

NAUTICAL NARRATIVES IN ANGLO-LATIN HAGIOGRAPHIES, CA. 700-1100

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ABSTRACT

Rebecca Shores: Nautical Narratives in Anglo-Latin Hagiographies, c 700-1100
(Under the direction of Patrick P. O'Neill)

The four studies presented here uncover the various ways in which Anglo-Latin hagiographers, from the eighth century until the early twelfth, used nautical narratives in their stories of saints. Each chapter is organized around one type of navigable space: archipelago, the North Sea, rivers, and the eastern Mediterranean. And while they all provide distinct arguments about how hagiographers describe travel by water, the four chapters are unified by the common claim that the authors of these texts—Bede, Felix, Stephen, Willibald, Alcuin, and two anonymous hagiographers in the eleventh century—were not as “sea blind” as scholars once assumed.

Significant findings are made in the final chapter, about five “Nicholas poems” that were copied into Cotton Tiberius B.v.i. around the year 1100. This unique set of poems offers the earliest English evidence for St Nicholas as an explicitly nautical saint, complicating the commonly held belief that he was revered as the patron saint of sailors before the twelfth century. Scribal and textual analysis identifies the source of Poem 5 as Nicephorus’s prose *translatio Sancti Nicholai*, and provides enough evidence to argue that Poem 5 is the first versification of the *translatio* in England.

The appendices provide transcriptions of St Nicholas’s “substituted cup” miracle in Tiberius Poem 2 and its prose corollary in CCCC9 (part of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary), as well as an edition and translation of Tiberius Poem 5.

Dedicated to all of my parents, and
in gloriam Dei.

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To my husband Drew, who took on virtually all of my responsibilities over the past few months: thank you for making this a team effort. To my son John Henry, whose dazzling joy got me through the dreariest days: please note the example I have set by dedicating this work to my parents.

PREFACE

My analysis, edition, and translation of the fifth Nicholas poem has been published, with a few slight differences, as “An Examination of the Fifth ‘Nicholas Poem’ in Cotton Tiberius B.v (i) and Its Source” in *Studia Neophilologica*, Vol. 89, 2, 2017, pp. 238-249.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Sources

AVC	Anonymous Vita Cuthberti
Bonif.	Willibald, Vita sancti Bonifati
HA	Bede, Historia Abbatum
HE	Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica
VBir	Anonymous Vita sancti Birini
VC	Bede, Vita sancti Cuthberti
VCeol	Anonymous Vita Ceolfridi
VG	Felix, Vita sancti Guthlaci
VW	Stephen, Vita Wilfridi

Tertiary Sources

BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina
DACL	Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie
DMLBS	Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historiae
PASE	Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: BRINGING SAINTS TO THE SEA

1. Scope

This dissertation argues that Anglo-Latin hagiographers between the early-eighth and early-twelfth centuries used nautical narratives to transform an imported genre into a reflection of local, experiential conceptions of sanctity. Medievalists have long used Oceanic Studies to peek into a world that was wetter, darker, and more quiet than our own. Yet literary studies of the sea in the ancient, medieval, and early modern eras tend to rely on one central conceptual issue: to the terrestrial human, bodies of water can be mechanisms of isolation and channels of exchange. Often, scholarship regarding this issue ignores the idea that boats are what distinguish a divisive sea from a unifying one. The elision of the nautical from early medieval maritime studies creates a scholarly discourse of binary and, ironically, terrestrial terms. In studies of secular literature, human figures navigate waters described as boundaries or highways; in works of religious writing, they traverse seascapes recalling demonic deserts or paradisiac gardens. My project builds on both sets of richly evocative scholarship to call for an interpretive framework that regards human interaction with the sea as unmoored from *terra firma*. This framework supports the four separate studies presented here and emphasizes the fluidity, rather than rigidity, of the hagiographical genre.

Spiritual in the elegies, transactional in the laws, and invasive in the chronicles, nautical activities encourage and exploit questions of contact and change. Journeys across the North Sea, English Channel, and Irish Sea (and even journeys within England) were exercises of cultural, religious, and economic exchange. Ships, then, were the sites that enabled contact

between distant shores; they brought missionaries and mercenaries, kings and Vikings, Latin and French to the Isles of Britain. Surely, there is an opportunity to imagine a theoretical framework for different roles navigation plays in various forms of Anglo-Saxon literature.

At the time of my prospectus, my first task was to distinguish between narratives of the sea and narratives of sea voyages. I had assumed, wrongly, that the frequency with which the sea is invoked by Anglo-Saxon literatures correlated with narratives of human interaction with the sea. I began with the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, which record landings, departures, and invasions, but virtually no narrative of sailing, rowing, or punting. Boats are included in Anglo-Saxon wills, and their taxes recorded in Anglo-Saxon laws; we know from the burials in southeast England and northwest Europe that, for a time, ships were imagined as valuable vessels of otherworldly transportation.

In vernacular poetry, references to the sea are seemingly countless; linguist Katrin Thier has dedicated an entire book to *Old English Sea Terms*.¹ And yet, the few verses that do describe the experience of being on a boat—namely *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*—have been studied so deeply that I felt dissuaded from incorporating them in my research. The next genre to be examined was vernacular hagiography, which was somewhat more promising. I found that ships are vessels of knowledge in which apostles like Andreas and Thomas can discourse about the power of God, or spaces of trial for saints like Eustace and Mary of Egypt. In all of the vernacular saints' lives, boats are sites of both ordeal and redemption. Still, this was not enough for a dissertation-length study. Finally, I turned to Anglo-Latin hagiography, which offered a greater number of nautical narratives with which to engage.

¹ Thier, Katrin. *Old English Sea Terms*. Anglo-Saxon Books, Little Downham, UK, 2014.

The next step was to revisit my timeframe. I was interested in post-Conquest narratives but wary of including Orderic and Malmesbury, for fear that their roles as historians (if even ecclesiastical) would take my research too far from the field of hagiography. I therefore limited myself to saints' lives that were written no later than the first decade of the twelfth century—a limit I would not have set for myself had I known how difficult the sources on missionaries and pilgrims would be.

The first chapter fused archaeology, ecocriticism, and sensory studies to illustrate the importance of small-craft navigation to the real and imagined worlds of Cuthbert and Guthlac. I had hoped that these methods would proffer similar results in the next set of texts: Lives of England's pilgrims, missionaries, and exiles. But ships seem to disappear beyond the horizon of the English shore. Bede's *HE*, Willibald's *vita Bonifatii*, Alcuin's *vita Willibrordi*, and Huneberc's *vita Willibaldi* record a great deal of travel, but tend not to narrate any details of voyages across the seas or rivers. I researched ecological, nautical, and even economic conditions in which these saints and their authors lived, and committed a great deal of study to the early medieval Frisians, who were master mariners at the time. After several months I had found no argument that could unify these Anglo-Saxon authors in a nautical, or even maritime, context, so I set them aside and moved on to the texts for my final chapter: a set of five poems that might have been written on the occasion of a maritime pilgrimage to a shrine of St Nicholas.

These poems demanded that I shift my focus to textual criticism, source work, and pilgrimage studies, so when I returned to the eighth- and ninth-century texts, I was prepared to look for nautical aspects of pilgrimage. I found that for Bede, Willibald, Alcuin, and even Huneberc, pilgrimage (*peregrinatio*) had virtually no interest in the sea. Where the use of *peregrinatio* and its cognates seemed to have a distinct meaning, the terms relate to the reception

of travelers abroad, rather than the journey itself. In his *HE*, for instance, Bede often uses the term to call for royal and ecclesiastical sponsorship for those who, following Abraham's example, have abandoned kith and kin.² While I was able to write extensively on the terrestrial nature of *peregrinatio*, the research did not fit my nautical theme.

At this point I had one chapter on seventh-century hermit saints in England's archipelagic seascape and one chapter on eleventh-century verses about a Byzantine wonderworker who spent his life (and his afterlife) in the bustling ports of the Mediterranean. The goal of my dissertation changed from producing a critical survey of nautical narratives and proposing a unifying theory about their function to preparing a series of distinct studies about discrete uses for nautical, maritime, and even riverine narratives in Anglo-Latin biographies of seafaring saints.

2. Organization

I have organized my dissertation according to bodies of navigable water. Chapter 2, "Cuthbert and Guthlac in the English Archipelago," takes an ecocritical approach to Bede's *vita Cuthberti* and Felix's *vita Guthlaci*. I argue that nautical perspectives engaged by both Bede and Felix show acts of coastal and inland navigation to be acts of encountering God. Moving farther offshore, Chapter 3, "Maritime Miracles on the Almost-Open Sea," considers specific theological contexts for maritime miracles that take place in the English Channel and the Firth of Forth. Bede and the biographer Stephen, Alcuin, and the anonymous author of the eleventh-century *vita Birini* use the vast and powerful sea to explore the problematic line between what is strictly miraculous and what is simply a product of God's divinely inspired world. Rivers are the

² See also Lawson, Helen. *Navigating Northumbria: Mobility, Allegory, and Writing Travel in Early Medieval Northumbria*, University of Edinburgh, 2016. PhD Dissertation.

subject of the fourth chapter, “Memory and Liturgy at the Riverbank,” which studies narratives of pilgrims and missionaries in and beyond England. Rivers are stable sites of unity and continuity for missionaries in England; abroad, they are miraculous couriers of martyrs.

3. Methodologies

Chapter 2 incorporates archaeology, visual theory, and ecocriticism in a close linguistic analysis of nautical narratives in Bede’s *vita Cuthberti* and Felix’s *vita Guthlaci*. By recovering the archipelagic seascape of the Farne Islands and the inland islescape of the Fenlands, I have tried to bring to life the forgotten environments through which Cuthbert and Guthlac navigated. With the waterways of eastern England restored to view, the study narrows by investigating how these saints participated in the visual experiences of their aqueous environments. Both Cuthbert and Guthlac limit their own visual experiences by spending time in their oratories, from which all they could see is the sky. Yet recent GIS surveys show that both Cuthbert and Guthlac would have themselves been highly visible in their states of self-imposed (and of course temporary) blindness. The islands of the Northumbrian coast and the East Anglian fens placed these holy ascetics not, as we were meant to believe, in an isolated and forgotten patch of earth but rather within the viewshed of secular rulers and patrons, and among increasingly visited networks of regional and international trade.³ Still, this is more than a historical project. By studying maritime diction in these specifically nautical narratives, this chapter’s most important contribution is a literary one: Bede and Felix each intentionally anchor their saints to particularly local shores.

³ “The natural environment that is visible from one or more viewing points.” See “viewshed.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2011.

Research for the third chapter began by investigating nautical narratives beyond the English shores. I expected to find stories like those of Ohthere and Wulfstan, or perhaps the three Irish peregrini who visited King Alfred. But this was not the case. For the English, pilgrimage to a foreign land had less to do with the trials faced at sea than the hospitality expected upon arrival. Close analysis of the use of *peregrinatio* and its cognates across these works leads one to believe that, had the English not been surrounded by water, there would have been no association between *peregrinatio* and voyage at all.

While neither archaeological nor ecocritical research proved useful to the third chapter, the maritime perspective remained a productive starting point. None of the four authors—Bede, Stephen, Alcuin, or the anonymous author of the *vita Birini*—seems to have had the same belief about contemporary miracles and the capacity of the human mind to be astonished by God’s power. But all four of them used human interactions with the sea as to explore the relationship among natural causes, divine intervention, and the limits of human reason.

For Anglo-Saxons and their patristic predecessors, much of the discourse on miracles depended upon the power of wonder—the emotional response to seeing something that one cannot imagine, or which fundamentally undercuts an expectation of natural law. Taking examples from the eighth, ninth, and eleventh centuries, Chapter 3 examines how hagiographers used maritime miracles to engage the difficult theological question of whether, and to what extent, present-day miracles still occurred. The distinction between the marvelous works of creation and miraculous acts of God were difficult to determine; the sea, in all its awesome power and endless mystery, was a useful space in which to play out beliefs about the limits of the natural world.

Bede and Stephen, in utterly opposite approaches, each describe maritime miracles that occur roughly within the expected natural order. Bede's three maritime miracles are actually three versions of the same: the calming of a storm at sea. And while the fifth-century Germanus is threatened by a demonically-inspired storm, there is not much in the narrative to suggest that the sea itself is acting beyond the bounds of natural law. Stephen's sole miracle in the whole of his *vita Wilfridi* is the tidal surge that rescues the shipwrecked Wilfrid (and his small army) from the pagan shores of Sussex. Stephen employs Old Testament descriptions to imagine the southeast coast of England as the Egyptian desert of Exodus (and even, occasionally, as the newborn or recovered earth in Genesis), but for all his pomp and drama, proclaims that God had rescued Wilfrid's ship by sending in the tide at an unusual hour. If this extraordinary scene is miraculous, it nevertheless has Biblical precedent. Both authors, then, describe natural (if rare) events— storms and tidal surges in their accounts of contemporary miracles.

In the later eighth century, Alcuin's *York Poem* takes the sea a bit further out from beyond the human (or biblical) experience when it saves Balthere from a fall hundreds of feet down from Bass Rock. And although Alcuin betrays a hint of interest in the "secondary nature" of the miracle— that is, how the sea comes up to meet the desert hermit, and how it acts as if it were land—he stops short of the elemental admixture that the author of *vita Birini* imagines. Indeed, the eleventh-century Winchester author, I argue, is quite innovative in the extent to which he pushes the rhetoric and imagery of an utterly unnatural sea.⁴ For all of these authors,

⁴ In other circumstances, this final episode would warrant a chapter on its own; the author's interest in the study of second causes could bear fruitful comparison with the writings of Adelard, among others. Moreover, further study of Winchester's post-Conquest history might shed light on the anonymous hagiographers' networks and affiliations, and provide clues to his identity.

the sea is full of wonder, in its known expressions of wind and wave, or in its otherwise impossible elemental transmutation, and for that, it is the perfect space for musing on the miraculous and natural alike.

The fourth chapter shifts from the marvelous vastness of the sea to the foundational borders of rivers. Using methods reminiscent of those in Chapter 2, I begin with Blair's findings that English place-names reflect a distinctly Anglo-Saxon interest in their surrounding topographies.⁵ Bearing this environmental awareness in mind, I begin with Ceolfrid's famous departure scene in the Anonymous *vita Ceolfridi* (*AVC*). The eighth-century hagiographer presents Ceolfrid's highly dramatic crossing of the River Wear (a journey of .04 nautical miles, about 75 meters) but almost entirely disregards his voyage across the English Channel, from which the abbot barely escapes with his life.⁶ Using this contrast as a touchstone, I survey the riverine narratives in eighth-century accounts of missionaries and pilgrims. In Bede's *HE*, English rivers are powerful sites of monastic foundation, and form topographical records of sacramental commemoration. The same holds true abroad, but to devastating effects for the missionary martyrs Hewald the Black and Hewald the White.

Willibald's *vita Bonifatii* narrates the saint's missionary departure from the Thames, martyrdom on the Boarne, and translatio on the Rhine. Recent research on early medieval economies in Frisia and Francia provides a better sense of the environment through which Boniface navigated; an interdisciplinary approach suggests that even on the Continent, monastic settlements on or near rivers were connected to those waterways in space and communal

⁵ Blair, John. *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 195.

⁶ Here and throughout the dissertation, distance in nautical miles has been calculated using *Open Sea Map: The Free Nautical Chart* at openseamap.org.

memory. Further research on the economic and ecclesiastical foundations of early medieval northwest Europe will surely deepen our understanding of the visual power imposed by churches— and even liturgical rites— on the banks of these nautical highways.

The final chapter is the longest and most detailed. Analyzing the five poems copied into the back flyleaves of Cotton Tiberius B.v. necessitated research on the history of post-Conquest England, an understanding of manuscript production and transmission, as well as a very basic grasp of paleography—all before any research to buttress the study of the poems’ remarkable contents.

Due to its length and textual approach, the chapter is broken up into three sections and followed by three appendices. Part A introduces the manuscript and the poems’ placement within it, then calls for a reassessment of two persistent assumptions about the cult of Nicholas in post-Conquest England: that William the Conqueror had a special affinity for the saint, and that the Normans adopted Nicholas because he was patron saint of sailors. I use primary historical and ecclesiastical sources to prove that William had no discernable interest in Nicholas, that the Normans did not yet have a shared identity with the Italians over whom they ruled, and that Nicholas was not, before 1100, understood as a patron saint of sailors. From there the section reconstructs the muddled foundation histories of Battle Abbey (where the poems are thought to have been copied) and its satellite priory in Exeter, which was dedicated to St Nicholas. Next it surveys the presence of Nicholas materials in English manuscripts and summarizes recent studies of the movements of Nicholas’s cult across England and Northwest Europe.

In part B I examine the content and form of Poems 1-4. While the events of the first three poems took place after the saint’s death in the fourth century, only Poem 4—a versification of Nicholas’s *vita*—provides any information about the saint while he was alive. Because Poem 2 is

the most expressly nautical of the first four poems, I read it against prose versions of the same legend from other English manuscripts. Close examination shows that the place of greatest divergence among each version is the voyage scene; the nautical journey seems to have offered the prose authors and versifiers the greatest opportunity for modification. Part B concludes with the claim that each of the four versified poems imagines a Nicholas who is deeply entrenched (even posthumously) in the mercantile and maritime milieu of the Mediterranean.

Part C treats Poem 5 on its own for several reasons: it is paleographically distinct from the first four, and seems to have been added to the manuscript at a slightly later date. More importantly, Poem 5 is the first poetic treatment of Nicholas's translation from Myra to Bari—a move performed by a crew of Barese merchants in 1087 and documented by two (opposing) Barese churchmen in 1088. It is one of these prose accounts which was abbreviated, versified, and copied into the back flyleaves of Tiberius almost within a decade. The Tiberius versifier (who need not have been the Tiberius scribe) adapts the story to fit his form by streamlining the narrative and erasing the particularly local Italian details. And again, the scene which provides the most convincing evidence for the poem's source is a nautical scene. Source studies of Poems 2 and 5 confirm that stories about seafaring did matter to Anglo-Latin hagiographers, and suggest that this collection of poetry is the first English manuscript witness of St Nicholas's becoming a patron saint of sailors. I close the chapter with the dissertation's most important finding: that Poem 5 of Tiberius B.v is the first versification of Nicholas's *translatio* in England.

CHAPTER 2: CUTHBERT AND GUTHLAC IN THE ENGLISH ARCHIPELAGO

Like the Desert Fathers who inspired them, the seventh-century English saints Cuthbert and Guthlac practiced solitary contemplation and performed miraculous deeds. Yet their hagiographers describe the holy landscapes of their saints by emphasizing, rather than erasing, the topographical distinctions unique to their archipelagic environs. Bede and Felix construe the atmospheric characteristics of each saint's *insula* as particularly aqueous; in both works, boats are crucial vessels by which island hermits can interact with these ecosystems, whose elemental hybridity is a direct expression of the divine, and which is best perceived on, in, or along the eastern English archipelago.

Written only a few decades after East Anglians buried their king's royal treasure in a ninety-foot, clinker-built ship at Sutton Hoo, these prose hagiographies suggest that boats were valuable to more than the secularly powerful. It is now conceivable that, even as members of the religious elect, the authors of these stories might have been quite familiar with the humble "raft," "fisherman's skiff," and "little boat" that bore temporal sustenance and divine transcendence to their subjects.

The first desert hermit hagiography is the *Life of St Antony*, written in Greek by Athanasius of Alexandria (d 362) and translated into Latin by Evagrius of Constantinople (d 380). Saint Jerome knew both versions, and it is through his writings, likely carried to Jarrow from Rome by Benedict Biscop, that Bede had access to these early texts. Within one generation, Sulpicius Severus of Aquitaine had emphasized the contemplative, though not as arid, life of Martin of Tours in the *Life of St Martin*. The desert hermit hagiography developed its own genre-

specific components like demonic trials, threatening environments, and the depiction of the ascetic's temporal survival with assistance from visiting monks; each of these had an almost immediate impact on the continental treatment of local hermit-saints. The genre was also highly influential on Irish authors like Adomnán, who wrote the *Life of St Columba* around the same time that the anonymous Lindisfarne monk wrote the first prose *Life of St Cuthbert* (ca. 700). This chapter examines two English interpretations of and interventions in the desert-hermit hagiographical tradition: Bede's Prose *Vita Cuthberti*, based on the anonymous version of *Vita Cuthberti*, and Felix's *Vita Guthlaci*.⁷

Many scholars have written about ways in which Insular authors reimagined their archipelagic landscape to accommodate and comment on the desert setting of this ancient literary tradition. And although most of these studies articulate specific claims about early Insular authors and their conceptions of the sea, they neglect the crucial link connecting the monks to their aqueous surroundings: the boats they took across them.⁸

Like the Desert Fathers, Cuthbert and Guthlac practice solitary contemplation, perform miraculous deeds, and engage their environments beyond (rhetorically, at least) their nearest communities. And while neither Bede nor Felix tries to hide his use of patristic writings, they seem to go out of the way to inscribe their monks in a particularly localized viewshed. These

⁷ See also David Rollason, "Hagiography and politics in Early Northumbria" and Mary Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England" in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, edited by Paul Szarmach, State University of New York, 1996.

⁸ One of the few exceptions is Stefan J. Schusterderer's "Ships and Conquests in Medieval England: Texts and Contexts," in *Comitatus* 45, 2014, pp. 45-64, which explores "a possible relationship between a change of material culture in Britain during the Germanic invasions in the fifth and sixth century and the use of specific ship terminology in Old English" (45).

Anglo-Saxon hagiographers distinguished their holy landscapes from those of the Desert Fathers by emphasizing, not erasing, their topographical distinctions. Instead of neglecting environmental elements so different from the arid deserts of the first hermits, Bede and Felix describe the distinctively archipelagic, and even aqueous, characteristics of each saint's *insula* – Cuthbert's Inner Farne and Guthlac's Fenland isle of Crowland. This archipelagic characterization has some obvious effects on the narrative, of course: the reader expects to see otters instead of camels, for example. But some differences are less obvious: lower atmospheric density, for instance, makes visibility in the islands of Britain worse than it is in the deserts of the Near East, and even without understanding the meteorological foundations of this distinction, Bede and Felix accommodate the unpredictable nature of archipelagic visibility which had not been an issue to their earlier counterparts. In their hagiographies of Cuthbert and Guthlac, Bede and Felix describe boats as the means by which island hermits can more fully interact with their aqueous environments, whose variability they regard as a direct expression of the divine.

Participating with the divinely-hybridized ecologies in which they live demands that the saints assume multiple points of view—literally and figuratively. Noting that scholars have neglected views *from* promontories for the views *of* them, Austin Mason's study of intervisibility of secular and religious sites along the Northumbrian coast during the conversion period shows that Anglo-Saxons considered multiple perspectives when creating or reworking important sites along waterways. Assuming that the anonymous hagiographer, Bede, and Felix participated in a culture that celebrated intervisibility across land and sea, I argue that the boats in the first two *vitae* of Cuthbert and the *Vita Guthlaci* help their authors explore notions of visibility and invisibility unique to the aqueous environments of the Northumbrian coast and Lincolnshire

Fenlands. They also reveal a surprising familiarity with navigation and, in Cuthbert's case, reflect a new conception of sailors as a distinct class of characters.

Recent studies of material culture suggest changing attitudes towards increasingly mobile members of coastal communities between the 6th and 8th centuries. Studying the Insular and Continental shores of the North Sea, Deckers and Tys propose the emergence of “a ‘maritime culture’ characterized by a large degree of overseas mobility and interaction, resulting in a seemingly hybrid material culture.”⁹ They are quick to point out that this “was not fundamentally different in nature from that found inland” except in “certain peculiar characteristics, notably its hybrid, mobile, fluid nature and the central role it affords to interaction between low-status communities.”¹⁰ Coastal regions are more likely to change than inland areas, and they also depend more on exchange among the lower rungs of society. On a more local scale, “[t]he wealthy, mid-seventh century fine-metalworking smith found at Tattershall Thorpe (Lincolnshire), buried on his own, next to the marshland and waterways to the sea, with his tools, a bell, a fine seax and a silk-wrapped amulet, is emblematic of the transition from such ‘outsider’ itinerant artisan/merchants to the vibrant artisan and trading communities of the emporia ports.”¹¹ And remembering that “[p]erception of threat from itinerant ‘outsiders’ is emphasized in the late seventh-century Anglo-Saxon law code of Wihtred, by the obligation on non-local travellers and foreigners to announce themselves with bells or horns, prior to leaving principal

⁹ Pieterjan Deckers and Dries Tys, “Early Medieval Communities around the North Sea: A ‘Maritime Culture.’” *ACE Conference Brussels: The very Beginning of Europe? Early-Medieval Migration and Colonization*, 2012, pp. 81-88 (84).

¹⁰ Deckers and Tys, 84.

¹¹ Loveluck, Christopher. *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, 600-1150*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 208.

roads or trackways to approach settlements,” it is safe to suggest that there was considerable nautical activity around the areas where Cuthbert and Guthlac lived.¹²

If maritime and riverine activity were as prominent as studies of the coast and fenland suggest, then it is reasonable to consult these hagiographies for details about ecclesiasts’ changing attitudes towards boats and navigation—just as it has been appropriate to study them as reflections of political and ecclesiastical change. In this context, Bede enriches two themes introduced by the anonymous author: Cuthbert’s place within the archipelagic gaze of his coastal community, and his relationship to the *fratres navigantes*—the sailing brethren who help sustain his missionary and later eremitic life. Bede reveals the importance of boats to this new, Northumbrian hagiography.

Although Guthlac inhabited the Fens, not the Farnes, Felix suggests that boats and riverine navigation were as vital to this English saint’s life as they were to Cuthbert’s. A Mercian writing only ten or twenty years after Bede, Felix took much from the *Life of St Cuthbert* for his own *Life of St Guthlac*, and further developed the landing-place as an important and transformative site for early English hermits.¹³ Using boats to navigate through land, sea, and even (fictitiously) air, he reveals everyday and extraordinary nautical experiences within a specifically local and maritime ecology. In fact, the nautical perspective is so important that it

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ For a stylistic and structural analysis of the *vita Guthlaci* and its sources, see Sarah Downey’s 2004 dissertation for the University of Toronto: *Intertextuality in the Lives of St Guthlac*.

defines Crowland, which is described as being an island from one point of view, and a peninsula from another.¹⁴ Like Bede, Felix records multiple perspectives of England's holy islescape.

1. Bede's *Vita Cuthberti*

Bede's *Vita Cuthberti* (*VC*) introduces both the nautical perspective and the *fratres nauigantes* in the "rafts episode"—a unique invention by Bede in Chapter III. Throughout the chapter he flips back and forth between the northern and southern banks of the Tyne to depict Cuthbert's first miracle among missionary monks on one side and reluctant rustics on the other. Bede contextualizes sanctity in service to those who are in danger, and nowhere is danger more affecting than in Cuthbert's first miracle, on the shore looking out at a storm at sea.

Over ninety miles north of the Humber and nearly sixty miles south of the Tweed, the River Tyne flows eastward for 200 miles across Northern England. Bede opens the episode by placing an un-named monastery on the southern bank near the river's mouth. The scene is initially calm, describing monks bringing timber eastward along the river by raft.¹⁵ Yet as they approach land, "a sudden storm of wind, arising from the west, dragged their rafts away and began to carry them off towards the mouth of the river."¹⁶ Although it might seem like being dragged out to sea is more an inconvenience than a threat, Bede is quick to describe the direness

¹⁴ A synopsis of this interdisciplinary emergence can be found in "'...some distance to go': A Critical Survey of Island Studies" by Lisa Fletcher in *The Literature of Postcolonial Islands*. ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, University of Tasmania, 2011, pp. 17-34.

¹⁵ Jarrow was not established until the eighth century, so the identification of the monastery Bede refers to is still only a matter of speculation.

¹⁶ *Vita Ceolfridi*, in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, edited by Bertram Colgrave pp. 162-163: "ecce uentus subito ab occasu tempestiuus assurgens, abripuit rates, atque ad hostium fluminis trahere coepit."

of the situation in terms of the nautical rescue mission that follows. As soon as the monks on land see what happened, they “launched some boats on the river and attempted to help those who were toiling on the rafts, but they were overcome by the force of the river and the violence of the winds and could do nothing.”¹⁷ The work of the would-be rescuers is urgent, and, even allowing for fourteen centuries of change, a quick glance at wreck records of Tynemouth suggests that this is likely no embellishment on Bede’s part.¹⁸ While he tells us that he heard the story from a fellow monk, Bede might well have witnessed something like this scene with his own eyes during his time at Jarrow.¹⁹

Bede’s use of *ratīs* to describe the timber rafts and *navicula* to denote the rescue boats does more than distinguish the two sets of vessels and their occupants. Although early medieval rafts, “which were used as ferries, have been found in Sweden...accompanied by a logboat to form a ‘pool’ of boats which could be used to transport different types of loads,” no such material remains have been found in the British Isles.²⁰ McGrail reminds us that rafts would have been used at sea only in warmer climates, since those on board would have no protection from

¹⁷ VC, 162-163: “emissis in fluuio nauiculis, eos qui in ratibus laborabant adiuuare nitebantur, sed ui fluminis ac uentorum uiolentia superati nequaquam ualebant.”

¹⁸ Since the 14th century, nearly 400 wrecks have been documented near Tynemouth. See the searchable database of the National Record of the Historic Environment: www.pastscape.org.uk.

¹⁹ When it was established, Jarrow “stood right on the river edge” at the mouth of the Tyne. Petts, David. “Coastal Landscapes and Early Christianity in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.” *Estonian Journal of Archaeology*, 2009, 13, 2, pp. 79-95 (84).

²⁰ Thier, Katrin. *Old English Sea Terms*. Anglo-Saxon Books, Little Downham, UK, 2014, pp. 56-57.

the cold wind and waves.²¹ *Ratis* (and the more specific *pontonium*) is glossed as *flyte* in the Erfurt and Cleopatra glossaries and *scip(u)* in the Antwerp Glossary. Otherwise, it seems to be absent from other Anglo-Latin texts outside of Bede's prose *vita Cuthberti*.²² As Thier observes, *ratis* "became more general [for a boat] in sense during the second half of the first millenium"—and the *vita Guthlaci* is evidence of this.²³ *Ratis* is sometimes glossed as *flyte*, which otherwise corresponds to *pontonium*. The Old English *flyte* kept a specific meaning in the vernacular, which is witnessed even by other usages. The imagery of a light vessel's shallow draft is preserved, for instance, in the secondary meaning, "skimings of milk, that is, cream..."²⁴

Pontonium, which is responsible for our current *punt*, likewise resisted generalization: "the Latin word *ponto*, from which the Germaninc word was borrowed, stresses the boat's function of 'bridging' (or crossing) water, [rather than denoting] any particular kind of construction."²⁵ Although moderns consider punts to be "different kinds of flat-bottomed inland craft as well as a variety of round-hulled ships often used as lighters on the coast," the Latin *ponto* "denot[ed] a type of ferry or a pontoon, that is a floating platform which can be used for constructing bridges or for similar purposes."²⁶ While other small vessels were described by

²¹ McGrail, Sean. *Ancient Boats in North-West Europe: The Archaeology of Water Transport to AD 1500*. Longman Archaeology Series, Routledge, 1998, p 5.

²² Thier, 57, 101.

²³ Thier, 57, 101.

²⁴ "flyte 2." *Dictionary of Old English: A to H Online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al., Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016.

²⁵ Thier, 92.

²⁶ Thier, 91.

their physical characteristics (*musculus* was glossed as *sceortscip*), the *pontonium* was described according to its function.

Whether they were punted or rowed, these rafts would have had no hulls to speak of, making them difficult to manoeuvre and leaving their handlers at the mercy of the elements.²⁷ Moreover, they were probably quite small; of the three early medieval log rafts remaining in the archaeological record, the largest one measured 5x1.2 meters—none of them would have been large enough to carry timber for anything more than a campfire.²⁸ If they were meant to be ferries, they might have undertaken only short-distance hauls along a familiar riverine course.²⁹ In either case, Bede's reference of transporting goods on the Tyne suggests a very practical, if even mundane place that boating held in the lives of monks and their surrounding communities.³⁰ It also suggests that being out to sea was an issue of life or death.

One distinction between *ratis* and *navicula* is that only the latter offers conceptual as well as concrete definitions. The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* notes that *navicula* can refer literally to a “small boat” and figuratively to “the Church as Saint Peter's

²⁷ The likelihood of their being so is quite slim.

²⁸ “Two rafts were found in Sweden; the other in Germany. The contemporary editor of a nineteenth-century diary recorded that part of what might have been a medieval raft was found in Lincolnshire, but “these timbers cannot now be traced” (McGrail, 54).

²⁹ Indeed, the “earliest documented use of log rafts in northwest Europe is in Roman times...[when] Celtic tribes used them to cross rivers, and there was a specialised group of *ratiarii* in the Roman world who moved rafts of timber downstream and operated ferries” (McGrail, 54). There is also some linguistic evidence that the term *ratis* referred to ferries.

³⁰ For an example of recent work on medieval navigation, see Fiona Edmonds's “Barrier or Unifying Feature? Defining the Nature of Early Medieval Water Transport in the North-West” in *Waterways and Canal-Building in Medieval England*, ed. John Blair, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.17-34.

ship” or even “the nave of a church.”³¹ The two kinds of vessels differ in their literal and metaphorical functions; Bede’s use of both suggests that the monks—either bringing cargo down river (the Tyne flows west to east) or attempting to rescue their storm-tossed brethren—are at the very least familiar with basic boat styles and boating skills. This proficiency should not be taken for granted, since it provides useful insight into the daily workings of a community that depended on the waterways. And Bede, having spent so much of his own life observing, recording, and calculating the tides, might well have understood how perilous the mouth of the Tyne could be to those who could not recover control from sudden currents and winds.³²

The would-be rescuers, looking first to the landing-place and then to the sea, are spurred to immediate action. Nevertheless, they too are unable to navigate through the storm, and “while the rafts were drifting out to sea, they left the monastery and, gathering on the nearest rock, they knelt down interceding with God on behalf of those whom they perceived to be even now in imminent risk of death.”³³ They continue to look out to sea, keeping their eyes on the rafts as

³¹ In the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, for instance, “the translator renders Latin *naucula* as ‘little ship’ but adds a more specific local word [cuopel] as an alternative.” Pairing “in lytlum scipe” with “in cuople” for Matthew 8:23 is a fascinating puzzle for those interested in the sustained relationship between Ireland and Northumbria. The *cuople* is the literary ancestor of *coble*, which designates an English or Scottish ship with “fundamental differences from early medieval Germanic shipbuilding.” It is conceivable, then, “that the boat was introduced by the Irish mission in Northumbria and adapted there under the influence of Germanic shipbuilding.” This hypothesis is troubled, though, by the fact that the glossator also attached *floege*, connoting a Scandinavian boat type, to *naucula* in John 6:22” (Thier, 49).

