" rather than "soul" here, since the passage as a whole is drawing a distinction between sins of thought and sins of action.
[172] *...ita etiam ab interioribus uitiis et morbis languentis animae abstinendum est ac abstergendum ante uerae pacis coniunctionem et aeterne salutis conpaginem* (Bieler 106).

than elaborating upon the emotional state necessary for effective confession and penance. Nevertheless, it is significant because it offers the earliest example of a penitential prefacing a list of tariffs with an extended metaphoric description of the confessor-penitent relationship, and for characterizing that relationship in medical terms. This opens the way for later texts' depiction of confession and penance as an affective process—the subject of the second part of this chapter.[173] Unlike the Finnian manual, which jumps into tariffs immediately, the *Penitential of Columbanus* includes not one but two prologues: the A-prologue, introducing the initial section on penances for monks, and the B-prologue, opening the sections on penance for the secular clergy and lay penitents. The A-prologue is very brief, acknowledging the need for penance and describing the tariffs that follow as passed down by the holy fathers and appropriate to the severity of the sins. The B-prologue expands upon this concept of appropriateness using an extended medical metaphor. The text, as found in Bieler's edition,[174] is as follows:

> Diuersitas culparum diuersitatem facit paenitentiarum. Nam et corporum medici diuersis medicamenta generibus conponunt. Aliter enim uulnera, aliter morbos, aliter tumores, aliter liuores, aliter putredines, aliter caligines, aliter confractiones, aliter conbustiones curant. Ita igitur etiam spiritales medici diuersis curationum generibus animarum uulnera morbos [culpas][175] dolores aegritudines infirmitates sanare debent. Sed quia haec paucorum sunt, ad purum scilicet cuncta cognoscere, curare, ad integrum salutis statum debilia reuocare, uel pauca iuxta seniorum traditiones et iuxta nostram ex parte intellegentiam (ex parte namque prophetamus et ex parte cognoscimus) aliqua

[173] While one might expect confession and penance to be affective—at least in the general sense of involving emotional expression—the earlier texts do not contain introductions discussing the internal emotional experience of the confessor or penitent, much less how those emotions might be harnessed to help the penitent achieve a sufficient intensity of remorse.
[174] Bieler uses both surviving manuscripts in his edition: Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, G. VII 16 and Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, G.V. 38 (which he abbreviates as Ti and Tii, respectively). Bieler notes that Ti dates from the mid-to-late 11th century and Tii from the 9th to early 10th (15).
[175] Bieler notes here: *ut glossema deleui*.

proponamus. (Bieler 98)

> Diversity of offenses make for a diversity of penances. For physicians of bodies also compound their medicines in diverse types; thus they heal wounds in one manner, sicknesses in another, boils in another, bruises in another, festering sores in another, eye diseases in another, fractures in another, burns in another. Accordingly, so also should spiritual physicians treat with diverse kinds of cures the wounds of souls, their sicknesses, [offences], pains, afflictions, and infirmities. But since these [skills] belong to few, namely to know how to cure all these things completely, to restore what is weak to a full state of health, let us lay out a few things[176] according to the traditions of our seniors and according to our understanding in part (for we prophecy in part and know in part).

Here, the emphasis is on ensuring the appropriateness of the penance to the sin; the medical language insists upon the importance of the penitential itself as an instrument for achieving this goal. The B-prologue makes no mention of the penitent's mindset or the emotional state required for effective penance. Aside from recognizing a need for guidance in the prescription of penance, the passage also ignores the confessor's attitude toward his task. The metaphor of matching remedies to ailments is well suited to this narrow focus on the careful prescription of penance according to the nature of the sin and the circumstances of the sinner.

Although, as already noted, the *Penitential of Columbanus* relies heavily on the *Penitential of Finnian*, the latter begins abruptly, without any prologue beyond the incipit; there is no sign of the medical metaphor that figures so prominently in the *Penitential of Columbanus*' introductory material. There appear to be no close analogues in the continental texts generally believed to have influenced the initial development of the penitentials, namely Caesarius, Origen, and Cassian.[177] Whether

[176] Bieler pursues the metaphor, translating *aliqua* as "prescriptions" (99)

[177] While the *Institutes* does not contain any true analogue to the B-prologue, Cassian stands out for his repeated use of medical language. At times, his metaphors do overlap in sentiment

the author of the *Penitential of Columbanus* drew upon a source that has not survived or expanded upon biblical passages himself,[178] the result is an extended metaphor that endures for centuries in penitential works. Most notably, in the texts that McNeill and Gamer title the *Penitential of Egbert* and the *Penitential Ascribed by Albers to Bede*, an extended metaphor that is clearly derived from the Columbanian B-prologue appears in introductory instructions to the confessor, modified to emphasize different aspects of penitential practice. These two texts, which both draw upon the *Penitential of Theodore*, have a complicated history, even by the standards of the penitentials. A few notes on their relationship and titling are in order before discussion of their framing of the confessor-penitent relationship.

Frantzen notes that "various handbooks have been assigned to each author, so that 'the penitential of Bede' actually refers to four different handbooks, while 'the penitential of Egbert' refers to three" (*Literature* 69). After dismissing two of the three penitentials ascribed to Egbert as far too late to have been issued under Egbert's authority as archbishop, Frantzen settles on the Latin *Penitential of Egbert*—the same text given that name by McNeill and Gamer—as possibly genuine, though with some continental additions (70, 73). The prologue of this text features an extended medical metaphor of the "diversity" type. As for the so-called penitential of Bede, Frantzen writes that "there appear to be two distinct lines of development, one including Egbert's penitential, the other independent of it" ("Bede" 589). He further breaks down the surviving manuscripts into five classes, which vary in the degree to which

---

if not in phrasing with content from the penitentials. See, for example, his discussion of the treatment and prevention of *acedia* (book 10, chapters 14 and 15 especially).

[178] Most obviously, the identification of Jesus as a physician (e.g. Matthew 9:12).

they incorporate material from the *Penitential of Egbert*. Most relevant to this study is Class 2, which includes the version of the text edited by Albers (from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 477). Manuscripts in this category—the largest of the five—all contain the Egbert prologue ("Bede" 582–583). This passage presents a variation on the "diversity" medical metaphor from the *Penitential of Columbanus*. Here is the text as it appears in the edition by Arthur Haddan and William Stubbs[179] (from Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex lat. 2223):

> Institutio illa sancta que fiebat in diebus patrum nostrorum rectas vias numquam deseruit, quae statuta erunt penitentibus atque lugentibus suas passiones ac vitia medicamenta salutis eterne, quia diversitas culparum diversitatem facit penitentibus medicamentorum, vel sicut medici corporum diversa medicamenta vel potiones solent facere contra diversitatem infirmitatum vel judices secularium causarum. Diversa igitur judicia, qui boni sunt et recti, pensent atque tractent, quomodo recte judicent inter miseros et divites, inter causam et causam; quanto magis igitur, O sacerdotes Dei, diversa medicamenta animarum [invisibilium][180] hominibus pensare et tractare oportet, ne per stultum medicum vulnera animarum fiant pejora, propheta dicente: Conputruerunt et deterioraverunt cicatrices meae a facie insipientiae mee. O stulte medice, noli decipere animam tuam et illius, ne duplicem poenam accipias, vel septupla vel millena, audi Christum dicentem: Si cecus cecum duxerit, ambo cadunt in foveam. (Haddan and Stubbs 3:416)
>
> That holy instruction that was made in the days of our fathers never forsook the correct ways, those which will have laid out the remedies of eternal salvation for penitents and those who bewail their passions and sins, since the diversity of offenses makes for a diversity of remedies for penitents, just as the physicians of bodies are accustomed to make diverse remedies or potions for

[179] Haddan and Stubbs base their text on that of Wasserschleben (231), but there are minor variations between the two editions. The H. and S. edition also provides more extensive footnotes on the text. This penitential is the subject of ongoing scholarship as part of the Körntgen-Kottje project, which aims to produce editions of major penitential manuals from the early medieval period. A draft edition (based on a different manuscript than the one used by Haddan and Stubbs) is available through a link on Michael Elliot's *Anglo-Saxon Canon Law* website.

[180] The manuscript used by Haddan and Stubbs has *visibilibus* here, but they note that *invisibilium* appears in other manuscripts (3:416n34). The latter makes more sense in translation.

> the diversity of ailments or as judges are accustomed to do for secular cases. Therefore, those who are good and righteous weigh and lay out diverse judgments, in the same way that they judge rightly between the poor and the rich, between one case and another; how much more therefore, O priests of God, ought one to weigh and set down the diverse remedies of invisible souls for men, so that the wounds of souls may not be made worse by a foolish physician, as the prophet says: "My wounds putrify and deteriorate on account of my foolishness." O foolish physician, do not deceive your soul or his, lest you receive a double punishment, or sevenfold or a thousandfold. Hear Christ saying: If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the pit.

The general intent of the passage—to emphasize the importance of prescribing the appropriate penance for a particular sin—remains the same, though the list of ailments used to illustrate it has been dropped in favor of a second, judicial metaphor that emphasizes the effect of sin on the social body as much as on the individual. While the mindset of the penitent is still unremarked-upon, this version of the "diversity" metaphor does attend to the confessor's attitude toward his task, using the vivid medical language of the quotation from Psalm 38 (37 in the Latin). The language of the quotation naturally reflects that of the psalm itself, but in this context, it also effectively binds together the fates of the confessor and the penitent: the foolishness is the physician's, but the wounds are both his own (grammatically) and those of the penitent (in the context of the prologue). This is consistent with the notion expressed in other penitentials of the sins of the penitent as a threat to the community, in the same sense that the whole body is affected by harm to one member. Altogether, the innovations in this passage—the comparison to secular judgments, biblical quotations, and the explicit warning to the confessor—combine to suggest increased concern about confessors prescribing inappropriate penances out of an inappropriate mental or spiritual state rather than out of the simple ignorance described in the *Penitential of Columbanus*.

Type 2: "Solicitude"

The second category of medical metaphor that I have identified in the penitential introductions is the "solicitude" type, which emphasizes forming an empathetic connection with the sinner to cure his wounds and prevent the disease of sin from spreading through the community. The "solicitude" extended metaphor survives in a greater variety of texts, the earliest of which appears to be the text commonly referred to as the *Tripartite St. Gall Penitential.* This text, which Meens dates to the second half of the 8th century, survives only in a mid 9th century copy in Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Sangallense 150. Meens notes that "the author of this text clearly worried about the differences of opinion he encountered in his sources and therefore presented his material in three distinct parts": "the first series following a Frankish penitential from the Columbanian tradition, a second one presenting Theodorian *iudicia* and finally a series drawing on Cummean's penitential" (*Penance* 111). Meens does not discuss the introductory material containing the medical metaphor specifically, but it does not appear to have its source in Columbanus, Theodore, or Cummean. The *Penitential of Columbanus* and the *Regula Coenobialis*, as already discussed, feature metaphors of the "diversity" type. The *Penitential of Cummean* (a source for the Theodorean material) begins with very basic medical language, describing its own introduction as "the prologue of the health-giving medicine of souls" and the penances as "the remedies of wounds according to the determinations of the earlier fathers" (McNeill 99), but the text does not expand on these metaphors. The *Penitential of Theodore* is merely addressed to the "physicians of souls," and the

Canons of Theodore is prefaced by the text that Frantzen terms the *Old English Introduction*, lengthy instructions for confession that are entirely devoid of medical metaphor. Given that none of these texts contain the source material for the extended metaphor found in the *Tripartite St. Gall Penitential*, its compiler either expanded upon the biblical quotations himself or drew upon sources that have not survived or lie outside the penitential tradition. His "solicitude" metaphor was then incorporated into a variety of other penitential works.

Hermann Joseph Schmitz identifies eight such works and provides an edition of the introductory material that catalogues the variations between the texts (2:199–200), though these prove to be minor. Among the texts are another pseudo-Bedan work and the *Penitential of Halitgar*.[181] The historical context of the *Penitential of Halitgar* is relatively clear, thanks to content that dates the manual's production to Halitgar's lifetime or shortly thereafter. It is a central text in the Frankish reform movement, which grew out of ecclesiastical councils in 813 and 829 that addressed differences in penitential practices. The *Halitgar* text thus offers a better opportunity than the *Tripartite St. Gall Penitential* for considering how the instructions to the confessor may relate to historical concerns about penance: while the earlier text reflects the diversity of manuals available to the compiler, the *Penitential of Halitgar* represents an attempt to address the problems posed by such diversity rather than

[181] The *Penitential of Halitgar* is sometimes known as the "Roman Penitential" or "So-called Roman Penitential," based on a claim within the text that it was found in "a book repository of the Roman Church" (McNeill 297). While Schmitz has argued for the legitimacy of this claim, his argument has been widely discredited, since "much of the text is derived from Celtic and Theodorean sources" (McNeill 296). It has survived in whole or in part in numerous manuscripts. See Kottje for a list of these and details of the contents (13–83).

simply mirroring it. The incorporation of the introductory remarks, including the "solicitude" metaphor, from the *Tripartite St. Gall Penitential* into Halitgar's text suggests their ongoing relevance for framing the confessor-penitent relationship at a time when penitential practices were a source of controversy.

As Frantzen notes, the *Penitential of Halitgar* responds to concerns raised by Frankish reformers about the authoritativeness of penitential manuals (or their lack of it), their disorganization and contradictions, and differences in how confession was heard and penance administered (*Literature* 103–105). Halitgar composed five books on penance, drawing upon authoritative sources, before adding a sixth book, the only one to contain a penitential manual with lists of tariffs. Halitgar describes the sixth book (referred to here as the *Penitential of Halitgar*) as Roman, but this appears to have been an attempt at lending additional authority to a penitential that draws together material from Columbanus, Theodore, and Cummean, after the manner of the St. Gall manual. In addition to recognizing both public and private rites related to penance, the *Penitential of Halitgar* stands out for its incorporation of an extensive *ordo confessionis*, detailed instructions to the confessor that include not just prayers to be performed but information about the proper emotional approach to penance. This unusually detailed level of guidance serves as a response to concerns about a lack of standardization in the administration of penance, particularly private penance. The medical metaphor, which occurs in a passage just after the sixth book's incipit, is key to the penitential's depiction of the proper confessor-penitent relationship.

The text of the "solicitude" introduction is quoted below from Schmitz's

edition of the *Penitential of Halitgar*.[182] It is nearly identical to the version of the introduction found in the *Tripartite St. Gall Penitential*.