³² See Bede’s calculation of tides in *De temporum ratione*, edited by Charles W. Jones in *Beda opera didascalia* 2, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 123B, Turnhout, Brepols, 1997. For English translation, see Chapter 29, “On the harmony of the Moon and the Sea” of Faith Wallis’s *The Reckoning of Time*, Liverpool University Press, 1999.

³³ *VC*, 162-163: “Egressi nanque de monasterio, et labentibus in oceanum ratibus collecti in proxima obice flectebant genua, supplicantes Domino pro his quos in tantum mortis discrimen iamiamque irruere cernebant.”

they pray for divine help. The narrative pace slows here while Bede explains that the monks' prayers are left unanswered so that Cuthbert, on the other bank of the river amid a hollering crowd, can perform his first miracle. Like many of his subsequent miracles, this episode emphasizes his place not only within a seascape, but also explicitly, and vitally, within the view of mariners.

To Bede and his anonymous source, the view of mariners was central to the construction of Cuthbert's multifocal environment. Multiple perspectives highlight both the quotidian use of boats and the divine presence of an all-elemental God; looking out to sea, looking from the sea, and traveling on the sea are all acts through which these men have access to the divine. Moreover, the viewshed of the farnes renders a seascape that is neither desolate nor marginal, but populated by human activity and divine presence. And for the anonymous author and Bede, the maritime monks, often called *fratres navigantes*, create a new class of characters to add to the desert island hagiographical tradition.

Bede moves quickly among the different perspectives of this nautical disaster, rotating among the monks on the north bank, the "rustics" on the south bank, and the rafts drifting out to sea. Uniting two conflicting perspectives (literally, the points from which they view the rafts and figuratively, from their impression of the event), Bede writes that the "crowd of common people," with Cuthbert among them, "were watching the rafts on which the monks were sadly gazing."³⁴ While the scene is rendered through the eyes of the shoreline watchers on both sides of the river, time is measured by space, as the drifting rafts by now had been "carried so far out

³⁴ *VC*, 162-163: "Stabat enim in altera amnis ripa uulgaris turba non modica, in qua stabat et ipse. Quae cum aspectantibus cum tristitia monachis raptas porro per mare cerneret rates..."

to sea that they looked like five tiny birds riding on the waves.”³⁵ Bede’s simile injects the scene with pathos that portrays the rowdy crowd opposite the fearful monks as especially hostile and boorish onlookers. After all, this is a far cry from the boat-as-bird metaphor we see in *Beowulf*.³⁶ Instead of fiercely surging across the waves, these little rafts flutter off into the distance, beyond the help and nearly beyond the sight of others.

Cuthbert speaks out from among the crowd to indict both their speech, and their vision: “what are you doing, cursing those whom you see being carried away even now to destruction?”³⁷ When they reply that the monks had undone their old religion, and that no one knew how to worship in the new way, Cuthbert answers by showing rather than telling, restoring their perspective by inviting their gaze from the horizon across the sea to the land under his feet. His prayer incites a series of turns—by the people, and by their environmental surroundings: “he knelt down to pray to God, bending his head to the ground, and immediately the violent wind turned about and bore the rafts safe and sound to land, amid the rejoicings of those who were guiding them, and left them in a convenient place near the monastery itself.”³⁸ In this posture of prayer he limits his own view, seeing nothing but the ground. However, he is now the pictorial

³⁵ *VC*, 162-163: Quae cum aspectatibus cum tristitia monachis raptas porro per mare cerneret rates, adeo ut quasi quinque aues paruulae...”

³⁶ “For the comparison of the rafts with birds cf. *Beowulf*, l.218. “flota...fugle gelicost.” (Colgrave, *VC*, 343). See also the illustration for Psalm 103 of the 9th century Utrecht Psalter, which shows two boats with bird-head stems floating on the waves, with sea birds floating in the background (Thier has a sketch of this on p. 105).

³⁷ *VC*, 162-163: “Quid agitis inquires fratres, maledicentes his quos in loetum iam trahi uidetis?”

³⁸ *VC*, 164-165: “Quo accepto responso, ipse oraturus Dominum genua flexit, caput in terram declinavit, statimque retorta uis uentorum, rates cum his qui duce-monasterium in loco oportuno deposuit.”

crux of the scene, becoming the axis around which his audience (now subdued), the winds (now from the east), the rafts (now controlled), and the monks (now rejoicing) have turned. If God speaks to men through their maritime environment, men speak back by nautical endeavor.

Bede positions Cuthbert's solitary devotion within full view of both well-intentioned monks and misguided "rustics;" that he does so in an especially nautical and navigational context reflects the centrality of waterways to Northumbrian experience. Indeed, I suggest that Bede marks this moment as the watershed experience for Cuthbert's choice to seek a holy life—one that, like those of other hermits, depends largely on establishing and maintaining coenobitic networks. It is true that, in the next chapter, Cuthbert returned the flock of sheep he was watching "and decided to seek a monastery" after he is visited by the spirit of Aidan.³⁹ But the rafts episode, as his first miracle (and one of Bede's most significant contributions to the Anonymous *vita Cuthberti*), provides vital maritime context for this spriritual visit: Aidan had founded Lindisfarne when he came from Iona to convert Northumbria; he had also spent time during Lent on Inner Farne. Only after Cuthbert learns of his visitor's identity—that Aidan had been the "bishop of the church at Lindisfarne"—does he decide to exchange his ovine flock for a human one. Even before he joins a monastery, Cuthbert perceives the monastic world as deeply immersed in his coastal surroundings.

Cuthbert relies heavily on monks like those on the Tyne—well-intentioned but occasionally overwhelmed by their maritime duties—once he reaches his island hermitage of

³⁹ *VC*, 166-167: "Haec dicens uir Domini Cuthbertus, non parum corda pastorum ad reuerentiam diuinae laudationis accendit, agnouitque mane facto antisitem Lindisfarnensis aecclesiae Aidanum magnae utique uirtutis uirum, per id temporis quo uiderat raptum de corpore, coelestia regna petisse, ac statim commendans suis pecora quae pascebat dominis, monasterium petere dreuit"

Inner Farne, and some of his most memorable miracles involve “rustics” like those who are on the wrong side of the river. As scholars of Insular hagiography become more interdisciplinary, we begin to see that its authors and scribes in medieval England might have had more than a “little technical knowledge of actual seafaring” after all.⁴⁰ As I hope this section proves, it is possible to study the “figural dimensions of Anglo-Saxon maritime culture” while assuming with some confidence that Anglo-Saxons did take part in the literal dimensions as well.⁴¹

The “rafts” episode is a pivotal scene in another way; it emphasizes a set of stock characters particular to English eremitical hagiography—the sailing brethren. Although the anonymous author of Cuthbert’s *vita* is the first to employ the term *fratres nauigantes* and does so more often than Bede, this episode creates a narrative setting for the maritime monks as a new set of formulaic figures for this specific genre. Nor does this suggest that the anonymous author, Bede, and Felix are the first to write about monks who sail—Irish hagiographers were masters of maritime narratives: Aidan, Columba, and Brendan are specifically sea-faring saints.

However, the English topos of monks as both familiar with nautical vessels and sometimes incapable of commanding them marks the monastic maritime experience as drastically different from that of their Irish counterparts. This is not to suggest that the English monks should have been able to manage their vessels in extraordinarily inclement weather, but in the context of their other maritime mistakes—they often rowed to Inner Farne to help Cuthbert

⁴⁰ Klein, Stacy S. “Navigating the Anglo-Saxon Seas.” *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, edited by Stacy S. Klein et al, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014, pp.1-20 (14).

⁴¹ Klein, 14.

but soon forgot, or disobeyed, his requests—the *fratres nauigantes* show a surprisingly different learning curve from the more experienced, and even expert, Irish *peregrini*.

By Chapter X of Bede's *VC*, Cuthbert's fame as a monk is so well-known that Abbess Æbbe asks him to visit her at Coldingham. Thirty miles northeast of Melrose, "[t]he monastic center of Coldingham lies a quarter of a mile west of the sea, where the shore offers little more than a stretch of open beach..."⁴² Traveling from Melrose, Cuthbert surely came to Coldingham by land—perhaps a blessing since the “small harbor at nearby Saint Abbs, formerly known as Coldingham Shore” offered only a “shingly beach” on which to disembark.⁴³ The anonymous author and Bede maintain generic expectations by excluding any details of the journey to Æbbe's monastery, focusing the narrative on the contemplative, rather than active, elements of an itinerant monk.⁴⁴ But this exclusion also ignores the hair-raising details of the cliffs that Cuthbert had to climb down: a geophysical survey taken in 2011 “tentatively” identifies a site just “west of the [medieval] church” on Kirk Hill “as the location of St Æbbe's monastery mentioned by Bede,” and a glance at the current topography shows almost 20 meters of craggy cliffs below.⁴⁵ Immersion in the sea, which for Bede was Cuthbert's most important act at this monastery, was

⁴² Lemont Dobson, “Time, Travel and Political Communities: Transportation and Travel Routs in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Northumbria” in *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe*, ed. Elizabeth Ragan. Issue 8, June 2005 NPN.

⁴³ Dobson, 2005.

⁴⁴ The suggested site of the monastery is now known as "Old Melrose." Currently, "Melrose Abbey" refers to a monastery lying due west 1.5 miles, which was founded by Cistercians in the 12th century. As it stands, Old Melrose is over 35 miles due west of the coast and over 25 miles (as the crow flies) to the mouth of the Tweed.

⁴⁵ See “St Abb's Head Geophysical Survey” on *Canmore: National Record of the Historic Environment*. canmore.org.uk/event/959725

meant to be performed in secrecy and darkness.⁴⁶ Cuthbert engaged in this ascetic practice of immersion while the other monks slept. Climbing down the formidable cliffs above the sea, Cuthbert walked “into the deep water until the swelling waves rose as far as his neck and arms, [and] spent the dark hours of the night watching and singing praises to the sound of the waves.”⁴⁷ Even from the little refuge offered by the beach, the sea would have been turbulent enough to make standing up in it quite arduous.

With his feet in the wet sand and his body in the sea, Cuthbert is actually participating in both, not excluded from either; this is not, strictly speaking, a liminal moment. He is not between earth and sea, or earthly and divine, but participating in each at the same time. His body becomes an island—surrounded by the sea, and rooted to the land. When day breaks and his prayers are over, he returns to the shore and is followed by otters, who warm him and return to their sea-dens after receiving his blessing. Inhabiting both land and sea and uniting complementary viewpoints, he is a figure of elemental transcendence and perspectival hybridity. Again, Cuthbert becomes the focal point of opposing litoral perspectives: the gaze from the spying monk on land and the view beyond the divinely-inspired otters at sea.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Colin Ireland reminds us that Bede also describes Drythelm’s immersion in Melrose, where Cuthbert and the half-Irish King Aldfrith had spent many years. Bede’s source for Drythelm is Haemgis, who lived as a hermit in Ireland. See his “Penance and Prayer in Water: An Irish Practice in Northumbrian Hagiography,” in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 34, Winter 1997, pp. 51-66.

⁴⁷ *VC*, 186-187: “[i]ngressusque altitudinem maris, donec ad collum usque et brachia undatens assurgeret, perungiles undisonis in laudibus tenebras noctis exegit...”

⁴⁸ I do not mean to suggest that the author is imagining the otters’ visual experience, but rather that he is inviting his audience to imagine the point of view from the sea (as a person, not an otter, might).

In his later travels to Pictland and Coquet, Cuthbert again adjusts the maritime views of others. En route to the northern territories of the Niduari Picts, he and two sailors (*nautis*) become stranded on the shore of Fife.⁴⁹ Presuming that they had come northwest over land from Melrose across southern Scotland, it is hard to imagine why they would have taken a boat to the Firth of Forth.⁵⁰ That this miracle occurs on the shore, suggests the importance of the nautical part of the journey and increases the tension and awareness of their being stranded in foreign territory. With the storm preventing them from boarding their boat, Cuthbert denounces their torpor as acutely at odds with the ferocity of their turbulent surroundings: “Why, I ask, do we remain inactive and slothful and not seek some way of safety in every direction? Lo! the land is grim with snow and the sky with clouds; the heavens rage with adverse winds and the sea with waves.”⁵¹ The busy, billowing atmosphere is thrice mirrored: the hyperactive sky, land, and sea all echo one another. In the midst of this combustion, Bede takes the opportunity to expand the anonymous author’s description of them as figural reflections of Moses and the Israelites. Leading them to the south-facing shore on the north side of the Firth (that is, Fife, not Lothian), “on which he was accustomed to spend the night in prayer,” Cuthbert finds dolphin’s flesh that has been perfectly prepared for them. As he foretold, the skies cleared on the fourth

⁴⁹ For a survey of the disputes surrounding the location of the Niduari Picts and compelling (if dense) argument for their location as north of the Firth of Forth, see Andrew Breeze, “St Cuthbert, Bede, and the Niduari Picts” in *Northern History*, XL: 2, September 2003, pp. 365-368.

⁵⁰ They would have had to travel 30 miles east to the mouth of the Tweed, then sailed or rowed north and west along the coast to have come back into the Firth.

⁵¹ *VC*, 192-193: “Quid rogo tanta ignavia torpemus, et non quacunq̃ue iter salutis inquirimus? En tellus niuib̃us, nebulis coelom horrescit, aer flatibus, aduersis furit fluctibus equor...”

day and “the promised calm arrived to bring them to their own country with favorable breezes.”⁵² For Cuthbert, this is a teaching opportunity; being barred from travelling by ship gives him the chance to instruct his fellow travellers in trusting in God. Only once their belief is tested (and proved) can they depart for home.

Not all of Cuthbert’s journeys take him to a place where Bede can emphasize the maritime perspective (his trips to Carlisle, for instance), so those that do are best considered together. After moving to Inner Farne in 676, Cuthbert’s first trip away from the hermitage is to visit Æthelfled, Abbess of Whitby, at Coquet Island. Twenty miles nearly due south of Inner Farne and over seventy miles north of Whitby, Coquet was “famous for its companies of monks”—a reminder that an island need not be isolated, forgotten, nor hidden from view and memory despite its isolation from the mainland.⁵³ And it must have been especially crowded, since King Ecgfrith, Bishop Trumwine, and “many other religious and powerful men” were there to persuade Cuthbert to take up the bishop’s staff.⁵⁴ Like many others along the coasts of the North and Irish Seas, it was an island known for its monastic inhabitants and secular ties. And

⁵² *VC*, 194-195: “promisa secuta est, quae illos secundis flatius patriam referret...” And since it was January, the unfavorable breezes could have been especially biting.

⁵³ Like Inner Farne and Lindisfarne, Coquet Island continued to play an important role in the ecclesiastical and political landscape of the area. See entry for monument number 7979 on pastscape.org.uk for a brief synopsis of buildings and uses until the 19th century.

⁵⁴ He was ordained Bishop in 684. “When Tunberht was deposed in 684, Cuthbert was elected to the bishopric of Hexham, but because Cuthbert preferred to rule over Lindisfarne, he exchanged sees with Eata. Meanwhile, Wilfrid was recalled to Deira by Aldfrith in 686 and soon returned to his principal monasteries.” A. Joseph McMullen, “Rewriting the Ecclesiastical Landscape of Early Medieval Northumbria in the Lives of Cuthbert,” *Anglo-Saxon England*, 43, 2014, pp. 57-98 (91).

considering the quickly-shifting boundaries of ecclesiastical and secular powers, these outposts may have been seen as bastions of stability.

So it is this world of islands that Cuthbert invokes when Æthelfled asks who her brother's successor will be. In the anonymous *vita* (*AVC*), Cuthbert encourages her to keep the question out of her mind, since its answer is unknowable: "Oh handmaiden of God, why should you wonder though he be on some island beyond the sea?"⁵⁵ Of course, he is imbedding his answer here, since the political (and familial) situation is such a delicate one. The person he speaks of as "beyond the sea" is Aldfreth, who was essentially in exile on Iona from his half-brother Ecgbert. Bede changes Cuthbert's tone to reflect a more positive perspective of the northern islands: "You see how this great and spacious sea abounds in islands? It is easy for God to provide from any of these a man to place over the kingdom of the English."⁵⁶ The answer to both is inscribed in the archipelagic seascape of the north Atlantic. But where the anonymous author suggests that looking to the sea was futile, painting Iona as irretrievably alien and distant, Bede counsels that looking to the sea will acquaint Æthelfled with God's bounty, offering a more optimistic, though still delphic, response. Bede suggests that, for monks and princesses alike, the maritime perspective is vital to the perception of God's abundance, and the hope of political change.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Anonymous Vita Cuthberti*, in Colgrave's *Two Lives. AVC*, pp. 104-105: "O serua Dei, quid miraris licet sit in aliqua insula super hoc mare?"

⁵⁶ *VC*, 236-237: "Cernis hoc mare magnum et spaciosum quot abundet insulis? Facile est Deo de aliqua harum sibi prouidere quem regno praeficiat anglorum"

⁵⁷ This may be an example of Irish influence. Kay Muhr finds that "the use of the sea...in Irish religious literature is often positive, reflecting not chaos and desolation but vastness and depth." "Water Imagery in Early Irish," *Celtica*. 1999, p. 203.

Cuthbert's move to Inner Farne was the ultimate act of restricting his own sight while remaining a central figure in the sight of others. As Williamson and Mason point out, Inner Farne is far more visible, though less accessible, than Lindisfarne.⁵⁸ Unlike Lindisfarne, Inner Farne is a proper island; Bede describes it as “in the middle of the sea” and “shut in on the landward side by very deep water and on the seaward side by the boundless ocean.”⁵⁹ And although Bede knew that Aidan had regularly retreated to Farne, he does not correct his source's suggestion that no one had lived there before.⁶⁰ Similarly, he excludes his knowledge that Eadbert spent Lent at Inner Farne during his episcopate at Lindisfarne, and that Æthelwald succeeded Cuthbert on Farne.⁶¹ These exclusions are especially interesting because of how these maritime spaces were actually used. Petts writes that the Farne Islands, “were not only retreats; they were also probably key navigational points” and were amidst “the main deep-water coastal shipping lane.”⁶² In fact, the “Farne beacon was not only used to steer traffic away from dangerous rocks, but also

⁵⁸ Mason, Austin. *A Tomb with a View: Burial Rites and the Landscape of Anglo-Saxon Conversion*. Boston College, 2012. PhD Dissertation, p. 30.

⁵⁹ *VC*, 214-215: “medio in mare posita”; “ad eorum secreta, et hinc altissimo, et inde infinito clauditur oceano.”

⁶⁰ *AVC*, 96-97: “almost no one could remain alone for any length of time on account of the various illusions caused by devils (Ubi prius pene nullus potuit solus propter uarias demonum fantasias aliquod spatium manere...)” But compare Bede: “No one had been able to dwell alone undisturbed upon this island before Cuthbert the servant of the Lord, on account of the phantoms of demons who dwelt there...(Nullus hanc facile ante famulum Domini Cuthbertum solus ualebat inhabitare colonus, propter uidelicet demorantium ibi phantasias demonum).” (*VC*, 214-215).

⁶¹ In *HE* IV.xxx and V.i. See also Eadberht 3 in *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* database: www.pase.ac.uk

⁶² Petts, 86.

provided a key point by which to navigate some approaches to the harbour on Holy Island.”⁶³

The fact is that Inner Farne was inhabited by monks intermittently until the 13th century, when the Convent of Durham determined that two hermits should always be present there.⁶⁴

Well aware that “despite the rhetoric of isolation and retreat, ascetic practice took place under the gaze of kings, nobles, travellers, traders, and sailors,” Bede expands the anonymous author’s description of Cuthbert’s construction on Inner Farne.⁶⁵ Both describe two separate places on the tiny island of Inner Farne, whose perimeter is less than one mile. One consists of an oratory and a separate building for general use, both surrounded by a wall; the other consists of a large guest house, down on the shore where the visitors are expected to land. To the north side of this first site, Cuthbert enlisted the help of his sailing brethren to build a latrine.⁶⁶ They left the task unfinished (without explanation in the anonymous version and because of a memory lapse in

⁶³ Petts, 86.

⁶⁴ “From the time of Cuthbert, Farne become a place of resort to monks of Lindisfarne and was used by a succession of hermits. Soon after the death of Bartholomew the Convent of Durham determined that Farne be inhabited by two monks of their body.”
www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=8302

⁶⁵ The earlier *vita* describes Cuthbert digging down one cubit into the earth to make a small space to dwell in, and then building a wall a cubit above that. Within these walls, it seems, he built “some little dwelling-places from which he could see nothing except the heavens above (de domunculas, de quibus nisi sursum coelum uidere nihil potuit)” (*AVC*, 96-97). Bede writes that Cuthbert builds a “structure (aedifici(o))” which is “almost round (pene rotundum)” and measuring about eighty feet across (*VC*, 216-217). He further expands the anonymous account by describing a concentric construction which directs Cuthbert’s thoughts to heaven, and the incorporation of two other buildings—the oratory and the building for common uses—into Cuthbert’s plan (216-217).

⁶⁶ Herity finds Irish analogues to the general layout of Inner Farne, its *necessarium*, and cross-slabs in “Early Irish Hermitages in the Light of the Lives of Cuthbert” in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, edited by Gerald Bonner, David W. Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe. Boydell and Brewer, 1989, pp. 45-64.

Bede), but the next morning, “they saw that the night tide had carried up some timber of the required length, and had placed it over the very spot whereon it was to be set for the building.”⁶⁷ God had inspired the “insensible elements” to do what the maritime monks did not, and they felt ashamed of their sloth and disobedience.⁶⁸ Despite their slowness to understand Cuthbert’s teachings, they are nevertheless central to his life as a hermit. whose dependence on them is most visible at the landing-place in the final chapters.

Yet Bede reveals a distinction between maritime landings, which come to reveal the sailing brethren’s devotion to Cuthbert, and maritime departures, which emphasize boarding as a test of understanding or obedience. The “dolphin episode” is one of three moments in which delayed departures make boats destinations unto themselves—initially unreachable because of sloth, ignorance, or disobedience. Chapter XXXVI opens by emphasizing Cuthbert’s eagerness to return to the hermit’s life after two years as a bishop. Bearing with some grace his first set of visitors at Inner Farne, he declared that he was eager to return to his oratory, and gave them a goose to cook before their departure. This particular instruction might not be as arbitrary as it seems. In “The Food Economies of the Atlantic Island Monasteries,” Murray, McCormick, and Plunkett recall that the rules for Tallaght monastery designated venison and pork as the only meats to be eaten by the monks, and that “other meat, presumably that of domesticates, [was] reserved for guests.”⁶⁹ Their analysis of “Archaeo-Environmental Evidence” at Iona and

⁶⁷ *VC*, 226-227: “et exurgentes mane uiderunt quia nocturnus oceani estus lignum memorate longitudinis attulit, et in ipso insuper loco deposuit, ubi in aedificium despuer erat imponendum...”

⁶⁸ *VC*, 226-227: “insensibile elementum.”

⁶⁹ “Both dolphin and seal were considered by the church to be fish and therefore permitted when meat was otherwise prohibited. An early Irish penitential attributed to Adomnán, *Canones*

Illaunloughan revealed local seabirds as a considerable source of food.⁷⁰ Since the goose was already hanging on the wall, it is not unreasonable to think that Cuthbert himself had procured it for his guests (perhaps even learning from his trip to Pictland, for which he had not taken proper provisions). When he left their company for his isolated oratory, they disobeyed him and tried to board their ship without cooking the goose, and “a fierce tempest arose and entirely prevented them from setting sail.”⁷¹ They were stranded on the island for a week, at the end of which Cuthbert emerged to explain their transgression. He insisted that cooking the goose would calm the sea, and as soon as they cooked it, “the waves of the sea ceased from their fury and the winds fell.”⁷² The ship, as had been the case on the journey to Pictland (the first of the three scenes featuring an interrupted departure), was a site forbidden by the monks’ shortcomings, and accessible only after they took instruction from Cuthbert. What follows is a description of being at sea unique to the entire work: “And so when the meal was finished, they saw that the sea was calm and went on board their ship and with favourable winds returned home with feelings both of joy and shame.”⁷³ Bede adds an emotional element to the “favorable breezes” that had brought Cuthbert and his attendants back from Scotland. In this chapter, the monks spend the time on

Adamnani (Bieler 1975), also notes that the eating of dead marine animals washed up on the shore was permitted by the early church.” Emily Murray, Finbar McCormick and Gill Plunkett: “The Food Economies of Atlantic Island Monasteries: The Documentary and Archaeo-Environmental Evidence,” *Environmental Archaeology*, 9, 2004, pp. 179–189.

⁷⁰ See Murray et al, Table 2, p 184.

⁷¹ *VC*, 268-269: “exorta subito tempestas fera omnem eis nauigandi facultatem abstulit”

⁷² *VC*, 268-269: “...eadem hora unda in mari cessantibus uentis suo a feruore quiesceret...”

⁷³ *VC*, 268-271: “Expleta itaque refectione uidentes mare placidum ascenderunt nauem, et secundis flatibus cum gaudio simul et pudore domum remeauerunt.”

board to reflect on their disobedience and God's miracle; the boat is a place of remembrance, as well as a means to transport the lesson learned on one island to the monks of another.

Two years after assuming the bishopric, Cuthbert's final departure from Lindisfarne to Inner Farne marks the third of this set, though Bede's tone this time conveys less admonition than before. Boarding a *nauis*, Cuthbert is interrupted by a monk, asking when he would return. Cuthbert replies, "when you bring my body back here," revealing his knowledge that he will not be buried on Inner Farne, and, perhaps more poignantly, that these are the last words he will speak, and the last footsteps he will take, on Lindisfarne.⁷⁴ This conversation is the last place that Bede speaks for the saint, whose death and burial are preserved in the words of Herefrith, who was present for both. The boarding-scene marks the narrative transition from Bede as historian to Herefrith as witness. These last two departure scenes—both of which display Cuthbert's prophetic powers— contextualize Bede's most explicitly nautical scenes since Chapter III. The pause at his departure betrays Cuthbert's self-awareness, and perhaps betokens some sorrow on what he knew to be his last trip out to sea.

Boats are central to a story that deals with the temptations and trials of a Northumbrian saint whose life bears witness to the nautical and desert elements found in Irish and Continental influences. More than placing his subject in the political and religious milieu of his time, Bede situates Cuthbert squarely in the mundane world of waterway navigation. Moreover, the nautical perspectives Bede invokes argue against Grocock's claim that Bede intentionally excluded landscape description from his prose, since it seems clear that Bede had a very real interest in the ecological surroundings of Northumbria, and even the specific layout of the hermitage on

⁷⁴ *VC*, 270-271: "quando inquit meum corpus huc referetis"

Farne.⁷⁵ Grocock finds that “[t]he monastic ideal Bede wishes to celebrate is an ‘inner life’, not the physical realities of the landscape encountered ‘outside’ the life of the mind and of prayer.”⁷⁶ But from the evidence put forth above, one can sense Bede’s dependence on the physical realities of the archipelagic landscape to actualize the abstract nature of contemplation. Bede emphasizes the maritime perspective to show Cuthbert’s experiencing a nautical life whose contact with the sea provides access to, not an allegory of, inward spirituality.

Here, Bede provides an aural analogue to the visual experience of Cuthbert’s environment. As the narrative of Cuthbert’s death comes to a close, the landing-place on Inner Farne offers an aural analogue to the restricted visibility of the hermit. When Herefrith arrives, he uses a customary landing-signal (probably a bell) to alert the hermit, since the latter cannot see beyond the small hole in his dwelling.⁷⁷ Cuthbert greets him with a sigh, contrasting the visiting monk’s own aural announcement. Knowing that Herefrith is in a hurry (presumably pressed by the tide, or wind, or fading light), the reluctant hermit bids him and the other monks to “get on board your vessel and return home safe and sound” until they return to bury him on

⁷⁵ Grocock, Christopher. “The Sense (or Absence) of Place in Bede.” *The Anglo-Saxons: The World through their Eyes*, ed Owen-Crocker and Schneider. BAR British Series 595, 2014, pp. 23-29.

⁷⁶ “Catherine Clarke comments, ‘Like Bede’s *Life of Cuthbert* and Evagrius’s *Life of St Antony* itself, Felix’s *Life of St Guthlac* is often read as a symbolic, allegorical text in which the exterior transformation of a landscape represents the inner spiritual transformation of the individual’” (Grocock, 28).

⁷⁷ There have been a few studies of landing-places in Irish islands, though none of them shed much light on what this signal might have been. We know that some travellers were required to travel with bells to announce their arrival, and the discovery of the smith in Lindsey suggests that this auditory announcement might have effectively signaled an outsider rather than an arrival; in other words, in heightening awareness of a visitor’s status as “other,” the arrival bell might not have tempered suspicions of newcomers.

Inner Farne.⁷⁸ Next, Cuthbert provides in remarkable specificity a dizzying survey of his tiny hermitage, which sheds light on how his holy, isolated, and highly visible space was used: “Bury me in a tomb near my oratory, on the southern side, opposite the eastern part of the holy cross which I erected there. There is to the north of this same oratory a sarcophagus covered with sod, which the venerable abbot Cudda gave me long ago. Put my body in it, wrapping it in the cloth which you will find in it.”⁷⁹ To topographical features already described, Bede adds particular details of how Cuthbert interacted with his immediate surroundings. The description is not only cartographic in its cardinal and relational details, but also highly personalized in its recollection of Cuthbert’s own memories. In effect, Cuthbert creates an annotated map of Farne, resuming his orienting role and providing his interlocutor with multiple, simultaneous perspectives whose almost gyroscopic effect is reminiscent of the “rafts” episode. Although his own sight is limited, he nevertheless retains the power to instruct the gaze of others.

It might seem natural to be buried where he lived, but Bede takes special care to give us details about a place which is explicitly *not* used as Cuthbert requested—this is the last we hear of the cross he erected, for instance.⁸⁰ As moderns we might fairly imagine this description from

⁷⁸ *VC*, 272-273: “ascendite nauem ac domum salui redite”

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Dr Babcock for his translation of this sentence, which elucidates Bede’s meaning more clearly than Colgrave’s. (pers. com.). “Cum autem Deus suscepit animam meam, sepelire me in hac mansione iuxta oratorium meum ad meridiem contra orientalem plagam sanctae crucis quam ibidem erexi. Est autem ad aquilonalem eiusdem oratorii partem sarcophagum terrae cespite abditum, quod olim mihi Cudda uenerabilis abbas donauit. In hoc corpus meum reponite, inuolentes in sindone quam inuenietis istic” (*VC*, 272-273).

⁸⁰ Based on date and region, the Ruthwell Cross might be a good example of the kind of cross that Cuthbert is said to have placed here. However, his would likely be considerably smaller. See Clayton, “Hermits and the Contemplative Life” for a paragraph describing the “eremitic orientation” of the Ruthwell Cross (154). One eagerly awaits more findings from the crowd-funded Lindisfarne digs led by David Petts, conducted during the summers of 2015-2020.

a bird's-eye view, but even with the directional details mentioned above, to early medievals like Bede and Cuthbert, this description may have been more meaningful from a horizontal perspective. Applying Mason's argument that Northumbrian burials imagined and even privileged the presumed perspective of the dead from their tombs reveals that if Cuthbert's initial request had been granted, his body would lie on the very tip of Farne, looking south east out to the sea. He would have his back to, and perhaps not been seen from, Lindisfarne to the northwest and Bamburg to the west. Ultimately, he envisions his own invisibility—an aporia which would prove unsustainable in the mental map of his Lindisfarne brethren.

Herefrith had been kept from Cuthbert longer than he had intended; a storm had prevented him from returning to Farne until the saint is near death. When Herefrith finally arrives on Inner Farne, he finds Cuthbert not, as he had anticipated, locked away in his oratory to spend his last moments in quiet contemplation. Instead, Cuthbert had hobbled out to the visitors' dwelling which he had built on the landing-place, to be sure that his oncoming *fratres navigantes* can see him.⁸¹ This is one of Bede's most poignant scenes, since it sketches out Cuthbert's fear and loneliness on this tiny island. Here he is not only visible to but also even imagined as one of his sailing brethren. In this moving scene, Cuthbert enacts a total inversion of his final wish to be buried beyond the sight of anyone. Rather, he embodies the holy, archipelagic environment that Bede has constructed around him; indeed, he becomes the center of it.

Open data on the finds, including the early medieval namestone, can be accessed at digventures.com/lindisfarne/ddt/browser.php

⁸¹ Cuthbert "had gone out of his monastery and was sitting in the dwelling in which we used to stay (Ut autem reddita tranquillitate insulam repetiuimus, inuenimus eum suo monasterio egressum sedere in domo in qua nos manere solebamus)" (*VC*, 274-275).

The back and forth between boat, sea, and shore-- the constant pivot between the visible and envisioned, and the maritime and archipelagic environment against which Cuthbert's great battles are fought—is silently and subtly erased in the tender intimacy of Cuthbert's death (though quickly restored). Walking back to Cuthbert's contemplative side of the compound, Herefrith finds him "lying in a corner of his oratory, opposite to the altar" and sits beside him.⁸² That evening, Cuthbert "continued quietly in prayer through a night of watching" and received communion during nightly prayer; he died after "raising his eyes to heaven and stretching out his hands aloft."⁸³ Bede's treatment of Cuthbert's dying moments surely owes something to Adomnán's description of Columba's death. Having spoken his final words reclining in his own lodging, the dying Columba "rose in haste and went to the church and, running, entered in advance of the others, alone" as soon as he heard the "beaten bell."⁸⁴ His attendant, Diormit, follows him close behind and sees "from a distance the whole church filled inside with angelic light about the saint."⁸⁵ The light, seen by a few others, fades by the time Diormit enters. Calling out to him and "groping in the darkness...he found the saint lying before the altar" and put the dying man's head in his lap.⁸⁶ It is one thing for Bede to align Cuthbert's virtues and miracles

⁸² *VC*, 282-283: "recumbentem in angulo sui oratorii contra altare".

⁸³ *VC*, 284-285: "eleuatis ad coelum oculis, extensisque in altum manibus".

⁸⁴ *Vita Columbae*, pp. 224-225: "Tum proinde media nocte pulsata personante cloca festinus surgens ad ecclesiam pergit, citiorque ceteris currens solus introgressus iuxta altare." Anderson, Marjorie Ogilvie and Alan Orr Anderson. *Adomnán's Life of Columba*. Revised ed., Oxford University Press, 2002.

⁸⁵ *Vita Columbae*, pp. 224-225: "eminus totam intrinsecus ecclesiam angelica luce erga sanctum repleti uidet"

⁸⁶ *Vita Columbae*, pp. 224-225: "...per tenebras palpans sanctum ante altarium recubantem inuenit..."

with the holy men who had gone before him; it is quite another to insist on the saint's similar intimacy with his brethren.

Bede's *VC* does not describe miraculous light emanating from the dying saint as an indication of holiness. It does, however, include a hectic narrative of how Cuthbert's attendants communicated by torch between the two island monasteries. Bede details the shared discourse among the scattered, sailing brethren as Cuthbert dies. Herefrith rushes out to share the news with the few that remained on Lindisfarne. Bede writes that "without delay," one of them took two torches, "and holding one in each hand, he went on to some higher ground" to signal the monks at Lindisfarne, who were waiting expectantly at their watch-tower.⁸⁷ The watch-tower at Lindisfarne might not have been unique, since the last half of the fourth century saw "the establishment of a string of signal stations" whose "known distribution extends from Filey to Huntcliffe," but which might have "extended north to the Tyne."⁸⁸ The detail about "higher ground" is a little peculiar, since the highest point on Inner Farne (19 meters) is actually on the southwest side, where the oratory is likely to have been.⁸⁹ There seem to be three possibilities: they went south, or perhaps just up a single rock/boulder to signal; they went north, maybe even past the sarcophagus that Cuthbert described and Herefrith misremembered; the detail is entirely invented, and illustrates Bede's investment in grounding his narrative in the

⁸⁷ *VC*, pp. 284, 286: "ipse noctem uigilando atque orando transegerant" 284; "specula Lindisfarnensis insulae"

⁸⁸ Daniels, Robin. *Anglo-Saxon Hartlepool and the Foundations of Early Christianity: Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Monastery*. Tees Archaeology, 2007, p.9. Recent excavations of the Anglo-Saxon monastery at Lindisfarne have unearthed early medieval material, including an 8th-century sceatta issued by Eadbert.

⁸⁹ Inner Farne is 19 meters high; Lindisfarne is 25-35 meters above sea level.

topographical/geographical seascape in which it unfolded. The Lindisfarne monk “quickly ran to the church” where the rest were gathered reciting the psalms.⁹⁰ In the dark and quiet of night, song and light echo among these island inhabitants of the North Sea. Topographical separation collapses as they share the sights and sounds of their vigil, uniting across space in a final, shared vision of the waters that surround them. Ultimately, the *fratres nauigantes* successfully complete their final nautical endeavor—bringing Cuthbert’s body from his tiny hermitage to the church on Lindisfarne, whence his incorrupt body could look out across the nave.⁹¹

2. Felix’s Vita Guthlaci

Like *The Life of St Cuthbert*, Felix’s *Life of St Guthlac (VG)* emphasizes the hostile environment to which the hermit subjected himself. Felix writes that, stretching from Cambridge north to the sea 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.”⁹² The watery landscape seems to change substance of its own accord, from patchy wetland to aqueous mist. It shifts often, revealing a patchwork of interwoven and agential elements—the fenland is at first “consisting” then “studded” and finally “traversed” by its own components. Even in this short introduction to the space, Felix

⁹⁰ *VC*, 286-287: “cucurrit citius ad aecclesiam”.

⁹¹ After dying “without a sigh (*sine gemitu*)” he was washed and clothed, then taken by ship to Lindisfarne and placed “with honour in the church (*honorabiliter in basilica deposuerunt*)” (*AVC*, 130-131).

⁹² *VC*, 180-181: “...nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris fusi vaporis laticibus, necnon et crebris insularum nemorumque intervenientibus flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus, ab austro in aquilonem mare tenus longissimo tractu protenditur.” Rivigarum is glossed as “ubi congregator aqua” and “is most probably a misreading of the Vulgate, Isaiah xix.6: ‘attenuabuntur et siccabuntur rivi aggerum’”

emphasizes the formal and temporal ambivalence of this watery landscape: it is at once air, land, and water, yet still able to vacillate among the three. Nowhere is this fluid tension more evident than in Felix's first two deployments of boats—one pushed through watery land and one imagined in aerial waters.

Despite decades of scholarship across disciplines, reconstructing an image of the fens as Guthlac inhabited them remains a daunting task.⁹³ The difficulty posed by fragmentary evidence is further burdened by the fact that the fenlands were not topographically uniform: “The usefulness and stability of the fens varied by location, with some areas flooded to the point of forming ‘great lakes,’ others ‘fairly dry during ordinary years; the islands themselves were but little different from the surrounding upland,’ and still other areas changed with the seasons....”⁹⁴ Moreover, the fenland plain “has an uneven surface with projections of land rising above the landscape to become the ‘islands’ of Ely, March, and Crowland [...] among many other raised sites with place names ending in ‘eg’ (island) around Ely.”⁹⁵ The fenland can be understood as its own archipelago, whose waterborne viewpoints, like those of the Northumbrian coast, are recorded in their region's Anglo-Latin hagiographies. Stretching from the northern border of

⁹³ See Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar, *Old English Ecologies: Environmental Readings of Anglo-Saxon Text and Culture*. Western Michigan University, 2013. PhD dissertation (p. 196). For a summary of the fenlands based on “archaeology, geology, hagiography, [and] poetry,” see pp. 197-200.

⁹⁴ VanDonkelaar, 198.

⁹⁵ VanDonkelaar, 199. For cultural consequences of the Old English compound *ealond/igland*, see Winfried Rudolf, “The Spiritual Islescape of the Anglo-Saxons” in *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*, ed. Sobecki, Brewer, 2011, pp. 31-57.

East Anglia across Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, it probably posed similar accessibility issues to Guthlac as the Northumbrian islands did to Cuthbert.

Chris Loveluck notes that recent Fenland surveys offer “evidence for settled landscapes of farmsteads and small hamlets within the zones of sand islands, saltmarshes, peat fen and tidal creek systems” as early as the seventh century.⁹⁶ Duncan Sayer finds that despite a lapse in hydraulic management between the fifth and ninth centuries, communities in or around the fens were nevertheless dependent upon them, since “networks of waterways and channels provided an interconnection that allowed these settlements access to the sea, some fifty miles away.”⁹⁷ In fact, recent surveys suggest that “while not every village deserves to be called a port, many of the hides and lodes cut into the softer peat fen would have given them some port-like functions.”⁹⁸ The idea that early “nucleated settlements” began in the region in the seventh or eighth centuries, rather than the ninth or tenth, is tentatively suggested by some and arduously argued for by Wright.⁹⁹ Loveluck and Tys find “a much more complex range of settlement patterns and sites of exchange than has been envisaged in coastal zones.”¹⁰⁰ To Felix’s

⁹⁶ Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, 77. There is still dispute over whether colonization began in the seventh century or, as some suggest, as early as the fifth (78).

⁹⁷ Sayer, Duncan. “Medieval Waterways and Hydraulic Economics: Monasteries, Towns and the East Anglian Fen” in *World Archaeology*, vol. 41, 1, pp. 134-150 (137).

⁹⁸ Sayer, 139.

⁹⁹ Wright, Duncan. “Restructuring the 8th Century Landscape: Planned Settlements, Estates and Minsters in pre-Viking England.” *Church Archaeology* 14, 2010, pp. 15-26. He uses Cottingham and Fordham as case studies; they are to the south and east of Crowland, on the edges of the marsh. He finds evidence in both sites of regulated occupation as opposed to scattered or temporary habitations, and offers that the change from peripatetic to permanent settlements resulted in (and was in turn further enforced by) production for fixed elites.

¹⁰⁰ Loveluck and Tys, 141.

contemporaries, Crowland existed within a fenland that, if not more densely populated, was at least more frequently visited, than scholars once assumed. Instead of a no-man's land, it was an area of increasing traffic and trade, both undertaken by boat.¹⁰¹

At once inhabited and desolate, dry and wet, the hybrid ecology of Guthlac's hermitage would also pose visibility problems similar to those in Cuthbert's aqueous world. In both Lives, boats provide direct interaction with these highly complex and sensitive environments. Although it seems as if the wooded, rambling lowlands might have obscured the view of and from Crowland, Mason suggests that its existence, like that of "monastic foundations clustered along" the Witham river "speaks not of isolation but of highly visible locations that could control access to the fens."¹⁰² Situated between the sea and what would become Stamford, Crowland rested squarely along a "river route [that] would have seen much commercial traffic."¹⁰³ Although Crowland is fewer than 10 meters above sea level and rests 27 miles north of Ely, views of and from its environs were still important features in the daily lives of its inhabitants.

Felix depicts an atmosphere of elemental, temporal, and historical ambiguity of the fenland. This space is described as a desert but was likely used as a waterway by Guthlac's contemporaries; it is said to be uninhabitable but nevertheless hosts direct evidence of past habitation (and visitation) in the barrow and its cistern. Even its history, at once resistant to

¹⁰¹ Although "the fens do not appear to have been a popular place for settlement in the early Anglo-Saxon period...both Norfolk and Cambridgeshire were extensively occupied, as is witnessed by the distribution of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries" (Sayer, 138). More importantly, "monastic foundations seem to have been the key to success" in water management systems, and "[t]he great monasteries of Crowland, Ely, Peterborough, Ramsey and Thorney dominated life in the fens" (Sayer, 144).

¹⁰² Mason, 93.

¹⁰³ Mason, 23.

human memory yet enshrining a human past, resists temporal limitations, just as its ecology resists topographical categorization.

Like Cuthbert, Guthlac maintains close ties to established monasteries and keeps in touch with visitors; as soon as he surveys Crowland, he returns to his brethren at Ripon to say goodbye and select two assistants.¹⁰⁴ Tatwine seems to have been the only one to know of Crowland's existence, describing it as a place "more remote and hidden" than the other desert-fens, and one which has led others to failure. Tatwine uses the word "desert" twice, then further shrouds the space with intentional vaguenesses like "unknown portents" and "terrors of various shapes."¹⁰⁵ The desert, like that of St Antony, is resistant to the habitation of man but nevertheless teeming with an ecosystem—and inhabitants—all its own. Placing Guthlac in real and imaginary boats through which he interacts with all elements of this environment, Felix deploys the mundane experience of waterway transportation to highlight the extraordinary gift of saintly contact with the divine.

With Christ accompanying Tatwine and Guthlac on their fisherman's skiff (*piscatoria scaphula*) through the fens, Felix encourages us to recall the New Testament episode of Jesus' offering discipleship to fishermen.¹⁰⁶ The journey from the southern borders of the fens to the hermitage would have been about 40-50 miles as the crow flies, and despite the perilous

¹⁰⁴ Colgrave, Bertram. *Felix's Life of St Guthlac*. Reprint, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 90-93. (Hereafter *VG*)

¹⁰⁵ *VG*, 88-89: "...quam multi inhabitare temtantes propter incognita heremi monstra et diversarum formarum terrores reprobaverant"

¹⁰⁶ "scaphula." *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*. ed. R. E. Latham, D. R. Howlett, & R. K. Ashdowne, British Academy, Oxford, 1975–2013. Accessed via Logeion.

environment, Felix glosses over what must have been a considerable undertaking. At this point the boat positions Guthlac as a novice under the tutelage of Christ and the guidance of Tatwine.

Like Cuthbert and the Desert Fathers, Guthlac constructs his living space in an abandoned edifice: “Now there was in the said island a mound built of clods of earth which greedy comers to the waste had dug open, in the hope of finding treasure there; in the side of this there seemed to be a sort of cistern and in this Guthlac the man of blessed memory began to dwell, after building a hut over it.”¹⁰⁷ Under a roof, over a cistern, in the side of a barrow, this procedural internment engages the ecological environment in architectural terms. Felix ends the chapter with two perspectives which simultaneously mirror and oppose each other: the intimate, seen in the tactile animal skins with which Guthlac clothes himself, and the universal, witnessed by the dark of night, hastening in once “the sun reached its western limits.”¹⁰⁸ As he wraps himself in and binds himself to the natural resources of his environment, the sun’s celestial circuit casts one more shroud overhead.

But Guthlac’s entombment does not keep him safe from the invasion of demons. They “entered through floor-holes and crannies, [and] neither the joints of the doorways nor the openings in the wattle-work denied them entry, but, bursting forth from the earth and sky, they covered the whole space beneath the heavens with their dusky clouds.”¹⁰⁹ The natural

¹⁰⁷ *VG*, 92-95: “Erat itaque in praedicta insula tumulus agrestius glaebis coacervatus, quem olim avari solitudinis frequentatores lucra ergo illic acquirendi defodientes scindebant in cuius latere velut cisterna inesse videbatur; in qua vir beatae memoriae Guthlac desuper inposito tugurio [sic] habitare coepit.”

¹⁰⁸ *VG*, 94-95: “Nam cum sol occiduis finibus vergeretur.”

¹⁰⁹ *VG*, 102-103: “...nam per criptas et cratulas intransibiles non iuncturae valvarum, non foramina cratium illis ingressum negabant; sed caelo terraque erumpentes, spatium totius aeris fuscis nubibus tegebant.”

architecture implied by this description casts the wildness of the demons in high relief to the newly established order of Guthlac's home.¹¹⁰ They wrap him up, "plunged him into the muddy waters of the black marsh...carried him through the wildest parts of the fen, and dragged him through the dense thickets of brambles, tearing his limbs and all his body."¹¹¹ Frustrated by his resolve, the demons shift from amphibious tortures to aeronautical trials: "they began to drag him through the cloudy stretches of the freezing skies to the sound of the horrid beating of their wings."¹¹² Guthlac is not afraid until he reaches the cavern of hell in the summit of the sky—the "fiery abyss swelling with surging flames" and "the sulphurous eddies of flame mixed with icy hail [which] seemed almost to touch the stars with drops of spray."¹¹³ The forbidding, inter-elemental atmosphere recalls the billowing storm that keeps Cuthbert from boarding his boat in Fife. But instead of standing languidly among earth, sky, and sea, Guthlac is dragged into each.

¹¹⁰ Crawford summarizes other discussions of the demons' relationship to the fens in "Food, Fasting and Starvation: Food Control and Body Consciousness in Early Anglo-Saxon England" in *Intersections: The Archaeology and History of Christianity in England, 400-1200: Papers in Honor of Martin Biddle and Brithe Kjolbye-Biddle*, edited by Martin Henig and Nigel Ramsay BAR British Series 505, 2010, pp. 99-105 (103).

¹¹¹ *VG*, 102-103: "Deinde asportantes illum per paludis asperrima loca inter densissima veprium vimina dilaceratis membrorum compaginibus trahebant."

¹¹² *VG*, 104-105: "...horridis alarum stridoribus inter nubifera gelidi aeris spatia illum subvectare coeperunt."

¹¹³ *VG*, 104-105: "Non solum enim fluctuantibum flammaram ignicomos gurgites illic turgerescere cerneret immo etiam sulphurei glaciali grandine mixti vortices..." There are correspondences between this scene and Bede's account of Fursey's fiery vision in *HE*. When his soul is escorted by angels into the sky, he looks back upon the earth and sees four fires dividing it from the heavens. The angels escort him back, parting the fires like the Red Sea, but devils fling up a tormented soul, whose flesh burns Fursey. One angel's defense—of Fursey's body as well as his previous actions—quenched the fire. Fursey remained warm from the singe, though, even through the coldness of winter. (*HE* III, xix).

St Bartholomew barges “into the midst of the swarthy darkness of night with outpoured radiance” and orders the demons who are tossing Guthlac in the air to return him home.¹¹⁴ Unable to tolerate the saint’s heavenly light, they oblige, and “with the utmost gentleness [bear] him up most quietly upon the oarage of their wings, so that he could not possibly have been conveyed more steadily in a chariot or ship.”¹¹⁵ In this simile, the dream-ship creates a space of stability and quiet—of safe-haven from the tumult of the demons’ avian tortures. And yet, it is of course created by and actually consisting of the demons—their wings’ rotations are like those of a smoothly-rowed ship on calm water. As the demons shift into forms of conveyance and security under the will and light of Bartholomew, Felix creates a surprisingly parallel image to Guthlac and Tatwine’s initial voyage through the frenetic fens. Whether through the hostile wetland of the fens or the flaming ice-den in the sky, boats allow Guthlac to interact with the divine and demonic array of elements with which Felix has surrounded him.

Commanded by a saint or guided by Christ, Guthlac’s nautical experiences situate boats in environmentally violent and elementally/ecologically ambivalent spaces. Unique to this hagiography is the emphasis on the adaptability of these vessels: real boats navigate across watery land, and simulative boats cut through aerial waters. Both boats create a place for Felix to show the humility of Guthlac and his subordination to the experiential expertise of Tatwine and the codified sanctity of Bartholomew.

¹¹⁴ *VG*, 106-107: “cum inmenso caelestis lucis splendore media furvae noctis infuso lumine interrumpens tenebras, sese ab aethereis sedibus radiantis”

¹¹⁵ *VG* 108-109: “...revehentes cum nimia suavitate, velut quietissimo alarum remigio, ita ut nec in curru nec in navi modestius duci potuisset, subvolabant”

These scenes are the most suggestive of the very rare nautical depictions in the rest of the *vita*. Nevertheless, Guthlac contributes to the hagiographic tradition of the English desert island saints by seeking desolation in the thronged yet abandoned spaces surrounded by water. In fact, even his conversion to the religious life is presented in terms of an elemental admixture: “being storm-tossed amid the uncertain events of passing years, amid the gloomy clouds of life’s darkness, and amid the whirling waves of the world, [Guthlac] abandoned his weary limbs one night to their accustomed rest; his wandering thoughts were as usual anxiously contemplating mortal affairs in earnest meditation, when suddenly, marvelous to tell, a spiritual flame, as though it had pierced his breast, began to burn in this man’s heart.”¹¹⁶

The next boat scene offers evidence that, after the last demonic visitation (Ch XXXVI), Guthlac’s interaction with the wilderness and its inhabitants is changed. When Guthlac sees a raven fly off with a piece of parchment inscribed by his guest, he orders his colleague “to get into a boat which was lying by the neighbouring landing-place and to make his way amid the dense clumps of reeds by the path which would reveal itself to him.”¹¹⁷ There is no mention at all of a forbidding landscape or kidnapping demons; this nautical undertaking is closer to a jaunt than a journey. The monk is able to navigate through the fens on his own—without guidance from Tatwine or Guthlac, and without the interference of Bartholomew. If anything, the environment is now almost inviting; its only agency is exercised in the miraculous act of

¹¹⁶ *VG*, 80-81: “inter dubios volventis temporis eventus et atras caliginosae vitae nebulas, fluctantes inter saeculi gurgites iactaretur, quadam nocte, dum fessa membra solitae quieti dimitteret et adsueto more vagabunda mente sollicitus curas mortales intenta meditatione cogitaret, mirum dictu! extemplo velut percussus pectore, spiritalis flamma omnia preacordia supra memorati viri incendere coepit.”

¹¹⁷ *VG*, 118-119: “ut naviculam in contiguo portu positam conscendisset, et ut inter densas harundinum conpagines, quo viri sibi monstraret, incederet.”

“reveal[ing] itself to him.” Still, the boat takes the holy brother to a waterborne miracle: when he “reached a certain pool not far from the same island he saw near by, in the middle of the pool, a reed standing with its top bent down and shaken on every side by the moving waters of the pond; on the very top could be seen the very leaves of parchment hanging exactly balanced as though they had been placed there by a human hand, and, marvellous to relate, they were apparently being touched by the waves around them and yet were intact.”¹¹⁸ This is a miracle of natural limits; God has not kept the parchment from the waves, but kept the waves from making the parchment wet. Like the “dolphin episode” in *VC*, this miracle shows the archipelagic wilderness to be especially sensitive to the will of God. Boating across the fens gives the monk rare access to a miracle in which parchment is impervious to water. Moreover, this miracle proves that Guthlac had successfully driven out the demons. Now, visitors can travel without being led by Tatwine, rescued by Bartholomew, or even guided by Guthlac. His is a nautical conquest of evil.

Felix links Guthlac to Columbanus and Cuthbert by describing his miraculous premonition about thieving birds along the shoreline.¹¹⁹ When Æthelbald and Wilfrid take a small boat (*ratis*) to visit Guthlac in Crowland, Wilfrid “jumped onto land from the prow of the boat and left both his gloves in the stern.”¹²⁰ Again, the surroundings of the waterways are erased; the landing-place is free from the mischievous wetland described in the beginning of the

¹¹⁸ *VG*, 118-119: “cum ad aliquod stagnum haud procul a praefata insula situm devenisset, conspicit non longe in media planitie stagni unam harundinem curvato cacumine stantem, quae stagni tremulis quassabatur undique limphis; in cuius fastigio aequiperatas, scedulas aequali lance pendentes, velut ab humana manu positas, cerneret. Mirabile dictu! tangi, non tactae contiguus videbantur ab undis.”

¹¹⁹ Birds are also present in the Life of St Anthony.

¹²⁰ *VG*, 124-125: “Wilfrith vero ratis de prora saltu terram petens, ambas manicas suas puppi dimisit”.

vita. His jump from the ship to the shore is unblighted by brambles and demons, but menaced by impish birds. I would not be the first to write about the “domestication” of the fen by Felix/Guthlac, but I would like to suggest that we consider this transformation in light of the nautical details sometimes neglected.¹²¹

Guthlac’s limited visibility from his barrow shapes his knowledge about the gloves on board as an indication of his sanctity: “although he was seated in the house and could not see farther than the entrance...suddenly began to ask them whether they had left anything in the ship.” A raven had taken one of the gloves and dropped it onto the roof at Guthlac’s bidding—a considerably less dramatic scene than St Bartholomew’s ordering the flying demons to put Guthlac down. Guthlac treats Wilfrid’s anxiety with an almost parental sensitivity, and as soon as he assures him that this was a test of their faith, “three brethren sounded the signal and appeared at the landing place” and one of them “declared that he had found by chance on the way a certain glove dropped from the curved claws of a jackdaw.”¹²² Guthlac’s God acts in small ways; He is particularly local, and as I hope to have shown by now, especially nautical.

Like Cuthbert, Guthlac depends on light across the water and brethren in boats to establish and promote his cult. As dawn breaks Guthlac utters his final words to his attendant, Beccel: “My son, get ready for your journey, for now the time has arrived for me to be loosed from the body; the end of my life has come and my spirit is eager to be carried away to joys

¹²¹ “[D]uring the medieval period the wild fen home of *Beowulf*’s Grendel (Heaney 2000) and St Guthric’s savage pagan (Goodwin 1847) was tamed not by man but by a religious institution’s desires for building stones, fish, and fowl” (Sayer, 144).

¹²² *VG*, 126-127: “...ecce tres viri fratres pulsato signo ante portum praefatae insulae steterunt...”; “forte in via quendam manicam de uncis pedibus corvi demissam invenisse se fatebatur, et manicam sibi ostendit.”

without end.”¹²³ His spiritual departure is a blinding show of emergence and light that contrasts with the initial entombment on his arrival at Crowland. Indeed, the sight is too much for Beccel’s mortal eyes, “so he took a boat and, leaving the landing-place, then began the journey which the man of God had commanded him.”¹²⁴ Guthlac’s posthumous prophecies to Æthelbald unfold in the dark sepulcher of the saint’s tomb but are performed at the landing-stage in the early hours of the morning. Reminiscent of Guthlac’s initial envelopment in skins in a cistern in the side of a barrow, Æthelbald participates in a form of supplicance “known in classical times under the name of *incubatio*, in which the consultant obtained direct communion with the god or departed spirit, by laying himself down in some holy place to await a vision.”¹²⁵ Guthlac tells Æthelbald that the kingdom will be his; proof of this prophecy will come the next day, with the arrival of unexpected food. And “before the third hour of the day had arrived, they heard the signal sounded at the landing-stage, and they saw some men bringing thither unhopd-for food.”¹²⁶ The miraculous delivery of food by mariners proves the landing-place of Crowland to be hospitable, having been made accessible and visible by Guthlac’s holiness.

¹²³ *VG*, 158-159: “Fili mi, praepara te in iter tuum pergere, nam me nunc tempus cogit ab his membris dissolvi, et decursis huius vitae terminus ad infinita gaudia spiruts transtolli malit.” This is also reminiscent of Cuthbert’s conversation with Herefrith, in which the saint tells his assistant to prepare for a journey.

¹²⁴ *VG*, 158-159: “...arrepta navicula portum reliquit ac deinde, quo vir Dei praeceperat, coepto itinere perrexit.”

¹²⁵ *VG*, note p. 195.

¹²⁶ *VG*, 165-166: “...nam priusquam tertia diei hora propinquasset, signum in portu pulsatum audierunt hominesque illic insperata solatia portantes conspiciunt”

This chapter has shown that hagiographers understood how vital boats were to island ascetics like Cuthbert and Guthlac, who depended on these humble vessels—and the men who steered them—for temporal and spiritual sustenance.

CHAPTER 3: MARITIME MIRACLES ON THE ALMOST-OPEN SEAS

Farther beyond the English shore, maritime miracles gave Anglo-Latin hagiographers the opportunity to imagine the infinite power of God in the awesome power of Nature. The sea, in all its spacious might, was a perfect place to engage theological questions about contemporary miracles. Early medieval hagiographers inherited from Augustine and Gregory a deep ambivalence about the mechanisms and meanings of miracles. Augustine's initial claim, as Godden summarizes, was that "physical miracles no longer happened" and that his was "the present age of inner, spiritual miracles."¹²⁷ Yet over time, Augustine's views changed, and Godden sees his later works as "testimonies to a complete faith in contemporary miracles."¹²⁸ According to Watkins, Augustine "had indicated that God was seen to work in the world both directly through extraordinary miracles and indirectly through the ordinary course of nature."¹²⁹ And yet, Augustine "also insisted that ultimately this distinction was merely a matter of human convenience as all things, wondrous and non-wondrous alike, unfolded from the first and greatest of miracles, which was creation itself."¹³⁰ There are then, two levels on which God uses

¹²⁷ Godden, M. R. "Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles." *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, edited by Elisabeth Gellert and Jelena O. Krstovic, vol. 46, Gale, Literature Resource Center, 2001, NPN. Accessed 16 Oct. 2017. Originally published in *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 16, 1985, pp. 83-100.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Watkins, C. S. *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 1.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

nature to interact with humans: by establishing the elements and environments in which they live, and by (occasionally) directing these elements in unusual ways to communicate a particular message to or about a saint.

Gregory also wrote ambivalently about miracles, and emphasized Augustine's point that all of creation is a miracle—even, or especially, the regular events of the seasons and other natural phenomena. Gregory bemoaned humanity's desensitization to the wondrous works of creation permeating daily life:

Yet we neglect to admire [Creation], because these things, which are wondrous and incomprehensible to the investigator, have become worthless through the custom of human eyes. Hence it is the case that if a dead man is revived, everyone leaps up in wonder, and [yet] every day a person is born who did not [previously] exist, and nobody wonders. However, it is plain to all and far from doubt that it is greater to create that which did not exist than to repair that which did exist . . . Wondrous therefore are all those things that men neglect to wonder at, because, as we said before, they grow numb by habitually considering them.¹³¹

For Gregory, seeing a divine hand in the regular course of nature should be as powerful as seeing an aberration from established natural patterns.

This chapter investigates how hagiographers used the sea as a place to explore the spectrum of ordinary and miraculous. In the *HE*, Bede uplifts the ordinary in his maritime miracles; he does not sensationalize the fantastic. From Constance's *Vita Germani* he inherits a spectacularly dramatic episode of a storm at sea. But he very carefully corrects the earlier source

¹³¹ Keagan Brewer provides the English and Latin in *Wonder and Skepticism in the Middle Ages*. Routledge, 2016, pp. 53, 63. "Sed tamen mirari neglegimus quia ea quae incomprehensibili indagatione mira sunt, humanis oculis usu uiluerunt. Vnde fit ut si mortuus homo suscitetur, in admirationem omnes exsiliant, et cotidie homo qui non erat nascitur et nemo miratur, dum procul dubio omnibus constet quia plus sit creari quod non erat, quam reparari quod erat . . . Mira itaque sunt omnia quae mirari homines neglegunt, quia ad considerandum, ut praediximus, usu torpescunt." His source for the Latin is "Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, Marcus Adriaen (ed.) in CCLSL, vol. 143 (Turnhout, 1979), Book 6, ch. 15, §18, vol. 1, p. 296, ll. 11–16, 22–6".

with more accurate details of the English coast to give the account more credibility. In the contemporary miracles of Aidan and Æthelwold, Bede emphasizes the performance of sacraments at sea, dampening the intercessory power of the saints in comparison to the power of holy ritual. Stephen, Wilfrid's biographer, does exactly the opposite; he uses the sea to exaggerate the sanctity of his subject, turning the contemporary miracle on the shores of Sussex into a dramatic display of large-scale miracles recorded by the Old Testament. A generation later, Alcuin's *York Poem* would contrast the growing mercantile town of York to the hermitage of Balthere in the Firth of Forth, where water and land seem to intermingle, and even exchange elemental properties with each other, to display the might of God above even the most powerful elements.¹³² The sea remained a valuable place for literary reflection on the awesome forces of God into the eleventh century, when the anonymous author of the *vita Birini* expounds a nautical narrative of elemental inversions that defies, and even discredits, attempts to find reason or logic behind the natural wonders of Creation.

1. Bede and Stephen

In his *Commentary on Mark*, Bede adopts Gregory's argument that physical miracles once performed by holy men for the conversion of heathens have been replaced by spiritual miracles performed by the church for the salvation of Christian souls.¹³³ Godden summarizes Bede's intention for the *vita Cuthberti* as "not historical accuracy but imaginative truth within

¹³² For evidence of the mid- to late-eighth century mercantile expansion of York, see Carver, Martin and Chris Loveluck. "Original 'Early Medieval Period Working Group' Resource Assessment and Research Agenda Document." *People and the Sea: A Maritime Archaeological Research Agenda for England*, Appendix 5, 2013 (43). (Hereafter *People and the Sea*).

¹³³ Godden, NPN.

the framework of a conventional literary form, that of a saint's life," and warns that "Bede was satisfying the demands of genre-writing rather than those of faith."¹³⁴ Whether or not one agrees with this claim in the context of the twinned *vitae* (and I do not), Bede's reluctance to engage with miracles in the same way can be detected in the *HE*, which describes only three nautical narratives, all of which feature miracles from *vitae*. The nautical narratives included in the work reveal one of many routes through which Bede tries to understand the miraculous in his larger work. Ultimately, Bede uses maritime miracles on the southern, eastern, and northern coastal borders of England's Christian realm. By localizing miracles at sea, Bede subtly uses accurate details to make the miraculous seem familiar. In so doing, he shows that God provides for the English Church even on its seas.

Written in 731 and dedicated to king Ceolwulf, the *HE* was intended "to tell the story of the development of God's plan for the conversion of the English people and the building up of one united Church in the land."¹³⁵ To achieve this purpose Bede "began by painting a background, geographical and historical, picturing the British inhabitants as feeble in time of war and, though Christian in name, vicious in time of peace, easily falling into heresies; but, worst of all, refusing to co-operate in the conversion of the 'heathen Saxons.'"¹³⁶ The first part of this chapter will examine the presence of the sea in the geographical, historical, and even literary backdrop of his work.

Michelet observes that Bede, like Gildas before him, "inscribe[s] the Anglo-Saxon

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *HE*, xxx.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

migration in a providential scheme of history” yet ignores the opportunity “to highlight the coming of the Germanic tribes as an event willed by God” as well as the chance “to enhance the courage and martial prowess of the protagonists.”¹³⁷ She argues that “[t]he silence which insular authors observe about the central part of the Anglo-Saxons’ myth of cultural identity” implies “that their travels were imagined neither as a quest—in which case the very expedition leading them to their new homeland would have been highlighted—nor as a test—in which case their worthiness to inhabit the territory...would have been emphasized in heroic terms.”¹³⁸ Bede’s terseness on this point might be partially explained by the fact that he included only miraculous voyage narratives in the *HE*. The Germanic tribes coming over were not yet Christian, so their narrative was, in a way, beyond the scope of Bede’s work.

Michelet suspects that sea cannot be inscribed with communal memory in the same way that the land can be, and this lack of receptiveness to commemoration partially explains why this crucial seafaring was not given more narrative attention.¹³⁹

Commenting on the sense of home in *The Wanderer*, Howe points out that the sea in this poem comes close to the ‘horror of vacancy’, as in the open sea, ‘there is nothing that can be set in a landscape [or] fixed on a map’...Collective memory may thus not be comfortable in such an imaginary setting; for the sea, it seems, does not allow for the articulation in geographic terms of a collective sense of self.¹⁴⁰

Yet one wonders why Bede observes a similar silence over many of Britain’s most

¹³⁷ Michelet, Fabienne. “Lost at Sea: Nautical Travels in the Old English Exodus, the Old English Andreas, and Accounts of the Adventus Saxonum.” *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*, D.S. Brewer, 2011, pp. 59–80 (65).

¹³⁸ Michelet, 78.

¹³⁹ Michelet, 79.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

important missionary crossings. He does not narrate much of the Augustinian mission to Kent, excluding even “Gildas’s favourable winds and omens,” whose “speed and savageness” indicated “that the migration is in the nature of things.”¹⁴¹ Nor does Bede invest any narrative energy in the dozens of voyages undertaken by the ecclesiastical and royal figures who travel widely and often over the course of the work. Maritime journeys to and from English shores were undertaken for various purposes beyond mission: kings retired to Rome, abbots travelled abroad to collect materials for their monasteries, men and women went on penitential pilgrimage, and others were involuntarily exiled. Even narratives of *peregrinatio*—the most popular motivation for maritime travel in *HE*—almost never engage nautical description. Instead, Bede and his contemporaries use pilgrimage to reflect on the duties of hospitality: a decidedly terrestrial concern.

Preserving nautical narratives in exclusively hagiographical contexts, Bede treats the sea not as a vast and vacant expanse to be quickly crossed over by enterprising missionaries or intrepid pilgrims, but as an ever-present site where God’s mercy is writ large for the sake of the English church. The first of these maritime miracles preserves Constance’s legend of Germanus and Lupus battling against a demonic storm in the English Channel (I. xvii). Bede’s narrative of the storm matches Constance of Lyons’s *Vita Germani* nearly word for word, except for a few notable exclusions. That he cuts his source to create a shorter narrative is no surprise, but where so much of the Germanus episode is verbatim, Bede’s omissions reveal something of his intention for this story. As Michelet observes, Bede is transparent about the allegorical meaning of this episode. The table of contents describes this narrative as one in which Germanus and

¹⁴¹ Michelet, 61.