> Quotiescunque Christiani ad paenitentiam accedunt, jejunia damus et nos communicare cum eis debemus jejunio unam aut duas septimanas, aut quantum possumus; ut non dicatur nobis, quod sacerdotibus Judaeorum dictum est a Domino Salvatore: Vae vobis, legisperiti qui adgravatis homines et inponitis super humeros eorum onera gravia; ipsi autem uno digito vestro non tangitis sarcinas ipsas. Nemo autem potest sublevare cadentem sub pondere nisi inclinaverit se, ut porrigat ei manum, neque ullus medicorum vulnera infirmantium potest curare nisi foetoribus particeps fuerit: ita quoque nullus sacerdotum vel pontifex peccatorum vulnera curare potest, aut animabus peccata auferre, nisi praestante sollicitudine et oratione lacrymarum. Necesse est ergo nobis, fratres charissimi, sollicitus esse pro peccantibus, quia sumus alterutrum membra: et si quid patitur unum membrum, conpatiuntur omnia membra. (Schmitz 2:290–291)
>
> As often as we assign fasts to Christians for penance, we ourselves ought also to unite with them in fasting for one or two weeks, or as long as we are able; so that it is not said to us what was said to the priests of the Jews by our Lord and Savior: "Woe unto you scribes, who oppress men and lay upon their shoulders heavy loads, but ye yourselves do not touch these burdens with one of your fingers." For no one can raise up one who is falling beneath a weight unless he bends himself so that he may reach out a hand to him; neither can any physician treat the wounds of the sick unless he becomes a participant in their foulness. So also no priest or pontiff can cure the wounds of sinners or take away the sins from their souls unless by providing solicitude and prayers of tears. Therefore, it is necessary for us, dear brothers, to be solicitous on behalf of sinners, since we are "members one of the other" and "if one member suffers anything all the members suffer with it."[183]

Despite serving the same purpose in the text—to instruct confessors on the confessor-penitent relationship—this passage reflects very different concerns from those suggested by the contents of the "diversity" introduction, particularly as it appears in

[182] Most of Schmitz's edition, which includes the first five books of Halitgar's work in addition to the penitential in the sixth, is based on the text of Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibl., Hamilton 290. For the part of the sixth book quoted above, he uses Paris, Bibl. Nat., Ms. lat. 8508. For details about these manuscripts, see Kottje (16–17, 54–55); for a very brief overview of previous editions, see McNeill and Gamer (295–297). Note that Schmitz had previously published an edition of the sixth book based on another manuscript altogether.
[183] 1 Corinthians 12:26.

the B-prologue from the *Penitential of Columbanus*. Rather than emphasizing the importance of choosing the appropriate "remedy" for each sin, the "solicitude" introduction focuses on empathy as a means of healing. This can take the form of actions, such as fasting, or emotional identification with the condition of the penitent, through "prayers and tears." Achieving this empathetic connection requires solicitude: actively seeking to share in others' experiences. The goal is not so much to feel what the penitent is feeling as to recognize in the penitent's emotional condition the fallen state that the confessor and penitent share. The medical metaphor at the center of the passage expresses this idea most vividly, pointing out that a physician cannot be effective "unless he becomes a participant in the foulness [lit. foulnesses]" of patients' wounds. While McNeill and Gamer choose to translate *nisi foetoribus particeps fuerit* loosely, as "comes in contact with their foulness," I believe that a literal translation of the phrase is essential to capturing its meaning and its relationship to the other metaphors in the passage.[184] For spiritual healing, it is not enough merely to come into contact with another's wound, as a physician of bodily injuries might; it is necessary to experience the injury as if it were one's own, because within the community, an injury to one member *is* an injury to all. This notion of shared experience is reinforced later in the introduction with a quotation from Paul: "Who is weak and I am not weak; who is scandalized and I am not on fire" (2 Corinthians 11:29).[185]

[184] The phrase *particeps fuerit* is used in this sense—participation rather than just contact—in other contexts. Augustine, for example, uses it in his *Tractates on John* (26.15) to describe participants in communion: *Res vero ipsa cuius sacramenta est, omni homini ad vitam, nulli ad exitium, quicumque eius particeps fuerit* (94B in the edition by the Benedictines of St. Maur).

[185] Douay-Rheims. The Latin in Schmitz's edition (2:291) reads: *quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor, quis scandalizatur, et ego non uror?*

Type 3: "Purgation"

The third category of medical metaphor used to introduce penitential material, and the latest to appear, is the "purgation" type, which characterizes sin as a poison to be vomited out. It appears in the *Old English Handbook*, which survives in six manuscripts[186] dating from the early to mid 11th century. Meens emphasizes that there is no manuscript evidence of insular penitentials from the ninth century, perhaps due to the disruptions caused by Viking activity, and that the *Old English Handbook* and other English penitentials of the tenth and eleventh centuries represent a reintroduction of the penitential tradition from the continent (Meens 158–159). These works therefore show the influence of the Frankish reformers as well as building upon each other. The *Old English Handbook* is a case in point: it draws heavily upon the *Old English Penitential*, which in turn is based upon both Halitgar's work and another vernacular text commonly referred to as the *Scrift Boc* (162–163). However, in its use of medical language in instructions to the confessor, the *Handbook* diverges from all three of these sources. The *Old English Penitential* and the *Scrift Boc* are both prefaced by the thoroughly non-medical *Old English Introduction* (edited and translated as a separate text by Frantzen); Halitgar's penitential, as already discussed, features the "solicitude"-type introduction to its list of tariffs. Rather than using either of these options, the *Handbook* provides instructions to the confessor that are permeated with medical language, yet bear little overt resemblance to either the

[186] Assigned letters as per Fowler and Frantzen: Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, 8558-63 (B); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 265 (C); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 201 (D); London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A.iii (N); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (X); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 482 (Y).

"diversity" or "solicitude" introductions.

As Roger Fowler notes in the preface to his edition of the MS D (CCC 201) text, the *Old English Handbook* survives in a long version, comprised of six parts, and a short version containing parts 1, 3, 4, and 5 in a variety of orders (4–6). Fowler writes that these two versions most likely represent "the progressive accumulation of relevant texts by secretaries who had been trained to assemble sets of texts" and that the long version "is not a unified work, but an assemblage of texts of different sources, subjects and styles (5). He suggests that the short version may have been the original one (4), and Frantzen reiterates this in stronger terms.[187] Both Fowler and Frantzen provide charts showing the components present in each manuscript and their order of appearance. As for the content of the six elements, which appear all together only in MS D, Frantzen describes them as follows: 1) "Latin Introduction"; 2) "Prayer of confession for priest to teach to the penitent and direct the penitent to recite"; 3) "The ordo confessionis, which tells the priest how to receive the penitent"; 4) "The tariff penitential"; 5) "Further directions for the priest"; and 6) "Commutations of penance for the powerful." Frantzen argues with strong textual evidence that the second part is an interpolation, intended for use in a public rite of confession, and that the remaining material forms "a complete, wholly adequate guide to private confession" that is "the most practical of the vernacular penitentials" ("Description" 47–48). The brevity of the list of tariffs—extracted from the longer *Old English Penitential*—contributes to this practicality, as does the inclusion of material instructing the priest in how to question the penitent and how to modify penances for the sick and the wealthy.

[187] See the page "Description of the OE Handbook & Indices," accessible through Frantzen's website, *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database.*

For the purposes of this chapter, part 5 and to a lesser extent part 3 are the most significant, and these survive in every manuscript. Part 3 opens with an identification of the confessor as the "physician of men's souls" but does not expand upon this metaphor, instead reminding the confessor to consider penitents' social status and other factors before determining the appropriate penance. In effect, this section of text does the work of the "diversity" medical metaphor without the medical language. Part 5, on the other hand, frames the process of confession and penance in explicitly medical terms. This framework does not appear in the *Old English Penitential*, and Fowler writes that "no specific source has been found" for the part of the *Handbook* that "develop[s] the metaphor of confession as a purge" (14). Following Frantzen, and drawing upon his edition,[188] I translate the medical metaphors found in this section of the *Old English Handbook* as they appear in MS D (CCC 201). Note that the content of part 5 is very similar across all manuscripts, though MS X offers two nearly identical versions of part 5, and in MS Y, the material from part 5 is split and distributed across other parts of the text. In all manuscripts except Y, part 5 opens with the statement that "the need of a greatly sinful man is very dependent on a wise confessor, just as the healing of a sick man [depends] on a good physician."[189]

After briefly reminding the confessor to consider factors such as ability and rank in assigning penance, the text proceeds to describe the virtues and conditions of penance in medical terms:

---

[188] Note that, for ease of formatting and reading, I use Frantzen's basic text without the additional manuscript features he includes in his online edition (e.g. rubrication, medial puncti, etc). Here, the punctuation is my own. The material in the block quote can be found in Frantzen's electronic edition of CCC 201 from D55.04.01 through D55.09.01.

[189] See D55.01.00 in Frantzen's electronic edition: *On wisan scryfte byð swiðe forðgelang forsyngodes mannes nydhelp, ealswa on godan læce bið seoces mannes lacnung*.

> Se læca þe sceal sare wunda wel gehælan he mot habban gode sealfe to. Ne syndon nane swa yfele wunda swa sindon synwunda forðam þurh þa forwyrð se man ecan deaðe buton he þurh andetnesse & þurh geswicenesse & þurh dædbote gehæled wurðe. þonne mot se læca beon wis & wær þe ða wunda hælan sceal. Ðurh gode lare man sceal ærest hi lacnian & mid þam gedon þæt man aspiwe þæt attor ut þæt him on innan bið: þæt is þæt he geclænsige hine silfne ærost. þurh andetnesse. Eal man sceal aspiwan synna þurh gode lare mid andetnesse ealswa man unlibban deð ðurh godne drenc. Ne mæg æni læce wel lacnian ær ðæt attor ute sy ne æni man eac dædbote wel tæcan þam ðe andettan nele, ne æni man ne mæg synna buton andetnesse næ gebetan þe ma þe se mæg wel hal wurðan þe unlibban gedrucen hæfð buton he þæt attor swiðe aspiwe. Æfter andetnesse man mæg mid dædbote godes mildheortnesse raðe geearnian gif he mid inneweardre heortan heofe þæt bereowsað þæt he þurh deofles scyfe ær gefremode to unrihte. On wisum scrifte bið eac swiðe forðgelang wislic dædbot ealswa on godum læce bið.
>
> The physician who must heal painful wounds well must have a good salve for that. Nor are any wounds as evil as the wounds of sin, since through those a man perishes in eternal death unless he becomes healed through confession and through repentance and through penance. Then the physician who must heal the wounds should be wise and careful. First, one must heal [him] through good teaching, and with that make him vomit out the poison that is within him; that is, he should first cleanse himself through confession. Every man must vomit sin through confession just as he does poison through a good drink. Nor may any physician heal well before that poison is out, nor any man assign penance well to him that does not want to confess, nor any man repent his sins except through confession, any more than he who has drunk poison may become well unless he vomits out that poison violently. After confession, a man may quickly earn God's mercy with penance if he laments with his inward heart and repents that which he did wrong before at the devil's prompting. A wise repentance is also greatly dependent on a wise [confessor], just as [a remedy for disease] is on a good physician.

The details in this passage differ significantly from both the "diversity" and "solicitude" introductions. There is no attention paid to matching sins with the proper penances—the primary concern of the "diversity" medical metaphor—and the passage also lacks the "solicitude" introduction's concern with the confessor's state of mind and recognition of his own transgressions. Instead of focusing on the confessor's emotional labor as a teacher and model of repentance, the "purgation" metaphor emphasizes the effort involved on the part of the penitent. This introduction is also much more thoroughly medical in its imagery than the earlier types, both of which

lean on additional sources of authority (legal and scriptural) to supplement the medical language. As the first chapter of this dissertation shows, the Anglo-Saxon medical recipe-books conceptualize disease both as "poison" (*attor*) and as "evil" (*yfel*), suggesting defensive measures that may repel or expel it. The "purgation" medical metaphor taps into this understanding of illness: the passage's apparently distinct metaphors (the topical treatment of wounds and the vomiting of poison) are united by a belief, evident throughout the medical corpus, that healing requires the drawing-out of the poison or evil that is responsible for the patient's suffering. This is as true for an infected wound as for illnesses viewed as internal. While the confessor-physician's "good teaching" is described as the drink resulting in the purgative speech of confession, the passage emphasizes that the act of speaking one's sins is not a sufficient remedy for them. The penitent must confess willingly, and he must afterward "lament with his inward heart." This intriguing phrase suggests that not only an emotional state but the internal *performance* of that state is necessary for the penitent to merit divine mercy. The next section of this chapter will pursue this concept in more detail.

In summary, the "diversity" introduction reflects concerns arising from the shift away from vindictive, public penance towards a more remedial form, partly or entirely private. In the private setting, customizing the penance to the sin and the sinner took on additional importance, since the shame and regret necessary for effective penance had to be supplied through introspection and interaction with the confessor rather than through public displays of punishment. The medical metaphor in the "diversity" introduction is an extended acknowledgement of the need for appropriateness in the

prescription of penance, and the judicial metaphor that appears in the *Penitential of Egbert* version serves a similar purpose.

The later "solicitude" and "purgation" introductions pursue appropriateness into the mental and emotional states of confessor and penitent. In the *Penitential of Halitgar*, a product of Frankish reforms, the "solicitude" introduction appears as part of a broad explanatory apparatus, developed in response to anxieties about the organization, consistency, and authoritativeness of the penitential manuals. The "solicitude" introduction focuses on the confessor rather than the individualization of penances, advocating for an empathetic approach that involves the confessor weeping for his own sins and recognizing his "wounds" in those of the penitent. This introduction is more community-oriented and less hierarchical than the "diversity" type, drawing connections between confessor, penitent, and the larger group. The "purgation" introduction appears in the *Old English Handbook*, a vernacular text that compresses its source material to form a concise guide to penance with only brief instructional remarks. This short "purgation" introduction uses vivid medical language to describe confession as a precondition for repentance, in the same way that purging the body of poison is a precondition for healing. Repentance itself comes through an internal performance of grief experienced in the "inward heart."

These introductions have different instructional goals and use different medical metaphors, but they share a concern about the relationship between the external performance of confession and penance and the internal experience of the confessor, penitent, or both. More specifically, they seek to bring the external and the internal into alignment, whether by customizing the penance to the individual—

acknowledging that a particular penance may affect one penitent more than another—or by characterizing emotional experiences in performative terms. Given the centrality of emotional performance to affective piety in the later Middle Ages, the presence of this element in pre-Conquest penitential literature raises the question of whether practices described in these texts should be considered "affective" in the same sense. In the following section, I consider the issue with respect to existing scholarship on affective meditation in Anglo-Saxon texts and conclude that many of the penitentials do present evidence of affectivity: assisted in part by medical language, the texts script both the ritual of confession and the emotional performance required for the ritual to take effect. Unlike the earliest handbooks, which lack the guidance provided by later introductions, these penitentials recognize that private penance requires the deliberate, internal cultivation of shame that would previously have been imposed by the community.

Affectivity in the Three Categories of Medical Introduction

While this chapter is focused on confession and penance in early medieval material, a discussion of the role of emotional scripting requires a brief overview of trends in scholarship on affective piety in later devotional literature. Research on the subject has been concentrated among scholars working on Middle English texts or the high Middle Ages more generally, most of whom have emphasized the distinctiveness of affective piety relative to earlier devotional practices.[190] In introducing their

[190] For an intriguing hypothesis about the possible role of a particular calendar year in catalyzing this shift, see chapter 2 of Fulton's historical study, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200*.

anthology of devotional texts, *Cultures of Piety*, Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul describe affective piety, arising in the twelfth century, as "a form of spirituality that differed from that of previous centuries by placing much greater emphasis on self-examination, the inner emotions, and the cultivation of an interior life." They write that this spirituality was "typically anchored in devotion to Christ in his human form, with special attention to the events of the Passion" and that literature in this tradition uses "prayer, meditation, or contemplation" to prepare the reader emotionally for an encounter with the divine (2).

Much scholarship on affective piety has been dedicated to tracing its popularization (with a focus on the role of the Cistercians, the Franciscans, or both) and to exploring the importance of gender in the development of this literature, with Carolyn Walker Bynum and Sarah McNamer publishing particularly influential works in the latter category. While researchers in the field may disagree about the driving forces behind the spread of affective piety, they generally share a belief in the distinctiveness of this form of religious practice relative to earlier forms of devotion. A smaller number of scholars, however, have pushed back against the notion that affective piety is a post-Conquest development, pointing to a variety of earlier texts as potential antecedents. Although no one has yet studied the role of the penitentials broadly in contributing to the development of affective piety, Anne Savage and Sandra McEntire, among others,[191] have published studies of other pre-Conquest texts that

[191] See, for example, John C. Hirsch's "The Origin of Affective Devotion" in his book, *The Boundaries of Faith.* The chapter examines the organization of prayerbooks for use by particular individuals what Hirsch considers "a concept of the individual which began to gain currency only in the eleventh century" (15). Due to its focus on later material and on organization more than content, it is not covered in depth in this chapter.

they argue show evidence of affectivity. Savage focuses on canonical Old English poetry, McEntire on works by Bede and Aelfric, but despite their different selections of literature, each author makes points about the origins of affectivity that are relevant to study of the penitentials, particularly the introductory material discussed so far in this chapter.

Savage's "The Place of Old English Poetry in the English Meditative Tradition" argues that *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Dream of the Rood* "indicate by structure as well as content that some sort of meditation practice was second nature to their writers and audiences." She notes that she is using the terms "meditation" and "meditative" in a "more general sense than when applied to later writing (when they come to be applied to particular devotional writings and practices), because they cannot be employed more specifically in the Anglo-Saxon period" (92). Having untethered meditation from the specifics of later practices, Savage finds evidence of poetry as "organised meditation" in the three Old English texts. These, she argues, "share a distinct pattern of organisation which seems designed to excite an audience affectively and to direct the feeling toward an application" (93). The pattern includes an introduction to the situation by a first-person speaker followed by a section in which "personal emotion is distanced or generalized"; this latter section "applies the wisdom gained through experience of the situation to life in the world" (93). The initial step in the process—emotional engagement of the reader with the speaker's situation—is facilitated by the use of "stock" imagery that is traditionally affiliated with particular situations and feelings (93), while more homiletic language is used afterward to achieve the distance necessary for the formulation of a broader truth.

As the above summary suggests, Savage's argument is deeply tied to poetics and the ability of poetry to build a powerful connection with its audience through structure and imagery. While the details of her analysis are not especially applicable to a study of affectivity in the penitentials, her essay is valuable to this study for some general principles she establishes. The first of these is the idea that "meditation" as a mental or emotional process can be divorced from the practices with which it is associated in the later Middle Ages,[192] and that it is possible to do so while still studying the scripting of emotion as a connection between earlier and later approaches to meditation. Put simply, a text can be affective without including imagery of the Crucifixion or the Virgin Mary: the object of contemplation does not have be an object of devotion. Secondly, the notion that non-devotional material can be intentionally structured to "excite an audience affectively" with a particular purpose in mind offers a new avenue for analysis of confession and penance, particularly the preparations that some penitentials instruct the confessor to make before meeting with penitents. Applying these two ideas from Savage's poetic analysis to non-poetic texts from the same period requires defining meditation within a new context: the contemplation of sinfulness with the goal of purification and forgiveness. Sandra McEntire's "The Doctrine of Compunction from Bede to Margery Kempe" offers a definition of compunction and an outline of its forms that can be combined with the principles just identified in Savage's paper in order to examine instructions to confessors as part of a meditative tradition.

McEntire defines compunction as "the sting of remorse at the deep and

[192] See, for example, McNamer's discussion of "brides of Christ" and related language in devotional texts (25–57).

existential realisation that one is a sinner, that others too sin, and that this sinfulness places one in the likely possibility of hellfire and the loss of heavenly joy." This remorse "is usually signified externally by tears, but it is the inner disposition which is central to the grace" (78). She identifies four sources of compunction that are derived from patristic texts but also found in Anglo-Saxon works, specifically those of Bede and Ælfric. The sources include: weeping for one's own sins, weeping for others' sins, weeping out of a deep awareness of God's justice, and weeping out of an "awareness of and desire for the beauty and glory of God and the blessedness of heaven" (80-82). The last two she describes as the "compunction of fear" and the "compunction of love," respectively. The tears involved in compunction do more than just express emotion—the weeping "effects what it implores," allowing for God's forgiveness (83). McEntire writes that "although the recollection of sins inspires the initial wounds which give rise to the interior realisation of the existential place of the sinner before God, the effects of the tears are efficacious in a baptismal way, washing the soul clean of all the effects of the sin" (83).

Having established that the Old English sources resemble their patristic predecessors, McEntire draws on thirteenth and fourteenth century sources to argue that a significant change occurs in later periods, as a new "compunction for the Passion of Christ" replaces the compunction of fear (86). She writes:

> In the succeeding centuries…while tears remain central to spirituality, the teachings of the Fathers become increasingly diffused and diluted. This is due primarily to the influence of the Cistercians and the Franciscans who introduced to spirituality a more personal, affective devotion to the humanity of Christ and his mother. Especially in the vernacular materials, this new, intensified awareness of the suffering of Christ, the suffering of Mary and the human realities of their life [on] earth, obscures the prior preoccupation with the eschatological aspects of compunction…. The preoccupation with the Passion of Christ, his bodily sufferings and the blameworthiness of the sinner who caused such agonies in the Saviour served to focus the individual on his own

sinfulness and unworthiness. (84-85)

The distinction between the earlier and later material, according to this account, is a change in the object of contemplation. Compunction remains a form of remorse expressed through an emotional outpouring that is potentially efficacious in cleansing the soul. This brings us back to Savage's point that the object of contemplation does not have to be an object of devotion in order for meditation to be affective. It is true that the Old English texts discussed by McEntire do not reveal a "preoccupation with the eschatological aspects of compunction" in a manner intended to move the reader to tearful remorse, but this has more to do with her choice of sources than a lack of such material in the Old English corpus as a whole. She chooses to draw upon the works of Bede and Ælfric based on their close connection to patristic sources; while this strategy makes it easier to discuss compunction in the sense of an evolving tradition, it overlooks the evidence of the penitentials, which do not always lay out their relationship to patristic material in explicit terms and are not primarily devotional in their purpose.

The scope of McEntire's argument is also limited by her focus on the compunction of fear and its replacement by compunction for the Passion. Her paper largely ignores the remaining three traditional sources of compunction that she identifies in the early pages. She acknowledges that the first and second sources—weeping for one's own sins and weeping for others' sins—persist in later literature but does not explore them in any depth. They are relevant to investigation of the origins of affective meditation, however, as is clear from the penitentials discussed earlier in this chapter. The introductory remarks found in these penitentials address the first and second sources of compunction and, in doing so, present increasingly clear evidence

of attention to the emotional experience of the penitent and the confessor. In some cases, they also advocate for a ritual structure explicitly intended, as Savage writes of her three poems, “to excite an audience affectively and to direct the feeling toward an application” (93). Below, I review how each of the three categories of medical introduction to the penitentials depicts emotional expression in the course of confession and the role of this expression in the cleansing of sins.

The “diversity” introduction, the earliest of the three types, is almost entirely focused on the confessor, not the penitent, and the first version of this introduction (from the *Penitential of Columbanus*) makes no mention of weeping or compunction on the penitent’s part. The metaphorical illnesses and injuries listed as treatable through confession are suggestive of pain, but the pain itself, to pursue the metaphor, would be a representation of damage caused by the sin rather than the ultimately purifying pain of compunction, which is cultivated by the penitent with the encouragement of the confessor. The judicial variation on the “diversity” introduction (quoted in the "Three Categories" section above from the *Penitential of Egbert*) does mention weeping for one’s own sins. The *Egbert* introduction describes the “remedies” of penance as offering salvation to “penitents and those who bewail their passions and sins,” making emotional performance part of the healing process. The metaphor that follows, of the confessor as judge, is immediately problematized: one must be “good and righteous” to make correct judgments in secular cases, but the confessor, “foolish” or “blind” on account of his own sinful nature, may well lead the penitent farther astray if left to make his own decisions. The penitential manual provides guidance as a guard against this possibility. The awkward position of the

confessor—simultaneously aligned with the penitent in compunction and an authority figure as "physician" or "judge"—remains a prominent theme in the "solicitude" and "purgation" introductions.

The "solicitude" category of introduction addresses the first of McEntire's forms of compunction—compunction for one's own sins—by encouraging confessors to participate in fasting as frequently as they assign it as a form of penance. Acknowledgement of one's own sinfulness and a willingness to perform penance are preconditions for assisting others, a point the introduction makes by reference to Matthew 23:4: "Woe unto you scribes, who oppress men and lay upon their shoulders heavy loads, but ye yourselves do not touch these burdens with one of your fingers." The remainder of the biblical chapter (the so-called "woes of the Pharisees") targets hypocrisy, pointing out the ways in which a beautiful exterior or seemingly righteous behavior disguises internal decay or immorality. In the "solicitude" introduction, a confessor, by fasting, "bends himself to reach out to [the penitent] a hand," sharing the burden that he bears. Unlike the judicial metaphor that is paired with medical imagery in the *Egbert* "diversity" introduction, the concept of burden-sharing deemphasizes the confessor as an authoritative figure, instead recognizing the interdependence involved in spiritual well-being within the community, such that "if one member suffers anything all the members suffer with it" (from 1 Corinthians 12).[193] The medical metaphor in the "solicitude" introduction functions in a similar way. The statement that the confessor-physician should "participate in the foulness" of the penitent's wounds is less surprising when the wounds are understood to be communal in their

[193] This is a common metaphor in the Bible: see, for example, Romans 12:4–5, Ephesians 4:15, 5:29–30.

effects. In this context, the distinction between compunction for one's own sins and compunction for the sins of others is blurred. The confessor's "solicitude and prayers and tears," informed by his recognition of his own sinful nature as well as the penitent's, contribute to healing—to borrow McEntire's phrase, they help "effect what they implore."

The *Penitential of Halitgar*, one of the texts that features the "solicitude" introduction, contains an extensive *ordo confessionis* that describes how a confessor's repentance works upon the penitent. Its structure also suggests an intention to excite the penitent affectively with the goal of drawing out sins, though unlike the structure pointed out by Savage in the Old English poems, this one acts indirectly: it is meant to work upon the penitent through the confessor, by altering the confessor's emotional condition. The text states that those who make decisions about penance should "humble themselves and pray with moaning and tears of sadness, not only for their own faults, but also for those of all Christians" (McNeill 298).[194] More specifically, the confessor is told to prepare to receive the penitent by praying either in his chamber or "in his heart," with the wording of the prayer provided by the penitential itself. The prayer is brief and emphasizes the confessor's role as an intermediary seeking forgiveness on behalf of the penitents. The passage that immediately follows it, describing the effect of the confessor's emotional state, is of greater interest. It reads: "Moreover, he who on coming to penance sees the priest sad and weeping for his evil deeds, being himself the more moved by the fear of God, will be the more grieved and

[194] Schmitz: *Sicut ergo superius diximus, humiliare se debent Episcopi sive Presbyteri et cum tristitiae gemitu lacrimisque orare, non solum pro suis delictis, sed etiam pro Christianorum omnium* (2:291).

abhor his sins. And any man who is approaching for penance, if thou seest him in a state of ardent and constant penance, receive him forthwith" (McNeill 298).[195] In this case, meditating upon his own sins prepares the confessor for the work of empathizing with penitents, instilling a sense of humility and a dread of divine judgment (McEntire's third form of compunction). Hearing confession in turn reinforces the confessor's awareness of his own "wounds" and the necessity of repentance. Despite the apparently hierarchical nature of the confessor-penitent relationship, the "solicitude" introduction depicts it as mutually difficult and mutually healing.

The "purgation" introduction, from the *Old English Handbook*, indicates that a penitent must "lament with his inward heart and repent that which he previously did wrong through the devil's prompting" in order to receive mercy from God. Unlike the other two types of introduction, this one is specific about the order of events: first, a person confesses, then repents, then merits mercy. In medical terms, the patient must vomit up the poison that is making him ill before he can "become well." The passage relies upon three metaphors that work together to make a point: sin=poison, good teaching=purgative, and confession=vomiting (in addition to the initial, brief comparison of sins to wounds). Together, these metaphors emphasize the essential role of the confessor in providing the teaching that initiates this process. Further, I would argue that the metaphors are chosen to elicit in readers a kind of queasiness as they contemplate the poisons they themselves have consumed: the reader-confessor is both responsible for the cleansing of the penitent and at risk for the same disease, an

[195] Schmitz: *Videns autem ille, qui ad paenitentiam venit, Sacerdotem tristem et lacrymantem pro suis facinoribus, magis ipse timore Dei perculsus, amplius tristatur et exhorrescet peccata sua. Et unumquemque hominem accedentem ad paenitentiam si videris acriter, et assidue stare in paenitentia, statim suscipe eum* (2:291–292).

unstable position requiring him to be especially "wise and careful" in his work. Despite depending on a confessor for the purgation of sins, however, the penitent is responsible for the repentance that should follow, a state marked by inward lamentation. The structure of confession—deliberately compared to an unpleasant yet necessary physical experience—assists the penitent in producing the necessary affect (even if the performance is held within the "inward heart").