Lupus “stilled, by divine power, first of all the raging of the sea and afterwards the raging of the Pelagians.”¹⁴² The storm foreshadows and allegorizes the Pelagian heresy; Germanus’s triumph over both reveals not only his sanctity, but also God’s power to affect miracles. Bede’s omissions from his source suggest an intentional abridgement program that used the space of the sea to create an explicitly English narrative; doing so rescues the story from the narratively “vacant” sea that Howe and Michelet identify.

Bede’s pruning also achieves a narrative that is less dramatic, and less fantastical, than Constance’s. The effect is that the storm, though caused by demons and resulting in day darkening to night, is not otherwise unusual or beyond the bounds of normal experience. Bede’s version of Constance’s storm-tossed-ship is therefore more than what “[l]iterary critics have long recognised...as a set piece.”¹⁴³ The nautical narrative deserves to be considered beyond its “biblical parallels” and “echoes of classical literature” which “heighten Germanus’s achievements and indicate that his journey is divinely sanctioned.”¹⁴⁴ Bede’s use of the nautical narrative, and all its allegorical trappings, normalizes the wondrous event at sea, then folds it neatly into the communal memory of the English church.¹⁴⁵

Traveling to Britain to rescue the Church from Pelagianism, Germanus and Lupus board a ship that “sped along safely with favoring winds” until it met a flurry of demons at the midway

¹⁴² Michelet, 62.

¹⁴³ Michelet, 64.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ This is an anachronistic move on Bede’s part. In Germanus’s time, what would become England was part of Celtic Britain.

point of the English Channel.¹⁴⁶ While Bede keeps the same “favoring winds” that he had excluded from Gildas, he cuts out Constance’s Virgilian description of the departure from Gaul: “At first, when the ship put out to sea, she ran before light breezes blowing from the Bay of Gaul until she was in midchannel where, gaze as you might, you could see nothing but sky and water.”¹⁴⁷ By omitting this passage, Bede streamlines the narrative and reduces epic diction. But the omission also reveals Bede’s keen interest in creating a storm that would be familiar to his readers; his English audience would have known that the Channel is not wide enough to escape the sight of land. Sacrificing classical poetics for navigational accuracy, Bede places this event firmly within its English context. In doing so, he anchors the narrative in the lived experience of his audience while untethering it from supernatural tales of classical epics.

The demons, Bede writes, had “raised storms” and “darkened the sky, turning day into night with clouds” so that “men of such quality” could not reach the people of Britain.¹⁴⁸ Unlike the demons of Guthlac, they do not interact directly with the saint; instead, they express

¹⁴⁶ Colgrave, Bertram and R.A.B. Mynors, eds. *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Oxford Medieval Texts, Reprint, Oxford University Press, 2007. Hereafter *HE*, with book, chapter and page numbers following. For the passage above, “secundis flatibus naus tuta uolabat,” (*HE* I.xvii, 54-55).

¹⁴⁷ For English text of Constance’s work, see F.R. Hoare’s translation, “Constantius of Lyon: The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre” in *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints’ Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, edited by Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head, reprint, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, pp 75-106 (86). The Latin text appears in René Borius’s *Constance de Lyon: Vie de Saint Germain d’Auxerre*. Sources Chrétiennes, no. 112, Paris, 1965. Latin corresponding to the quotation above: “Ac primum de sinu Gallico flabris lenibus naus in altum prouecta deduciture donec ad aequor medium perueniret, ubi, porrectis in longum uisibus, nihil alilud quam caelum uideretur et maria” (Borius, 147).

¹⁴⁸ *HE* I.xvii, 54-55: “inimica uis daemonum, qui tantos ac tale uiros pertendere ad recipiendam populorum salutem liuidis iniquiquitatibus inuiderent”; “procellas concitant, caelum diemque nubium nocte subducunt”

themselves only through the elements, which they manipulate to defend their shores against the missionaries. When the storm first began, “the sails could not resist the fury of the winds; the sailors toiled in vain; the ship was supported by prayers rather than their efforts.”¹⁴⁹ The mariners see that human help has failed them; they rely, instead, on the divine.¹⁵⁰ The inability of humans to save themselves is a hagiographic (and biblical) commonplace; that it is a trope should not deprive it of further meaning, since in Merovingian stories of shipwrecks averted by the prayers of living saints, mariners tend to be frozen by dread, rather than toiling in vain.¹⁵¹

Bede keeps Constance’s description of the bishop’s falling asleep from exhaustion, retaining the physical effort and bodily toil of the seafarers.¹⁵² Next, both authors distinguish Germanus from Jesus in needing more than speech to calm the storm. Instead of redirecting the winds or rebuking the demons, Germanus offers a prayer and performs a Christian ritual: he “called on Christ and in the name of the Holy Trinity took a little water and sprinkled it on the raging billows.”¹⁵³ Still, neither act is enough, so “at the same time he admonished his colleague

¹⁴⁹ *HE* I.xvii, 54-55: “cedebant ministeria uicta nautarum; ferebatur nauigium oratione non uiribus.”

¹⁵⁰ The sentence is reminiscent of one in Bede’s rafts scene in *VC*: “So, despairing of human help, they fled to the divine.”

¹⁵¹ See, for instance, McNamara, Jo Ann, et al. “Genovefa.” *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, Duke University Press, 1992, pp. 1-21. The Latin can be found in Bruno Krusch, “Vita Genovefae Virginis Parisiensis.” *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum Aevi Merovingici et Aniwuorum Aliquot*, Hahn, 1896, pp. 204–38: www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH_SS_rer._Merov._3_S._III.

¹⁵² It is in the physical cause of his weariness that the bishop is first differentiated from his model, Christ, who slept through a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

¹⁵³ *HE* I.xvii, 56-57: “Qui periculi inmanitate constantior Christum inuocat, et adsumto in nomine sanctae Trinitatis leui aquae spargine fluctus saeuientes obprimit.” Bede has changed “oleo” to aquae, an emendation Colgrave and Mynors suggest is “a defect in his copy of the Vita,

[Lupus]” for their lack of faith, “and encouraged them all, whereupon with one consent and one voice they lifted up their prayers.”¹⁵⁴ In Matthew’s narrative Jesus had also admonished his disciples, but Christ did not need the unified prayers of his followers in order to manipulate the elements. Germanus, on the other hand, had invoked Christ, blessed holy water, and chided his brethren until they prayed “in one voice (*clara voce*).” Colgrave and Mynors write that “the *Vita Germani* has *adsumto oleo*” and offer that “*aquae* is added, perhaps by Bede to make good a defect in his copy of the *Vita*, which contained several errors.”¹⁵⁵ But it is difficult to determine what textual circumstance would encourage Bede to correct a corrupted *oleo* into *aquae*. It is possible that Bede wanted to preserve the ecclesiastical practice of blessing chrism only on Holy Thursday; if this is so, then his adjustment to contemporary practice is another example of Bede’s naturalization of the text.¹⁵⁶

It is only after the passengers offer a unified prayer that “divine help was forthcoming, the adversaries were put to flight,” and the winds were calmed.¹⁵⁷ Constance’s detail that the ship kept her speed (*naugium famulatrix unda prosequitur*) is left out altogether; the comment that they sailed across a great distance (*immensis spatiis*) is adapted to the short distance of the

which contained several errors.” Constance’s text reads, “*adsumpto oleo, in nomine Trinitatis leui asperigine fluctus sauentes obprimit...*” (Borius, 146).

¹⁵⁴ *HE* I.xvii, 56-57: “*collegam commonet, hortatur uniuersos, oratio uno ore et clamore profunditur.*”

¹⁵⁵ *HE*, 56, note a.

¹⁵⁶ Water could be blessed by a bishop or a priest. Chrism, on the other hand, could only be sanctified by a bishop (usually on Maundy Thursday).

¹⁵⁷ *HE* I.xvii, 55-56: “*Adest divinitas, fugantur inimici, tranquillitas serena subsequitur, uenti e contrario ad itineris ministeria reueruntur*”

channel (*brevis spatiis*).¹⁵⁸ One might well expect Bede to make adjustments to the text as he saw fit. That he did so to the exclusion of classical poetic authority, for the sake of contemporary plausibility, lends authenticity to his less lively, more English account.

Neither Constance nor Bede would have suggested that holy water (or oil) and devout prayer are ineffective methods of soliciting divine intervention. But in both versions (which are the same at this point) the multimodal approach of interfering with their threatening environment makes it difficult to attribute the event to one particular act of supplication. Allegorically, this allows the narrative to privilege, above all other episcopal duties, leadership and unity within the ship-as-church.¹⁵⁹

Although Bede and Constance are careful to attribute the change in the wind to “divine help” the evil spirits confess “that they had been vanquished by the merits and the power of these men.”¹⁶⁰ The mechanisms of the miraculous are not distinct here; indeed, *miracula* is not used at all in this particular episode. The nature of relationship between God’s power, which expels the demons and changes the winds, and the character of the bishops who inspire Him to use it, remains mysterious.

Making only a few small changes to Constance’s narrative, Bede uses the sea to shape part of England’s spiritual topography.¹⁶¹ This Channel crossing is more than the prefigurative or

¹⁵⁸ Borius, 148; *HE* I.xvii, 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ Once in Britain, Germanus continues to take a multimodal approach to divine intervention: he cures a blind girl and achieves the famous “Alleluia victory” with the help of both relics and incantation.

¹⁶⁰ *HE* I.xvii, 56-57: “uictosque se eorum meritis et imperio non negabant.”

¹⁶¹ After all, Bede begins on the border of England’s seaways; the Gallic side of the Channel has fallen entirely away.

allegorical triumph over Pelagianism; it marks the southern boundary of English Christianity which subsequently would be delimited by the western river over which Britons retreated after the “alleluia victory,” the eastern coast of Aidan’s prophetic miracle, and the northern seaway of Æthelwold’s Cuthbertine rescue. Communal memory, therefore, is written across the sanctified seas and rivers that both bind and sustain the English people. Bede extends the map of Britain’s salvation even beyond her shores, and suggests that the customary order of nature need not be upturned to accommodate contemporary (or at least, post-apostolic) acts of God.

At the midpoint of the Channel, on the edge of Britain’s coastal frontier, Bede elegantly trims his Gallic source while restoring the local experience of the crossing. It is perhaps in better keeping with the purpose of *HE* that he describes not just a single man with miraculous power, but rather a bishop who, by performing his sacramental duties and encouraging his flock, can warrant a divine intervention for the sake of his Christian community.

In the early 640s, the coastal map of Britain’s Christianization was further expanded by Bede’s second maritime miracle, which marked more than 250 miles of England’s eastern shore as under the purview of God.¹⁶² In the early years of his tumultuous reign, King Oswiu of Bernicia hoped that marrying Eanfled, the daughter of Edwin of Deira, would endear him to the Northumbrian southern kingdom.¹⁶³ But first, she needed to be transported from her exile in Kent back to her native Northumbria. Undertaking this task on behalf of Aidan (who had begun his

¹⁶² Utta’s journey north covered over 250 nautical miles. See openseamap.org for interactive nautical charts.

¹⁶³ Yorke, Barbara. *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*. Routledge, 1997, p. 126. It should not be forgotten that the same Edwin was partly responsible (under the leadership of Rædwald) for the death of Æthelfrith, Oswiu’s father—an event that led him and his brothers into exile in Scotland.

monastic life at Iona and founded the monastery at Lindisfarne) was a priest named Utta, who planned to go south by land and return north by sea, perhaps to avoid backlash from political adversaries that had first motivated her expatriation after Edwin's death. Knowing that the trip north would be more expeditious, if more dangerous, Utta asked Bishop Aidan to bless him and his companions.¹⁶⁴ Aidan sustained a close relationship with Oswine of Deira—the king of Northumbria's southern half, who would be killed by Oswiu's men within a decade. It seems, then, that Utta might have been asking for assurances both spiritual and political when he visited the bishop: Aidan was in the unenviable position of having to work with two opposing rulers, and Utta would be right to ask his advice on diplomacy. Yet Aidan is blessed with the power of prophecy (one often associated with other Irish and Northumbrian holy men); he foresees a storm that will beset Utta on the voyage home, and gives the departing priest a vial of holy oil by which he can calm the sea.¹⁶⁵

Bede describes nothing of the southern journey, focusing on the fulfillment of Aidan's prophecy rather than the details of Utta's travel (or reception in Kent). The northern voyage reads like many other tales of miraculously-averted shipwrecks:

at first the sea was stormy and the sailors attempted to hold the ship by throwing out the anchor, but all to no purpose. The waves swept over the ship from all sides; the vessel began to fill and they all realized that death was imminent....when the priest, remembering the bishop's words, took out the flask and poured some of the oil onto the sea. At once, as Aidan had predicted, the sea

¹⁶⁴ A blessing before departure remains standard practice for some.

¹⁶⁵ The vial of holy oil reveals small details about what was brought aboard the vessels that ferried churchmen along and beyond the English coast: The distribution of St Menas flasks along the rivers of Gaul (especially in Lyons), and in both western and eastern ports of Britain between the 5th and 7th centuries reflects the practice of bringing holy oil or holy water on pilgrimage overseas.

calmed down.¹⁶⁶

Dropping the anchor is doubtless an echo of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27, where four anchors had been thrown off the stern to prevent the ship from running aground.¹⁶⁷ This act is not limited to apostolic or biblical tradition; throwing off weight to keep a distressed ship afloat continues to be an actual nautical practice during desperately turbulent conditions, and Utta's ship might well have been near enough land for this effort to have worked.

It is a curious feature of Anglo-Latin hagiography that no thaumaturgical miracles are performed at sea. Bede comes quite close to being an exception when he ascribes the calming of the sea to the Holy Spirit working through Aidan, rather than the oil. The sea calms as soon as it is touched by the oil; Bede reminds his reader that "the man of God foretold the tempest by the spirit of prophecy, and, by virtue of the same spirit, calmed it when it had risen, although he was absent in body."¹⁶⁸ This last phrase surely owes something to Adomnán, who often described Columba as "far in distance but close in spirit" to those in danger on the sea.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *HE* III.xv, 260-261: "...et quidem inprimis furentibus undis pelagi temtabant nautae anchoris in mare missis nauem retinere, neque hoc agentes aliquid proficiebant. Cumque uerrentibus undique et implere incipientibus nauem fluctibus, mortem sibi omnes imminere... tandem presbyter reminiscens uerba antistitis adsumpta ampulla misit de oleo in pontum, et statim, ut praedictum erat, suo quieuit a fuerore."

¹⁶⁷ "timentes autem ne in aspera loca incideremus de puppi mittentes anchoras quattuor optabant diem fieri" (Vulgate, Acts 27:29).

¹⁶⁸ *HE* III.xv, 260-261: "per prophetiae spiritum tempestatem praedixerit futuram, et per uirtutem eiusdem spiritus hanc exortam, quamuis corporaliter absens, sopiuerit."

¹⁶⁹ Both are ultimately echoes of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, in which he reminds members of the Greek city-state that he has the power to judge them for their sins, even from a great distance: "Ego quidem absens corpore, praesens autem spiritu, jam iudicavi ut praesens eum, qui sic operatus est" (Vulgate, 1 Corinthians 5:3).

Bishop Aidan does not triumph as a congregational figure in the same way that Germanus does. Instead, the miracle-worker is described as having exclusive knowledge about God's Creation. In seeing from Northumbria to Kent, Aidan incorporates the whole of English Christendom within one narrative viewpoint. Like Columba (and later Cuthbert), Aidan's view partakes in otherwise invisible truths about both divine workings of the natural world and the secular concerns of his intercoastal neighbors. These holy men, as the previous chapter has also argued, were supported by the seascape through which they witnessed divine secrets of the natural world. In describing the miraculous acts of his own time, Bede has made his narrative vulnerable to skeptics. He therefore reassures the reader about the reliability of his source, "a most trustworthy priest of our church named Cynemund," who "had heard it from the priest Utta on whom and through whom the miracle was wrought."¹⁷⁰

Germanus's missionary efforts had been saved by prayer, holy water, and pastoral care; his rescue echoed Jesus's miracle on the Sea of Galilee. Aidan's sanctity had been sustained by prophecy and chrism, and recalled Paul's second sight as he crossed the Adriatic. Æthelwald, the next and final maritime miracle worker opens Book V. He is neither a bishop, with powers to bless chrism, nor a prophet, with access to otherwise hidden knowledge. And yet, Æthelwald¹⁷¹ saves a ship at sea by prayer alone, aligning himself with the contemporary and local tradition of Cuthbert's rescue of the rafts, rather than a biblical or apostolic parallel. Although eremitic miracles performed by Cuthbert and Guthlac have their roots in the life of St Antony and other

¹⁷⁰ *HE* III.xv, 260-261: "Cuius ordinem miraculi non quilibet dubius relator sed fidelissimus mihi nostrae ecclesiae presbyter, Cynimund uocabulo, narravit, qui se hoc ab ipso Utta presbytero, in quo et per quem completum est, audisse perhibebat."

¹⁷¹ Æthelwald 8 in PASE database.

narratives of the desert fathers, the rafts episode is unique to Cuthbert, whose memory was still fresh in the minds of Northumbrian churchmen. The cult of Cuthbert, attested in the early years of the eighth century by the *AVC*, was flourishing decades later, and would continue to do so for centuries.

Bede writes that he had heard about this miracle from Guthfrith, who was on the ship that was saved; he appears to record Guthfrith's account in his own words, to enrich the narrative logic as the monk recalls his visit to Æthelwald, Cuthbert's successor on Farne.¹⁷² When he and two companions shoved off from the hermit's shores, "the calm weather which had accompanied us was broken, and so fierce a wintry tempest arose that we could make no progress either by sailing or rowing and expected nothing but death."¹⁷³ The narrative continues with perspectival and emotional details that smack of an authentic, first-hand account: "After we had struggled in vain against the wind and sea, we looked back to see if perhaps we could, by any effort, at least return to the island we had left. But we found that we were shut in by the storm on every hand, and there was no hope of safety by our own efforts."¹⁷⁴

Like the other maritime miracles, this episode records the attempts by the seamen to save themselves. And like the other mariners, these find that their human efforts are insufficient for the task. But the struggling monks see Æthelwald, who "had emerged from his retreat on Farne

¹⁷² These figures, then, are the same *fratres nauigantes* from *VC*. See also Guthfrith 2 in PASE.

¹⁷³ *HE* V.i, 454-455: "ecce subito, positus nobis in medio mari, interrupta est serenitas qua uehebamur, et tanta ingruit tamque fera tempestatis hiems, ut neque uelo neque remigio quicquam proficere, neque aliud quam mortem sperare ualeremus."

¹⁷⁴ *HE* V.i, 454-455: "Cumque diu multum cum uento pelagoque frustra certantes, tandem post terga respiceremus, si forte uel ipsam de qua egressi eramus insulam aliquo conamine repertere possemus, inuenimus nos undiqueuersum pari tempestate praeclusos, nullamque spem nobis in nobis restare salutis."

Island and was watching our progress; for he had heard the crashing of the storm and the boiling ocean and had come out to see what was happening to us.”¹⁷⁵ Æthelwald the hermit comes to the shore because he hears the storm but cannot see the fate that awaits his brethren—he has no divine powers like prophecy to aid him in this moment.

While it shares much with Cuthbert’s rafts episode, Guthfrith’s story includes the perspective and experience of those who are in danger. Guthfrith almost seems to make eye contact with Æthelwald, whose prayer to God the Father (not the Trinity or an intercessory saint) causes them to be saved.¹⁷⁶ The brothers progress to Lindisfarne with a Virgilian flourish: “No sooner was his prayer ended than he had calmed the swelling main; so that the fierce tempest ceased on all sides and favourable winds carried us over a smooth sea to land.”¹⁷⁷ The moment they beach their boat, the tempest resumes, making it clear that the rescue had occurred “in answer to the prayers of the man of God.”¹⁷⁸ Guthfrith and Uta are both saved from shipwreck by saints who remain on land. The perspective of the seafaring monk is central to these narratives; what he sees and experiences underwrites the maritime events that sanctify the waters surrounding the English church.

¹⁷⁵ *HE* V.i, 454-455: “Ubi autem longius uisum leuauimus, uidimus in ipsa insula Farne ingressum de latibulis suis amantissimum Deo patrem Oidilualdum iter nostrum incipere. Audito etenim fragore procellarum ac feruentis oceani, exierat uidere quid nobis accideret; cumque nos in labore ac disperatione positos cerneret...”

¹⁷⁶ *HE* V.i, 454-455: “flectebat genua sua ad patrem Domini nostri Iuesu Christi pro nostra uita et salute precaturus.”

¹⁷⁷ *HE* V.i, 454-455: “Et cum orationem conpleret, simul tumida aequora placauit, adeo ut cessante per omnia sauitia tempestatis, secundi nos uenti ad terram usque per plana maris terga comitarentur.”

¹⁷⁸ *HE* V.i, 456-457: “ad uiri Dei preces nostrae euasionis gratia caelitus donata est.”

Bede's use of the sea to explore the nature of miracles was surely not accidental. As McCreary points out, Bede's scientific mind understood that events such as "the daily rising and setting of the sun" were caused by "forces that were accessible to human reason" and which "did not require each day a separate act of divine governance."¹⁷⁹ For Bede, God created the order of nature, "and it was worthy of study because of the way scientific knowledge could enhance Christian understanding of the universe and our place in it."¹⁸⁰ The mechanisms by which God's plan sustained this order universe would continually reveal the truth of nature's divine designs. When the everyday workings of the world were so entrancing, more dramatic miracles might have seemed superfluous to Bede's intentions for the HE.

If Bede uses the sea to naturalize miracles of England's saint-studded shoreline, the biographer Stephen exaggerates the sea's wondrous nature to make Wilfrid's single miracle all the more exceptional. Colgrave believes it likely that "the anonymous *Life of St Cuthbert* which appeared between 698 and 705 inspired the community at Rippon to urge [Stephen] to produce an account of his own patron [Wilfrid]."¹⁸¹ While the precise date of the later composition remains unknown, Colgrave's estimate that it was written before 720 has not met with much dissent. And while "Bede obviously uses" Stephen's biography of the saint, "he describes only one miracle connected with Wilfrid—the vision of St Michael."¹⁸² Consequently, Stephen's

¹⁷⁹ McCreary, William D. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*. Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1994, p. 21.

¹⁸⁰ McCreary, 21.

¹⁸¹ Colgrave, Bertram. *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*. Reprint, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. x. Hereafter *VW*.

¹⁸² *VW*, xii.

approach to nautical travel and maritime miracles participates in a separate but related tradition of the relationship between saints and their seas.

Like Bede, Stephen (perhaps to be identified with “Eddius Stephanus”) had ample opportunity to narrate the heroism of his subject’s journeys. Yet Stephen rarely describes the voyages of Wilfrid’s several journeys between England and the Continent. He does so with uncharacteristic subtlety regarding the nature of Wilfrid’s propulsion across the Channel or the North Sea. In beginning episodes of the *vita*, Wilfrid’s ships are driven by the winds, whose favorable directions Stephen seems at pains to relate.¹⁸³ This is unremarkable until his final visit to Rome: the ships follow “God going before them” to Rome and sail “with the help of God” on their return.¹⁸⁴

For Stephen (but not for Bede), ships are markers of divine blessing as well as Wilfrid’s

¹⁸³ This is especially true for Wilfrid’s trip to Frisia, which is described by Bede as being an accident of westward winds (V.ix) but reported as an intentional choice by Stephen. The result, of course, is the same: an unaffiliated Winfrid is intercepted on Wilfrid’s expected southern route and stripped of all his possessions. The case of mistaken identity shows the breadth and depth of enmity towards Wilfrid, even on the continent. But the nautical significance of Wilfrid’s “choice” to take the northern route to Frisia, should not be underestimated. On a clear day, the cliffs of Dover and Calais may even be intervisible, so one need not have specialized navigational skills to take the trip. The trip to Frisia, however, could require as many as two nights at sea, and one would need the ability to navigate without the use of land marks once beyond the latitudes of East Anglia. Because the land is lower in the Netherlands, recovering visibility of the oncoming shore might take longer going east than going west. A colder, wetter, darker, potentially more dangerous voyage took Wilfrid from England to Frisia, where he spent the winter as a missionary.

¹⁸⁴ *VW*, 102-103: “...the party embarked with our holy bishop, and, borne oversea by their ship, reached the southern shores, God going before them (quosque parati cum sancto pontifice nostro navem ascenderunt et, vehiculo navis transportati, ad litora australia, Domino praeviente, pervenerunt).” And *VW*, 124-125: “they crossed [the sea’s] full extent by ship and, by the help of God, they found a safe harbour in the land of Kent (coepto itinere usque ad mare pervenerunt, cuius magnitudinem navigio superantes, in Cantuaria regione portum salutis Deo adiuvante invenerunt).”

worldly prestige. Wilfrid is often sent across (or beyond) the Channel in elite ships outfitted by kings and bishops—ships that might have been very much like the one buried at Sutton Hoo.¹⁸⁵ Wilfrid had himself outfitted the exiled Dagobert with his own ship and crew, so he could return to Francia from exile in Ireland. In England and on the continent, Wilfrid often travelled in high style; it is this ostentatious display of wealth and episcopal status that made ships like his such easy (and frequent) targets of pirates and shoreline raiders.

Sailing across the “British Sea” Wilfrid and his priests were “praising God with psalms and hymns, giving the time to the oarsmen” when “a violent storm arose in mid-ocean and the winds were contrary, just as they were to the disciples of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.”¹⁸⁶ The pulsing psalms are muted by the wind, which “blew hard from the southeast” while “the foam-crested waves hurled them onto the land of the South Saxons... and left the ship and the men high and dry.”¹⁸⁷ Sandra Duncan sees the act of singing psalms and hymns as a means of “ensuring a correct progress through the waves,” perfectly suited to the Christian tradition of imagining the vicissitudes of life as a perilous sea from which the ship of the church offers mankind’s only refuge.¹⁸⁸ But *celeuma* could refer to a song of happy sailors, a shout for lunging oarsmen, or a salve for any communal labor; its depth of association animates and emboldens the

¹⁸⁵ Wilfrid was provided ships by Eanfled, Dalfinus, Oswiu, and Pectarit.

¹⁸⁶ *VW*, 26-27: “quoque eis de Gallia Britannicum mare cum beatae memoriae Wilfritho episcopo, canentibus clericis et psallentibus laudem Dei pro celeumate in choro, in medio mari validissima tempestas exorta est, et venti contrarii, sicut discipulis Iesu in mare Galileae erant.”

¹⁸⁷ *VW*, 26-27: “Flante namque vento euroastro dure, albescentia undarum culmina in regionem Australium Saxonum...proiecterunt eos. Mare quoque navem et homines relinquens...”

¹⁸⁸ Duncan, Sandra. “Prophets Shining in Dark Places: Biblical Themes and Theological Motifs in the Vita Sancti Wilfridi.” *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences*, edited by N.J. Higham and Shaun Tyas, 2013, pp. 80–93 (89).

otherwise disembodied voices on the ship.¹⁸⁹ And given Wilfrid's (and perhaps also Stephen's) interest in liturgical music, it is worth considering that the aural elements of this scene are especially resonant.¹⁹⁰

Having cast the ship ashore, the sea "fled from the land, and, laying the shores bare, withdrew into the depths of the abyss."¹⁹¹ Stephen's littoral diction speaks to the "long-continued medieval belief that tides arise out of the abyss through a spring or spiracle in the sea bottom"¹⁹²—a belief that was corrected by Bede in his *Reckoning of Time*. As Wallis has found, "Bede offered a new causal model for the tides in place of the 'swelling' or 'geyser' theories"—and had suggested instead that "the Moon 'drags' the waters of the ocean around the world with it."¹⁹³ Wallis finds that Bede was unique in articulating "that no general theory can totally account for tidal phenomena" and that, "though the tides are driven by the Moon, whose sway is exercised over all the earth, their ultimate expression is eccentrically local."¹⁹⁴ If Stephen did

¹⁸⁹ See Daniel J. Sheerin's careful study, "'Celeuma' in Christian Latin: Lexical and Literary Notes," *Traditio*, vol. 38, 1982, pp. 45–73. Many examples of a Christian *celeuma* exist before the *vita Wilfridi* was written, but in England, Stephanus is the first (since Gildas) to employ the term. It is therefore difficult to determine whether Stephen's audience would have read this term as familiar or foreign. My sense is that Stephen owes a debt to the author of the *Vita Genovefa* for the word.

¹⁹⁰ See Jesse D. Billett's "Wilfrid and Music" in Higham and Tys, pp. 163–85.

¹⁹¹ *VW*, 26-27: "Flante namque vento euroaustro dure, albescentia undarum culmina in regionem Australium Saxonum, quam non noverant, proiecerunt eos. Mare quoque navem et homines relinquens, terras fugiens, litoraue detegens, et in abyssi matricem recessit."

¹⁹² Brown, Alan K. "Bede, a Hisperic Etymology, and Early Sea Poetry." *Mediaeval Studies*, vol. 37, 1975, pp. 419–432 (424).

¹⁹³ Wallis, Faith. *Bede, The Reckoning of Time*. Liverpool University Press, 1999, p 310.

¹⁹⁴ Wallis, 310.

know about Bede's work on the tides, he ignored it. If he did not know Bede's work, which is more likely, then the mention of the abyss recalls not parting of the Red Sea in Exodus, but the "founts 'of the abyss'" in the Flood narrative of Genesis.¹⁹⁵ Either way, Stephen has no interest in hinting at a local or contemporary reality. Instead, he uses this unique miracle to position Wilfrid as a descendant of Noah and Moses—the great sailors of the Old Testament.

A local pagan army arrives and a battle ensues. When Wilfrid tries to ransom his surviving men, the natives reject his offer, "proudly declaring that they treated as their own possessions all that the sea cast upon the land."¹⁹⁶ Their reaction should not have surprised Wilfrid, since Icelandic, Norse, Faroese, English, and Continental laws made specific provisions for what was washed ashore.¹⁹⁶ In this almost mercantile moment, flotsam marks the heathens as landed citizens and strikes Wilfrid's status as exile into sharp relief. He is, as ever, a pilgrim without a country. Only slightly better off than the *celeuma*-singers of Gildas, Wilfrid has at least made it to shore; yet he stands, precariously, a stranger in a foreign land.¹⁹⁷

With staff in hand on a cliff above the receding sea, the pagan leader is positioned as a heathen distortion of Moses, whom Wilfrid is soon to mirror: "The chief priest of their idolatrous worship also took up his stand in front of the pagans, on a high mound, and like Balaam,

¹⁹⁵ Anlezark, Daniel. *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*. Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 68.

¹⁹⁶ "Any property obtained as drift, from whales to driftwood to goods from wrecked ships, was valuable, so much so that most monarchs across Europe took pains to legally claim 'drift.'" Szabo, Vicki E. *Monstrous Fishes and the Mead-Dark Sea: Whaling in the Medieval North Atlantic*. Brill, 2009, p. 250.

¹⁹⁷ This foreign land is Sussex, which was subsequently converted.

attempted to curse the people of God, and bind their hands by means of magical arts.”¹⁹⁸ The David figure, on the other hand, who threw a rock that “pierced the wizard’s forehead and penetrated to his brain as he stood cursing” is neither named nor mentioned again, suggesting that killing the enemy magician is less important than outperforming his incantation. This will be a story of Christian forces overtaking pagan magic, despite the fact that the episode does not convert any pagans. The wondrous act is performed for Wilfrid’s critics, not Christianity’s skeptics.

The Mosaic parallel is first made explicit in Stephen’s numerology: “these companions of our holy bishop, being well-armed and brave in heart though few in number (there were 120 of them, equal in number to the years of the age of Moses)” vowed that “they would either win death with honour or life with Victory.”¹⁹⁹ If Wilfrid had been accompanied by 120 men, he would have needed more than one ship; unlike Bede, Stephen has little interest in retaining any sense of realism beyond biblical precedent. Wilfrid prays like Moses as the scene takes on even more biblical references: “For as Moses continually called upon the Lord for help, Hur and Aaron raising his hands, while Joshua the son of Nun was fighting against Amalek with the people of God, so this little band of Christians overthrew the fierce and untamed heathen host, three times putting them to flight...”²⁰⁰ As Wilfrid prays and the heathens prepare for a fourth

¹⁹⁸ *VW*, 28-29: “Stans quoque princeps sacerdotum idolotriae coram paganis in tumulo excelso, sicut Balaam, maledicere populum Dei et suis magicis artibus manus eorum alligare nitebatur.”

¹⁹⁹ *VW*, 28-29:

²⁰⁰ *VW*, 28-29: “Sicut enim Moyses, Hur et Aaron sustentantibus manus eius, Iesu Nave cum populo Dei adversum Amalech pugnante, frequenter Domini protectionem implorans triumphavit, ita et hic isti pauci christiani feroces et indomitos baganos tribus vicibus in fugam versos strage non modica obruerunt...”

battle, God “straightaway bade the tide return before its usual hour,” and “the sea came flowing back and covered all the shore, so that the ship was floated and made its way into the sea.”²⁰¹ In the rhetorical trappings of a present-day Moses, Wilfrid is extraordinarily out-of-time with contemporary England. Stephen creates a scene in which God has altered both spatial and temporal qualities of the sea.

Back at sea, Wilfrid and his retinue ‘returned thanks to God’ before arriving in Sandwich.²⁰² It is easy to imagine, given the parallels cited above, that this prayer of gratitude was inspired by the Canticle of Moses, recited once by Moses (Exodus 15.1-18) and later by Miriam (Exodus 15.20-21) to the accompaniment of dancing and tambourines. The tidal irregularity does not inscribe Wilfrid in the shores of English historical hagiography, but onto the Old Testament narrative of God saving His chosen people. Bede joins the sea to England’s geographical and spiritual topography. Stephen, on the other hand, uses the sea to create a sense of high-drama exceptionalism which takes Wilfrid well out of his contemporary setting.

It may be that Stephen subscribed to the belief that there were no more miracles in his present age, and employed hyperbolic narrative to imagine (rather baldly) Wilfrid as an heir of the ancient Israelites—akin, at least, in being perennial exiles. By using Old Testament narratives of the flood and the parting of the Red Sea, Stephen reshapes the familiar English shore and its idiosyncratic tides into the universally foundational settings of the world’s creation and the Israelites’ triumph. Instead of rewriting contemporary figures into a familiar setting, Stephen

²⁰¹ *VW*, 28-29: “...statim iussit ante horam penam, priusquam consuerat, mare venire”; “tunc mare redundans fluctibus tota litora implevit, elevataque nave, cimba processit in altum.”

²⁰² *VW*, 28-29: “Gloriose autem a Deo honorificati, gratias ei agentes, vento flante ab affrico, prospere in portum Sandicae salutis pervenerunt.”

adapts the English shore into an Old Testament space.