Another component of the *Old English Handbook* has a similar effect: the confessional prayer. As in the *Penitential of Halitgar*, the medical metaphors in the *Old English Handbook* appear as part of a larger explanatory apparatus that provides the confessor with guidance regarding his interactions with penitents. In all surviving versions of the *Handbook*, the tariff penitential splits this material, so that directions to the confessor appear both before the list of penances and afterward; the "purgation" passage appears in the instructional material just after the tariffs. In two manuscripts, Cambridge Corpus Christi 201 (the text from which I have translated the medical material) and Cotton Tiberius A. iii, the tariffs are immediately preceded by a confessional prayer. This prayer confesses a variety of sins of the mind and behavior before moving on to sins of the body, listing numerous body parts and finishing with the all-encompassing "everything soft or hard, wet or dry." The prayer is inserted midsentence in CCC 201, but in the Tiberius manuscript, it is integrated into the text,[196] suggesting that it was viewed as belonging to the tradition of private confession rather than (or in addition to) that of devotional confession. Frantzen

[196] In the Tiberius manuscript, the confessional prayer immediately follows a request that the Lord hear the prayers of those who are calling out; it clearly comes to a conclusion (with an "amen") and is followed by instructions to the confessor (the same instructions that are split by the confessional prayer in the Cambridge Corpus Christi 201 manuscript).

argues that confessional prayers fall into the latter category, which he defines as monks "confessing to each other and to God alone" rather than to a confessor, since a "long list of imagined offenses would not facilitate [private confession]" but would ensure a penitent's thoroughness in devotional confession (*Literature* 87–88). This reading, however, neglects the actual language of the prayer and its immediate surroundings in the Tiberius manuscript: the penitent is told more than once to recite the prayer to his confessor, who is additionally termed the "Lord's masspriest," "priest of the Lord," and "intercessor with the Lord."[197]

Aside from a reference to the confessor as "spiritual physician," the language of the prayer is not explicitly medical, but as a spiritual survey of the physical self, it resembles the loricae, texts in which spiritual protection is evoked for each part of the body. These do sometimes appear in a medical context. The so-called *Lorica of Laidcenn*, which forms chapter 65 of *Lacnunga*, invokes the protection of angels, prophets, apostles, and other figures as armor in the battle against evil before providing an exhaustive list of body parts requiring this protection. The comprehensiveness of the list does not necessarily reflect a comprehensive attack—an illness affecting every part of the body—but rather a desire for protection to be extended over the entire person, body and soul. Similarly, the listing of body parts in the confessional prayer reflects a desire to be wholly cleansed, not a belief that every component of the physical and spiritual self has committed its own sins. Rather than comprehensive repelling of attack, as in the loricae, the confessional prayer seeks comprehensive expulsion of the poison of sin. Understood this way, the inclusion of

[197] In Frantzen's electronic edition and translation of CCC 201, the confessional prayer can be found from D53.01.00 through D53.08.02.

the prayer as a preface to more individualized confession of sins makes some sense: it conveys to God the penitent's desire to confess completely (and perhaps offers a form of insurance in case any sin is overlooked).

This reading of the confessional prayer, as potentially useful in the context of private confession, is not at odds with the possibility of its use, as Frantzen suggests, in devotional confession. The lorica tradition may provide some insight here as well. Leslie Arnovick, discussing the loricae in the broader context of orality in medieval texts, writes that "generic form, subject matter, and locutionary structure all interact to ensure the perlocutionary effect of charms." As a result, "the saints themselves become immanent during charm performance" (120). The same might be said of the confessional prayers, which use a generic form and structure (a list not modified to the individual's sins) in a performance intended to attract God's mercy. The analogy is not a perfect one: the confessor, as mediator, replaces the saints as the "immanent" presence, and the loricae do not require a particular emotional state in order to work (at least, they do not state that this is a requirement).[198] Nevertheless, the penitent who is about to recite the confessional prayer is twice told to do so humbly and also to say the prayer "with contrite mind."[199] suggesting that his state of mind is relevant to the process. The prayer itself facilitates this mindset: reciting the offenses in the list, much like imagining one's sins as a poison or disease, emphasizes one's utter unworthiness before God, and it is this feeling and knowledge of unworthiness that is the "pure and true confession" offered up to Christ. In other words, it is McEntire's "inner

[198] Regarding lists in confessional prayers, Frantzen observes: "At the least, such lists or catalogues would have situated the penitent physically and psychologically at the center of a reflective and indeed affective process" ("Spirituality" 125).
[199] D52.01.03: *mid reowsigendum mode*

disposition which is central to the grace" (78).

The "purgation" introduction and the confessional prayer that appears with it in the *Old English Handbook*, then, share important features: they emphasize the importance of inward lamentation on the penitent's part, acknowledge the role of the confessor in helping to initiate and shape the proper emotional performance, and contain textual features (language evocative of sickness and disgust) that can assist both penitent and confessor in this process. Although the extended metaphor of poison and purgation in the *Old English Handbook* is a new development in the explanatory content of the penitentials, its concerns reflect and synthesize issues addressed by earlier introductions, especially of the "diversity" type. The "diversity" introduction, likely a product of the shift from public, vindictive penance to a more private, remedial form, focuses on ensuring that the penance assigned by the confessor is appropriate to each individual's sin, or the proper remedy for that particular ailment. In its later, judicial form, it also suggests that the penitent's bewailing of his sins is a necessary component of effective penance. The *Old English Handbook* picks up the both the emphasis on appropriateness and the judicial metaphor—in passages outside the medical metaphor, the reader is instructed that penances should be appropriate so as not to "cause them [i.e. penitents] to despair" and that "in every deed must a prudent judge wisely distinguish how it was done, and where and when" (Frantzen D53.01.01, D53.05.01). More importantly, the text portrays the process of confession and repentance as requiring the coordination of two individuals to create the conditions for "healing." The confessor-physician contributes good teaching and the penitent contributes contrition and the confession itself. Since the confessor himself

must confess his own sins, becoming the penitent to another confessor, there is a communal element to this ritual that is evocative of the "solicitude" introduction's imagery of burden-sharing.

As the preceding analysis shows, all three types of medical introduction provide some evidence of affectivity, encouraging the production of particular emotions (remorse, compunction, humility) that can be applied toward a particular end (purification of sins). The object of contemplation suggested by the medical language is generally an imagined body, bearing the wounds or sicknesses of sinful behavior, rather than an object of devotion, as in later texts' depictions of Christ's injuries. Still, these two kinds of compunction make some of the same demands of readers: they must be able to imagine a body vividly enough to feel what it "feels" and simultaneously recognize that body as a physical representation of a spiritual state. In the next section of this chapter, I consider a text that plays with this imaginative process, drawing upon its audience to correct the misunderstanding displayed by one of its characters. *Soul and Body I*, an Old English poem that researchers have suggested relates to the penitential tradition, has been the subject of extensive scholarship. This is not intended to be a comprehensive discussion of the poem and its connections to other soul-and-body literature—topics that could fill a book and more—but a preliminary look at its treatment of confession and penance as themes and their relationship to emotional performance.

Penitential Themes in *Soul and Body I*

The Old English poem *Soul and Body I* survives in the 10th century Vercelli

Book,[200] a manuscript that also contains other poetry, prose homilies, and a saint's life. The poem is largely composed of two speeches, the first by a soul that is damned and the second by one that is saved, with each soul addressing its respective body. The former speech is longer and vividly detailed, while the latter breaks off abruptly in line 167, mid-sentence, since the end of the poem has been lost. A second version of the poem, *Soul and Body II*, survives in the Exeter Book, another major collection of Anglo-Saxon texts, but it concludes deliberately at line 126, excluding the speech of the virtuous soul altogether, and thus cannot supply the ending missing from the Vercelli text. For the purposes of this chapter, *Soul and Body I*, with its parallel speeches, is the more relevant, and the discussion below engages with that version of the poem and its thematic connections to the penitentials. I have used Douglas Moffat's edition of the text; translations are my own.

In *Soul and Body I*, the evil soul attributes its damnation solely to its body and the virtuous soul praises its body for taking actions in life that have assured its salvation. The damned soul's rejection of responsibility is particularly emphatic, as in this passage from early in the poem:

> eardode ic þe on innan ne meahte ic ðe of cuman
> flæsce befangen and me fyrenlustas
> þine geþrungon þæt me þuhte ful oft
> þæt hit wær xxx þusend wintra
> to þinum deaðdæge a ic uncres gedales onbad
> earfoðlice: nis nu huru se ende to god (33–38)
>
> I dwelled within you, nor could I go out from you,
> surrounded by flesh, and your sinful desires
> oppressed me. It very often seemed to me
> that it would be thirty thousand
> winters until your death-day. Always I awaited our parting

[200] MS Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII. For an overview of soul-and-body literature, and a detailed consideration of Vercelli Homily XXII, see Zacher 140–178.

miserably: yet now it is not so good an end.

The good soul similarly attributes its fate after death to the behavior of its body in life, specifying self-deprivation—of food and wealth—as particularly virtuous (142–144). Given the poem's focus on the eternal consequences of behavior during life and the penitentials' focus on shaping behavior to change those consequences, one might expect extensive scholarship on the relationship between *Soul and Body I* and the penitential handbooks. The souls' attribution of responsibility to the flesh has been a major concern of scholars working on the poem, but few have looked at the penitentials in any detail for assistance in explaining this feature. So far, only Frantzen has examined the entirety of *Soul and Body I* with respect to the penitential manuals, and much of this last section will address his article on the subject. Before turning to Frantzen's argument and my own interpretation of the poem, however, it is useful to consider the broader framework for analysis offered by another paper: Jacob Riyeff's "Dualism in Old English Literature: The Body-and-Soul Theme and Vercelli Homily IV," published in *Studies in Philology* in 2015. This article, which contrasts *Soul and Body I* with a homily from the same manuscript, provides a discussion of dualism that can assist in consideration of Frantzen's essay.

Like most criticism on *Soul and Body I*, Riyeff's work focuses on the poem's apparent reversal of the more traditional Christian hierarchy in which the soul has the ability to control the flesh or at least shares responsibility for the body's actions. As Riyeff puts it: "The Christian understanding of the human person in the period and reflected in the body-and-soul theme *was* dualistic. Yet it is also true that the simultaneous unity of the human person, affirmed by the same tradition, is absent, or

at least inexplicit, in *Soul and Body [I]*" (455).[201] Instead, the reader is repeatedly informed by both the damned soul and the good soul that their fates were determined by the choices that their bodies made, a view that is especially problematic if the poem is intended to remind its audience of the eternal, spiritual consequences of pursuing physical pleasures. Averting those consequences is only possible if the soul has some influence over the body's behavior.

Riyeff begins his consideration of the problem by pointing out the lack of precision in other scholars' use of the term "dualism" in discussions of *Soul and Body I*. For his own analysis, he uses the term "anthropological dualism" to refer to the idea that "a substance of the individual…survives organic death"—that there is existence apart from bodily existence (457). This is clearly the case in *Soul and Body I*, but it is also too vague a notion to be of much use as an analytical tool. Drawing from sources such as Isidore and Gregory, Riyeff follows up with the more focused "complementary dualism," in which "the human person's two primary parts [body and soul] are understood to create a unity…and to both affect and share in the ultimate fate of the person" (463). This view "affirms a basic anthropological dualism that is not hostile or antagonistic." The fury that the damned soul expresses toward its body in the poem is thus "rhetorically productive"—it grabs the reader's attention—but also "doctrinally troubling" in that it glosses over the unity of body and soul in determining the person's fate after death (463).

In *Vercelli Homily IV*, another text featuring a bitter speech by a damned soul to

[201] Note that some scholars, Riyeff included, prefer to refer to *Soul and Body I* simply as *Soul and Body*, emphasizing that the two texts are versions of one poem, while others prefer to emphasize the variations that do exist between the Vercelli and Exeter versions. I follow Frantzen in including the numeral, simply for clarity.

its body, Riyeff locates a reaction to this difficulty. He writes:

> [The] Vercelli IV homilist perceived a problem with the implications of the hostility found in the body-and-soul theme even as he employed it and inserted material into his homily that serves as a counterweight to this particular feature. He seeks to adjust the dominant tone and reduce potential misunderstanding of the theme's hostility by emphasizing the…complementary anthropological dualism that is required of bodily creatures who continue to live beyond organic death. (461–462)

The counterweight to the damned soul's hostility is the presence of Christ, who "embodies the unity of opposites" himself. Acting as judge, he indicates the complementary roles of soul and body in determining the person's fate, correcting both the good soul and the damned soul when they overemphasize the body's responsibility (464–467). Riyeff concludes: "Though not wishing to strip his judgment scene of the powerful rhetorical effect of the damned soul's unsettling complaints, tempering the souls' speeches with Christ's pronouncements enables the Vercelli homilist to present a more balanced and sympathetic understanding of the relationship between body and soul than is found elsewhere in the use of the body-and-soul theme in Old English literature" (468).

Soul and Body I is part of this "elsewhere" for Riyeff: it lacks Christ as an arbiter (explicitly, at least) and has no other character serving in a corrective role. Based on my own reading of the poem, however, I argue that the text's use of penitential themes serves a similar function, emphasizing the complementary dualism of soul and body and enabling the audience to recognize the damned soul's blame of its body as a sign of its own corruption. In the process, I point out differences in how the damned soul and virtuous soul understand their relationship to their bodies: while Riyeff views both souls as misunderstanding the body's responsibility, I find a

recognition of complementarity in the good soul's speech to its corpse. My argument builds off of Frantzen's "The Body in 'Soul and Body I,'" which points out the importance of fasting and penance more generally in the poem. I expand on his penance-focused analysis to consider the possible role of confession in *Soul and Body I*, finding that the souls' speeches serve as postmortem examples of effective and ineffective confession. The poem indicates that affective expression of remorse—a process that unites soul and body—is essential to confessing properly and meriting forgiveness. In other words, it is essential to achieving Riyeff's complementary dualism.

Responding to other scholars' remarks on the poem's apparent inversion of the hierarchy of soul over body, Frantzen argues that *Soul and Body I* "is informed by principles derived from the practice of penance" and that "these principles in no way stain [the poem] with doctrinal impurity" (77). He begins by pointing out that the damned soul's statements blaming the body for the soul's current state are not necessarily representative of the poet's own view. Next, he connects the souls' allocation of responsibility to the body to the penitential tradition: "This principle underlies the medieval practice of penance: the salvation of the soul depends on the mortification of the body; unless the body suffers in repentance, the soul will be damned. Fundamental to this principle is the belief that both sin and the forgiveness of sin are the body's responsibilities" (79). For the body to bear responsibility for the fate of the soul, it must have the ability to *take* responsibility—it must have a will of its own, separate from that of its soul. Frantzen points out that this will manifests itself in *Soul and Body I* "either in self-denial or gluttony," with the good soul praising its

body for fasting and the damned soul blaming its body for overconsumption (80).