2. Alcuin

Taking another approach to maritime miracles near English shore is Alcuin, who composed his York Poem between 782 and 793 in Charlemagne's Frankish court to "celebrate the political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual history of his native Northumbria, with its spiritual centre at York."²⁰³ The majority of the piece "draws on Bede's *HE* and the prose and metrical lives of St Cuthbert" with the remainder "describing events of Alcuin's own lifetime."²⁰⁴ His introductory proem consists of three parts: the first two, prayers to Christ and the saints, "are modeled chiefly on the late antique Biblical epic" but the third, being "the statement of Alcuin's historical theme" is "new to Medieval Latin narrative poetry."²⁰⁵ That this "historical and regional theme" is immediately established as maritime should not be dismissed as a mere classicism; his emphasis on the York's nautical history connects its Roman past with its more recent re-establishment.²⁰⁶ Alcuin's innovation, then, stems from York's mercantile rebirth.

Alcuin was right to describe York as being built by the Romans "to be a general seat of commerce by land and sea alike," even if the phrase is taken directly from Bede's description of

²⁰³ Godman, Peter. *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*. Oxford Medieval Texts, Oxford University Press, 1982, xxxix. Hereafter Alcuin, York Poem; citations with Arabic numerals indicate line numbers unless otherwise noted.

²⁰⁴ Alcuin, York Poem, xxxix.

²⁰⁵ Alcuin, York Poem, n.1 p.5.

²⁰⁶ Alcuin, York Poem, n.1 p.3

London.²⁰⁷ It was “a haven for ocean-going ships from the farthest ports,/ where the eager sailor, weary from the sea, could / at last moor his ship with its long tow-rope.”²⁰⁸ Traders came to York from “kingdoms all over the world...in hope of gain.”²⁰⁹ Even in his description of the British soliciting Germanic mercenaries, Alcuin makes ships central to the port’s identity in its foundation and maintenance, creating a naval history of these “dwellers by the sea.”²¹⁰

Alcuin would have been aware that the maritime and mercantile success of this port was relatively new.²¹¹ Despite its maritime and martial history, and despite York’s recent surge as a site of international trade, the poem about the holy figures of York offers very few maritime miracles. The first are mentioned only in passing, as Alcuin summarizes Bede’s writings on St Cuthbert: “how, when a boy, by his prayers he called back from the sea / five rafts tossed by wind on the waves” and “how, thrown up by the sea, he averted sailors’ hunger / by his prayers, and certainly foretold calm weather” among many.²¹² But Alcuin’s goal is to celebrate York, so he does not dwell for long on the slightly more southern past.

²⁰⁷ Alcuin, York Poem, 24: “ut foret emporium terrae commune marisque” and editorial note, p.5.

²⁰⁸ Alcuin, York Poem, 27-29: “...venientibus hospita portu / navibus oceani, longo sua prora remulco / navita qua properans iam sistat ab aequore fessus.” Godman writes: “Sea-going ships of this period could navigate the Ouse. Supplies were also conveyed by the water transport with the Fenland” (p. 5). This is one of the earliest examples of this practice in medieval Anglo-Latin.

²⁰⁹ Alcuin, York Poem, 35-36: “regnis unique lecti / spe lucri veniunt...”

²¹⁰ Godman notes that Alcuin uses *aequorei* “to describe the territory or people of Britain” three other times in the poem (p. 11).

²¹¹ It is likely that York’s mercantile growth was even more noticeable to Alcuin when he returned to England in the 780s, after so much time away.

²¹² Alcuin, York Poem, 690, 698-699: “aut quomodo ipse puer ventis per caerula puppes”; “utque precando famem proiectus ab aequore nautis/ expulit et certum predixit adesse serenum.”

After remembering the deeds of Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Northumbrian kings and bishops, and Bede, Alcuin describes a remarkable miracle performed by the island hermit Balthere.²¹³ About this anchorite almost nothing is known except that he is associated with Bass Rock—the second most eastern island in the Firth of Forth. Before relating the miraculous tale, Alcuin addresses Balthere with a typical, classical (and popular Carolingian) apostrophe that associates the composition and seafaring: “preserve and guide my frail craft through the ocean depths, among the sea-monsters and waves as high as cliffs, that it may safely reach harbour with its cargo.”²¹⁴ Doing so emphasizes the littoral seascape in which Balthere performs his first miracles: “...a place completely encircled by the ocean waves, / hemmed by terrible crags and steep cliffs” where he “vanquished time and again the hosts of the air/ that waged war upon him in countless shapes.”²¹⁵ The craggy coastline is just as crucial to Balthere’s demonic battles as the marshy fenland is to Guthlac’s: both aqueous sites host the trials of the eremitic saints on familiar territory that is inaccessible except by boat. The littoral is a space of exorcism and

²¹³ Balthere 1 in PASE.

²¹⁴ Alcuin, York Poem, 1321-1324: “placida tu mente teneto/ et rege nunc nostram pelagi per caerula cymbam/ inter monstra maris, scopulosas inter et undas/ ut possit protum portans attingere tutum.” Godman notes that Alcuin “deliberately inverts the traditional rhetorical description of a *locus amoenus*” and also observes “a resemblance, which should not be exaggerated, to Anglo-Saxon poetry of exile” (p.105). For associations between composition and voyage in classical and Carolingian works, see Curtius, pp.128-129. While this poetic metaphor often functions as an introduction, Alcuin uses it again to conclude his work: ll. 1649-1659.

²¹⁵ Alcuin, York Poem, 1325-1326;1328-1329: “Est locus undoso circumdatus unique ponto,/ rupibus horrendis praerupto et margine saeptus”; “saepibus aetrias vincebat Balthere turmas,/ quae sibi multimodis variabant bella figuris.”

sanctification through the permeability of water, earth, and air.²¹⁶

Balthere is on Bass Rock when the miraculous episode begins. Lying one nautical mile off the shore of northeast Lothian, the 7-acre island juts out to over 100 meters above sea level. It is here that a soul, tortured by a demon, falls from the sky and asks Balthere for his intercession. Though sympathetic, Balthere is not moved to interfere until the demon insults St Peter. Then, the holy man “implored God with tears for the guilt of that [tormented] soul,/ ceaselessly pouring forth holy prayers, / until he saw with his own eyes that [the soul] was carried high / over the stars in Heaven in the arms of the angels....”²¹⁷ Alcuin uses Balthere’s visual perception to credit the miracle; his senses confirm the potency of the virtuous prayers that initiated divine action. This short scene provides a relatively clear example of distinct intercessional levels and the causality of miracles: a holy person prays devoutly for the sake of another, and God responds through an intermediary such as an angel or apostolic saint.

The rest of the cliff-side miracle story, however, does not fit smoothly into any tradition of miraculous intercession. Shortly after he watches the angel carry the soul to heaven, Balthere ironically loses sight of the earth beneath him, and falls into the sea far below. Alcuin does not mince words about the fundamental mechanism of what is to come: “Christ achieved another miracle (*signo*) through this pious father [Balthere],/ which was the exact equivalent of one performed in ancient/ times. For just as Peter trod the waves of the sea, / so did this holy

²¹⁶ See also: Dendle, Peter. “Demons of the Water: Anglo-Saxon Responses to the Gerasene Demoniac.” *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, edited by Klein et al., ACMRS, 2014, pp.187-288

²¹⁷ Alcuin, York Poem, 1359-1362: “cum lacrimis Domino pro culpa supplicat illa,/ nec prius ille preces desistit fundere sacras / quam propriis animam ferri vidisset ocellis / altius angelicas caeli super astra per unas.”

father.”²¹⁸ Godman notes that “*veteri...signo*” alludes “to Christ’s command that Peter walk on the waters (Matt. 14:29)” and observes, “Alcuin makes no higher claim for any miracle in this poem: the anchorite Balthar[e?] of his own day is represented as a match for the Apostle Peter.”²¹⁹ Alcuin does not hesitate to describe the fantastic, contemporary miracle; unlike Bede, he appears to have made very little effort in verifying it, and is more deft with his biblical parallels than Stephen.

Falling unharmed from so great a distance does indeed elevate Balthere to the heights of Peter’s sanctity, and the position from which Balthere falls also invites comparison to the mountain where Christ was praying after the miracle of loaves and fishes.²²⁰ According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus walked across the sea to help the disciples when they were caught in a storm. Initially they were too amazed to believe their eyes, and even after Jesus identified himself, Peter was so reluctant to accept the truth that he challenged Christ to prove His claim. To this, Jesus counters with another challenge: that Peter walk across the waves himself. Peter steps from the boat and walks on water until, crucially, he looks down, becomes afraid, and falls into the sea. Alcuin excludes this point from his narrative; Balthere has no moments of doubt to imperil his rescue from, and by, the sea.

So despite his declaration that Christ performed the same miracle for Balthere as he did for Peter, Alcuin’s description of the cliffside rescue has almost nothing in common with

²¹⁸ Alcuin, York Poem, 1363-1366; : “*Par quoquoque iam veteri signumque aequabile signo / hoc de patre pio gessit clementia Christi. / Nam velut aequoreas Petrus calcaverat undas, / sic huic evenit...*”

²¹⁹ Alcuin, York Poem, p.107

²²⁰ See Matthew 14: 23-24.

Matthew's narrative. Balthere fell from "the steep border of a high cliff" but was "[b]ouyed up by the ocean waves" and then "passed over the water with dry feet."²²¹ And unlike Matthew, Alcuin is curious about how the water was made traversable. He describes the sea into which Balthere falls as more forgiving "than the unyielding earth" would have been. Yet the gentler water has not, elementally, become land; it is only acting as if it is land: "the wave flowed to prevent [the water] injuring him,/ remaining as firm as earth beneath his step lest he drown/ and so he walked on the sea, as if on a solid path or earth."²²² At the mouth of the Firth of Forth, one wave has come up to catch Balthere, acting almost as another (if lower) island in the bay. The sea continues to be solid only by simile: Balthere "walked on the sea, as if on a solid path of earth,/ until he came to a boat adrift on the waves,/ into which he climbed—his journey made safely on foot."²²³ Alcuin does not suggest that the sea turned into land, or that it was altered fundamentally. Instead, he describes the sea acting in an exaggerated way—with a giant wave (and connecting current) performing the same function, but not taking the same form, as solid land.

Alcuin is clear about his intentions for this miracle story: "...what nature denies Christ's power can dispense;/ at Christ's command sea-waves become a path to the just;/ the earth is turned into a whirlpool to punish the wicked,/ the sea bears up the humble while the land engulfs

²²¹ Alcuin, York Poem, 1368-1369: "...sed fluctibus ille marinis/ suffultus graditur siccis super aequora plantis."

²²² Alcuin, York Poem, 1372-1374: "quam si dura virum accepissent arva cadentem./ ...unda fluit, casus ne laederet illum:/ gressibus arva manent, illum ne mergeret aequor;/ / ambulat ergo freto solido ceu tramite terrae"

²²³ Alcuin, York Poem, 1375-1377: "ambulat ergo freto solido ceu tramite terrae, / donec ad unidvagam pervenerat ipse carinam,/ quam mox ascendit securo calle pedester."

the proud.”²²⁴ Alcuin takes for granted that the sea is usually an agent of God’s wrath, and the land a place for His mercy. From here, Alcuin inverts the two to create an elemental absurdity that illustrates the power of Christ as nearly beyond imagining. The salvific sea stands against the newly-perilous land, upending the expected order of both the natural world and God’s interaction with it.

The exceptionalism of Balthere’s rescue, though, shrinks from its exaggerated narrative in Alcuin’s closing metaphorical conceit. The author prays, “that, just as the wave carried your body from the sea, / bearing you back in perfect safety to familiar shores, / so with your prayers you may help our souls escape / the storms of this world and enter the port of salvation.”²²⁵ He hopes that Balthere’s prayers will act neither as a sheltering ship nor a safe harbor, but as the utterly anomalous, land-like sea: effective only by the grace and power of God.

3. The Anonymous Author of the *Vita Birini*

Alcuin’s inversion marks a half-way point between the miracles of Bede and Stephen and those of the eleventh-century Benedictine revival. In her edition, *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives*, Rosalind Love argues that this resurgence of interest provides “insight into the geographically wide-spread and diverse nature” of hagiographical proliferation, “and the different ways in which the commemoration of a long-dead saint could be approached...”²²⁶ The

²²⁴ Alcuin, York Poem, 1379-1382: “Quod natura negat, hoc dat tua dextera, Christe,/ unda tuo iusso pelagi fit pervia iustis; terra sed econtra vindex fit gurgis iniquis:/ suffert ista humiles, dum devorat illa superbos.”

²²⁵ Alcuin, York Poem, 1384-1387: “ut sicut unda tuum portabat ab aequore corpus/ te sanum penitus revehens ad litora nota,/ sic precibus nostras animas evadere fluctus/ mundanos facias portumque intrare salutis.”

²²⁶ *VBir*, xii.

Life of St Birinus, "an account (over 4,500 words long) of the mission of the apostle of Wessex, was written at Winchester, a prominent administrative, ecclesiastical, and literary centre, as part of a wider hagiographical scheme, which included the Life and posthumous miracles of St Swithun."²²⁷ Both works constitute a "formal commemoration of Winchester's patron saints, mirroring Goscelin's more substantial dossier of materials composed for St Augustine's in the 1090s"²²⁸ The *vita Birini* is, above all else, a foundational narrative.

Otherwise only briefly attested in Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, almost-unknown Birinus was a seventh-century priest "sent by Pope Honorius I to continue the conversion of England" and ordained as a bishop en route.²²⁹ His mission was probably meant for central or northern England, because he is said to have been surprised that Wessex had not been Christianized, and consequently "abandoned his original intention of penetrating deeper into the region."²³⁰ The eleventh-century *vita* describes two miracles performed by Birinus: healing a blind and deaf woman, and walking on water. Despite Bede being "the principal source of information about Birinus upon which the hagiographer seems to have been dependent," he includes neither of these episodes, and there is so far no means by which we can trace the origin of either miracle.²³¹

Yet hagiographers hardly ever worked *ex nihilo*: Both miracle episodes are "strongly

²²⁷ *VBir*, xii.

²²⁸ *VBir*, xlvii.

²²⁹ *VBir*, xlix.

²³⁰ *ibid.*

²³¹ I think the biographer must have been inspired by Alcuin's treatment of Balthere, if even indirectly.

biblical in flavor," and while we cannot exclude "that the author simply invented the miracles to make up for a lack of material," Love finds some evidence that "now lost sources...could have inspired either."²³² Still, "[w]hat is perhaps most remarkable about *Vita S Birini* is the thoroughly pompous and verbose style" with which its author "contrived, with some skill and imagination, to work up a rather terse report in Bede's *HE*, into a fairly lengthy piece, without adding any significant information about Birinus except his two supposed miracles."²³³ And although "[m]uch of the rest is hagiographical commonplace...or mere padding and rhetorical amplification, often of the most desperate kind,"²³⁴ Birinus's hagiographer "evidently had sufficient familiarity with the Classical Latin poets, Vergil, Horace, and Lucan, to be able to draw upon their work for his description of the sea (ch 9), and he may also have known some form of commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid*."²³⁵

The first borrowing, from Lucan, sets the tone for the next few chapters by pitting an active, cognizant Nature against the sailor: "Nature puts the sea in his way, the position of the places resists his entry by casting the ocean between."²³⁶ Nature coordinates efforts on multiple fronts against the sailor: "The sea fights on behalf of the land, the land spews forth from the sea, so that it rages furiously at him who approaches."²³⁷ To prevent Birinus from landing in (and

²³² *VBir*, liii.

²³³ *VBir*, li.

²³⁴ *VBir*, li.

²³⁵ *VBir*, li, liii.

²³⁶ *VBir*, 18-19: "Opponit sibi mare natura; situs loci ne intret mari interiecto repugnat."

²³⁷ *VBir*, 18-19: "Pugnat mare pro terra, euomit terra mare, ut in uenientem deseuiat."

converting) Britain, the ocean “proffers marine billows, ocean brine,” and even “vaunts monstrous animals.”²³⁸ Unlike the demonically-controlled elements surrounding Germanus, these elements are imbued with self-motivated malevolence; they are cognizant enemies of Birinus, rather than tools of the demonic or divine. This anonymous hagiographer takes things further than Alcuin’s land-like sea to create an environment of extreme irregularity: one with its own psychology.

The author privileges his primary (if somewhat dynamic) metaphor: the squall simultaneously represents the trouble Birinus would meet in England.²³⁹ The storm rages even before the ship sets sail, so prior to embarkation, “the glorious bishop celebrates the divine mysteries, preparing the *viaticum* for himself and for his men.”²⁴⁰ In Greco-Roman tradition, the *viaticum* (from *viaticus*, “pertaining to a journey”) was a coin placed in the mouths of the dead so they could be ferried by Charon across the Styx.²⁴¹ In Christian practice, *viaticum* referred to the

²³⁸ *VBir*, 18-19: “Offert mare fluctus marinos sales equoreos... animalia predicat monstruosa.” “Sales aequorei” is taken from Lucan, making it one of only four phrases Love attributes to classical sources. Far from being a peddler of ancient maritime tropes, the Birinus author shows considerable originality.

²³⁹ *VBir*, 18-19: “Now indeed the raging of the sea prefigured in itself the raging of the people, but the doughty soldier of God humbly looked for glory for himself from God as much from the subduing of the sea as from the subduing of the people. (Iam in se quidem furor maris populi furorem figurabat, sed miles Dei prepotens tam de maris quam de gentis subiectione gloriam sibi a Deo humiliter expectabat).”

²⁴⁰ *VBir*, 18-19: “Interea nauim ascensurus gloriosus antistes diuina celebrat misteria, sibi suisque uaticum parans; offert Deo hostie salutaris pia libamina.”

²⁴¹ George Grabka, “Christian Viaticum: A Study of its Cultural Background.” *Traditio* 9, 1953, pp. 1-43 (4).

Eucharist administered shortly before death—the soul’s journey to God.²⁴² The “provision for a journey” had been money to the ancient practitioners, but it became bread and wine in Christian ritual. Certainly, taking the *viaticum* before a literal journey articulated the danger of travel.

Despite mentions of pre-departure blessings as far back as the *vita Ceolfridi*, this appears to be the first explicit description of the *viaticum* administered before a voyage.²⁴³ The *viaticum* “was the Eucharist that was given as close to the time of death as possible” –Birinus’s sacramental act secured his and his companions’ souls, just as the holy water and chrism did in Bede’s *HE*.²⁴⁴

After mass, “as the moment of sailing is urgent and immediate, Birinus is led hastily to the ship.”²⁴⁵ The author uses asyndeton (one of his favorite devices, Love finds) to further galvanize the already eager seamen: “upon his entering, the ship’s tackle is raised up, they wage war with nature by skill, and the sailor’s cry echoes out endlessly.”²⁴⁶ The ship buoys the sailors’

²⁴² Though the term’s “early ecclesiastical usage” extended beyond the deathbed Eucharist to include any “spiritual provision for the two great journeys—that of life and that of death” Grabka, 28.

²⁴³ The more memorable example is perhaps Willibrord’s baptism and blessing of 30 Danish boys “so that if they perished from the long sea voyage or through the ambushes of the savage dwellers of those parts he should suffer no loss in their regard.” See Talbot’s translation of Alcuin’s *Life of St Willibrord*, pp. 9-10. The Latin text, *Vita Willibrordi, arhiepiscopi Traiectensis*, is edited by Levison in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 7, 1920, pp. 81-141: www.dmgh.de

²⁴⁴ Grabka, 28.

²⁴⁵ An inversion of the usual hurry up and wait attested by so many other departure narratives. “Interea nauim ascensus gloriosus antistes diuina celebrat misteria, sibi suisque uiaticum parans...Quibus rite peractis, urgente et instante nauigationis articulo ad nauim festine deducitur...” (*VBir*, 18-19).

²⁴⁶ *VBir*, 18-19: “...quo ascendente tolluntur armamenta, naturam arte oppugnant, nauticus clamor in immensum porrigitur.” See li-*lii* for Love’s analysis of his style.

frenetic intensity: “The breeze blows, the wind rises, the sea rages, the ship is tossed up on the stormy wave. The sailors “apply themselves to the rowing, and the port is their desire, they aim at it with countenance, hand, and speech, and strive to avert from themselves danger, disaster or death.”²⁴⁷ Sailors’ countenances and desires were part of early Latin epics (including the *Aeneid*), and preserved by later hagiographers who wanted to connect an intrepid spirit of classical heroes with the religious zeal of pilgrims and missionaries.

Details of the sailors’ strain and motivation highlight Birinus’s dependence on their physical and mental states: he is at their mercy, just as he had been when they rushed him from the altar to the ship.²⁴⁸ Yet “while that ship, by much toil and sweat on the part of the sailors, ploughs the depths of the sea, St Birinus remembers that” he left his corporal (*palla*) behind, having been “carried away by the business of the embarkation and hindered by the urging and bawling sailors.”²⁴⁹ The *palla* has posed some problems for medievalists, but Love asserts, “what seems to be intended here is a corporal with a Host wrapped in it.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ *VBir*, 18-19: “Flat aura, uentus insurgit, deseuit mare, nauis unda tumultuante succutitur. Insistunt naute remigio, illum uultu manu sermone requirunt, periculum dampnum mortem se declinare contendunt.”

²⁴⁸ The sense is that Birinus is intimidated by these sailors, and that he even feels like something of a prisoner on board their ship, just as Paul had been in Acts 27. Love points out that the mariners’ worship of Birinus has roots in Acts 28:6 and Acts 14:10 (p. 25).

²⁴⁹ *VBir*, 18-19: “Dum autem nauis illa multo labore multoque sudore nautarum alta sulcaret pelagi, reminiscitur beatur birinus se quod carius quod pretiosibus sibi erat amisisse seque a negotionis correptum et nautis conclamantibusque prepeditem in littore unde ascenerat reliquisse.” Love writes that “it seems mistaken...to regard Birinus’s ‘palla’ as being the equivalent of chrismal, since it was evidently not any kind of box” (n.1, p. 21).

²⁵⁰ *VBir*, 18-19: “Interea nauim ascensurus gloriosus antistes diuina celebrat misteria, sibi suisque uiticum parans; offert Deo hostile salutaris pia libamina.” Love further clarifies, “In Western liturgical use, from about the 4th cent., the ‘palla corporalis’ was a large linen cloth, spread on the altar so that the bread and wine could be consecrated over it” (n.1, p.21).

Birinius's hagiographer insists that the "great bishop, wholly wise, also prudent, had not sinned out of negligence or foolishness," but rather as "part of God's plan that the servant of God, who had been hitherto in obscurity, might by this deed be brought to popular notice."²⁵¹ He does not have the presence of mind of a monastic leader like Cuthbert, or divine prophecy, like Aidan; Birinus seems utterly unaware that he will participate in a miraculous event. The hagiographer, though, is certain: "Therefore, it fell to the power of a miracle that [the sailors] might be plucked from their benighted state, so that understanding, once lost, might be restored in them, and that they might desist from the deception of error..."²⁵² For the Winchester author, only a miracle can bring understanding to the minds of these men. One wonders how well that was received by the monks and priests who had committed their lives to the exegetical exercises of commentary or homiletic writing.

Birinus stoically sheds his initial sorrow and seeks a logical solution to the dilemma: he "applies his mind and looks to see whether he could in any way regain that which he has lost."²⁵³ The object of his gaze is unclear; perhaps the hagiographer imagined that he was scanning the horizon for a break in the storm. If he does so, it is to no avail: "He longs to return, but the power of nature, not to be scorned, resists."²⁵⁴ Undeterred, "he consults the sailors, he investigates the

²⁵¹ *VBir*, 20-21: "Notandum est autem tantum pontificem admodum sagacem, prudentem adeo, non ex negligentia uel inipientia sic peccasse, sed qui dispositionis erat dinine, ut seruus Dei qui adhuc celabatur, per hoc factum communi traderetur notitie."

²⁵² *VBir*, 20-21: "Veniture ergo ad uirtutem miraculi ut de nocte in qua erant eruerentur, ut perditus in eis repararetur intuitus, ubi ab erroris illusionem recederent, et ad uiam ueritatis se omnino conuerterent, ut Deum et seruum illius agnoscere preualerent."

²⁵³ *VBir*, 20-21: "attendit, obseruat si quod amisit aliqua posset ratione recipere."

²⁵⁴ *VBir*, 20-21: "attendit, obseruat si quod amisit aliqua posset ratione recipere. Cupit reuerti, sed uirtus nature non temeranda resistit."

art of rowing, he vows many things and promises much.”²⁵⁵ Yet neither the elements nor the sailors relent.

Again, the expectations of his inquiry on board are somewhat vague; one wonders what the hagiographer had in mind when he described the bishop “investigat[ing] the art of rowing,” or indeed, how that study would have helped him reach his goal. It is possible that the hagiographer intended to lampoon the discourse of logic and “second causes” by making Birinus’s quest for knowledge so absurd. In any event, Birinus is testing his environment and trying to acquire nautical skills, desperately trying to find a way to return to shore. He exhausts all of his options—including bribery—to go back for his corporal. Hyperbolically, his hagiographer creates a situation in which walking off the ship and into the raging billows seems like the next logical step. That he does so is consistent with the hypothesis that the author wanted to show the limits of learning without faith. It is also consistent with the author’s predilection for inversion: by the end of the episode, Birinus is positioned as an expert in the faith, then as a capable (if redundant) skipper.

While Birinus is eager to ask for help from his fellow man, he is reluctant to petition God for aid—a reticence his hagiographer justifies as a consequence of his humility. Yet this disinclination to test the mercy of Christ is at odds with the motivation of Peter, who challenges Jesus to prove His identity as He approached the storm-tossed ship on the Sea of Galilee. Nevertheless, as the sea continues to rage, Birinus descends into battle, “[a]rmed with faith,” and

²⁵⁵ It is tempting to see this as almost Aristotelian. In “Riddles, Wonder and Responsiveness in Anglo-Saxon Literature” Patricia Dailey summarizes the findings of Bynum: “Wonder initiates the sequence of *admiratio*, *questio*, *investigatio*, and *inventio* (wonder, questioning, investigation and discovery). . .” In *Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare A. Lees, 2012, pp. 451-472 (453).

“the sea renders the service of solidity to him whom solidity of faith was carrying to the Lord.”²⁵⁶ The only solution for Birinus is an act of faith, not an act of study or persuasion.

The narrative sustains another set of inversed expectations in the ocean’s being awestruck by Birinus. Traditionally, marvels were understood to be the product of the natural world acting out of (what humans perceive as) order. But here, the forces of nature marvel at the unexpected capability of a man, and undergo an elemental change:

The sea is brought to a standstill in amazement at the new and unfamiliar passage over it, but responds to and rejoices in the command of Him giving the order. The true nature of the sea rejoices to be put aside, because it was complying with Him Who had created it. Nor does it lament the loss but rejoices as if over an increase, while, upon God’s bringing about a change, it performs the function of dry land. It marveled at the passage of the human but gave heed to the power of God. The element’s light and mobile property, in order to serve God’s servant, is made strong and stable.²⁵⁷

The sea experiences the wonder of the miracle, and knows that God is the author of it. The natural entity’s capacity for thought may have classical roots, but it also has contemporary parallels with the vernacular riddle tradition, in which inanimate objects have a voice, an identity, and of course, enigmatic if not altogether confounding qualities.²⁵⁸

Like Alcuin, the author of the *vita Birini* leaves out the most important lesson of this

²⁵⁶ *VBir*, 22-23: “fide armatus in mare descendit... Prestat mare soliditatis obsequium quem fidei soliditas uehebat ad Dominum.”

²⁵⁷ *VBir*, 22-23: “Stupet mare nouum et inusitatem iter, sed ad ilubentis imperium prestat et gaudet. Natura maris se gaudet exemptam, quia obtemperabat ei, qui creauerat eam. Nec deplorat dampnum sed gaudet quasi de cremento, dum Deo commutante terre fungitur officio. Viam mirabatur humanam sed diuiniam attendebat potentiam. Natura elementi leuis et mobilis ut Dei seruo seruiret, facta est fortis et stabilis.”

²⁵⁸ Dailey remembers that “Boethius is taught to perceive the world properly, to restore wonder by means of adopting a proper mental disposition towards worldly things” because wonder “must be taught or restored to the mind” (471).

Gospel episode: without Christ, Peter sinks after looking at his feet above the waves and becoming afraid. Birinus's experience of walking across the water is the opposite of Peter's: "Great was your faith, St Birinus; great and immeasurable faith is your ship, and strength of mind is your oars. Seated in the ship you feared the sea, but walking through the sea you do not fear it."²⁵⁹ Moreover, "strength of mind" suggests that the author might challenge and refine rather than completely discredit the mental effort involved in discerning and experiencing faith.

By describing the mechanisms by which the sea became land, the author removes any praeternatural agency from the saint, who does nothing except walk across a stretch of solid ground. Indeed, his walk across the water-land has no immediate effect beyond the retrieval of his corporal. When he returns, the ocean and wind are rendered in equally impossible stasis. Despite the wind and wave, Birinus's ship is perfectly still: "the sails are unfurled, the sail-yards are bowed, the oars crash together, all the ship's tackle strains," but it does not move.²⁶⁰ The ocean's elemental transformation and the wind's forceful yet ineffectual gusts defy the most basic physical realities of the ocean in beautifully creative depiction of the unimaginable. And while wonder is meant to open the mind to belief, it is not enough to turn the heart to God.

The shock of the moment is a preparatory step towards conversion. Benedicta Ward finds that Augustine had described:

three levels of wonder: wonder provoked by the acts of God visible daily and discerned by wise men as signs of God's goodness; wonder provoked in the ignorant, who did not understand the workings of nature and therefore could be amazed by what to the wise man was not unusual, and wonder provoked by genuine miracles, unusual manifestations

²⁵⁹ *VBir*, 22-23: "Magna erat fides tua, beate Birine, magna et immensa fides tibi pro nauis est, pro remigio fortitudo mentis est."

²⁶⁰ *VBir*, 22-23: "Tendentur carbasa, antennae curvantur, concutiuntur remi, omnia nauis armamenta laborant."

of the power of God, not *contra naturam* but *praeter* or *supra naturam*.²⁶¹

The author of the *vita Birini* seems to combine them all when he describes the wonder of the sailors: “The master of the ship marvels, the sailors marvel and are stunned, but they do not recognize the power of God.”²⁶² They do not understand that “the winds, the sea, and the art of sailing have all lost their quality.”²⁶³ The sailors become students of their spiritual, rather than physical surroundings: “they are intent upon searching out the means of their salvation, they seek the ordinances of salvation and life.”²⁶⁴ The inherent *quality* of the sea had not been changed by earlier hagiographers, but here, the Birinus author invokes an ontological category reaching back to Aristotle. In doing so, he hits the crux of the miracle question: where can direct, divine interference be most distinguished from otherwise independent works of nature? By voiding the very qualities of the sea and air, and even those of “the art of sailing,” this hagiographer creates the most vivid picture of Nature’s subservience to God, who is stripping the elements of their most basic categories of meaning.

Birinus, too, is a student of the divine as he begins to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit on board the ship. After preaching to the sailors and hearing their confessions, he “blessed some water, sprinkled it over them and they were baptized...blessing God in his marvelous

²⁶¹ Ward, Benedicta. *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*. Revised edition, Wildwood House Limited, 1987, pp.3-4.

²⁶² *VBir*, 24-25: “Miratur magister nauis, naute mirantur et stupent, nec Dei agnoscunt uirtutem.”

²⁶³ *VBir*, 24-25: “Mirantur uentos mare artem nauigandi suam omnia perdidisse naturam, nec Dei attendunt ese pontentiam.”

²⁶⁴ *VBir*, 26-27: “...satagunt de salute sua inquirere, precepta reuirunt salutis et uite.”

works.”²⁶⁵ The transformation enervates the hitherto indefatigable mariners, who, like those in the divinely-steered ship of *Andreas*, fall asleep under a heaven-sent drowsiness. And although the ship “could not suffer shipwreck,” Birinus nevertheless “climbed up to the captain’s post, having recently become skilled in sailing, so that he might physically guide the ship through the waves of the sea, just as he was to guide the Church spiritually through the floods and whirlwinds of the world.”²⁶⁶ Finally, “[a]s the ship enters the harbour, the sailors awake, and heap upon the Lord, the guardian of their safety, and His servant, St Birinus, worthy praises of proclamation, as best as they are able.”²⁶⁷ Like all the others in this chapter who had been rescued or recovered from shipwreck, they are miraculously borne by the wondrous nature of the English seas.

Bede, Stephen, Alcuin, and the Winchester author each uses the sea as a *tabula rasa* on which to inscribe varying perspectives of miracles of the natural world. What all narratives have in common is the surprising fact that each and every one of them reveals to the saint something of the sea that is both real and otherwise hidden. None of these maritime miracles bring the saint into contact with “the otherworld” of heaven or hell. For all its divine mystery, the sea is a quintessential space of this world, not the next.

²⁶⁵ *VBir*, 26-27: “Benedixit denique aquam, respersit super eos et baptizati sunt, fidem sante trinitatis ore et corde confitentes, Deum in mirabilibus suis laudantes et benedicentes.”

²⁶⁶ *VBir*, 26-27: Ascendit interim beatus Birinus in locum magistri, peritus nauis de recenti effectus, ut inter undas maris nauim regeret corporaliter, wui inter fluctus mundi et turbines. recurtus erat ecclesiam spiritualiter.”

²⁶⁷ *VBir*, 26-27: “Intrante autem nauis in portum, euigilantes naute custodem salutis sue Dominum et seruum eius beatum Birinum dignis ut preualent preconiorum laudibus accumulans.”

CHAPTER 4: MEMORY AND LITURGY AT THE RIVERBANK

Hagiographers valued the placelessness of the sea in their works, but doing so did not preclude them from having a narrative interest in rivers, as well. This chapter argues hagiographers use riverine episodes—both miraculous and non-miraculous—to tie Christian worship to the landscape. In practice, rivers were often crucial to the foundations of monasteries in England and abroad. In literature, hagiographers depict rivers as belonging to monastic settlements, and in some cases, as legitimate substitutes for a physical church. Stories of Anglo-Saxon missions abroad occasionally privilege the riverine narrative over the maritime one; that three missionaries were martyred on the banks of a river, among the portable trappings of the travelling liturgy, suggests that open-air worship at the riverside was a powerful, and threatening, image abroad.²⁶⁸ When sketching a map of Christianity's expansion, Anglo-Latin hagiographers are more interested in the locality of rivers than the openness of the English Channel.