Frantzen uses the poem's focus on the sin of gluttony as a bridge to the penitentials, in which fasting is overwhelmingly the most common form of penance. In many manuals, it is the only kind of penance discussed, with variations in duration and frequency according to the severity of the sin and the rank of the offender.[202] The *Old English Handbook*, for example, prescribes fasting for everything from murder to witchcraft. In Frantzen's view, the prominence of fasting in both the poem and the penitentials "warrants the assumption that the audience of *Soul and Body I* understood this to be a poem about a specifically penitential act and its consequences for the soul's eternal welfare…. [T]he poet exaggerates the body's responsibility to underscore the necessity of physical commitment to goals which the mind readily approved" ("Soul and Body" 81). Given the prominence of gluttony/fasting as a theme in *Soul and Body I* and the ubiquity of fasting in the tariff portions of the penitentials, the assumption that readers would have recognized the poem's subject as penance and its consequences is a reasonable one. Because Frantzen considers only penance and not confession, however, his exploration of penitential themes in the poem is incomplete. When the role of confession in the poem is taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that the poet is emphasizing the need for spiritual, not just physical, commitment and the importance of expressing this commitment affectively, through confession as well as penance.

---

[202] High-ranking penitents are often given the option of making payment rather than fasting. Some manuals include other options. The *Penitential of Cummean* stands out as unusually diverse in the penances it prescribes: for example, it indicates that anyone who spills communion wine on the ground lick it up with his tongue and that a priest who stammers during Sunday prayer be beaten for fifty strokes. See Bieler 132–133.

First, regarding Frantzen's claim that the penitentials depict salvation as dependent on mortification of the body, it is important to acknowledge that the handbooks frequently insist in their introductions that penance alone is insufficient. The body's suffering can only purify the soul if the penitent confesses completely and cultivates the proper emotional state of repentance. As the *Old English Handbook* tell us, "Without confession, there is no pardon. For confession cures, confession justifies."[203] Bodily discomfort alone does not heal the soul. This view is more in line with the traditional hierarchy of soul over body than with *Soul and Body I*'s depiction of the body as controlling the soul's fate—a significant difference between the penitentials and the poem and a possible challenge to Frantzen's view of the latter as reflecting the practice of penance. The affective elements of the penitentials, though, suggest a more nuanced understanding of the soul-body relationship. Spiritual purification is not achieved simply by reasserting the soul's dominance over the body through mortification of the flesh. Instead, affective expression of repentance binds the soul and body together in purpose. Consider the *Penitential of Halitgar*'s instruction that confessors should "humble themselves and pray with moaning and tears of sadness"[204] in order to prepare themselves spiritually for meeting with penitents. Lamentation is a physical expression of the soul's awareness of its fallen state, and it is the union of mind and body in remorse that prepares the penitent for confession and penance (or the confessor for meeting the penitent). In *Soul and Body I*, this emotional

[203] This is missing from MS D (CC 201), the text used in this chapter for other quotations from the Old English Handbook. It appears in the Latin introduction to MS C (CC 265): *...sine confessione nulla est uenia. Confessio enim sanat & iustificat* (found at C.51.01.01 in Frantzen's electronic edition).
[204] See note 194 for Latin.

bond is absent during the life of the damned soul and its body. The soul recounts that its body was driven by physical desire (specifically gluttony) in life while the soul "thirsted for God's body, for the drink of souls." Expression of the former appetite is incompatible with pursuit of the latter, and the triumph of the body results in the soul's damnation.

The dual roles of the mouth—eating and speaking—link gluttony and fasting to the hoarding or expression of sin. Speech in the poem is entirely one-sided; the bodies may have a responsibility to their respective souls, but only the souls speak. They both address their bodies directly as "you" (*þu*), as though speaking to conversational partners, and the bodies respond with the silent testimony of their decay. This is emphasized by a passage in which the damned soul's body is described as eaten by worms: "That tongue has been torn apart into ten pieces as a comfort to the hungry ones; therefore, it cannot shamefully exchange words with that accursed spirit. Gluttony is the name of that worm, whose jaws are sharper than needles" (113–117a).[205] The destruction of the tongue reverses the sin committed during life (the consumer is consumed), a point reinforced by a later line identifying the body as "a meal for worms in the earth," *wyrma gifel on eorþan* (124–125). It also prefigures the silence to come on Judgment Day, as the damned soul reminds the body:

> Þonne ðu for unc bæm andwyrdan scealt
> on ðam miclan dæge, þonne mannum beoð
> wunda onwrigene, þa ðe on worulde ær
> fyrenfulle men fyrn geworhton,
> ðonne wyle dryhten sylf dæda gehyran
> hæleða gehwylces, heofena scippend,

[205] Lines 113–117a: *beoð hira tungan totogenne on tyn healfa hungregum to frofre; forþan hie ne magon huxlicum wordum wrixlian wið þone werian gast. Gifer hatte se wyrm, þe þa eaglas beoð nædle scearpran.* See also Moffat's explanatory notes ons this passage.

æt ealra manna gehwæs muðes reorde[206]
wunde wiðerlean. (86-94a)

When you must answer for us both
On that great day when the wounds of humankind
Are revealed, those that in the world before
Sinful men once wrought—
Then will the Lord Himself, shaper of heaven,
Hear of the deeds of each person
Of every and all people, by the mouth's speech,
recompense for [His] wounds. But what will you
say to the Lord there on Judgment Day?

Due to its appetites, the damned soul's body will have nothing to offer up as "recompense," only the wounds of sin—wounds that, as the penitentials describe, could have been healed through repentance and confession. The soul is at least as much to blame as the body for its failure to heal, since the process requires spiritual commitment, not just the physical commitment of penance that Frantzen identifies as the focus of the poem. In this sense, the damned soul's diatribe against its body serves as an inadequate substitution for the confession that should have taken place during life. The soul articulates the sinfulness of its body but fails to accuse itself, displaying rage rather than repentance and surveying the details of the corpse's decay as assiduously as it should have surveyed itself for "disease" or "wounds" to confess while alive. The soul's claim in lines 95 through 98—that "there is no joint at all grown in any part of the body little [enough] that you will not be obliged to make a just account for [it], each one separately, when the Lord is fierce on Judgment Day"[207]—even echoes the physical mapping of sins that occurs in contexts such as the

[206] There is perhaps some wordplay here, given the two meanings of reord, "speech" and "meal."
[207] Lines 95–98a: *þonne ne bið nan na to þæs lytel lið on lime aweaxan þæt ðu ne scyle for anra gehwylcum onsundrum riht agildan þonne reðe bið dryhten æt þam dome…*

Old English Handbook's confessional prayer, reminding readers to consider their own present and future state.[208] The soul's failure to confess responsibility—to lament its own failings—is what damns it, severing it from God while binding it to the body whose former actions it disclaims.

Read this way, the poem suggests that soul and body share responsibility for their fate: the damned soul's blame of its body in death serves as evidence of its failure to confess the sins of the body properly in life. On the other hand, when soul and body are aligned in their desire for God—an alignment that confession and penance are meant to ensure—they are rewarded. The good soul and its body are unified in purpose during life, so that the body's penance through fasting and poverty feeds the soul and ultimately allows it to reach heaven. The connection between the two persists after death. While both souls periodically visit their corpses, the good soul is distressed by its body's state, saying:

> Forþan me a langaþ, leofost manna,
> on minum hige hearde þæs þe ic þe on þyssum hynðum wat
> wyrmum to wiste, ac þæt wolde god,
> þæt þu æfre þus laðlic legerbed cure.
> Wolde ic þe ðonne secgan þæt ðu ne sorgode,
> forðan wyt bioð gegæderode æt godes dome.
> Moton wyt þonne ætsomne syþan brucan
> ond unc on heofonum heahþungene beon. (153–160)
>
> Therefore, it always pains me, dearest of men,
> sharply in my heart, that I know that you [are] in this abasement,
> as food for worms, but God wanted it,
> that you chose for yourself ever thus a loathsome grave.
> I would say to you then that you did not sorrow:
> therefore, let us be gathered together at God's judgment.
> Let us two be allowed to enjoy [existence] as one afterward
> and the two of us be high ranked in heaven.

[208] For an Irish example, see Hill, "Punishment According to Joints of the Body in the Old English 'Soul and Body II'" (409–410).

The soul experiences what is essentially compunction: it suffers as a result of the body's suffering, as represented by its decay. The union of the good soul and its body during life—their shared desire for God—persists as shared pain after death. This apparently problematic connection, which presents the good soul as suffering rather than joyous, is then reformed by the soul itself: in the line reading, "I would say to you then that you should not sorrow," the soul enacts to the speech to which it refers and shifts the poem's focus from the emotional pain involved in visiting the deteriorating body to their joint anticipation of a more complete reunion in heaven.

While we are not told explicitly that the virtuous soul confessed its sins during life, this is suggested by the fact that it engaged in penance with its body and reached heaven after death. Confession, as the penitentials indicate, is an important step in this process. The soul generously expresses gratitude to its body for its help—saying, for example, that its abasement "heaved me up into eternal joy"[209]—but a passage near the end of the poem makes it clear that the two share responsibility for their fate and that the virtuous soul knows this. The soul tells its body: "We need not be anxious at the Lord's coming, nor have a wicked recompense for that, sorrow in the chest, yet we two ourselves can exult in our deeds on doomsday, what rewards were ours" (160–164).[210] The grammatical distinction between the two collapses, the singular pronouns "I" and "you" becoming the dual pronoun *wyt*, "we two," a word that captures their joined state. More significantly, the (averted) experience is depicted as shared: the body would have worried along with the soul, and the soul would have sorrowed along

[209] Lines 151–152: *Bygdest ðu þe for hæleðum ond ahofe me on ecne dream.*
[210] Lines 161–165: *Ne þurfon wyt beon cearie æt cyme dryhtnes, ne þære andsware yfele habban sorge in reðre. Ac wyt sylfe magon æt ðam dome þær dædum agilpan, hwylce earnunga uncre wæron.*

with the body. Instead, they experience shared pride in their deeds. Like the damned soul's rant, which demonstrates the flaws that have damned it, the good soul's speech helps explain its current state. Its words emphasize collaboration between soul and body as a path to virtue, as in the case of fasting. In the course of its speech, the good soul also confesses and corrects its own remaining fault; having bemoaned the body's fate, it acknowledges that such decay is the will of God. The damned soul, in blaming its body for its damnation, continues to turn from God, while the good soul turns from grief to hope through its admission.

Frantzen's essay, as previously noted, argues that the audience of the poem would have understood *Soul and Body I* to be about the importance of penance for the soul's welfare. The evidence of the two souls' speeches, however, suggests that the relationship of the poem to penitential practices extends beyond the physical penance of fasting to include confession as an essential precursor—a means of both acknowledging the soul's complicity in the body's sinful actions and of unifying the soul and body in desire for God. This more expansive reading of the poem's connection to the penitential tradition has the advantage of corresponding to the consistent pairing of confession and penance in the handbooks, and likely in the audience's expectations as well. As for the question of whether or not the poem reverses the hierarchy of soul over body, the unity of purpose that the good soul and its body demonstrate during life—and that the soul describes as persisting afterward—suggests the complementary dualism that Riyeff identifies in *Vercelli IV*. It is true that *Soul and Body I* lacks Christ as a judge and corrective, but any reader familiar with confession and penance would recognize the damned soul's speech refusing

responsibility as the opposite of the remorse required for the purification of sins. The poem offers its audience the opportunity not only to imagine themselves as the characters facing judgment but to correct the damned soul's tirade, drawing upon narratives of confession and penance such as those that have been preserved in the penitential manuals. While there is some variation across the penitentials in how the process of confession is scripted, expression of remorse is a constant. In identifying themselves in the poem's two souls, readers are encouraged to recognize their own failings and practice the kind of emotional performance required in confession.[211]

The imagery of the corpses in *Soul and Body I* assists this process in much the same way that the medical imagery in the penitentials helps prepare the confessor: it works to "excite an audience affectively and to direct the feeling toward an application" (Savage 93). In the poem, the souls speak to unresponsive bodies—indeed, their inability to respond is the point, a reminder to engage in confession and penance before death. Yet consideration of the bodies' gruesome decay provokes an emotional response from both souls and potentially from readers as they imagine their own spiritual injuries in physical terms. As McEntire writes in her description of the compunction of fear, "the recollection of sins inspires the initial wounds which give rise to the interior realization of the existential place of the sinner before God" (83). While this realization can be inspired through direct portrayals of the torments of hell (as occurs elsewhere in Old English literature), contemplation of the body can serve as well, with its terrain described in much the same terms as hell itself: foul, putrefying, infested with gnawing creatures, and most especially poisonous. When the penitent of

[211] For a detailed look at performance in another soul-and-body text, see O'Dell, "Dramatizing Devotion in the Old English *Vercelli Homily IV*."

the "purgation" introduction repents and vomits up the poison of his sin through confession, he spits out hell and is cleansed; when *Soul and Body I*'s damned soul fails to feel remorse and express its bodily sins, it is bound to hell and to a body that evokes hell for the poem's audience.[212] The penitentials, with their metaphors of disease and shared burdens, insist that the confessor recognize himself to be a patient, not just an observer or listener, and the poem's imagery likewise pushes the reader to recognize his own spiritual state in the corpse's afflictions.