1. Rivers at Home

In his study of the Anglo-Saxon church and its environment, John Blair writes that between *ca.* 650 and *ca.* 850, “[m]ost minsters stood near water, whether rivers or the sea,” and that the most popular sites for these communities were on “[p]eninsulas enclosed by converging

²⁶⁸ In fact, the ultimate triumph of Boniface is not only that he gave his life for Christ, but also that his body was brought miraculously, against the current of the Rhine, to his final resting place in Fulda.

ivers, or sites on tributaries two or three miles above confluences.”²⁶⁹ But for all of these establishments, “proximity to navigable water was important everywhere.”²⁷⁰ Navigation to and from these sites was vital, but many literary sources have obscured (intentionally or not) the richness of interaction that occurred around these riverine and coastal foundations.

Blair suggests that Anglo-Saxons were self-conscious about their relationship with their environs, even if they were silent about mundane interactions with them: “unlike the place-names of Christian sites in Wales and Cornwall,” which “generally refer to saints and churches, English minster names tend...to be topographical.”²⁷¹ He suspects that “the Anglo-Saxons’ intense and fine-grained interest in the landscape, and their wide vocabulary for the natural world” explains this proclivity.²⁷²

The twin monasteries at Jarrow and Wearmouth are perhaps two of the most famous examples of this naming tradition. Grocock and Wood point out that Bede intentionally begins the first book of *Historia Abbatum* “with Ecgfrith’s grant of Wearmouth to Benedict Biscop” and “ends [it] with the amalgamation of Wearmouth and Jarrow.”²⁷³ They argue convincingly that Wearmouth and Jarrow were not initially imagined as one monastery in two places, but as two distinct establishments. The Wear’s centrality to the narrative is evident in Bede’s first sentence: “The pious servant of Christ Biscop, also called Benedict, was inspired by the grace from above

²⁶⁹ Blair, John. *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford University Press, p. 193.

²⁷⁰ Blair, 193.

²⁷¹ Blair, 195.

²⁷² Blair, 195.

²⁷³ Grocock, Christopher and I.N. Wood, eds. *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2013, xxiv. Hereafter *HA*.

and built a monastery in honour of Peter, the most blessed prince of apostles, next to the mouth of the river Wear on the northern bank.”²⁷⁴ The founder of Wearmouth, Benedict Biscop, went to Rome six times over the course of his tenure. Yet Bede preserves almost no nautical detail about Biscop’s voyages to, within, or from the Continent. Instead, Bede focuses on the experiences, people, and objects Benedict brought back.²⁷⁵ Ceolfrid, an eventual successor of Benedict, had accompanied him on at least one acquisitional journey to Rome. Less than a decade after their return, Ecgfrith gave more land to Benedict for the expansion of his monastery, but commanded that the extension be dedicated to St Paul (Jarrow). Bede and the anonymous author seem to carefully avoid locating this monastery in geographical space. For the uninitiated, both narratives make it easy to imagine that Jarrow is next door to, rather than almost ten miles away from, Wearmouth. Both authors intended to convey a sense of unity between the two houses, and we now know that this unification was, at first, more literary than historical. By avoiding descriptions (and even the name) of Jarrow and the Tyne, Bede and the anonymous hagiographer imagine a community that is unified by space, at the very least. As a result, Ceolfrid’s remarkable crossing of the Wear can be studied in literary proximity with both foundations.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ *HA*, 22-23: “Religiosus Christi famulus Biscopus cognomento Benedictus, aspirante superna gratia, monasterium construxit in honore beatissimi apostolorum principis Petri, iuxta ostium fluminis Viuri ad aquilonem...”

²⁷⁵ From his third journey to Rome, Biscop returns with “a good many books of all divine teaching” which were either purchased “at a reasonable price” or “enriched by the gift of his friends (...compleuit librosque omnis diuinae eruditionis non paucos uel placito pretio emptos uel amicorum dono largitus retulit)” (*HA*, pp 31, 30).

²⁷⁶ Jarrow is on the south side of the Tyne and Wearmouth on the north side of the Wear; they are connected by land, which makes it easier to imagine that they share property.

Once considered to predate the *HA*, the *Vita Ceolfridi* is now thought to have been written after Bede's account (perhaps, in part, to fill in what Bede left out). Grocock and Wood point out that "Bede's account ends in 716 with the death of Ceolfrith in Langres, and the decision by some brothers to stay at the abbot's burial place" while a second group went on to Rome and a third turned back to Northumbria.²⁷⁷ The anonymous author, on the other hand, "goes on to record the journey to Rome of those who continued with the Codex Amiantinus, and their return with a papal letter to Wearmouth –Jarrow."²⁷⁸ The editors believe that Bede is more likely to have not seen, rather than intentionally excluded, the papal letter; they therefore suggest that he wrote *HA* before the emissaries of the Codex Amiantinus returned to England in the spring of 717, and the anonymous author wrote *VC* after their arrival.

Bede and the anonymous author describe what might be the earliest literary witnesses to a riverside processional service in England. Both authors record the secrecy of Ceolfrid's plan to accompany a troop of monks already scheduled to leave for Rome. Both also depict the resistance Ceolfrid met from the brethren at Jarrow (again unnamed) and Wearmouth. Both describe a lengthy service that included incense, the Eucharist, more than one kiss of peace, and Ceolfrid's various admonitions to maintain unity with Jarrow, before the party arrives at the bank of the Wear.²⁷⁹ Bede writes that Ceolfrid "offered up a prayer, and went on board with his companions."²⁸⁰ He continues: "The deacons of the church went on board carrying lighted

²⁷⁷ *HA*, xxi

²⁷⁸ *HA*, xxi

²⁷⁹ The anonymous author provides much more liturgical than does Bede. See Éamonn O'Carragain's Jarrow Lecture, "The City of Rome and the World of Bede," 1995.

²⁸⁰ *HA*, 64-65: "...dat orationem, ascendit nauem cum comitibus"

candles and a cross of gold. He crossed the river, bowed to the cross, got on his horses, and left, leaving behind a good six hundred brothers in his monasteries.”²⁸¹ The structure of this last sentence collapses time into one final, fluid act of departure.

The author of the *VC* begins the riverside scene similarly: “a prayer was said on the shore, he went on board the ship, and sat in the bows; the deacons sat next to him, one holding the golden cross he had made, the other holding lighted candles.”²⁸² Initially, the only appreciable change is that Ceolfrid and his attendants are seated on board. But the anonymous author’s great distinction comes from his description of Ceolfrid’s point of view from the ship:

As the ship sailed swiftly across the river, he looked across at the brothers mourning his departure, and heard the glorious sound of their song mingled with their grief, and he could not prevent himself from giving way to sobs and tears. However, he repeated this one phrase in a loud voice: ‘Christ have mercy on this company! Almighty God, protect this troop!...’²⁸³

The prayers, songs, and sobs in which he had taken part on land are sustained on board the ship, which in a realized metaphor has become a nave. The ship acts as another place of service, just

²⁸¹ *HA*, 64-65: “Ascendunt et diacones ecclesiae cereas ardentes et crucem ferentes auream, transiit flumen, adorat crucem, ascendit equum, et abiit relictis in monasteriis suis fratribus numero ferme sexcentorum”

²⁸² The *Life of Ceolfrid* is included in Grocock and Wood’s *HA*. Quotations taken from *Vita Ceolfridi* are marked *Vceol*. “...ed dicta in litore oratione ascendit nauem, resided in prora, sederunt iuxta diacones, unus crucem quam fecerat auream, alter caereas tenens ardentes” (*Vceol*, 106-107).

²⁸³ *Vceol*, 106-107: “Currente trans fluuium nauis, aspectans contra merentes suo abscessu fratres, audiensque sonum sublimem mixti cum luctu carminis, ullatenus uauit ipse a singultu et lacrimis temperare. Hoc autem solum crebra uoce repetiit: ‘Christi, misere illi coetui! Domine omnipotens, protégé illam cohortem!’”

as St Peter's had, and the river is made part of Wearmouth's monastery. From the boat, Ceolfrid continues the service by responding to the brethren he leaves behind.²⁸⁴

Moments later he "bowed to the cross, got on his horse, and left, leaving behind the cares of worldly matters, and hastening from the race of the Angles to lands where, freer and purer in spirit to contemplate the company of angels, he might make his way to heaven."²⁸⁵ Suddenly, his eighty attendants and six hundred brethren fall completely away.²⁸⁶ In the same spirit as Bede, the anonymous author describes Ceolfrid adoring the cross, mounting a horse, and riding far beyond the frame of the narrative. But as a place of worship, the boat anchors the river to the monastic space of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The silent dismissal, in which he turns his back to the community and all the spaces they inhabit, is what marks his actual departure.

Richter believes this sorrowful departure in the *vita* was "presented as a classic Irish-style *peregrinatio*," but even he acknowledges that Ceolfrith's motivations do not match those of the Irish *peregrini*. The conflict can be resolved when one considers a nuanced and more precise understanding of *peregrinatio*, as put forth by Lawson.²⁸⁷ Alternatively, one need look only to

²⁸⁴ For an in-depth study of Ceolfrid's soundscape, see "Sensing the Sea: Sounds of Sailors in Anglo-Saxon Literature." *Water in Anglo-Saxon England*, Brills, forthcoming

²⁸⁵ *VCeol*, 106-107: "Sic egressus nauem adorat ad crucem, ascenditque equum, et abiit, abiectis saefularium rerum curis, festinans ab ipsa quoque cognata sibi Anglorum gente peregrinari in terris quo liberior puriorque animo ad contemplanda angelorum consortia redderetur in caelis."

²⁸⁶ In *Journeys from Jarrow*, Richard Morris suggests that he intentionally travelled by land (after crossing the Wear) so the news of his successor's election could reach him before he crossed the Channel. Jarrow Lecture Series, St Paul's Parish Church Council, 2004, p. 20.

²⁸⁷ See Helen Lawson, *Navigating Northumbria: Mobility, Allegory, and Writing Travel in Early Medieval Northumbria*. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2016, especially pp. 109-150.

the writings of Gregory and Paulinus (and of course, Aldhelm, Alcuin, and Boniface) for examples of emotional departures on riverbanks.²⁸⁸

The atmospherically calm if emotionally torrential crossing of the Wear finds its inverse narrative in Ceolfrid's subsequent near-fatal crossing of the English Channel. After a month-long wait, Ceolfrith makes three failed attempts at reaching France; the fourth lands him on the Continent, but nearly drowns him in the process. One might expect our anonymous author to take full advantage of the perilous voyage across the Channel as a reflection on the hardship of mortal life, or an opportunity to display Ceolfrith's power of prayer as a means by which the ship was saved. Yet this voyage is marked only as an exception to his regular practice of taking communion: he receives the host every day, except during the final days of his fatal illness on land and "the one day when his ship was storm-tossed and he was hard at work sailing."²⁸⁹ Grocock and Wood read between the lines: "he was bailing out the ship."²⁹⁰ The implications of the underlying assumption—that he would have taken the host in something like a *missa nautica* described by 13th century liturgist Durandus—gives a tantalizing glimpse of what happened during some of these crossings.²⁹¹ The scene is perhaps mournfully quiet: there are no psalms or prayers for salvation, no vials of holy oil or invocations of saints. In this dire moment, Ceolfrith

²⁸⁸ Especially in poetic prolegomena.

²⁸⁹ *VCeol*, 114-115: "excepta illa duntaxat una qua quatientibus nauem procellis tota laborabat in mari, et quattuor ante obitum suum diebus."

²⁹⁰ *VCeol*, p 114, n.164.

²⁹¹ Durandus, "in his book *De Ritibus*, (1.2.c.4)" describes a mass sung without the canon as sometimes "called *the seaman's mass*, *missa nautica*, because it was used [sic?] to be celebrated at sea and upon the rivers, where by reason of the motion and agitation of the waves the sacrifice could hardly be offered without danger of effusion." Joseph Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 1885, p. 365.

is not served by anything except his own manual labor and that of his fellow voyagers.²⁹² Bede later relates that eighty men had accompanied Ceolfrith on this journey (or, rather, the other way round); but there is no sense of community on this ship.

If water transport made communion difficult, it made baptism readily available. In *HE*, Bede records that Paulinus took great advantage of nearby rivers in his missionary work in England—especially in his capacity of bringing the Northumbrians, named for their proximity to the river Humber, into the fold.²⁹³ His first step in this process was to accompany the Christian, Kentish princess Æthelbruh back to her native Northumbria, to be married to the pagan King Edwin of Northumbria, who had given his assurance that she could maintain her faith in their marriage.²⁹⁴ Paulinus seems to have been appointed bishop on the occasion of this journey, and was thereby qualified “to make sure by daily instruction and the celebration of the heavenly sacraments that she and her companions were not polluted by contact with the heathen.”²⁹⁵ On Easter Eve the next year, Edwin survived an assassination attempt and Æthelburh survived the birth of a healthy daughter. By Pentecost, their baby was “the first of the Northumbrian race to be baptized, together with eleven others of [Edwin’s] household.”²⁹⁶ Still, Edwin was not among

²⁹² It is rare to find an account of mortal danger at sea that does not include any sense of human heroism or divine intervention.

²⁹³ *HE* II. ix, 162-163: “the Northumbrian race, that is the English race which dwelt north of the river Humber (Quo tempore etiam gens Nordanhymbrorum, hoc est ea natio Anglorum quae ad aquilonalem Humbræ fluminis plagam habitabat).”

²⁹⁴ Bede writes that the betrothal occurred in 625, though the date is debated. The date is debated, but again, what Bede believed to be true is most relevant.

²⁹⁵ *HE* II. ix, 162-163: “ne paganorum possent societate pollui, cotidiana et exhortatione et sacramentorum caelestium celebratione confirmaret.”

²⁹⁶ *HE*, II. ix, 166-167: “prima de gente Nordanhymbrorum cum xi aliis de familia eius.”

this number; he was rather prudent about his conversion, and by all accounts seems to have been genuinely concerned with its repercussions for his soul and his kingdom, and perhaps also his own well-being if the aristocracy rejected Christianity.

According to Bede, Paulinus succeeded in converting Edwin by first converting the king's high priest, who was so fervent a convert that he destroyed some of the riverside altars "which he himself had consecrated."²⁹⁷ These altars are still visible, Bede reminds his reader, but the site has been renamed as *Godmunddingaham* (Goodmanham).²⁹⁸ Bede edifies this riverside place of worship within communal, visual, memory—just as he does for the foundations of three riverside churches which are either abandoned or partially destroyed. In all of these examples, Bede rescues these places from oblivion by tying them directly to their location along rivers. So on Easter Day in 627, Edwin "was baptized at York...in the church of St Peter the Apostle, which he had hastily built of wood while he was a catechumen and under instruction before he received baptism."²⁹⁹ Edwin's church, is founded on and for the occasion of baptisms, at one of the many Humber estuaries circumscribing Northumbria's conversion.

During another visit "to the king [Edwin] and queen in their royal palace at Yeavinger, [Paulinus] spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechizing and baptizing [...] in the

²⁹⁷ *HE*, II. xiii, 186-187: "polluit ac destruxit eas, quas ipsse sacrauerat aras."

²⁹⁸ *HE*, II. xiii, 186-187.

²⁹⁹ *HE*, II. xiv, 186-187: "Baptizatus est autem Eburaci die sancto paschae pridie iduum Aprilium, in ecclesia sancti Petri apostoli, quam ibidem ipse de ligno, cum cathecizaretur atque ad percipiendum baptismum inbueretur, citato opere construxit." He later began construction on a stone church, which was unfinished at the time of his murder. This is reminiscent of the church that Germanus had built for the baptism of the British soldiers before their miraculous victory over the Picts and Saxons.

river Glen, which was close at hand.”³⁰⁰ The royal estate “was left deserted in the time of the kings who followed Edwin, and another was built but instead in a place called Maelmin,” yet is worth recording in the landscape of England’s conversion history, and made more permanent by the presence of the Glen.³⁰¹ Paulinus also baptised Northumbrians in the southern kingdom of Deira, while he was a guest of the king. And again, the baptisms are marked by the river in which they take place. These, for instance, were performed “in the river Swale which flows beside the town of Catterick [...because] they were not yet able to build chapels or baptisteries there in the earliest days of the church.” And yet, “in Campodonum, where there was also a royal dwelling, he built a church (which was later burned down but reconstructed in stone).”³⁰² Riverine baptisms are foundational sacraments for English Christianity. Bede preserves these foundations—some of which fell quickly into disrepair, as explicitly riverside establishments built for baptism. These rivers joined the liturgical foundations of the English church to the preexisting English landscape.

Paulinus continued his preaching and riverside baptisms even farther south, bringing his program of baptism and construction along with him: “Paulinus also preached the word in the kingdom of Lindsey, the first land on the south bank of the river Humber, bordering on the

³⁰⁰ *HE*, II. xiv, 188-189: “ut quodam tempore Paulinus ueniens cum rege et regina in uillam regiam, quae uacatur Adgefrin, xxxvi diebus ibidem cum eis cathecizandi et batizandi officio deditus moraretur.”; “atque instructam in fluuio Gleni, qui proximus erat, lauacro remissionis abluere”

³⁰¹ *HE*, II. xiv, 188-189: “Haec uilla tempore sequentium regum deserta, et alia pro illa est facta in loco qui uacatur Maelmin.”

³⁰² *HE*, II.xiv, 188-189: “baptizabat in fluuio Sualua, qui uicum Cataractam praeterfluit; nondum enim oratoria uel baptisteria in ipso exordio nascentis ibi ecclesiae poterant aedificari. Attamen in Campodono, ubi tunc etiam uilla regia erat, fecit basilicam, quam postmodum pagani, a quibus Eduini rex occisus est, cum tota eadem uilla succenderunt...”

sea.”³⁰³ This was surely strategic: Lindsey’s location made it an ideal place for trade, and it is likely that the stone church erected there was initially well-supported before its roof fell in, “either through long neglect or by the hand of the enemy.”³⁰⁴ The church’s foundation at the river, no doubt driven by practicality, was still a valuable act with which Bede could describe these churches as part of the past and present.

Indeed, these river baptisms were so momentous that stories about them acquired the same kind of authorization as miracles:

A priest and abbot of the monastery of Partney, named Deda, a most truthful man, told me this, regarding the faith of the kingdom; a certain old man told him that he had been baptized at noon by Bishop Paulinus, in the presence of King Edwin together with a great crowd of people, in the river Trent, near a city which the English call Tiowulfingacæstir (Littleborough)....³⁰⁵

Again, England’s ecclesiastical history and physical geography are intertwined. If England is “an island of the ocean” set apart from the rest of the world, it is nevertheless one within which rivers provide rich interconnectivity.³⁰⁶ Bede shows that successful riverside rituals incorporated the waterway into the memorialized landscape of a church or monastery.

³⁰³ *HE*, II. xvi, 190-193: “Praedicabat autem Paulinus uerbum etiam prouinciae Lindissi quae est prima ad meridianam Humbrae fluminis ripam, pertingens usque ad mare...”

³⁰⁴ *HE* II.16, 192-193: “uel longa incuria uel hostili manu.”

³⁰⁵ *HE* II., xvi, 192-193: “De huius fide prouinciae narrauit mihi presbyter et abbas quidam uir ueracissimus de monasterio Peartaneu, uocabulo Deda, rettulisse sibi quendam seniore, baptizatum se fuisse die media a Paulino episcopo praesente rege Eduino, et multam populi turbam, in fluuio Treenta iuxta ciuitatem quae lingua Anglorum Riouulfingacaester uocatur...”

³⁰⁶ *HE*, I.i, 14-15: “Oceani insula”

As central as rivers were to foundation narratives in England, they were likewise crucial components of the promotion of missionary memory and martyrs' cults on the continent. Ecgbert, Bede's favorite pilgrim, had been studying in Ireland (a regular practice for early Anglo-Saxon monks) when he survived the great plague of 664 that wiped out his host monastery. He subsequently vowed that he would undertake the pilgrim's life (*peregriniam ducere uitam*) by never returning to his native England. Each time Bede associates Ecgbert with *peregrinatio*, he uses the same formula: *peregrinam ducere uitam*.³⁰⁷ Ecgbert's commitment to this promise is clear from his travels, which under other circumstances would have certainly involved his stopping over in England.³⁰⁸

For all his success as a *peregrinus*, Ecgbert was a failed missionary. Wishing to partake in the mission to Germany, Ecgbert began making arrangements at the now-lost monastery of Rath Melsigi, thought to have been close to the River Barrow.³⁰⁹ During Ecgbert's preparations,

³⁰⁷ In Chapter xiii of Book III, Bede writes that he lived a pilgrim's life in Ireland. The same phrase also describes the penitential exercise of Fursa (III.xiii), the pious intention of Hild (IV. xxiii), and the reiteration of Ecgbert's vow (V. ix). It is likewise echoed in Wihbert's experience, "...in Hibernia peregrinus anchoriticam in magna perfectione uitam egerat" (V. ix). Gallic and Irish hagiographies (like those of Martin and Columba, for instance) frequently feature boats as sites of their saints' miraculous performances. The Gallic tradition features riverine miracles for male and female saints. The Irish tradition also engages with small craft, perhaps most famously in the earliest narrative of the Loch Ness monster. Voyaging across the northern seas, however, belongs to a different genre altogether.

³⁰⁸ Ecgbert's *peregrinatio* is not static. Nevertheless, *peregrinatio* is a state of being in exile from rather than a journey to somewhere else.

³⁰⁹ Kirby, D.P. "Cuthbert, Boisil of Melrose and the Northumbrian Priest Ecgbert: Some Historical and Hagiographical Connections." *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, edited by Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard, Four Courts Press, 2001, pp. 48-53 (52). Kirby cites Ó Cróinín's claim that Rath Melsigi was in Clonmelsh—an inland county, in which the only (and barely?) navigable waterway would have been the River Barrow.

the spirit of his (deceased) teacher Boisil appeared to Ecgbert's colleague in a dream to reveal "that Ecgbert cannot perform this proposed journey" because God willed "that he should go instead and give instruction in the monasteries of Columba."³¹⁰ Bede and his reader know already that Boisil is right; Ecgbert would later be present at Iona during their acceptance of the Roman Easter calculus.³¹¹

Ecgbert resists the message and asks the intermediary monk to keep his vision a secret. Boisil visits the dreamer twice more to emphasize his point; by the third warning, Ecgbert acknowledges the truth of the vision, but continues with his plan in willful ignorance of God's intention and commands. When the ship is ready and the sailors wait only for fair wind, "there arose a fierce tempest in which some of the goods in the ship were lost and it [the ship] was left lying on its side in the water."³¹² The river keeps Ecgbert in his place, within the bounds of the monastery.

When Ecgbert saw that his and his companions' cargo had been saved, he recited "the words of the prophet [Jonah], 'For my sake this tempest is upon you'" before "he withdrew from the undertaking and resigned himself to staying at home."³¹³ By quoting Jonah at this riverside marvel, Ecgbert acknowledges that, like Jonah's, his intentional refusal of God's orders had

³¹⁰ *HE*, V. ix, 476-479: "Dei enim uoluntatis est, ut ad Columbae monasteria magis docenda pergat."

³¹¹ Kirby, 51.

³¹² *HE*, V. ix, 478-479: "Cumque iam nauis inposuissent, quae tanti itineris necessitas poscebat, atque oportunos aliquot diebus uentos expectarent, facta est nocte quadam tam saeva tempestas, quae perditis nonnulla ex parte his quae nauis in rebus, ipsam in latus iacentem inter undas relinqueret; saluata sunt tamen omnia, quae erant Ecbercti et sociorum eius."

³¹³ *HE*, V. ix, 478-479: "Tum ipse quasi propheticum illud dicens, quia 'propter me est tempestas haec', subtraxit se illi profectioni, et remanere domi passus est".

threatened the voyage for all who would be on the ship.³¹⁴

Egbert eventually relinquished his own participation in the mission, but did not abandon it altogether. Instead he sent Wihtbert, a man “remarkable both for his contempt of the world and for his learning” to Frisia. After two years, neither the Frisian King Radbod nor any of his people had converted, and Wihtbert came back to Ireland. Bede writes conciliatorily that he “returned to his beloved place of exile...and although he failed to help strangers to the faith, yet he too care to help his own people more, by example of his virtues.”³¹⁵ Egbert still did not give up on the mission; he later sent Willibrord and eleven others, “to visit Pippin, duke of the Franks, by whom they were graciously received...”³¹⁶ This royal patronage seems to have made all the difference: Pippin “had just driven King Radbod out of nearer Frisia and had taken it over” and “he sent them to preach there” with “the support of his royal authority so that no one should molest them as they preached.”³¹⁷

³¹⁴ In the Book of Jonah, this verse precedes Jonah’s request that his fellow sailors throw him overboard. They reluctantly oblige, and Jonah is subsequently swallowed by the infamous and enormous fish. One wonders if the Columban monastery was as trying an environment for Egbert as the fish’s belly was for Jonah. The parallel seems damning.

³¹⁵ *HE*, V. ix, 480-481: “reuersus ad dilectae locum peregrinationis...et quoniam externis prodesse ad fidem non poterat, suis amplius ex uirtutum prodesse curabat.” (480).

³¹⁶ *HE*, V. x, 480-481: “diuertentes ad Pippinum ducem Francorum, gratanter ab illo suscepti sunt.”

³¹⁷ *HE*, V. x, 480-481: “Et quia nuper citeriorem Fresiam expulso inde Rathbedo rege ceperat, illo eos ad praedicandum misit, ipse quoque imperiali aucrotitate iuuans, ne qui praedicantibus quicquam molestiae inferret...”

2. Rivers Abroad

Following in the footsteps of Willibrord, two brothers, each named Hewald, came from England to Ireland for monastic training before pursuing the mission in Germany. Their example proves that political alliances were not simply assets, but rather necessities, for these itinerant, Continental missions. When the Hewalds first arrive in Germany, their request to see the local chieftain is inexplicably put off by the reeve at their port of disembarkation; without sanction or authority from local administration, they are vulnerable to attack.³¹⁸ The expectation of regional infrastructure and support is also implied by the Hewalds' lack of preaching. Bede mentions their riverside liturgical practices, but says nothing about sermons, or any other proselytizing. This suggests that they were waiting for official permission to begin their missionary work in earnest.³¹⁹

The Hewalds waited patiently, being “continually engaged in psalms and prayers and daily offering up the sacrifice of the saving Victim to God—for they had sacred vessels with them and a consecrated board instead of an altar.”³²⁰ According to *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, Bede's description is the earliest literary attestation of these portable

³¹⁸ Their martyrdom might have taken place in the northeastern region of the Rhine; there is a church dedicated to the brothers in Aplerbeck, Dortmund (Westphalia).

³¹⁹ When the local chieftan discovered that the English *peregrini* had been not only prevented from seeing him but also murdered, he “slew all those villagers and burned their village (mittens occidit uicanos illos omnes uicumque incendio consumit)” (V.x, 482-483). The link between the Carolingian authorities and ecclesiastical powers must have been considerable for the repercussion to have been so severe. Indeed, the missionaries' importance to the empire is later shown in Pippin's entombment of the martyrs at Cologne, on what was at the time an island in the middle of the Rhine.

³²⁰ *HE*, V.x, 482-483: “...quod essent alterius religionis (nam et psalmis semper atque orationibus uacabant, et cotidie sacrificium Deo uictimae salutaris offerebant, habentes secum uascula sacra et tabulam altaris uice dedicatam)...”

altars in Western Christendom since the time of saint Cyprian, who prophesied about others celebrating mass in prisons.³²¹ The oldest portable altar in the archaeological register is the seventh-century portion of St Cuthbert's altar.³²² Hagiographical works testify to a literary appreciation for these wooden boards in the eighth and ninth centuries. Portable altars are used in the *Lives* of Wulfram, Willibrord, and in ninth-century material of St Denis—the last of which records that monks accompanying Charlemagne on his Saxon campaigns took possession of a wooden board, covered it in linen, and treated it as if it were an altar.³²³ Each mention occurs in the context of missionary work in Frisia or Saxony by foreign churchmen. The native Saxons might be forgiven, then, for suspecting that the arrival of missionaries betokened a change in far more than their worship practices.

Fearing for their religion and way of life, the pagans killed the Hewalds and threw their remains into the Rhine. When the martyrs' bodies landed in the river, they “were carried for nearly forty miles against the current to the place where their companions were” and “[a] great

³²¹ *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* (DACL), ed. Cabrol and Leclercq, vol. 1, pt. 2, 1907.

“On peut soupçonner l'existence et l'usage d'autels portatifs dès la plus lointaine antiquité en s'appuyant sur le texte de saint Cyprien qui prévoit le cas où les prêtres auront à célébrer le saint sacrifice dans les prisons... J.B. Thiers paraît être dans l'erreur quand il soutient que les autels portatifs n'ont pas été introduits avant le VIII^e siècle. Indépendamment des textes sujets à discussion on peut apporter le témoignage de Bede qui raconte que deux Anglais missionnaires chez les Saxons, en 692, emportaient...” (p. 3187).

³²² This altar was modified twice after its seventh-century burial with Cuthbert. See Elizabeth Coatsworth, “The Pectoral Cross and Portable Altar from the Tomb of St Cuthbert” in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, edited by Bonner, Stancliffe, and Rollanson, Boydell, 2002, pp. 287-301.

³²³ DACL, I.2, p 3187. “...le moines qui accompagnaient en qualité de chapelains Charlemagne dans ses campagnes contre les Saxons emportaient une table de bois qu'il couvraient avec des linges et dont ils se servaient comme d'autel: *quibus lignea tabula erat, quae linteo adopterta modum altaris efferebat.*”

ray of light reaching to heaven shone every night upon the spot where they chanced to be and even the heathen men who had slain them saw it.”³²⁴ When the bodies arrive, the spirit of one of the martyrs visits a monk named Tilmon in a dream, telling him “that the bodies could be found in the place where he saw a light shining from heaven to earth.”³²⁵ The monks recover the bodies, and Pippin sent for the remains to be “buried with much splendour in the church of the city of Cologne, on the Rhine.”³²⁶ Curiously, the place where they were discovered did not retain the status of a location with contact relics. This is especially surprising because the place of their martyrdom did: “a spring burst forth in the spot where they were killed which to this day provides the place with an abundant supply of water.”³²⁷ Bede’s silence regarding the site of their martyrdom and the location of the bodies’ revelation might suggest his commitment to a single place of veneration on the Rhine: the burgeoning city of Cologne. The Hewalds had arrived, it seems, to an unknown place on an unknown tributary of the Rhine, without any local or institutional support. From this blank, now non-existent place, their riverine mission seems to have ended before it could begin; their burial in the cathedral of Cologne achieves the fame that their lives did not.

³²⁴ *HE*, V.x, 482-483: “...contigit ut haec contra impetum fluuii decurrentis per cl fere mili passum ad ea usque loca, ubi illorum erant socii, transferrentur.” The Rhine flows into the North Sea, so “against the current” means that the bodies were traveling south/southeast, depending on their starting point.

³²⁵ *HE*, V.x, 482-483: “indicans quod eo loci corpora eorum posset inuenire, ubi lucem de caelo terris radiasse conspiceret.”

³²⁶ *HE*, V.x, 484-485: “corpora condidit cum multa gloria in ecclesia Coloniae ciuitatis iuxta Hrenum.”

³²⁷ *HE*, V.xi, 484-485: “fons ebullierit, qui in eodem loco usque hodie copiosa fluenti sui dona profundat”

Only a few decades later, Saxony and Frisia were more receptive to foreign missionaries, in large part because of bishop Lull of Mainz. During Lull's episcopal tenure at Mainz (754-786), the Frankish churches along the northern border with Frisia "formed a coherent ecclesiastical infrastructure" which allowed "Anglo-Saxons in Frisia [to be] not simply dislocated frontiersmen and women, but rather people integrated quickly into the social and political fabric of the Frankish world."³²⁸ One of the first to make use of this infrastructure was Boniface, the most famous English missionary to the Continent, whose missionary life is almost entirely dependent upon riverine navigation.

Boniface was born (as Wynferth) in Wessex in 675 and martyred in Dokkum (Frisia) in 754. Less than a decade later, an Anglo-Saxon named Willibald wrote the *Vita Bonifatii* in Mainz.³²⁹ Boniface's own letters provide a unique testament to how he understood his various duties over the many decades and across central Europe: he believed himself to be, first and foremost, a missionary to the Saxons. And yet, as Wood writes, "Boniface had [neither] been the great missionary figure of his dreams, nor was he represented as one by Willibald."³³⁰ Yet as Palmer confirms that "the commemoration of Boniface was divorced from the Saxon contexts which seemed so important in his letters, freeing it for development by other peoples with different concerns."³³¹ He clarifies, "[t]o medieval writers in missionary centres like Utrecht, Boniface was a true missionary; but to writers at central episcopal sites," his missionary work

³²⁸ Palmer, James. "Saxon or European? Interpreting and Reinterpreting St Boniface." *History Compass*, vol. 4/5, 2006, pp. 852–869 (856).

³²⁹ Hereafter *Bonif.*

³³⁰ Wood, Ian. *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400-1050*. Routledge, 2014, p. 64.

³³¹ *Saxon or European*, 860.

was less important than particular, regional concerns.³³² Nevertheless, Boniface's cult spread quickly and far, in part because there were so few contemporary martyrdoms.

Despite the infrastructure used by bishop Lull and the previous missionary work of Wilfrid, Willibrord, Kunibert of Cologne, and Killian of Würzburg, Boniface is described as working alone in entirely uncharted territories.³³³ An inflated sense of his subject's isolation among the untamed wilds is hardly unique to Willibald. Boniface is featured in "an exaggerated foundation story" even in Eigil's *Vita Sturm*. According to Eigil, Boniface sent Sturm "out into the wilderness sometime in the 740s to find an appropriate place of hermitage" but did not approve of his pupil's first choice (Hersfeld), because it was not isolated enough. Yet archaeologists have uncovered evidence that the site of which Boniface did approve—Fulda—"revealed a manor house and a bridge" that predated the monastery, suggesting that he did not seek as much isolation as imagined.³³⁴ Willibald enacts a similar program of erasure in his depiction of the riverine spaces to which Boniface dedicates, and for which he gives, his life.

Boniface begins his mission from the Thames, is martyred at the Boarne, and is translated (posthumously and miraculously) on the Rhine. Yet until the rivers of Frankish Frisia are opened up by Radbod's death, Willibald narrates nautical journeys only in the contexts of ocean voyages. And even when the riverine journeys take shape, they borrow from the heroic diction of the North Sea crossings, as we will see below. The first nautical narratives are concerned with river port towns of enormous mercantile importance. Boniface's final journeys along the inland

³³² *ibid.*

³³³ Boniface "actually only developed the work of earlier figures like Kunibert of Cologne (d.663) or Kilian of Wurzburg (d. 689)" (*Saxon or European*, 855).