The above analysis, while contradicting Riyeff and Frantzen in some respects, actually advocates expanding the reach of their arguments, which do valuable groundwork. Riyeff distinguishes between *Soul and Body I* and *Vercelli IV*, finding in the latter a response to the souls' misallocation of responsibility to their bodies, especially to the hostility expressed by the damned soul. My reading of the poem, which expands upon Frantzen's work by including discussion of confession, suggests that readers familiar with confession and penance alike would have recognized the damned soul as mistaken without requiring the explicit correction provided by the Christ character in *Vercelli IV*. Similarly, the complementary dualism that Riyeff identifies in the homily is suggested in *Soul and Body I* by the virtuous soul's relationship to its body: its speech recognizes the body for the penance it did in life, a process that would have required the spiritual commitment of repentance and confession for success. The virtuous soul also demonstrates an emotional bond with its

[212] In *Vercelli IV*, the virtuous soul uses similar descriptors, telling the angels, "I see where my body stands in the middle of this multitude. Leave him to me. May he never be food for worms, nor may he become as bitter poison [*i.e.*, matter]" (Clough 40). Clough's translation, with its equation of poison and matter/pus, reflects the uncertainty surrounding usage of *attor* in the medical corpus. See Chapter 1's discussion of the word's range of meaning.

body that persists after death, expressed first as compunction for the body's suffering and later as anticipation of shared joy on Judgment Day. Most importantly, as lines 160–164 indicate, the soul recognizes its mutual responsibility with the body for actions taken during life and the rewards that follow. The complementary rather than hostile dualism that Riyeff recognizes in *Vercelli IV* thus exists in *Soul and Body I* as well, albeit in a subtler form, one that relies upon the audience's familiarity with the basics of confession and penance rather than overtly correcting the souls' misunderstanding within the text. While the homily's approach may be more straightforward, the poem can still provide attentive readers with what the poet calls "a reminder to all people, each person among the wise" (lines 125-126).[213]

In this chapter, I have shown that the instructional content of the penitentials not only provides behavioral scripts for the process of repentance, confession, and penance—indicating what should be said and done by whom—but also provides guidance regarding how to feel and how to cultivate the proper emotion for one's purpose. Within these instructional passages, extended metaphors, especially of the medical variety, are commonly used to remind confessors of their responsibilities, such as ensuring that the penance is appropriate to the sin and does not drive the penitent to despair. They may also emphasize the consequences should confessors fail to wrest the truth from penitents, allowing the disease of their sin to spread through the community. Because the confessors are also sinners themselves, being human, the imagery provided by the texts to illustrate the penitents' fallen state encourages the

[213] Lines 125b–126: *...Þæt mæg æghwylcum men to gemynde, modsnotra gehwam*.

confessor-readers' awareness of their own. These metaphors are meant to provoke remorse and ensure that the confessors undertake their task with humility. They also work indirectly upon the penitents, whose confessors are well prepared to draw out their sins and provide the proper remedy: as the *Penitential of Halitgar* observes, the penitent who "sees the priest sad and weeping for his evil deeds…will be the more grieved and abhor his sins."[214] Those penitentials that prescribe confessional prayers may also act on penitents more directly by providing wording for recitation. The texts do not indicate whether the prayers should be read aloud by the confessor and repeated back by the penitent, or whether (in cases involving literate penitents) the text itself should be shared. Both options involve some form of collaboration, another sign that, while each soul is ultimately judged on its own merits, those merits may well be produced collaboratively.

This should serve as a reminder that the confessor-penitent relationship, though potentially uncomfortable, is not inherently hostile, any more than physically unpleasant curatives are hostile to a patient. Nor is the relationship between the penitent and his own body hostile when the body endures fasting or other penance on behalf of his soul. Instead, confession and penance are meant to unify the soul and the flesh in expression of remorse, a unity marked most dramatically by outward, physical displays of lamentation and weeping. Internal emotional performance is also encouraged by the penitentials, with sinners told to lament inwardly. The spirit and the flesh complement each other in these efforts. This understanding of repentance as a collaborative performance—within the individual as well as between confessor and

[214] See note 195.

penitent—is reflected in *Soul and Body I*, which highlights the consequences of failing to experience and express remorse. In the poem, as in the penitentials, vivid imagery of the body engages the reader both as judge and as judged. The damned corpse may be beyond help, but the reader is still alive and able to seek a confessor-physician.

One can find in this imaginative process a premonition of affective meditation as it appears in later, devotional texts better known for their scripting of emotion, such as the works in the 13th-century Katherine Group.[215] Rather than mapping their sins onto an imagined body as wounds, visualizing them to cultivate remorse, readers of the later works are instead encouraged to map the wounds of an imagined body—Christ's—onto their own, experiencing His suffering. The detail in which Christ's injuries are rendered can be as vivid and gruesome as *Soul and Body I*'s depiction of decomposition. The content of the imagery differs, as does the emotion that it provokes (reflecting a shift from the compunction of fear to the compunction of love), but the act of imagining oneself into the experience of an emotion is much the same. While a detailed examination of the relationship between affectivity in the Anglo-Saxon penitentials and in later devotional works is a subject for another study, the evidence of emotional scripting in the penitentials and *Soul and Body I* suggests that such an investigation would be well worth pursuing. The medical imagery of the penitentials and its relationship to emotional performance may also have implications for other Anglo-Saxon texts, beyond the obvious soul-and-body literature: penitential themes have been previously identified, for example, in *Resignation A*,[216] while the poem *Vainglory*, not yet examined for penitential themes, may also engage with

[215] For examples, see the collections by Bartlett and Bestul or Savage and Watson.
[216] See Bestul, "The Old English *Resignation* and the Benedictine Reform" (18–23).

beliefs about the effects of confession.

The many directions that scholarship on affectivity in the penitentials could take is, at least in part, a testament to the flexibility of the imagery that the handbooks use for scripting emotion. With their details of disease, injury, and treatment, medical metaphors evoke fear and hope simultaneously and thus may possess the power to catalyze spiritual transformation in those who engage with them. The passage below, from the 13th-century *Ancrene Wisse*, captures that power, and in bringing together the familiar language of purgation with imagery of the Crucifixion, it makes a suitable conclusion to this chapter. Savage and Watson translate:

> Think how much pain [Jesus Christ] suffered in his flesh outwardly, how sweet-hearted he was, how soft within. And in this way you shall drive out every poison from your heart and bitterness from your body. For in this thought the pain which you suffer for love of him who suffered more for you, however bitter, shall seem sweet to you. (99)

CONCLUSION

When I first began work on this project, I was interested in examining the Anglo-Saxon medical texts alone, intending to analyze not just the recipe-books but also prognostics, bloodletting calendars, and other material. The herbals, however, are evocative: it is difficult to read through them without imagining, from time to time, the drama of physician and patient. This is especially true when it comes to prescriptions for grave conditions, such as what to do if a person has cracked his skull and brain matter is visible, or if someone has been bitten by a mad dog. It is possible, even at such a historical remove, to empathize with the fear and hope of the people involved and to wonder how they explained the situation and its outcome to themselves. Engaged in the herbals in this way, I began to explore beliefs about the causes of disease, focusing first on the evidence of preventive medicine and then on the meaning of *attor*. From there, the shift to non-medical literature was natural: the texts analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 use medical concepts and imagery to help the reader (the patient, in a spiritual sense) learn how to face suffering or heal. In *Guthlac B*, this involves accepting the "bitter drink" of mortality without becoming spiritually poisoned by anger or grief. In the penitentials and *Soul and Body I*, on the other hand, medical language is used to encourage deeper feelings of remorse and a desire for purification. While the herbals are full of remedies, these non-medical texts, in urging or even scripting emotions and behavior, attempt to serve as remedies themselves.

All three of these chapters, in pursuing the implications of *attor* and other medical language, end up examining the ways in which certain Anglo-Saxon texts

encourage readers to imagine the body and then turn that imagined body into an instrument for self-protection or positive change. The first chapter, focused on a subset of herbals within the medical corpus, establishes some of the important features of *attor* and explores the term's relationship to *yfel* and to disease more broadly. The analysis of preventive prescriptions provides the initial indication that *attor* is a key term used to talk about disease in these texts, where illnesses are otherwise generally identified by the symptoms they provoke (e.g. "falling sickness") rather than their causes. Preventive measures, intended to stop symptoms from appearing in the first place, are more likely than treatments to reveal beliefs about disease causation, and *attor* features in these prescriptions as a term used to talk about disease without necessarily specifying symptoms. It manifests itself in the disease-bearing weapons of elves and other invisible beings and in hostile creatures such as snakes and vicious dogs. Perhaps most importantly, it is associated with demons or devils, giving a moral quality to at least some disease and opening up new possibilities for protecting oneself against it, such as prescriptions involving prayers. Such protection requires imagining the body as under attack by powerful outside forces, including those that cannot be observed or appear only in visions.

In the herbals, *attor* is transformational: it appears where the invisible (supernatural beings) becomes visible (as marks or other physical symptoms) or where the external (a wound) becomes internal (what we would call blood poisoning or infection). This quality is reflected in many of the measures that the herbals recommend against it. Amulets worn on the body, for example, mark the distinction between internal and external, fortifying the "border" of the skin. Preventive measures

that function by dispersal—generally the burning of herbs—take something physical and change its state in order to make it effective against threats that are immaterial or widespread. Whether *attor* is the product of a hostile force or hostile itself is not always clear; like evil, *attor* is sometimes presented as an effect and sometimes appears to have agency of its own. Either way, its harmfulness and adaptability make *attor* frightening and well suited to use as a metaphor in a wide range of texts outside the medical corpus. As Chapters 2 and 3 show, *attor* appears in metaphors for both body and soul, emphasizing the precariousness of all well-being in a world full of dangers and temptations.

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, the poem *Guthlac B* uses an extended metaphor to build a relationship between the fenland surrounding Guthlac's hermitage and his physical body. As Noetzel writes, "the fens are a corruption of God's love and the result of careless actions by humanity" (114). This corruption runs all the way back to Eve's serving of the "bitter drink" in Eden, which brought harmful new plants into the natural environment and mortality to humankind. On the *beorg*, Death moves like an enemy warrior against the saint, then—having violated the borders of the flesh with the "weapon" of disease—moves through Guthlac's body, its presence transforming the body into a poisonous, hellish space surrounding the inner fortress of the soul. The soul, in this sense, becomes the defender of its own *beorg*. By encouraging the reader to imagine Guthlac's body (and the reader's own) in terms of the fens, as a marginal, undesirable territory haunted by old evil, the poet pushes readers to look elsewhere for meaning. Similarly, the metaphor of the "death-cup" transforms the familiar experience of a desirable drink into something physically and spiritually repulsive—

bitter in both senses of the term. The union of the two extended metaphors (poisonous environment and poisonous drink) emphasizes the permeability of the body and the inevitability of loss.

At the same time, these metaphors evoke their opposites, offering hope: bitterness exists in contrast to sweetness, and loss in contrast to permanence. Having engaged the reader's imagination with vivid depictions of the poisoned body, the poet insists that the bitterness of physical experience does not have to corrupt the soul. Christ's tasting of the bitter drink during the Crucifixion represents both a reenactment of the drink of death in Eden and the possibility of spiritual release from the fate that the latter brought down on mankind. Guthlac, armed with his extraordinary faith, is able to suffer *in imitatio Christi*, accepting physical pain without surrendering spiritually to evil. Passing on the wisdom shared with him by an angel, Guthlac speaks to his thane in "victory-tokens" (*sigortacnum*, 1116) words so powerful that the poet notes, the "secrets of the Lord" had never been "so deeply recounted, in such wide understanding, by human mouth" (1121–1123a).[217] The sweet smell of Guthlac's breath after his collapse is effectively the scent of his soul, a wordless communication of his blessedness.

The reader is meant to admire Guthlac but not identify with him: entrusted with divine secrets, the saint achieves a state of blessedness in life that is beyond the reach of everyday people. Instead, the reader is given Beccel (anonymous in the poem) to identify with and improve upon: an ordinary Christian who desires greater closeness with God but still fears suffering and death. While the saint is able to prevent physical

[217] Roberts, ed.: *ne swa deoplice dryhtnes geryne / þurh menniscne muð areccan / on sidum sefan* (116).

pain from embittering his soul, Beccel is overwhelmed, experiencing grief that burns, wells up, and oppresses him. He experiences no clear distinction between body and soul, leading to fear rather than assurance in the face of death. When Beccel delivers Guthlac's final message to his sister, foretelling a meeting of the siblings in heaven, he is also delivering it to the reader, who is given the opportunity to recognize what Beccel has not: that it is loss—the separation of body from soul—that makes possible the promise of eternal life and the reunion of those who have been parted. The poem suggests that we all, as mortal beings, can drink in bitterness and breathe out sweetness, so long as we reimagine the body apart from the spirit, vividly picturing its diseased state in order to reject that corruption from the soul.

Among the many metaphors representing the relationship between soul and body in *Guthlac B*, one offers a particularly strong connection to the penitential texts and poetry discussed in Chapter 3. While directing Beccel to deliver the message to his sister, Guthac instructs him**:** "Be ready for a journey after my body and limbs and this soul of life sunder their marriage through life-separation" (1175b-1178a).[218] The marriage metaphor recognizes both the intimacy of the relationship between body and soul and the fact that the two remain separable, doomed to part and wait upon Judgment Day. Unlike Guthlac, whose bodily suffering has not caused spiritual harm, Beccel's "marriage" of soul and body is a troubled one: mortal concerns and emotions

[218] Roberts, ed.: *Beo þu on sið gearu**,** / siþþan lic ond leomu ond þes lifes gæst / asundrien somwist hyra / þurh feorggedal* (118). A more literal translation of *somwist* might be "subsistence agreement." As the Bosworth-Toller entry for *wist* indicates, the term has multiple meanings, including "being," "subsistence," and "feasting." For *somwist*, I have chosen the translation "marriage" for its implications of an agreement or pact (in line with *som*) and the sharing of sustenance, but "subsistence agreement" would similarly emphasize the close bond involved in the soul-body relationship and the fact that the two parties are nevertheless distinguishable.

like fear and grief, experienced physically, have damaged his ability to fully comprehend a spiritual truth— that Guthlac's death will bring the saint perpetual joy in heaven. *Soul and Body I* depicts the consequences of such a troubled relationship, particularly the interdependency of soul and body that lasts beyond their separation at death. The poem helps the reader imagine a diseased or injured body as a representation of the soul, a powerful image to reflect upon, be repulsed by, or otherwise use as a tool for spiritual improvement.

The penitentials offer several examples of how such reflection might work. As discussed in Chapter 3, the introductions to the penitential manuals use three main categories of medical metaphor to characterize spiritual problems in bodily terms. Rather than providing the reader with an object for devotion, such as the Virgin Mary or Christ on the cross, they demand that the reader imagine an ailing body vividly enough to feel what it "feels" while at the same time recognizing that body as a representation of the spiritual state that results from sin. As in *Guthlac B*, poison appears in some of these passages as a term that can bridge physical and spiritual bitterness or pain. Here, though, instead of Christ's bitter drink "purging" the old poison served by Eve, one finds an emphasis on confession as a purgative for the poison of sin. Ideally, meditation involving the image of the diseased soul-as-body leads to genuine remorse, expressed in tears that help purify the weeper while also inspiring witnesses to repent for their own transgressions. The reader, perusing these texts intended for confessors, is essentially engaged in a meditative act and is meant to carry the resulting sense of humility into subsequent encounters with penitents.