³³⁴ *Saxon or European*, 856.

tributaries of the Rhine, on the other hand, take Boniface far from the heroic rhetoric and busy market-places of the maritime world.

Boniface's first voyage, crossing from England to the Continent, is self-sponsored, and the slow start to his departure reveals the frustrating logistics of preparing for such a journey. Willibald describes both departure and arrival ports as bustling areas of trade; in doing so, he reveals that Boniface travelled throughout a busy maritime North Sea network full of people, boats, and goods. The missionary's journeys took him away from these cosmopolitan centers of exchange, and his (perhaps imagined) riverine isolation is all the more dramatic because of this contrast.

Boniface "set his heart not on remaining in his native land but on traveling abroad (to a *peregrina loca*)."³³⁵ After obtaining permission from Winbert, he and a few others set out from Wessex "to a place where there was a market for buying and selling of merchandise"—a "place called Lundenwich by the Anglo-Saxons, even to this day."³³⁶ The mention of London as a place whose name is still used "even to this day" is perhaps Willibald's attempt to acknowledge London's recent changes.³³⁷ The river port town had evolved over Boniface's lifetime, and its

³³⁵ English text from the Life of St Boniface is taken from C.H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Being the Lives of SS. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba and Lenuin, together with the Hodoeporicon of St Willibald and a selection from the correspondence of St Boniface*. London, Sheed and Ward, 1954. The Latin text is printed in Wilhelm Levison's *Vitae Sancti Bonifati*. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Hannover, 1905. Excerpts will begin with *Bonif.* and end with page numbers in parentheses.

"*peregrina magis quam paternae hereditatis terrarum loca [desiderare]*" (Levison, 15; Talbot, 34).

³³⁶ "ac sic, inmensis peragratis terrae partibus, prospero obans fratrum comitatu, pervenit ad locum, uni erat forum rerum venalium et usque hodie antiquo Anglorum Saxonumque vocabulo appellatur Lundenwich" (Levison, p 16; Talbot, 34).

³³⁷ Marsden writes that "no archaeological or historical evidence" exists "to indicate that London existed in the fifth and sixth centuries as a port and an organised urban centre after the collapse

past might well have been remembered, if not still architecturally visible, to Willibald and his contemporaries back in England. Marsden writes that Bede is the first to document London's "emergence from obscurity" in its building of St Paul's in 604. This emergence was sustained throughout the century, by the end of which "the Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric indicate that *Lundenwic* was a trading centre with a king's hall and a reeve to regulate transactions."³³⁸ The port's use as a trading center "is also indicated by coins (silver *sceattas*), dating from the seventh and eighth centuries, which have been found in south-east England, in the northern Netherlands around the mouth of the Rhine, particularly at Domburg and Duurstede, suggesting trade conducted by Saxon and Frisian merchants."³³⁹

It is a curious habit of many early medieval authors to comment, even briefly, about time spent waiting for a ship. In this instance, Willibald details Boniface's process of securing safe passage: "After a few days, when the sailors were about to embark on their return home, Boniface asked permission of the shipmaster to go on board" and he paid his way. It is likely that he chose a home-bound Frisian merchant ship because it had unloaded its cargo, and had room for fare-paying passengers.

McCormick's work suggests that finding an obliging captain might not have been terribly difficult:

Remarkable currents of trade washed back and forth along the rivers of the Frankish empire, and beyond. For Dorestad and the Frisians, this is a

of the Roman Empire" although Bede "described London as 'a trading centre for many nations who visit it by land and sea.'" Peter Marsden, *Ships of the Port of London, First to Eleventh Centuries AD*. Reprint, English Heritage, 2006, p. 131.

³³⁸ Marsden, 131.

³³⁹ Marsden, 131. Most of the coins are from Frisian mints.

demonstrated fact. The scattered merchants whom the texts locate at London and York, and on the Baltic, have been joined by their exports, recovered in England as well as at Haithabu and the earlier marked settlement, Ribe.³⁴⁰

Willibald's attention to the small details of the ship's purpose and origin highlights the fact that this was a modest crossing. Boniface was going to pay for passage, not be outfitted by a royal patron.

Having set sail, the Frisian merchant ship "came with favorable winds to Dorestad," where Boniface "tarried for a while and gave thanks to God night and day."³⁴¹ Dorestad was "one of the great trading settlements of the Carolingian empire," near "one of the arms into which the Rhine divides as it approaches the sea."³⁴² The archaeological finds "testify not only to the local craft industries, but to a lively interregional and international trade."³⁴³ With merchant-mariners, Frisian craftsmen, and foreign vendors, Boniface would have had plenty to do as he

³⁴⁰ McCormick, Michael. *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900*. Reprint, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 670.

³⁴¹ *Bonif*: "Ac non multo transacto postlimino nautarum naviter novus quidem epitata consentienti nauclerio, adgressus est navem, nauoque inpenso, prospero ventorum flatu pervenit ad Dorset, ibique aliquandiu commoratus, debitum domino Deo exsolvit die noctuque praeconium." (Levison, 16; Talbot, 35).

³⁴² McCormick, 653. Growing since the end of the seventh century, it hit "its peak around 825" when it "sprawled over at least 40 hectares" (ibid).

³⁴³ McCormick, 653. "The 'Crooked Rhine,' where the boats beached, was shifting progressively eastward, away from the docks, so the merchants of Dorestad kept extending their wooden decks to reach the water." By the early ninth century, "these structures projected 200 m from the warehouses and stretched the length of the densely settled zone. The many hectares of wooden decking seem to have served as loading platforms. Between 675 and 825, all this building felled several million trees, deforesting the settlement's surroundings" (ibid).

“tarried.” That he spent most hours of the day and night in prayer suggests that he set himself outside this busy world, even as he was in the middle of it.³⁴⁴

But almost as soon as Boniface arrived, a war erupted between the Franks (led by Charles Martel) and the Frisians (under their king, Radbod), that proved an insurmountable obstacle to his mission.³⁴⁵ So he sailed west “when autumn was nearing its end,” in an understated hint at the direness of his situation.³⁴⁶ If his journey west across the sea were against the wind, as is likely, he would have to find a considerable crew of oarsmen (or an early northern practitioner of blue water tacking) to make his way by winter.³⁴⁷

After two years in England, he returned to the Continent, again from London, whence “he embarked on a small swift ship and began to cross the pathless expanse of the ocean.”³⁴⁸ Contrasting the small *celox* with the vast ocean, Willibald pits the frail human against the infinite divine, relishing the intrepid spirit of his subject even when the voyage itself is unremarkable. A slightly different translation of Willibald’s Latin makes Boniface’s dynamism more clear: “Quickly climbing the edge of the swift-sailing boat, he began to seek the unknown ways of the

³⁴⁴ Even as a hagiographical trope, this might still have been read as remarkable by anyone who had been to, or heard stories of, this great gateway to the Carolingian empire.

³⁴⁵ Wood writes that Pippin’s death “lead to a political crisis, and the rejection of the missionaries, who were seen as agents of Radbod’s new opponent, Charles Martel (*Missionary Saints*, 57).

³⁴⁶ *Bonif*: “estatis autumnique aliquantulum tempus praeteriret” (Levison, p 17; Talbot, 36).

³⁴⁷ Usually he takes only “a few” friends; in this instance, he takes “many”

³⁴⁸ *Bonif*: “Et celocis celeriter marginem scandens, coepit ignotas maris temptare vias ...” (Levison, 20; Talbot, 38).

sea.” This is an image of prophetic triumph—an image that makes his martyrdom at the riverside, within reach of his boat, all the more poignant.

Willibald’s sustained poetics further heighten the heroic nature of the journey: “The sailors were in good spirits, the huge sails bellied in the north-west wind, and helped along by a stiff following breeze, they soon came after an uneventful crossing in sight of the mouth of the river called Cuent (...trepudiantibusque nautis, immensa choro flante carbasa consugebant, et pleno vento prosperoque cursu hostia citius fluminis quod dicitur Cuent...)”³⁴⁹ Reconsidering the polysemous meaning of *tripudium* gives the description a greater depth of register. The *DMLBS* offers a few options: a celebratory dance, a joyful festivity, the “expression of” or “cause of rejoicing or exultation.”³⁵⁰ The details of the entire passage are sensory and substantiating; the journey is felt in the speed of the ship, the sound of the wind, the luff of the sails, and the work of the sailors. The wind is embodied by *choro*, implied by *carbasum*, and described as *pleno*. The sea, too, is made material by its *vias*, just as it is by its *wegas* in *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, and the Old English *Exodus*. The ways of the sea are perhaps never to be known, as *Andreas* argues, but they are certainly meant to be sought, and even celebrated.

Securely “safe from shipwreck,” they traveled to Quentovic, where “they pitched their camp and waited until the remainder of the party came together.”³⁵¹ Quentovic no longer exists, but McCormick writes that “the first [archaeological] finds connect” the site once near Etaples

³⁴⁹ *Bonif*: Levison, 20; Talbot, 38.

³⁵⁰ “tripudium” *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, accessed via Logeion.

³⁵¹ *Bonif*: Levison, 20; Talbot, 38.

“with its trading partner across the Channel, Hamwic.”³⁵² Quentovic was an important port for the Carolingians, and witness to their relationship with the kingdoms of England.³⁵³ Hamwic, for its part, was the trading hub for Boniface’s native Wessex; perhaps he had learned at home how to negotiate fares with Frisian traders.

From Quentovic, Boniface had hurried to Rome before winter, and come back to Francia via Christian Thuringia when he learned of Radbod’s death. Immediately, “he joyfully took ship and sailed up the river [Rhine]...reach[ing] districts that had hitherto been left untouched by the preaching of the gospel.”³⁵⁴ His high spirits and sense of determination recall his heroic crossings of the North Sea. The hagiographer depicts his work in the region as a “swift and spontaneous” success, meeting the tone and energy of his previous voyages. Not until Radbod’s death does Boniface’s work take hold. When the Frisian king died in 719, “the Christianisation of Frisia went hand in hand with the expansion of Frankish power over the region, although the nature of the landscape—much of it islands in the tidal delta of the Rhine—made work slow, and pockets of paganism remained.”³⁵⁵ Only now do the rivers open up to Boniface and his hagiographer.

His next nautical journey is described decades later, when Boniface is Archbishop of Mainz and Pippin II has just assumed the throne. Boniface is informed, through spiritual agents,

³⁵² McCormick, 671.

³⁵³ “Charlemagne chose the head of toll-collecting at Quentovic as his emissary to King Offa of Mercia, because of the man’s friendship with the Anglo-Saxon king” (ibid).

³⁵⁴ *Bonif*: “albeum quidem fluminis, magno gavisus gaudio, navigo ascendit, optans, quod etiam Fresia recipisset verbum Dei, et ad incultas caelesti praedicatione terras pervenit” (Levison, 23; Talbot, 40).

³⁵⁵ *Missionary Saints*, 57.

of his fate as a martyr in Frisia. He accepts this with expected grace and informs his successor, Lull, that he will resume his mission in the pagan north. He makes his final arrangements, including the instruction that he be buried in Fulda, which was still under construction. And although his martyrdom does not occur until five or six years later, Boniface's departure from Mainz to Frisia has a sinister and foreboding tone.

Boniface and a few others travel by night down the Rhine (northwards) until they "reached the marshy country of Frisia, crossed safely over the stretch of water, which in their tongue is called Aelmere, and made a survey of the lands round about, which up till then had borne no fruit."³⁵⁶ This descriptive language sounds almost like an itinerary, to which is added the heroic remark that Boniface and his men "bravely [hazarded] the perils of the river, the sea, and the wide expanse of the ocean."³⁵⁷ General consensus holds that Aelmere was not connected to the sea until the eleventh or twelfth century, so it is difficult to imagine what circumstances would call for such an indirect route to the brackish lake. Nevertheless Willibald strikes a balance between the heroic and observational as Boniface nears Frisia: "he passed through dangerous places without fear or danger, and visited the pagan Frisians, whose land is divided into many territories and districts by intersecting canals."³⁵⁸ Shifting quickly from heroic poetics

³⁵⁶ *Bonif*: "...nocturna portuum navigio exquesivit loca, donec aquosa Fresonum arva ingrediens, trans stagnum, quod lingua eorum dicitur Aelmere, sospis pervenit infecundaque divino germine litora inspiciendo circuit" (Levison, 47; Talbot, 54-55).

³⁵⁷ *Bonif*: "Cumque periculosum fluminum marisque et ingentium aquarum evassit discrimen" (Levison, 47; Talbot, 55).

³⁵⁸ *Bonif*: "in periculum iam sine periculo incedit, gentemque paganam Fresonum visitaret, quae interiacentibus aquis in multos agrorum dividitur pagos, ita ut, diversis appellati nominibus, unius tamen gentis proprietatem portendunt" (Levison, 47; Talbot, 55). Willibald had made a note to the reader that he would mention only a few names of the different Frisian districts "to prove the veracity and add to the continuity of our narrative" so "the place and its name will bear

to authenticating detail, Willibald preserves both the spirit of the saint's courage and the physical places that were changed by it.

Boniface and his companions are martyred that summer, camped near the shore of the River Boarn in advance of confirming a new group of the newly baptized.³⁵⁹ Only a decade or two before, Charles Martel and the Frisians had fought at or very near this spot. The wounds—perhaps metaphorical as well as physical—could have been reopened by Boniface's arrival at the erstwhile battlefield. The political associations between the enterprising missionary and the expanding empire are the downfall of Boniface, just as they had been for the Hewalds. At this juncture, though, the fact that Boniface had a stronger relationship with Continental powers does nothing for the missionary.

Expecting to be visited by the new initiates, the missionaries are instead met by a band of violent raiders, who kill all but a single surviving witness to the martyrdoms.³⁶⁰ Boniface had encouraged his brethren to put down their swords, and he was still bolstering their bravery (“anchor your hope in God, and without delay he will render to you the reward of eternal bliss”)

witness to the activity of the saint...and show the kind of death which took him from this world (ad narrationis nostrae seriem veraciter proferuntur, ut et locus et lingua relatam a nobis beati uir sanctimoniam...quali hunc mundum fine deseret, aperiat” (Levison, 47, Talbot, 55).

³⁵⁹ The Boarn divides Ostor and Westeraeche. These are the few place-names Willibald mentions “to prove the veracity and add to the continuity of our narrative.” Boniface had been ready to “confirm by the laying-on of hands all the neophytes and those who had recently been baptized (Sed quia festum confirmationis neobitorum diem et nuper baptizatorum ab episcopo manus inpositionis et confirmationis populo praedixerat iam longe lateque disperso...)” (Levison, 49; Talbot, 56).

³⁶⁰ By all accounts, virtually all of Boniface's travels in the area necessitated riverside camps like this; the locals certainly seem to have been well-informed of their presence.

when the onslaught began.³⁶¹ Afterwards, the pagans “stole the chests in which the books and relics were preserved and, thinking that they had acquired a hoard of gold and silver, carried them off, still locked, to the ships.”³⁶² Being only partially unloaded, the ships held wine, which the looters drank on board before even looking at the treasure. They fell into drunken arguments amongst themselves, and quickly took swords against one another.

The survivors, surrounded by the corpses of their rivals for the booty, swooped down upon the treasure which had been obtained by so much loss of life. They broke open the chests containing the books and found, to their dismay, that they held manuscripts instead of gold, pages of sacred texts instead of silver plate.³⁶³

Finding silver and gold on the ships of state-sponsored churchmen might by this time have been a fair expectation. But Willibald’s insistence that the only treasure was “manuscripts” and “pages of sacred texts” emphasizes the role that Boniface was playing: he was there to preach and to perform liturgies and sacraments. After martyring Boniface and his attendants, the Frisians throw the missionaries’ bodies, books, and relics into the river. The books are later recovered by miracle. The relics—except, perhaps, those which Boniface had hidden on his person when he heard the pagans approach—were lost or repurposed.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ *Bonif.* “spei vestrae ancoram in Deum figite, quia extimplo perpetuae reddet vobis remunerationis mercedem” (Levison, 50; Talbot, 56).

³⁶² *Bonif.* “Sed et thecas, in quibus multa inerant librorum volumina, et reliquiarum capsas abstulit; magna se ditatam auri argentique copia credens, ad naves...” (Levison, 50; Talbot, 57).

³⁶³ *Bonif.* “Tunc itaque, maxima insanientis turbae parte prostrata, iam qui supervixerant ad lucrum animarum sibi super desiderato cupiditatis thesauro obsistebant, gaudentes cucurrerunt, et confactis librorum repositoriis, etiam pro auro volumina et pro argento divinae scientiae cartas repererunt.” (Levison, 51, Talbot, 57).

³⁶⁴ *Bonif.* “But the man of God, hearing the shouts and the onrush of the rabble, straightaway called the clergy to his side, and, collecting the relics of the saints, which he he always carried

Willibald does not share who recovered Boniface's body from his place of martyrdom.³⁶⁵ He writes only that "the bodies of the holy bishop and of the other martyrs were brought by boat across the water called Aelmere, an uneventful voyage of some days, to the city of Utrecht" where "the bodies were deposited and interred until some religious and trustworthy men of God arrived from Mainz."³⁶⁶ Utrecht was founded by Willibrord on or near the remains of a Roman fortress on the Rhine. And while its foundation is recorded by Bede (*HE* V.xi, 486-487), the waterborne connectivity of the region, and the great success of Utrecht, remain visible in the archaeological record. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, "[w]ithin their home landscapes and island-scapes, mariners and river-based boatmen do not seem to have been limited in regard to the destinations for their products" and the "dispersion of imports and coinage throughout...settlements such as Utrecht" distinguish "this liminal world of maritime connection apart from the Continental interior."³⁶⁷ Once the saint's remains arrived in Utrecht, however, Lull ordered Hadda to deliver the relics to the monastery Boniface had established "on the banks of the river Fulda" so "that greater honor and reverence might be paid to the holy man and

with him, came out of his tent (Sed uir Dei statim, audito tumultuantis turbae ineptu, accito ad se clericorum clero, sumptis sanctorum reliquiis quas secum indesinenter habere consueverat, e tentorio procedit" (Levison, 49; Talbot 56).

³⁶⁵ Egil, on the other hand, "describes the martyrdom of Boniface in very few words" and "concentrates on the return of the martyr's body to Fulda." He records that "the monks of Utrecht went up to Dokkum and stole (*rapuerunt*) the bodies of Boniface and some of his companions." When the monks kept Boniface in Utrecht, "a deacon had a vision of the irate Boniface asking why he had not been moved." (*Missionary Life*, 71).

³⁶⁶ *Bonif*: "Corpus vero beati pontificis prosperis velis ventorumque flatibus trans fretum quod dicitur Aelmere—sed et aliorum martyrum—post dies non multos perductum est ad supradictam urbem, quae dicitur Trecht, ibique conditum ac sepultum, donec a Magontia relegiosi et fideles in Domino fratres..." (Levison, 52; Talbot, 58-59).

³⁶⁷ Loveluck, 194.

greater credence might be given to all the facts they saw and heard.”³⁶⁸ He was right to believe so; Fulda quickly became, and long remains, a powerful site of pilgrimage and prestige.

But the act of translating the body was not without incident. Initially, a magistrate at Utrecht claimed that Pippin had forbidden the removal of the bishop’s body. Willibald reminds his reader that God is more powerful than man, introducing a “marvelous miracle” performed by “angelic rather than human intervention.”³⁶⁹ A church bell of the riverside monastery, “untouched by human hands, began to ring, as if the body of the saint was issuing a warning.”³⁷⁰ The bell is not doing anything extraordinary; there is no claim that it sounds different than it should. Instead, the means by which it is rung, and perhaps also the time at which it is rung, are distinct departures from the expectations of quotidian life.³⁷¹

In hagiographical accounts, a local crowd often appears at the embarkation site of a translated relic in order to avoid, or at least deflect, potential discord between the house that formerly kept the relics and the house that received them. The arrival of the translated saint’s

³⁶⁸ *Bonif*: “ripam fluminis quod dicitur Fulda”; “ut maior sanctae reverentiae viro devotionis independeretur honor et plurimorum amplius testificatio in his, que auditu vel visu perciperent, praevaleret” (Levison, 53; Talbot, 59). Willibald’s narrative is a little confusing; Boniface’s body arrives in Mainz, and is taken to Fulda from there.

³⁶⁹ *Bonif*: “mirabile statim ac memorabile”; “angelica magis quam humana peractum cognitione” (Levison, 53; Talbot, 59).

³⁷⁰ Boniface had, after all, requested to be buried in Fulda.

³⁷¹ The most frequently used word to describe bells—whether they be rung within a church, or at a landing-place, or from a tower—is *signum*, a visual word which could, in its vagary, mean a bell, a horn, or a wooden clapper. *Glocca* (also *clocca*), on the other hand, certainly means “bell,” and its usage here might betray a campanal connection between Wearmouth and Mainz, where Boniface was writing (but not where the miracle occurred). See Arnold, John H. and Caroline Goodon. “Resounding Community: The History and Meaning of Medieval Church Bells.” *Viator* vol. 43, 1, 2012, pp. 99-130

body participates in another trope of the *translatio* narrative: the authority of the receiving house is absent when the saint arrives. On the same day that the body arrived in Mainz, though “no fixed arrangement had been made, there assembled together for the internment of this great man not only the envoys who had brought the sacred body but also many men and women of the faith from distant and widely scattered districts, just as if they had been forewarned of the event.”³⁷² Surprising even the most credulous readers, Willibald describes Lull as utterly uninformed of the event, despite having ordered it. He “was engaged at the royal palace and was not informed of the arrival of the sacred body and was quite ignorant of what was afoot,” yet miraculously arrived in Mainz “almost at the same hour and moment.”³⁷³

But the crowd at Utrecht had done more than authorize or authenticate the relic’s translation; they had instigated it. At the sound of the angelic objection to the saint’s arrival, “every person present, smitten by a sudden feeling of awe, was struck with terror and cried out that the body of this holy man should be given up.”³⁷⁴ They react, almost psychosomatically, to the angelic bell-ringing by being “smitten” and “struck.” Responding to this stimulus, they too cry out, demanding that Boniface’s dying wish to be buried in Fulda be fulfilled. In contrast to the monks on the shores of the Wear, these laymen are begging that the saint’s body be taken

³⁷² *Bonif*: “Miraque Dei omnipotentis providentia factum est, ut uno eodemque die sine statuto praediffitionis tempore quasi ad statutum praedestinationis diem tam legati sanctum diferentes corpus quam etiam de longinquis longe lateque regionibus multi virorum ac mulierum fidelium ad tanti viri mortis obsequia convenerant” (Levison, 53; Talbot, 59).

³⁷³ *Bonif*: “...regali illo in tempore praesens erat palatio, huius omnino ignarus causae adventusque sancti corporis inscius ad civitatem quam praediximus velud sub uno eodemque horae momento pervenit” (Levison, 54; Talbot, 60).

³⁷⁴ *Bonif*: “...ita ut omnes, repentino timoris pavore perculsi, maximo tremore obstupuerunt et iusti huius reddendum esse corpus proclamaverunt” (Levison, 53; Talbot, 59).

away. Nevertheless, Willibald has rendered a highly emotive and especially sonic moment which, like the *vita Ceolfredi*, remembers not only the sight, but also the sounds, of the monastic community and its river.³⁷⁵

Boniface's body is rowed, "to the accompaniment of psalms and hymns, without having to row against the current of the stream" to Mainz, after only 30 days.³⁷⁶ From there it is taken to Fulda, as Boniface had wished. The nautical mode of Boniface's translation registers this riverine miracle on both the shores and the waters of the Rhine. The sound of the bell, the shouts of the onlookers, and the songs of the boatmen all attend the miraculous voyage against the river's course. And the nautical narrative ends just as it does for the *Vita Ceolfredi*: once the sounds on shore are silent. The boat is past perception only once it is beyond the riverine landscape (and soundscape) of Utrecht.

³⁷⁵ Bells had been important to Boniface, and were at this time becoming increasingly popular in liturgical practices throughout England and the continent. When he was archbishop at Mainz, Boniface requested a *clocca* from the abbey of Wearmouth-Jarrow, which was then under the leadership of Archbishop Huetbert. Almost half a century later, Wearmouth's Abbot Cuthbert wrote to Mainz's Lullus "to acknowledge that he had sent him two palliums with books and a *clocca* that he had to hand." (Resounding Community, 110). Epistolary evidence for the donation of bells between houses exists throughout the ninth century, especially across the Carolingian networks.

³⁷⁶ *Bonif*: "Sicque statim redditum est corpus et a praedictis sanctae recordationis fratribus cum psalmis hymnisque honorifice ablatum ac sine remigantium labore tricesima obitus sui die perductum ad ciuitatem supradictam Magontiam" (Levison, 53; Talbot, 59). The transfer from Mainz to Fulda is almost imperceptible in Willibald's account.

For Willibald and the other hagiographers of this chapter, rivers are more than monastic property and missionary causeways—they are sites in which members of Christ are brought into the fold, where the presence of God is made real in the Eucharist, and whence the bodies of Christ’s ministers begin their journeys to eternal rest. As we shall see, nautical translations could profoundly affect the course of a saint’s cult and its associated literature.

CHAPTER 5: ANGLO-NORMAN NICHOLAS FROM THE ADRIATIC SEA

The previous chapters examine how Anglo-Latin hagiographers constructed coastal, maritime, and riverine environments as distinct places for saints to interact with the divine. This chapter asks how a post-Conquest versifier used narratives of the sea to bring St Nicholas, a Byzantine wonder-worker, into the Anglo-Norman world. In five unique poems, added *ca.* 1100 to a mid-eleventh-century manuscript, St Nicholas is consistently described as one who appears to any and all (including non-believers), on land and at sea. While he performs many maritime miracles, even his terrestrial miracles take place within the specifically maritime and mercantile Mediterranean Sea. The poet's frequent references to Nicholas's fame, especially when it has travelled across the sea—reiterates a nautical emphasis throughout the set. Remarkably, this nautical emphasis could be the earliest English evidence of Nicholas as a patron saint of sailors.

This chapter is split into three sections. The first, “Battle Abbey and the Cult of Nicholas,” provides background on the foundation of Battle Abbey, where the poems were copied into an earlier codex from Winchester or Christ Church, Canterbury. Next it unpacks the complicated history of Nicholas's cult, which found virtually unparalleled success after 1087. Having investigated the conditions in which the poems might have been copied and written, I present an analysis of the first four poems (Poems 1-4), with a particular focus on Poem 2, in the second section. The third section deals only with the paleographically distinct fifth poem (Poem 5). It conducts an in-depth analysis, identifies its source, and concludes that this is the very first poetic treatment of Nicholas's *translatio* in an English manuscript.

1. Battle Abbey, and the Cult of Nicholas

When it was completed at Christ Church, Canterbury between 1025-1050, Cotton Tiberius B.v.i was a compendium of highly illustrated Old English and Anglo-Latin texts.³⁷⁷ The codex we now know as Tiberius B v/ volume 1 is thought to have been assembled between 1025 and 1050 at Canterbury. Foys describes its original form as “a miscellany of temporal and spatial materials composed in Latin and Old English, accompanied in places by substantial pictorial materials.”³⁷⁸ At one time the codex hosted one of the earliest English *mappa mundi*, a Macrobian zonal map, and a now-lost “cosmography map”—among “three major picture cycles—one of the three versions of *Wonders of the East*, a calendar featuring the labors of the months, and a set of illustrations to accompany a version of Cicero’s astronomical treatise *Aratrea*.”³⁷⁹ Its other works include “numerous regnal, papal, and episcopal lists, the late tenth-century pilgrimage itinerary of Archbishop Sigeric, several computistical items and treatises...Priscian’s *Periegesis*, a fifth-century geographic description of the world [and] a copy of Hrabanus Maurus’ *De laudibus sanctae crucis*” the last of which is now missing.³⁸⁰ Foys’s apt

³⁷⁷ These texts ranged from calendars and computistical works to Priscian’s *Periegesis*. For a full list of the manuscript’s current contexts, see:

www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_V/1. For its original contents, see McGurk, *et al*: *An eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon illustrated miscellany: British Library Cotton Tiberius B. v. part I: Together with leaves from British Library Cotton Nero D. II*. Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1983. A brief introduction to the manuscript is also found in pp 152-154 of A.J. Ford’s *Marvel and Artefact: The Wonders of the East in Its Manuscript Contexts*. Brill, 2016.

³⁷⁸ Foys, Martin K. 2015. “Medieval Manuscripts: Media Archaeology and the Digital Incunable.” *The Medieval Manuscript Book*, ed. Michal Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 121.

³⁷⁹ *ibid*.

³⁸⁰ *ibid*.

description, and his comments on the material history of the codex itself, suggest at its inception, this “miscellany” could have been meant as a collection of writings about the outside world; a codex as richly decorated as this one was surely not assembled without some sense of thematic unity.

By 1120, the manuscript was at Battle Abbey, where an Anglo-Norman scribe copied a set of French annals into its front flyleaves.³⁸¹ At some point between these two places and times, five Latin poems about St Nicholas were copied into the back flyleaves of the manuscript.³⁸² The poems are all written in octosyllabic couplets, rhyming aabb except for their first two lines. Poems 1, 2, and 3 are inspired by three separate legends of Saint Nicholas.³⁸³ Two of these legends, poems 1 and 2, were once attributed to the Egyptian St Menas; prose versions of the same also appear together in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library MS 9.³⁸⁴ The fourth, considerably longer than the first three, is a highly truncated versification of the *Vita Sancti Nicolai*— a work translated from Greek to Latin by John the Deacon of Naples (d. after 910) in the late ninth century.³⁸⁵ The poems were separately edited by Wright and De Gray Birch

³⁸¹ The scribe of the first annal entries is the same scribe of the *Brevis Relatio* in the now disassembled *Battle Codex*, both of which are reconstructed in appendices to Elizabeth van Houts’s “The Ship List of William the Conqueror,” *Anglo-Norman Studies*, Proceedings of the Battle Conference, X, pp. 159-183.

³⁸² In his contribution to the facsimile edition, Dumville writes, “the script of the Nicholas poems is to be dated at no great distance from AD 1100, with a preference for the early years of the twelfth century as against the closing years of the eleventh” (McGurk, 105).

³⁸³ Two of these legends were once attributed to the Egyptian St Menas; they also appear together in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library MS 9.

³⁸⁴ These two legends traveled together within and from the continent.

³⁸⁵ For a short biography of John the Deacon of Naples, see relevant entry in the Catholic Encyclopedia: www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6449. See Treharne (1997: 28-36)

in the nineteenth century.³⁸⁶ Dumville and McGurck provide an introductory analysis of the script of the poems in their facsimile edition of the Tiberius manuscript which the British Library has recently digitized.³⁸⁷ Each poem has its own BHL number (6212-6216, though 6212 is actually the fourth poem).

In the facsimile edition of the manuscript, Dumville suggests that the annals were “written soon after 1119, derived apparently from the annals of Fecamp, and continued at Battle Abbey in various hands to 1206 (Nero, ff. 238-41).”³⁸⁸ He continues, “the script of the Nicholas poems is to be dated at no great distance from AD 1100, with a preference for the early years of the twelfth century as against the closing years of the eleventh,” implying that the Nicholas poems were copied before the annals.³⁸⁹ Two issues prevent him from making more than a speculative remark on whether the additions were made at Battle Abbey itself: 1) being unable to determine if the “primary scribe of the annals was him of the verse, or even a member of the

and Blacker (2013: 247-249) for the transmission of John the Deacon’s *Vita Sancti Nicolai*. It should be noted that Hrabanus Maurus of Fulda seems to have brought the *stratilates* episode north of the Alps while, or shortly before, John’s *vita* was disseminated.

³⁸⁶ Wright, Thomas et al. *Reliquiae Antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts, Illustrating Chiefly Early English Literature and the English Language*. Vol.2, London, John Russel Smith, 1845. de Gray Birch, Walter. “The Legendary Life of St. Nicholas, Part II.” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 64, 1888, pp. 222-34.

³⁸⁷ McGurk, Patrick et al. *An Eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Miscellany: British Library Cotton Tiberius B. V. Part I: Together with Leaves from British Library Cotton Nero D. II*. Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1983. For the digitized manuscript, see British Library, London, Cotton MS Tiberius B V/1: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_V/1

³⁸⁸ in McGurk, 104.

³⁸⁹ in McGurk, 105.

same scriptorium;” and 2) lacking solid evidence that St Nicholas was important enough to Battle Abbey that a “verse account of him would have been the only text (apart from the house’s annals and rental) to be entered in what must have been one of the most splendid and treasured possessions of the abbey’s library.”³⁹⁰

To address the latter issue—the question of if, and how much, Nicholas mattered to the monks of Battle, we must first consider the context of the Abbey’s founding, and the first men who occupied it. Scholars (medieval and modern alike) are at odds over when, and even where, William the Conqueror promised to build Battle Abbey. Some claim that he promised to build it before the Battle of Hastings, if he won. Others write that he made the promise after the battle, as an act of thanks and (a little) remorse over the blood that was spilled in the Conquest. There is also the papal letter suggesting (demanding?) that he build an abbey as an act of penance. Regardless of which is most true, William did found Battle Abbey just north of Hastings, *ca* 1067.

The project was beset by all kinds of obstacles, the least of which was the drowning of its first abbot en route from Marmoutier to Pevensey. Reconstructing Battle Abbey’s first few decades is difficult because so few contemporary records survive; scholars have depended on the forgeries of the Battle Abbey Chronicle, written to invent and record a list of its holdings and freedoms from the crown. The accuracy with which these chronicles were forged is well documented by Searle, who finds that they show a legal expertise unparalleled, even in most legitimate charters.³⁹¹ They are, she finds, too good to be real.

³⁹⁰ in McGurk, 105- 106.

³⁹¹ Searle, Eleanor. *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*. Oxford Medieval Texts, Clarendon Press, 1980.

Another challenge to scholars of Nicholas's cult in England is William the Conqueror's relationship with the saint. Orderic Vitalis writes that Nicholas had a special place in the king's devotion, but such was not the case. William had no cause to be devoted to a saint whose namesake only begrudgingly sanctioned his marriage to Mathilda (Nicholas II maintained his predecessor's ban on the marriage until 1059, when he demanded considerable penance before allowing the union). Nor was he likely to have any affinity for a "patron saint of sailors" after the first abbot of his endowed house had drowned in the English Channel. The very idea of patron saint as many now describe it was not current in Normandy or England. Indeed, while saints were invoked for particular purposes, and to varying and perhaps surprising levels of specificity, neither the hagiographical record nor church dedications before 1200, and certainly not before 1100, suggest an intentionally nautical association with the saint. If there were a Nicholas church in England before the Conquest, it was likely established to host a relic of St Nicholas, or to mirror another Nicholas church on the Continent, in Scandinavia, or in the east.³⁹²

But the best evidence for William's indifference to Nicholas is his *laudes regiae*, preserved in Rouen, Bibliotheque municipale MS 489.³⁹³ The *laudes regiae* began in secular rituals of antiquity as "nothing more than an acclamation to a new ruler."³⁹⁴ Over time the form "was sacralized and became a divine office," and eventually "took the form of a catalog of

³⁹² While John the Deacon's vita certainly included maritime miracles, there is no evidence that these were more important than Nicholas's terrestrial acts. He was certainly not the patron saint of sailors above the Alps.