This understanding of repentance as a collaborative task—between the soul and body of an individual as well as between confessor and penitent—is reflected in *Soul and Body I*, which highlights the harm that can occur when the body is allowed to dominate the soul before death. The body of the damned soul was gluttonous in life, seeking and consuming pleasures than purging itself through confession and penitential acts such as fasting. Its condition after death reflects this. The damned soul, outlining the process of decay, says that "Gluttony is the name of that worm, whose jaws are / sharper than needles. That one ventures forth / first of all in the earth-cave; / it tears apart the tongue and creeps through the teeth" (116-119).[219] Having failed to heed the soul in life, the body loses the tongue it should have used to confess its sins, and having fed itself too much before, it is now fed upon. While the striking imagery of the corpse differs from that of the imagined bodies in the penitentials—it is decaying rather than diseased, though they share some imagery of wounding—it is used in a similar way, forcing the reader to confront the consequences of failing to keep the body in line with one's spiritual goals.

The damned soul, haranguing the body for its history of misbehavior, is unable to change the situation now that the opportunities offered in life have passed. The body, though literal in the context of the poem, is also a metaphor, a visual representation of the suffering experienced by the soul that is bound to its body's fate, held captive by the "harsher hunger" of hell. As much as the damned soul tries to "confess" the sins of its body, bitterly confronting the silent corpse, the time to do so is over. The good soul, on the other hand, is largely at peace with its fate. In life, its

[219] Moffat, ed.: *gifer hatte se wyrm, þe þa eaglas beoð / nædle scearpran se genydde to me / ærest eallra on þam eorðscræfe / þæt he þa tungan totyhð and þa teð þurhsmyhð* (61).

body performed penance, improving the health of the soul, and even though that body must decay like any other, the soul is able to reassure it of future restoration and reunion in heaven. Aligned in purpose during life, the good soul and its body can look forward to Judgment Day rather than dreading it. This is a familiar point: Guthlac, in his words and deeds, shows such alignment of flesh and spirit, as does the weeping penitent evoked in several of the penitentials.

In each of these cases, the text involved engages its audience in a particular imaginative process, using vivid sensory detail to help the reader picture a body tormented by disease, wounds, or gnawing creatures (often described in terms of poison). After building this image and encouraging the reader's identification with it, these texts use different strategies to transform the imagined body into an instrument for positive spiritual change. In *Guthlac B*, the reader is encouraged by the image of the body as hell-scape to turn away from worldly things toward the promise of heaven, protecting the soul from the bitterness that torments Beccel but is rejected by the saint. The introductions to the penitentials, despite varying somewhat in their imagery, add an element of performance: the reader-confessor, after encountering imagery of injuries or purgation, is meant to recognize his own spiritual sickness and need for healing. This recognition should deepen his sense of remorse, displayed through weeping or other expressions of woe, and reinforce his dedication to penance. The confessor's performance should inspire other penitents in turn. Likewise, the highly emotional "performance" of the damned soul in *Soul and Body I*—centered on description of the body's physical corruption—provides the text's audience with good reason to listen to the blessed soul and behave accordingly in their own lives.

While the texts discussed in detail in this study make especially extensive use of medical metaphors, often using *attor* to link physical and spiritual states, such metaphors feature in many other works of Anglo-Saxon literature, and the language used to construct them is worth additional study, especially since it is often used to make moral judgments. Travel literature, for example, offers an opportunity to consider the extent to which the language of disease is applied to foreign places and peoples. Are these lands poisonous and demon-haunted like the marginal territory of the fens in *Guthlac B*? If so, is similar language used to characterize the people who live in these places, and how might such descriptions inform or explain the treatment of unfamiliar groups? A second possible line of inquiry is the use of medical language in homilies, which might provide valuable information about how biblical references to disease and poison are expanded upon or modified for an Anglo-Saxon audience. Yet another potential avenue of investigation is applying linguistic studies of Anglo-Saxon emotions to medical metaphors that reference physical sensations (such as anger=swelling)[220] in order to better understand the implications of the metaphors themselves. The "basic and intimate reality" of the body[221] means that concepts of health and disease are almost universally relevant in textual interpretation, so there are numerous possibilities for future research into the use of *attor* and medical metaphor in Anglo-Saxon literature.

[220] For an example of this kind of work, see Gevaert 275–299.
[221] Kuriyama 14.

APPENDIX

The chart below collects references to poison in the major Old English recipe-books. Note that plant names (e.g. *attorlaðe*) are excluded. Editions used for page numbers are listed below with their abbreviations; except in the case of Pettit, these editions match those used by the electronic corpus. "TB" indicates a reference found in the table of contents.

H: *Herbarium* (ed. de Vriend)
MDQ: *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* (ed. de Vriend)
LB1: *Leechbook I* (ed. Cockayne)
LB2: *Leechbook II* (ed. Cockayne)
LB3: *Leechbook III* (ed. Cockayne)
LCG: *Lacnunga* (ed. Pettit)

Source: Remedy	Ed. Pg.	Electronic Corpus Ref.	Direct Ref.	Category
H: TB iv	3	B21.1.1.1 0072 (4.8)	attorcoppan	Animal
H: TB xx	6	B21.1.1.1 0131 (20.1)	attres	Unspecified
H: TB xxvi	7	B21.1.1.1 0157 (26.2)	attres	Animal
H: TB xxxvi	8	B21.1.1.1 0197 (36.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: TB xlvi	10	B21.1.1.1 0238 (46.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: TB xlvii	10	B21.1.1.1 0244 (47.2)	ætrige	Unspecified
H: TB l	10	B21.1.1.1 0251 (50.1)	attru	Unspecified
H: TB lxiii	12	B21.1.1.1 0287 (63.4)	attorthigene	Ingestion
H: TB lxvii	12	B21.1.1.1 0298 (67.2)	attru	Unspecified
H: TB cxxxv	22	B21.1.1.1 0551 (135.3)	attru	Animal
H: TB cxlii	23	B21.1.1.1 0583 (142.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: TB clix	26	B21.1.1.1 0652 (159.1)	attru	Unspecified
H: TB clxxix	29	B21.1.1.1 0720 (179.1)	attru	Animal, Other
H: i	36	B21.1.1.2 0048 (1.22)	attor	Ingestion
H: i	36	B21.1.1.2 0049 (1.22)	attor	Ingestion
H: iv	46	B21.1.1.2 0145 (4.8)	attorcoppan	Animal
H: iv	46	B21.1.1.2 0146 (4.8)	attorcoppan	Animal
H: v	48	B21.1.1.2 0161 (5.0)	ætrigum	Other
H: vi	50	B21.1.1.2 0182 (6.1)	attor	Animal

H: xv	60	B21.1.1.2 0249 (15.1)	attor	Animal
H: xx	66	B21.1.1.2 0292 (20.1)	attres	Unspecified
H: xx	66	B21.1.1.2 0293 (20.1)	attres	Unspecified
H: xx	66	B21.1.1.2 0303 (20.5)	attor	Animal
H: xxv	72	B21.1.1.2 0337 (25.2)	attor	Animal
H: xxvi	72	B21.1.1.2 0344 (26.2)	attres	Ingestion
H: xxvi	72	B21.1.1.2 0345 (26.2)	attor	Ingestion
H: xxxii	78	B21.1.1.2 0395 (32.4)	attor	Animal
H: xxxvi	82	B21.1.1.2 0433 (36.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: xxxvi	82	B21.1.1.2 0434 (36.5)	attor	Ingestion
H: xlvi	92	B21.1.1.2 0512 (46.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: xlvi	92	B21.1.1.2 0513 (46.5)	attor	Ingestion
H: xlvii	94	B21.1.1.2 0526 (47.2)	ættrig	Animal
H: xlvii	94	B21.1.1.2 0526 (47.2)	attor	Animal
H: l	96	B21.1.1.2 0540 (50.1)	attru	Unspecified
H: l	96	B21.1.1.2 0541 (50.1)	attor	Unspecified
H: lxiii	106	B21.1.1.2 0614 (63.3)	attor	Animal
H: lxiii	106	B21.1.1.2 0615 (63.4)	attor	Ingestion
H: lxvii	110	B21.1.1.2 0637 (67.2)	attru	Unspecified
H: lxvii	110	B21.1.1.2 0637 (67.2)	atru	Unspecified
H: cxxxv	176	B21.1.1.2 1091 (135.3)	attru	Animal
H: cxlii	184	B21.1.1.2 1162 (142.5)	attres	Ingestion
H: clix	204	B21.1.1.2 1289 (159.1)	attru	Unspecified
H: clxiii	206	B21.1.1.2 1305 (163.2)	attru	Animal
H: clxxix	224	B21.1.1.2 1418 (179.1)	attru	Unspecified
H: clxxix	224	B21.1.1.2 1420 (179.1)	attrum	Unspecified
MDQ: v	250	B21.1.1.3 0115 (5.10)	attorcoppan	Animal
MDQ: vii	256	B21.1.1.3 0165 (7.8)	attor	Unspecified
MDQ: xiv	270	B21.1.1.3 0306 (14.7)	attor	Animal; Other
LB1: TB xlv	10	B21.2.1.1.1 0051 (45.1)	attre	Animal
LB1: TB xlv	10	B21.2.1.1.1 0051 (45.1)	atter	Ingestion
LB1: TB xlv	10	B21.2.1.1.1 0052 (45.1)	attre	Unspecified
LB1: TB xlv	10	B21.2.1.1.1 0052 (45.1)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LB1: TB xlv	10	B21.2.1.1.1 0052 (45.4)	attre	Unspecified
LB1: TB lxxii	14	B21.2.1.1.1 0081 (72.1)	attres	Air, or “Flying”
LB1: lxxvii	16	B21.2.1.1.1 0088 (77.1)	æterno	Other
LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0534 (45.1.1)	attre	Unspecified
LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0535 (45.1.2)	attre	Unspecified

LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0536 (45.1.3)	attre	Unspecified
LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0536 (45.1.3)	attre	Criminal
LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0537 (45.1.4)	attre	Unspecified
LB1: xlv	110	B21.2.1.1.2 0544 (45.3.1)	ator	Ingestion
LB1: xlv	112		L venenata	Animal
LB1: xlv	112		L venenatum	Animal
LB1: xlv	112	B21.2.1.1.2 0547 (45.5.1)	atre	Air, or “Flying”
LB1: xlv	112	B21.2.1.1.2 0547 (45.5.1)	æternum	Unspecified
LB1: xlv	114	B21.2.1.1.2 0550 (45.5.6)	atter	Animal
LB1: lxviiii	144	B21.2.1.1.2 0693 (69.1.6)	ater	Animal
LB1: lxxii	146	B21.2.1.1.2 0701 (72.1.1)	æterno	Air, or “Flying”
LB1: lxxii	146	B21.2.1.1.2 0703 (72.1.6)	æternesse	Air, or “Flying”
LB1: lxxxiv	154	B21.2.1.1.2 0736 (84.1.3)	atter	Ingestion
LB2: TB lxv	174	B21.2.1.2.1 0065 (65)	unlybbum	Unspecified
LB2: i	176	B21.2.1.2.2 0003 (1.1.8)	atterberendum	Humoral
LB2: i	176	B21.2.1.2.2 0004 (1.1.10)	æterna	Humoral
LB2: lxiv	290	B21.2.1.2.2 0486 (64.3.1)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LB2: lxv	292	B21.2.1.2.2 0502 (65.2.11)	unlybbum	Unspecified
LB2: lxv	296	B21.2.1.2.2 0510 (65.4.7)	atre	Air, or “Flying”
LB3: TB xliii	302	B21.2.1.3.1 0043 (43)	attres	Ingestion
LB3: lxxii	304	B21.2.1.3.1 0072 (72)	attre	Unspecified
LB3: xliii	336	B21.2.1.3.2 0141 (43.1.1)	attres	Ingestion
LB3: xliii	336	B21.2.1.3.2 0142 (43.1.3)	attor	Ingestion
LB3: xliii	336	B21.2.1.3.2 0143 (43.1.3)	attor	Criminal
LCG: xviii	10	B21.3 0018 (18.1)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: xxviii	16	B21.3 0028 (28.1)	attor	Ingestion
LCG: lxiv	36		L uenenum	Ingestion
LCG: lxiv	38		L uenenatum	Animal
LCG: lxxvi	60	A43.2 0003 (4)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: lxxvi	60	A43.2 0005 (11)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0006 (14)	attre	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0007 (16)	attre	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0007 (16)	attor	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0008 (18)	attre	Animal; Air, or “Flying”
LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0011 (27)	attres	Unspecified

LCG: lxxvi	62	A43.2 0012 (30)	attrum	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	64	A43.2 0014 (34)	attor	Other
LCG: lxxvi	64	A43.2 0016 (41)	attre	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	64	A43.2 0017 (45)	attrum	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attre	Other
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attorgeblæd	Unspecified
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0017 (45)	attor	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: lxxvi	66	A43.2 0019 (59)	attor	Unspecified
LCG: cxxvi	88	B21.3 0142 (133.1)	attre	Air, or “Flying”
LCG: clxx	118	B21.3 0180 (178.3)	attre	Unspecified

REFERENCES

Adams, J.N. and Marilyn Deegan. “Bald’s *Leechbook* and the *Physica Plinii*.” *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 21, 1992, pp. 87–114.

Arnovick, Leslie. *Written Reliquaries: The Resonance of Orality in Medieval English Texts*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006.

Ayoub, Lois. "Old English Waeta and the Medical Theory of the Humors." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 94, no. 3, 1995, pp. 332–346.

Baker, Peter and Michael Lapidge, editors. *Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion*. Early English Text Society. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Barney, Stephen A, translator. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville.* Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Bartlett, Anne and Thomas Bestul, editors. *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation.* Cornell University Press, 1999.

Bede. *On the Reckoning of Time*, translated by Faith Wallis. Liverpool University Press, 1999.

Bedingfield, Brad. “Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England.” *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 31, 2002, pp. 223–255.

Bellis, Joanna. “The Dregs of Trembling, the Draught of Salvation: The Dual Symbolism of the Cup in Medieval Literature.” *Journal of Medieval History,* vol. 37, no. 1, 2012, pp. 47–61.

Bestul, Thomas. "The Old English 'Resignation' and the Benedictine Reform." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, vol. 78, no. 1, 1977, pp. 18–23.

Biblia Sacra: Libri Novi Testamenti et Psalmorum. Ex Fontibus, 2009.

Bieler, Ludwig, editor. *The Irish Penitentials.* Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975.

Biggs, Frederick M. “Unities in the Old English ‘Guthlac B.’” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 89, no. 2, 1990, pp. 155–165.

Boase, C.W. “Guthlac, St.” *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines*, vol. 2, edited by Smith and Wace, 1880, pp. 823–826.

Bonser, Wilfrid. *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England.* The Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1963.

Bosworth, Joseph and Thomas Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, compiled by S. Christ and Tichý. Charles University in Prague, 21 Mar. 2010. http://www.bosworthtoller.com/002965

Braccioti, Annalisa. "L'apporto della tradizione indiretta per la costituzione di un testo critico delle Curae herbarum." *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2000, pp. 61-102.

Brown, Carleton. "Poculum Mortis in Old English." *Speculum*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1940, pp. 389–399.

Brown, Phyllis R. "Beccel and the Theme of Death in *Guðlac B*." *Mediaevalia*, vol. 19, 1996, pp. 273–297.

Burdorff, Sarah. "Re-Reading Grendel's Mother: *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charms." *Comitatus*, vol. 45, 2014, pp. 91–103.

Bynum, Carolyn. *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages.* University of California Press, 1982.

Cahill, Michael, editor. *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Marcum*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 82. Brepols, 1997.

Cahill, Michael, translator. *The First Commentary on Mark: An Annotated Translation.* Oxford University Press, 1998.

Calder, Daniel G. "*Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*: Some Discriminations." *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation: For John G. McGaillard*, edited by Nicholson and Frese, University of Notre Dame Press, 1975, pp. 65–80.

Cameron, M.L. *Anglo-Saxon Medicine.* Cambridge University Press, 1993.

---. "The Visions of Saints Anthony and Cuthbert." *Health, Disease, and Healing in Medieval Culture*, edited by Campbell, Hall, et al., 1992, pp. 152–158.

Carlton, Michael W. and Donald B. Kunkel. "St. Anthony's Fire: Eponym Misused." Letter to the Editor. *Academic Emergency Medicine*, vol. 2, no. 12, 1995, pp. 1114–1115.

Celsus. *De Medicina*, edited and translated by W.G. Spencer. 1935. Harvard University Press, 1971.

Chardonnens, László Sándor. *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics 900-1100*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

"Chronic Malaria." *Stedman's Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing.* 5th ed., 2005.

Clough, Francis M., translator. "Vercelli Homily iv." *The Vercelli Book Homilies*, edited by Lewis E. Nicholson. University Press of America, 1991, pp. 37–46.

Cockayne, Thomas Oswald, editor. *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England.* London: Rolls Series, 1865. 3 vols.

Colgrave, Bertram, translator. *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac.* Cambridge University Press, 1956.

Colgrave, Bertram and R.A.B Mynors, editors and translators. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. Clarendon Press, 1969.

Connolly, Hugh. *The Irish Penitentials.* Four Courts Press, 1995.

Darby, H.C. *The Medieval Fenland*. Cambridge University Press, 1940.

D'Aronco, Maria. "The Botanical Lexicon of the OE *Herbarium*." *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 17, 1988, pp. 15–33.

D'Aronco, Maria, and M.L. Cameron. *The Old English Illustrated Pharmacopoeia: British Library Cotton Vitellius C.iii.* Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1998.

Deegan, Marilyn. *A Critical Edition of MS. B.L. Royal 12. D. xvii: Bald's Leechbook*. 1988. University of Manchester, PhD dissertation.

Deferrari, Roy, translator. *Paulus Orosius: The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*. Catholic University of America Press, 1964.

Delcourt, Joseph. *Medicina de Quadrupedibus.* C. Winter, 1914.

De Vriend, Hubert Jan, editor *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus.* Early English Text Society. Oxford University Press, 1984.

Dobbie, Eliot Van Kirk, editor. *Beowulf and Judith.* Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 4. Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Dobson, M.J. *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

---. "History of Malaria in England." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, vol. 82, supplement 17, 1989, pp. 3–7.

---. “Malaria in England: A Geographical and Historical Perspective.” *Parassitologia*, vol. 36, no. 1–2, 1994, pp. 35–60.

Doyle, Conan. “*Dweorg* in Old English: Aspects of Disease Terminology.” *Quaestio*, no. 9, 2008, pp. 99–117.

Dreves, G.M., editor. *Hymnographi latini*. Lateinische hymnendicliter des mittelalters, vol 50. O.R. Reisland, 1907.

Elliot, Michael. *Anglo-Saxon Canon Law*. University of Toronto, 23 Jan. 2015, www.individual.utoronto.ca/michaelelliot/index.html

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic.* Vintage, 1994.

Fowler, Roger, ed. “A Late OE Handbook for the Use of a Confessor.” *Anglia*, vol. 83, 1965, pp. 1–34.

Frantzen, Allen J. *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database*. 2003–2018, www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/index.php

---. “The Body in ‘Soul and Body I.” *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1982, pp. 76–88.

---. *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, Rutgers University Press, 1983.

---. “The Penitentials Attributed to Bede.” *Speculum*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1983, pp. 573–597.

---. “Spirituality and Devotion in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials.” *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 22, 2005, pp. 117–128.

---. “The Tradition of Penitentials in Anglo-Saxon England.” *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 11, 1982, pp. 23–56.

Fulk, R.D., editor and translator. *The* Beowulf *Manuscript: Complete Texts and the Fight at Finnsburg.* Harvard University Press, 2010.

Fulton, Rachel. *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200.* Columbia University Press, 2002.

Gevaert, Caroline. "The evolution of the lexical and conceptual field of ANGER in Old and Middle English." *A Changing World of Words: studies in English historical lexicography, lexicology and semantics*, edited by Javier Díaz Vera, Rodopi, 2002, pp. 275–299.

Green, Monica, translator. *The Trotula.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Grattan, J.H.G and Charles Singer. *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine: Illustrated Specially from the Semi-Pagan Text 'Lacnunga.'* Oxford University Press, 1952.

Gerould, Gordon Hall. "The Old English Poems on St. Guthlac and Their Latin Source." *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1917, pp. 77–89.

Giles, J.A., editor. *The Complete Works of the Venerable Bede in the Original Latin*, vols. 7 and 10. Whittaker and Co., 1844.

Gowland, R.L. and A.G. Western. "Morbidity in the Marshes: Using Spatial Epidemiology to Investigate Skeletal Evidence for Malaria in Anglo-Saxon England (AD 410–1050)." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol. 147, no. 2, 2012, pp. 301–311.

Haddan, Arthur and William Stubbs, editors. *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*. Clarendon Press, 1869–1873. 3 vols.

Hall, Thomas N. "A Gregorian Model for Eve's Biter Drync in 'Guthlac B.'" *The Review of English Studies*. vol. 44, no. 174, 1993, pp. 157–175.

Hamilton, Sarah. *The Practice of Penance, 900–1050*. Royal Historical Society, 2002.

Hill, Thomas D. "Punishment According to Joints of the Body in the Old English 'Soul and Body II.'" *Notes and Queries*, vol. 15, 1968, pp. 409–410

Hirsch, John C. *The Boundaries of Faith: The Development and Transmission of Medieval Spirituality*, E.J. Brill, 1996.

Hostetter, Aaron K., translator. "Guthlac B." *Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry Project.* 11 Jun. 2016, www.anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/guthlac-b/. Accessed 15 Apr. 2019.

Howald, Ernst and Henry Sigerist, editors. *Antonii Musae De herba vettonica liber; Liber Pseudoapulei Herbarius; Anonymi de taxone liber; Sexti Placiti Liber medicinae ex animalibus, etc.* Corpus Medicorum Latinorum 4. Teubner, 1927.

Hutchison, Robert A. and Steven W. Lindsay. "Malaria and Deaths in the English Marshes." *The Lancet*, vol. 367, 2006, pp. 1947–1951

Jolly, Karen. *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf-Charms in Context.* University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Kádár, Zoltán. "Some Notes on the Common Archetypes of Pharmaco-Zoological

Illustrations in the MSS. [sic.] Cotton Vitellius C., III. and the Greek Theriaca." *Communicationes de Historia Artis Medicinae*, Supplement 6, 1972, pp. 85–95.

Kendall, Calvin, translator. *Bede: On Genesis.* Liverpool University Press, 2008.

Kottje, Raymund. *Die Bussbücher Halitgars von Cambrai und des Hrabanus Maurus*. Walter de Gruyter, 1980.

Krapp, George Philip, editor. *The Junius Manuscript.* The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, vol. 1. Columbia University Press, 1931.

Krapp, George Philip and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, editors. *The Exeter Book*. The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, vol. 3. Columbia University Press, 1936.

Ker, N.R. *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon.* Clarendon Press, 1957.

Kuriyama, Shigehisa. *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine.* Zone Books, 2002.

Liuzza, R.M., editor and translator. *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics: An Edition and Translation from London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii.* D.S. Brewer, 2011.

Liuzza, R.M., editor. *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, 2 vols. Oxford University Press, 1994.

McEntire, Sandra. "The Doctrine of Compunction from Bede and Margery Kempe." *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV*, edited by Marion Glasscoe, D.S. Brewer, 1987, pp. 77–90.

McNamer, Sarah. *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

McNeill, John and Helena Gamer, editors. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance.* 1938. Columbia University Press, 1990.

Meaney, Audrey L. "Alfred, the Patriarch and the White Stone." *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 65–79.

---. "The Anglo-Saxon View of Causes of Illness." *Health, Disease, and Healing in Medieval Culture*, edited by Sheila Campbell, Bert Miller, et al., Macmillan, 1992, pp. 12–33.

Meens, Rob. *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600–1200*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Migne, J.P., editor. *Pauli Orosii, Hispani Presbyteri, Historiarum Libri Septem*. Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, vol. 31, 1846, pp. 635, 663–1174.

Moffat, Douglas, editor and translator. *The Old English Soul and Body.* D.S. Brewer, 1990.

Momma, Haruko. "*Worm*: A Lexical Approach to the *Beowulf* Manuscript." Old English Philology: Studies in Honour of R.D. Fulk," edited by Neidorf, Pacual, et al., D.S. Brewer, 2016, pp. 200–214.

Noetzel, Justin T. "Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens." *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 45, 2014, pp. 105–131.

O'Dell, Kaylin. "Dramatizing Devotion in the Old English *Vercelli Homily IV*." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 117, no. 1, pp. 27–55.

Olds, Barbara M. *The Anglo-Saxon Leechbook III: A Critical Edition and Translation.* 1984. University of Denver, PhD dissertation.

Olsen, Alexandra Hennessey. *Guthlac of Croyland: A Study of Heroic Hagiography*. University Press of America, 1981.

Payne, Joseph Frank. *English Medicine in Anglo-Saxon Times.* Clarendon Press, 1904.

Pettit, Edward, editor and translator. *Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: the Lacnunga.* Edwin Mellen Press, 2001. 2 vols.

Pheifer, J.D., editor. *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*. Clarendon Press, 1974.

Pollington, Stephen, translator. *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plant-Lore and Healing.* Anglo-Saxon Books, 2000.

Ramsey, Boniface, translator. *John Cassian: The Institutes.* The Newman Press, 2000.

Rettig, John W., translator. *St. Augustine: Tractates on the Gospel of John 112–24 and Tractates on the First Epistle of John.* Catholic University of America Press, 1995.

Riddle, John M. "Pseudo-Dioscorides' 'Ex Herbis Femininis' and Early Medieval

Medical Botany." *Journal of the History of Biology*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1981, pp. 43–81.

Riyeff, Jacob. "Dualism in Old English Literature: The Body-and-Soul Theme and Vercelli Homily IV." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 112, no. 3, 2015, pp. 453–468.

Roberts, Jane, editor. *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book*. Clarendon Press, 1979.

---. "Two Notes on La3amon's *Brut*." *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R.A. Waldron*, edited by Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith. D.S. Brewer, 2000.

Rosier, James L. "Death and Transfiguration: *Guthlac B*." *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt*, edited by Rosier, Mouton, 1970, 82–92.

Russom, Geoffrey. "The Drink of Death in Old English and Germanic Literature." *Germania: Comparative Studies in the Old Germanic Languages and Literatures*, edited by Calder and Christy, D.S. Brewer, 1988, pp. 175–189.

Savage, Anne. "The Place of Old English Poetry in the English Meditative Tradition." *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV*, edited by Marion Glasscoe, D.S. Brewer, 1987, pp. 91–110.

Savage, Anne and Nicholas Watson, editors. *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works.* Paulist Press, 1991.

Schmitz, Hermann Joseph, editor. *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche*, vol. 2, Drück und Verlag von. L. Schwann, 1898.

Singer, Charles. *Early English Magic and Medicine.* Proceedings of the British Academy 9. Oxford University Press, 1920.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Picador, 2001.

Talbot, C.H. "Some Notes on Anglo-Saxon Medicine." *Medical History*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1965, pp. 156-169.

Teske, Roland J., translator. *Saint Augustine on Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, Catholic University of America Press, 1991.

Thompson, A. Hamilton and U. Lindelöf, editors. *Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis. The Durham collectar. A new and revised edition of the Latin text with the interlinear Anglo-Saxon version.* Surtees Society 140. Andrews and Company, 1927.

Van Arsdall, Anne. *Medieval Herbal Remedies: The* Old English Herbarium *and Anglo-Saxon Medicine.* Routledge, 2002.

Voights, Linda Ehrsam. "A New Look at a Manuscript Containing the Old English Translation of the Herbarium Apulei." *Manuscripta*, no. 20, 1976, pp. 40–60.

Wallis, Faith. "1. Medicine I: 1. Humours (1)." *The Calendar and the Cloister: Oxford, St Johns College MS 17.* McGill University Library Digital Collections Program, 2007, http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/ms-17/folio.php?p=1v. Accessed 30 Apr. 2019.

---. "1. Medicine I fols. 1v – 2v: Overview." *The Calendar and the Cloister: Oxford, St Johns College MS 17.* McGill University Library Digital Collections Program, 2007, http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/ms-17/folio.php?p=1v. Accessed 30 Apr. 2019.

Wasserschleben, F.W.H. *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche nebst einer rechtsgeschichtichen Einleitung*. Halle: Ch. Graeger, 1851.

Weber, Benjamin D. "A Harmony of Contrasts: The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 114, no. 2, 2015, pp. 201–239.

Wellcome, Henry. *Anglo-Saxon Leechcraft.* Burroughs, Wellcome, and Company, 1912.

Willems, R., editor. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 36. Brepols, 1954.

Wright, Michael J. "Anglo-Saxon Midwives." *ANQ*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1998, pp. 3–5.

Zacher, Samantha. *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies.* University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Ziegler, Michelle. "Mapping Malaria in Anglo-Saxon England." *Contagions.* 5 Feb. 2012, www.contagions.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/mapping-malaria-in-anglo-saxon-england/. Accessed 25 Mar. 2017.