³⁹³ Also called the Fecamp *laudes regiae*; see Appendix D in Laura Gathagan's "The Trappings of Power: The Coronation of Mathilda of Flanders." *Haskins Society Journal*, vol. XIII, Boydell, 2004, pp. 21-39.

³⁹⁴ Gathagan, p 24.

intercessors.”³⁹⁵ Its liturgical trappings were further developed in Carolingian ceremonies, and “at the end of the eighth century” the acclamations for intercession were “separated from the coronation proper.”³⁹⁶ This separate liturgical form “enjoyed a new vogue” in eleventh-century Germany and France; the *laudes regiae* came to distinguish itself as “the sole right in which a victorious, kingly Christ was figured, not to invoke penitential feeling, but to support and endorse the victorious and kingly on earth.”³⁹⁷ William’s *laudes*, which was performed in his ducal ceremony in Normandy, did not include any mention of Nicholas. This exclusion might not at all be remarkable, except that the *laudes* of his wife, Mathilda of Flanders, does.³⁹⁸

Indeed, until Mathilda’s coronation ceremony of 1068, “the *laudes* had never before been heard in England” at all.³⁹⁹ Ealdred of Winchester is now thought to be the author of this ceremony, and it is likely that he picked up Nicholas – and the other confessors included in Vitellius but not Rouen, on a trip to the Continent. Because the Vitellius *laudes* has a different structure than the earlier *laudes* of William, the addition of Nicholas cannot be understood as a particular interest in the saint. In fact, Ealdred’s *Miracula S. Swithuni*, “composed at Sherborne c

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Gathagan, 25.

³⁹⁸ One must use extreme caution when researching the *laudes* of William (preserved in Rouen) and those of Mathilda (preserved in the BL) because those of Mathilda were, until recently, ascribed to William. Lapidge’s lucid study, “Ealdred of York and MS Cotton Vitellius E.XII,” for instance, considers every possible circumstance under which Ealdred (or someone close to him) might have written the *laudes* for a coronation ceremony—except that the ceremony was for the queen. *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 55, 1983, pp. 11-25.

³⁹⁹ Gathagan, 26. William’s *laudes*, called “the Fecamp *laudes*” and preserved in Rouen MS 489 (A.254) was compiled for his ducal ceremony in Normandy in 1066.

1100” records that, when Ealdred was caught in a storm crossing the Channel, he prayed (successfully) to Swithun for respite from the squall.⁴⁰⁰ From these materials, at least, there is no evidence to suggest that William, Mathilda, or even the prolific Ealdred had a special affinity for Nicholas.

One is left to wonder, then, why Battle Abbey set up a priory dedicated to St Nicholas in Exeter. The history of this priory (and indeed, that of Battle Abbey) is difficult to reconstruct, but the general scholarly consensus is that the Nicholas facility (sometimes called cell, chapel, or priory) was built *ex nihilo* beside both St Olaf’s royal chapel and Exeter Cathedral. Martin Heale describes Cono, one of Battle’s first colonizers, promoting the cult of Olaf for the purpose of founding the cell: The “propagation of the cult of Olaf” brought in “enough benefaction to initiate the foundation of a sizable cell, for which a new church dedicated to St Nicholas was built.”⁴⁰¹ However, this success is erased by the forged Battle Abbey Chronicle, which describes St Olaf’s as decrepit: Roger, another early founder of St Nicholas at Exeter, is said to have built “a monastery suitable for monks nearby,” implying that St Olaf’s was in such disrepair that it could not be inhabited.⁴⁰² Further muddling the relationship between St Nicholas and St Olaf is that the latter was founded by King Harold’s mother, Gytha, during her son’s reign and was likely her safe haven during Exeter’s botched rebellion against William in 1068. Would the incoming Normans want to destroy, join, or entirely overtake an ecclesiastic establishment so closely tied with Anglo-Scandinavian dissidents?

⁴⁰⁰ Lapidge, 19. Although the *Miracula S Swithuni* was written in 1100, it “survives in several twelfth-century English manuscripts” *ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Heale, 28.

⁴⁰² Records that show St Olaf’s, decrepit or not, made payments to St Nicholas’s for centuries.

The selection of Exeter as a place for an outpost was surely no accident on the part of the Anglo-Norman monks who established it. Exeter was home to a productive mint and a cathedral, the latter of which had kept most of its native churchmen.⁴⁰³ Belonging to a different diocese and consisting of local Englishmen, Exeter remained hostile to its new Anglo-Norman neighbor into the twelfth century. Anselm wrote to Bishop Osbern (of Exeter) twice to plead for collegiality between the two houses.⁴⁰⁴ This antagonism could have stemmed from national politics (Englishmen v Normans), but could just have easily have come from a sense of fierce ecclesiastical competition. When one considers the substance of complaint—that the bishop of Exeter had forbidden the smaller foundation from burying the dead and ringing bells in “the custom of the Benedictine order”—it is tempting to imagine that the episcopal see did not want to lose its pilgrims (or their donations) to this insurgent house.

Somewhat ironically, the Nicholas connection was maintained in Russia by Gytha’s grandson (Harold’s son), who is believed to have founded the first stone church of St Nicholas at Novgorod. In 1089 King Eric of Denmark attended the Council of Bari, and returned with relics of Nicholas, around which he founded a church in the saint’s name.⁴⁰⁵ Nicholas was, indeed, a

⁴⁰³ For more information on Exeter’s mint, see the UK Portable Antiquities Scheme: finds.org.uk/database/search/results/mint_id/87/ruler/197/mintName/Exeter

⁴⁰⁴ “From a letter addressed by Archbishop Anselm to the Osbern bishop of Exeter, AD 1103, it appears that even the religious here were at first somewhat molested by the secular clergy of Exeter, and that even the bishop had forbidden them to ring their bells agreeably to the custom of the Benedictine order. Anselm rebuked the indiscretion of both; inculcated charity; and recommended the religious to his confidence as well as the protection of the venerable bishop.” Orme, Nicholas. *The Medieval Churches of Exeter*. London, Impress Books, 2014.

⁴⁰⁵ The 12th century saw eight or nine dedications to Nicholas in Scandinavia, including an archbishopric at Lund. Garipzanov, Ildar H. 2010. “The Cult of St Nicholas in the Early Christian North, c.1000-1150.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 35, 3, pp. 229-246 (236-237).

highly portable saint especially suited to the pluralism of England (and much of the Continent) at the turn of the twelfth century.

Still, it is not clear how the translation of his relics by Barian sailors in 1087 accounted for (or even created) the remarkable effect imagined by Jones or later Treharne, who writes, “[E]specially significant to the Normans was Nicholas’s patronage of sailors and merchants: he was an obvious choice as a tutelary saint for a seafaring nation.”⁴⁰⁶ I do not think that he was an obvious choice, and I am not sure that Norman sailors (or Italian sailors under newly Norman rule) had the idea of being a distinctly “seafaring nation” at this time.⁴⁰⁷ By the 1080s, there is little to support the idea that Barian sailors and Marmoutier monks would have each identified as members of the same maritime empire, or that there was a cohesive sense of empire in the first place.⁴⁰⁸ And despite the proliferation of the Nicholas cult throughout the tenth and eleventh

⁴⁰⁶ Treharne, 37. To Jones, St Nicholas foundations along English coasts and river ways prove that Normans brought over an expressly maritime saint Nicholas, whose cult experienced immediate success. Following the footnotes, one learns that these foundations are inclusive of the 400 years between 1100 and 1500; surely each dedication cannot be ascribed to Norman preoccupation with the nautical expertise of the ancient Mediterranean bishop.

⁴⁰⁷ Dawn Marie Hayes argues that Nicholas had developed a “reputation as a protector of sailors” by the late eleventh century, but she too eagerly uses Orderic Vitallis’s romantic nostalgia as “one of the most intriguing pieces of evidence” for this emergence. “The Cult of St Nicholas of Myra in Norman Bari, c. 1071- c.1111.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67, 3, 2016. pp. 492-512 (495). Similarly, she writes that “a chapel dedicated to the saint in the cathedral of Coutances, which was consecrated in 1056, as well as a chapel in Normandy, near the Seine, dedicated to Nicholas of the Sailors” are evidence for a nautical Nicholas cult in the middle of the century (ibid). There is no record of when the first was dedicated to Nicholas, nor of when the second earned its specifically maritime title. Her footnote reads that the sailors’ association comes not from a written source but exists “according to legend” (n.10, p. 494). Like Lifshitz, Treharne, and Jones, Hayes reads the expressly nautical interest in Nicholas backwards onto this time period. It may have been present in the mid-twelfth century, but was not in the mid-eleventh.

⁴⁰⁸ While the Norman sources preserve a sense of *Normanitas*, the Barian sources—particularly the two accounts of the translation mention nothing of Normandy.

centuries, none of the extant liturgies, hymns, or even the early dramas of the saint depict him as exclusively or even especially nautical. He was not the only saint to pray to during rough weather at sea, any more than he was the only one who would interfere on behalf of the falsely imprisoned. My argument is that Anglo-Normans were responsible for the development of this particularly “subjective” element of his hagiography, and that the Nicholas poems in Tiberius B.v offer early evidence of this nascent nautical intentionality. Although it may be impossible to determine if the monks at Battle Abbey (or even those in Exeter) were especially committed to St Nicholas, the poems dedicated to his life, miracles, and eventual translation are nevertheless proof of *someone’s* interest in the saint.⁴⁰⁹ And despite the undeniable popularity of his cult by the early decades of the twelfth century, this turn of the century text offers a uniquely early glimpse of the cult in England.

One must proceed with caution in examining the manuscript evidence for Nicholas’s cult in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: many of the eleventh-century manuscripts feature Nicholas material only “added by a later hand,” and most of these hands remain undated. Ælfwine’s Prayerbook of 1030 preserves five short poems to Nicholas in one of these unspecified “later hands,” though Nicholas’s name was an original part of Wulfstan’s *Pontificorum*, created at Worcester in 1030. Nicholas’s *vita* was also copied from “Northern French, or Flemish” exempla into the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, now broken into CCCC9 and Nero E.i. Other early versions of the *vita* appear in Cotton Tiberius D.iv and, in Old English translation, in CCCC 303.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ An interest that would spread quickly: “every calendar copied in England after 1100 included Nicholas” (Treharne, 41-42).

⁴¹⁰ Treharne believes that the Old English Life was composed in eleventh-century Rochester; it survives in a twelfth-century copy.

Elsewhere, Donald Matthew notes that “Durham had, exceptionally early, an illustrated life of St Nicholas,” and that Godric’s composition of his poem to Nicholas, the “earliest known lyric in English to have been written after 1066” testifies to sustained interest in maritime saints by the monks of the landlocked community.⁴¹¹ Anselm wrote a poem describing the arrival of a Nicholas relic in Bec; he later requested a copy of it from Canterbury (in order to revise it) but if it was delivered, it has since been lost. The Leofric Missal donated between 1050-1072 “records how Aethelstan founded the monastery of SS. Mary and Peter at Exeter and enriched it with the greater part of the relics listed; the Old English version refers to his systematically sending messengers to foreign lands to buy relics.”⁴¹²

Looking more broadly at the cult of St Nicholas in the 11th century does not provide much more clarity. In *The Cult of St Nicholas in the Early Christian North (c. 1000–1150)*, Ildar H. Garipzanov documents two paths on which the cult travelled. The “western route connected 9th-century Italy with Carolingian Francia and Ottonian Germany,” and brought the cult to Normandy in the first half of the eleventh century, whence it spread to England. Meanwhile, “Lower Lotharingia and its cathedral culture seem to have been a key factor in the promotion of the cult of St Nicholas and its Latin liturgy in North-Western Europe in the 11th century.”⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ See his introduction to *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193*, eds. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich, Boydell and Brewer, 1998. pp 9-10.

⁴¹² Caroline Brett, “A Breton pilgrim in England in the reign of King Aethelstan” in *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays in Memory of Ruth Morgan*, ed Gillian Jondorf and D.N. Dumville, Boydell 1991, pp. 43-70 (46).

⁴¹³ Garipzanov, 239. The most succinct work summarizing the research of Meisen, Ronsjo, Cioffari, di Viti, and Jones, see *Wace: The Hagiographical Works*, edited by Blacker, Burgess, and Ogden, pp 247-249, and 249-254.

Additionally, “an eastern channel linked late 10th-century Byzantium and newly converted Rus’,” where Nicholas was “being imported along with other Byzantine saints.”⁴¹⁴ That the eastern and western routes “converged in Scandinavia and northern Rus” is overlooked by most, despite the fact that “in the 1090s, the Latin feast dedicated to the translation of the relics of St Nicholas from Asia Minor to Bari in Italy was accepted in Kievan Rus’, but not in Byzantium.”⁴¹⁵

2. Poems 1-4

Returning to the Nicholas poems in Tiberius B.v, one finds that the first three are individual legends of the saint’s posthumous miracles performed before the eleventh-century translation. The fourth poem, whose narrative structure assumes the basic layout of *vita*, marks no transition between the distinct legends that it presents, and is somewhat lopsided in its narrative.⁴¹⁶ The fifth, an abbreviated *translatio*, stands alone in several ways. Written in lines of four rather than two (across the entire page rather than in columns), its “script is poor, with ill-formed and inconsistent letters” and its content shows more abbreviations, ligatures, erasures, and corrections than the other poems. Additionally, “[t]he high level of [scribal] alternation

⁴¹⁴ Garipzanov, 239.

⁴¹⁵ The further spread of the cult occurred in two stages: the first motivated by royal patronage in particularly far-reaching dynasties, the second by the exceptionally mobile “trading elites of Baltic,” whose mariners could pray to Nicholas whether they were Latin or Orthodox. (Garipzanov, 240).

⁴¹⁶ Cioffari observes that “there is no contamination” from either the Nicholas of Sion materials or the episode of the three clerks, which was Nicholas’s most famous episode on the Continent (especially in the north). Cioffari believes this lack of integration was “unthinkable after the year 1100.” “Battle Abbey and the St Nicholas Manuscript.” *St Nicholas News*, April 25, 2012. www.centrostudinicolaiani.it/articoli/allegato/st-nick-36-battle-abbey-ms.pdf

tempts one to suspect that this poem...is a late addition” but even more curiously, “even a more recent composition.”⁴¹⁷ Regardless of whether this fifth poem was written considerably after the other four, it nevertheless seems to be the first extant example of the *translatio* in an English codex.

Despite their beginnings in different genres of Nicholas’s hagiographical repertoire (the first three separate legends from *miracula*, the fourth from a *vita* or martyrology, the fifth from a *translatio*), these five unique poems all share an interest in vows, votive objects, and “foreigners.” That the *translatio* is the only one to mention Nicholas’s relics, and especially his salvific holy oil, is remarkable, and suggests that the first four were first gathered in relation to an event that emphasized visiting a shrine rather than returning with a relic. After all, “not all English relic-collectors were legitimate buyers: in eleventh-century hagiographical texts written on the continent it became a topos for Englishmen to attempt to steal relics.”⁴¹⁸

Poem 1⁴¹⁹

The first poem tells the story of a deceitful Christian defrauding a Jew who has lent him money. Thematically, it stresses the inviolability of vows made on Nicholas’s altar. Having fallen from wealth to poverty, a Christian man asks a Jew for a loan so he might “earn his living without ignominy.”⁴²⁰ The lender is happy to oblige, so long as the borrower has a guarantor.

⁴¹⁷ Dumville, 105.

⁴¹⁸ Brett, n.17 p 46, referring to Geary’s *Furta Sacra*, pp 60-63.

⁴¹⁹ Latin references to Poem 1, Poem 3, and Poem 4 refer to the lines and pages of Walter de Gray Birch, “The Legendary Life of St. Nicholas, Part II.” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 64, 1888, pp. 222-34. All translations are my own.

⁴²⁰ “Unde posset adquirere victum sine dedecore” (6, p. 223).

The Christian has no family or friends nearby whom he could ask (*nullus est...proximus, qui de me sit sollicitus*), but suggests that the altar of St Nicholas could serve in the same capacity.⁴²¹

The Christian man is impoverished and alone, removed from all relations and without the immense wealth he once had. In biblical contexts, poor and solitary figures are often shown to be closest to Christ, who told his disciples to leave all possessions and family behind to follow him. As events show, this Christian is not yet at this place of proximity to God.

Nicholas's cosmopolitanism—even from beyond the grave—stands in contrast to the social isolation of the Christian. That the saint “appears to all,” seems to have been well-known by Christians and Jews alike. It is for this reason that the Christian suggests to the Jew that Nicholas's altar would be tantamount to a guarantor. The borrower assents, agreeing that when Nicholas is present, no lies remain hidden.⁴²² The loan is made, and the Christian quickly becomes rich. Yet when the lender calls for payment, the borrower fraudulently claims to have already returned the loan. The Jew reminds the deviant man that even if he did cancel the debt, Nicholas would still exact his price.⁴²³

The Christian is convinced that he can trick his way out of repayment without committing perjury. He secretly fills a hollow staff with gold and asks the Jew to hold it. He again claims that he has returned the gold, and rejoicing in his cleverness, returns home. That he had taken back his staff—a walking stick often associated with pilgrimage—is not clear until the Christian meets his grisly end. The walking aid is not mentioned when the Christian suddenly becomes

⁴²¹ 11, p. 223.

⁴²² “*in eius presentia nulla latet fallatia*” (16, p. 224).

⁴²³ “*Si iusiurandum feceris super altare presulis, / Quicquid cogor exigere floccipendo amittere*” (25-26, p. 224).

drowsy along the way and falls asleep at a crossroads. He sleeps so heavily the warning shouts from an oncoming cart do not wake him; the carriage runs over the deceitful man, breaking him and his staff apart. The Christian dies alone on the road, with his body, wealth, and lie laid bare for all to see.

News of the Christian's gruesome death quickly reaches the Jew, who perceives it as an act of vengeance and vindication on Nicholas's part. He consequently converts to Christianity and prays for the salvation of the man who had defrauded him. The poem ends with a collect-like commentary on Nicholas's virtues; he is open to persuasive speech, but only from those who speak the truth: "So placable is the admirable Nicholas / that he recalled to bodily life he who quickly returned the gold. May all the world hear this and esteem Nicholas, who, keeping just rule, loves no deception."⁴²⁴ The poet emphasizes the sanctity of oaths and strength of Nicholas's power. But the narrative itself presents another, perhaps more subtle lesson: that the life of a mendicant (whose life is "ignominious" to the deceitful Christian) is better than the life of a wealthy pilgrim. In other words, gold and the pilgrim's staff are mutually exclusive.

Poem 2⁴²⁵

The second poem transitions from interpersonal commerce to actual pilgrimage, and provides a detailed glimpse of how the two might have interacted. A *paterfamilias* commissions a richly ornamented chalice to take with him to the saint's shrine in Myra. The goblet is so beautiful that he cannot bear to give it away, so he commissions an identical one to be made for

⁴²⁴ "[N]on fit exorabilis Nicholaus mirabilis, / Ad vitam functum revocat, qui mox aurum resituat./ [To]tus mundus hoc audiat, Nicholaumque diligit,/ [Qui] rectam tenens regulam nullam amat fallatiam" (53-56, p. 224).

⁴²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, references to Poem 2 and Poem 5 refer to my editions, which can be found in the appendices.

the votive offering. However, the gold and the gems will not take shape, and the goldsmith returns the materials to his client without explanation as to why he could not complete the task.

The father brings the completed and incomplete cups (and loose gems) on board before departing with his wife, son, and servants to the shrine. This is an especially communal activity; the visit is an annual pilgrimage, and they sail “with others (*cum ceteris*).” Unlike the man of mixed fortune in the first poem, this *paterfamilias* is a pillar of family and communal life. En route, the man’s son chills the decorated goblet in the sea before pouring him some wine, and the cup slips from his grasp. The child falls in trying to recover it, and presumably perishes in the sea below. Immediately, the father cries out for his boy, “filling his mouth with tears” and exclaiming, “for your death, son, I am solely to blame.”⁴²⁶ Arriving to the shrine, the distraught father offers another prayer of penitence to Nicholas: “I beg you, Nicholas, to have mercy on me, miserable (as I am),/ Do not pay back in kind so great a crime, as I deserve.”⁴²⁷ Unlike the lying Christian in the previous poem, the *paterfamilias* had not been beset by hardship; he knows he has no excuse to have kept the goblet for himself. When the ship lands, the despondent father places the loose gold and gemstones on the altar; the spirit of Nicholas pushes them off.

As the father mourns alone, apart from the festivities of the other pilgrims, the boy walks into the church with the chalice in his hands. The other pilgrims see him immediately, and the crowd erupts into celebration. The father throws his arms around the boy and asks him what had happened when he fell into the sea. The boy answers that under the sea, an old man had greeted

⁴²⁶ “Exclamat pater pueri, / suffundens ora lacrimis, / De tua morte iuuenis /omnino sum culpabilis” (69-72).

⁴²⁷ “Te Nicholae deprecor, / indulge mihi misero/ Nec uicem tanti criminis / rependas ut promerui” (73-76).

him and given him the goblet, then carried him back to the shore. The old man, the father knows, is Nicholas, so he makes good on his promise by taking the goblet back from the boy and placing it on the altar. The poet concludes, “To all who sail the sea Nicholas is known,/ and [all] who vow to pay their debts do as they promise (qui quasi preposito vota reddunt ex debito).”⁴²⁸ The language of exchange, purchase, and debt are still relevant, but the most salient interpretation of meaning still exists on the level of the utterance, just as it had in the first poem. Vows made to Nicholas, just as vows witnessed by him, are never to be broken.

The poet’s use of the nautical setting in this second poem deserves extended analysis because the voyage marks a departure from other sources of the legend. The prose *miracula*, (BHL 6172) about the “substituted cup” (the basis for poem 2) often travelled with the legend of the staff (BHL 6174, the basis for poem 1).⁴²⁹ According to the Bollandists, whose record for Nicholas is regrettably incomplete, BHL 6172 is attested in 27 manuscripts before 1200. One of these, Rouen BP U 55, is dated between 976 and 1025. Four others predate 1150: Paris BNF lat. 05607 (1001-1100); Angers BM 121(1050-1060); Koln HA, W 163 (1051-1150); and Brussels KBR 14294-14934 (prev 3238). Only four of the 27 do not share a manuscript with the broken staff episode (BHL 6174).⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Another version of this story begins on fol. 23v of CCCC 9, discussed below.

⁴²⁹ I am not the first to recognize 6172 as the source of the Tiberius poem. “Added to blank spaces in this manuscript (fols 55r–56r, 73r–v, 77r), apparently in a contemporary hand, is a metrical life of Nicholas (BHL 6212–16), which versifies several episodes from John the Deacon’s *Vita Nicolai* (see above, Nicolaus, vita) and two additional episodes of later vintage (BHL 6172–73).” Whately, Gordon et multi. “Acta Sanctorum.” *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, vol. 1, edited by Biggs et al, Medieval Institute Publications, 2001, pp. 22-486 (364).

⁴³⁰ According to a search of the Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Manuscripta Index: bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be

The earliest edited version of 6172 I have been able to access is that in the thirteenth-century manuscript from Namur.⁴³¹ With a few notable exceptions (to be discussed at length below), the text of Namur corresponds nearly verbatim with that of two *miraculae* added to extant English manuscripts during the twelfth century: Harley 3097 and CCCC 9.⁴³²

The complex nature of Nicholas's hagiographical history, already acknowledged in this chapter, makes source study all but impossible for this or any of his versified *miracula*, but reading the prose versions against the poem will nevertheless shed light on the various ways in which Nicholas material was being added into 10th- and 11th-century manuscripts. I cautiously treat the thirteenth-century manuscript (Namur) as closest to an "original" version of the legend.⁴³³ To do so tests the limits of prudence, but without access to the earlier manuscripts, and given its similarities with Harley, which is poorly copied, this approach is not altogether reckless. The Bollandists have edited Namur's 90-line prose *miracula* in an appendix of their second volume of *Analecta Bollandiana*.⁴³⁴ The Harley MS is in the process of being digitized by the British Library, which was generous in sharing some images with me. As part of the Parker Collection, CCCC9 is fully digitized, but only functionally so to those whose academic

⁴³¹ *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol 2, Société des Bollandistes, 1883, pp. 151-153.

⁴³² I have not seen the "comparably extensive collection of Nicholas miracles...preserved in the twelfth-century legendary from Hereford, now Hereford, Cathedral P.VII.6 (Mynors and Thomson 1993 p 111)" Whately, 361.

⁴³³ If nothing else, Namur gives us a sense of the extent of the Harley scribe's mistakes.

⁴³⁴ *Analecta Bollandiana*

institutions have subscribed to their website. Because of their similarities, I have transcribed CCCC9 and edited the Tiberius poem in the appendix.⁴³⁵

Harley 3097 is described as a “theological miscellany” probably written in the “2nd half of the 11th century or first quarter of the 12th” at the “Benedictine abbey of Saints Peter, Paul and Andrew in Peterborough.”⁴³⁶ The collation of the Nicholas texts with the other materials in the manuscript has not been studied, but it is possible that some of these Nicholas texts were added after the completion of the original codex. Given the numerous scribal corrections, this episode of Nicholas’s material was entered in a hurry, or by someone who was unfamiliar with his source text.⁴³⁷

CCCC9, part of the Cotton Corpus Legendary, “contains saints’ lives pertaining to the months of October, November and December, as well as a calendar which may once have been part of a separate volume.”⁴³⁸ It was probably written before 1062 in Worcester, but at the time of completion, did not include any mention of Nicholas, whose hagiographical material was added later. The substituted cup episode is among the tangled Nicholas material that was added sometime in the eleventh or the twelfth century. The confusing addition history is best

⁴³⁵ The Tiberius poem was last edited in the nineteenth century; my transcription departs from both of these editions by breaking the lines into couplets, according to the rhythm and meter. In-text references will therefore point to my lineation, not those of Wright or de Gray Birch.

The CCCC prose has not, to my knowledge, been transcribed before.

⁴³⁶ The British Library’s detailed record for Harley 3097 can be found at www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6593

⁴³⁷ For the nature of some emendations, see below.

⁴³⁸ The entire Parker Collection was digitized by Corpus Christi College Cambridge and Stanford University in 2010. While it is free to the public, one cannot zoom in on the manuscripts except through a paid subscription; I am grateful that UNC still has access. See parker.stanford.edu

summarized by Whately in the *Sources for Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture* entry for *Acta*

Sanctorum:

The Nicholas texts added in the late eleventh or early twelfth century to the Cambridge portion of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary include a broader selection of miracula: added as a supplement to the manuscript's original copy of the *Vita Nicolai* [added before the other Nicholas materials] are *BHL* 6150–56, 6160–61, 6163–65 (pp 41–46); next were added (in the following order) *BHL* 6172, 6168–69, and 6174 (pp 46–52). Although these two blocks of texts are in different hands and have been culled from other legendaries or booklets (the first contemporary with the original copy of the *vita* [*Nicolai*], the second later in the twelfth century), they seem to have been added to the manuscript at the same time.⁴³⁹

CCCC's scribe is both more focused and controlled than that of the Harley MS.⁴⁴⁰ The scribe of the Harley episode seems to have struggled with his material. On a few occasions, the Harley scribe paraphrases certain clauses in which Namur and CCCC 9 agree.⁴⁴¹ The most revealing scribal mistakes (by one or both Anglo-Norman author) occur at presumably foreign words: *xenii* (votive offering) and *oenophorum* (a two-handled wine jug, amphora).⁴⁴² These Greek-derived words are reminiscent of ancient Christianity; it may very well be that the Anglo-Saxon (and Anglo-Norman) keepers of these texts were unfamiliar with them, or expected their audience to be.

⁴³⁹ Whately, 361.

⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the steady hand of the Nicholas interpolation is initially caught off guard by the Graecism *xeniis*; he has written *ex*, then scraped off the *e*.

⁴⁴¹ The only points in which Namur is unique are in nautical details: “sua carbasa uentis commisit” and “cum igitur per uitreos capos nauigando” but it is, right now, impossible to know if these were part of the “original,” and left out by the Anglo-Latin authors, or if they were added in Belgium.

⁴⁴² Harley preserves what seems to be the scribe's confused attempts at transcribing *oenophorum*, which CCCC9 replaces with *uas*. CCCC 9's scribe has trouble with *xenii*, to which it had first added an initial *e*.

*The text common to all prose versions*⁴⁴³

All three of these manuscript witnesses present, for the most part, the same prose text. They begin by justifying the purpose of the story—to record the works Nicholas performed in “our time (nostris temporibus).”⁴⁴⁴ This start suggests that the *miracula*, at a very early stage, was connected to a series of miracles that was performed in another time—presumably, that of Nicholas himself. The prose version opens with an observation about Nicholas’s widely-known cult: “from far and wide, all kinds of people visit his tomb.”⁴⁴⁵ Yet in addition to the geographical distance, Nicholas’s reach extends over a lengthy period of time, as well: “in that time, there was a custom” of bringing wine vessels to Nicholas’s tomb.⁴⁴⁶ The following twenty lines (as edited by the Bollandists in the Namur MS) claim that Nicholas is celebrated by all kinds of people who gather from all corners of the earth.⁴⁴⁷ The text then focuses on one of these regular pilgrims—a wealthy man from across the sea, who promises to offer a wine vessel to the shrine at the next feast day.⁴⁴⁸ He commissions a goldsmith to make a work worthy of the cause, and he is so taken by the bejeweled artwork that he keeps it for himself, and requests that

⁴⁴³ In this subsection, Latin from the shared prose will come from the Bollandists’ edition of Namur, unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁴⁴ line 1, p 151.

⁴⁴⁵ “Cum longe lateque uirtutem beatissimi Nicolai propalarentur insignia, ex diuersis et semotis mundi partibus nobilium et ignobilium, diuitum quoque et pauperum cateruae, ad eius uenerabilia coeperunt conuolare merita” (lines 34-37, p. 151).

⁴⁴⁶ “Quodam autem tempore secundum morem consuetum ad eius ueniens bustum, uoto se constrinxit aureum uas se facturum in eius seruitio, sibi que delaturum” (2-3, p. 152).

⁴⁴⁷ An attribute also remarked upon by poem 5, as we shall see.

⁴⁴⁸ The vagueness of “wine vessel” will be addressed shortly.

another be made for Nicholas. But on the second attempt the gems and gold do not stick, and the goldsmith returns the raw materials at a loss for explanation.

After a foreshadowing remark about the wealthy man not giving something of his own for Nicholas,⁴⁴⁹ Namur and Harley launch into ten printed lines' worth of homiletic digression against avarice. This marks the greatest structural distinction between these two and the third, which come back together to rehash the difficulty with which the goldsmith had toiled in vain, and to emphasize the great price that the privileged man would pay.⁴⁵⁰ In the nautical portion of the narrative—including the family's preparation, the ship's embarkation, and the son's drowning – the three manuscripts vary only in a few places, but with considerable repercussions, to be discussed in depth below. May it suffice for now that all three preserve the same basic plot points while at sea: the wine vessel is dropped (under different circumstances in each version), the boy is drowned (also in related but slightly varied conditions), and the parents arrive in Myra, utterly despondent.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ “Uerum caeca animi pellectus cupiditate et perfossus cuspide tenacis auaritiae, tanti pretii uas suis usibus deputauit retinendum, malens sibi ex eo diatim uinum propinare quam sancto Nicolau qui illud deuouerat, deferre.” (13-15, 152).

⁴⁵⁰ The following line marks the first sentence of the resumed shared text: “Cum itaque praefectus locuples iam dictum uas amitiose suis delegasset...” (29, 152).

⁴⁵¹ Classical (and ironically, poetic) diction used in this nautical context is excluded by the Tiberius versifier. CCCC describes the embarkation in epic terms: “Itaque remigio remigum fultos, uelis quoque tantae nauigationi aptis adumbratus, Euro flante uela uentis commisit...” Namur reads much the same, until “Euro flante secundo, sua carbasa uentis commisit fluctuatique sali fluctibus: gubernatoreque artemonem prospere regente...” (40-41, p 152).

The prose records the father's acts of prayer when he arrives at the shrine, and the hagiographer reminds his reader that Nicholas "always hastens to those who invoke him."⁴⁵² Then, he gestures to his reader, "behold the miracle (Mira res)."⁴⁵³ As the man laments his sin, his son appears, to the wonder and celebration of all. The episode closes with the admonition to praise God for his mercies, which are performed by his saints. All three versions, then, are indeed the same legend, as the Bollandists acknowledged.

*What the Tiberius poem shares with all three prose versions*⁴⁵⁴

Beyond a few narrative details and the prose author's occasional interjections, the shared text of the prose legend clearly corresponds to the Poem 2 of Tiberius B.v. The Tiberius poem shares the basic structure with the latter half of the prose, cutting out introductory remarks on the annual observance and the homiletic digression, and severely reducing the redundant descriptions of the second offering's creation. There are only a few close verbal correspondences between the shared text of the prose and the Tiberius poem.⁴⁵⁵ Three of these occur in descriptions of the goldsmith's work: "Auro gemmas inserere / uniones...mirifice compositum" seems to be a reshuffling of the prose "...gemmarum unionumque ordinibus; mirifice decorauit,"⁴⁵⁶ just as "Rursus aurifax queritur, cui aurum committitur, / Iubet uas restituere quod

⁴⁵² Namur: "semper praesto adest omnibus se cum fiid inuocantibus adesse..." (41, p 152). The claim that Nicholas appears for all who invoke him is also a lesson learned from the first Tiberius poem.

⁴⁵³ Namur, 20, p. 153.

⁴⁵⁴ From this point on, Latin from the shared text refers to CCCC9.

⁴⁵⁵ For better readability, line numbers are included in Table 1.

⁴⁵⁶ *ordinauit* in Harley and Namur

sit priori simile” reorders “...rursus ad se conuocans aurifabrum similem prioris auri.” The most remarkable link between the shared text of the prose and the poem is the peculiar Greek loan *obrizum*, found in the poem’s “Instrumenta defitiunt, naturam perdit obrizum...” which is surely inspired by the prose “...et illi non modicum pretiosi obrizi librauit talentum.”

The closest verbal correspondence is regrettably the least revealing: the poet’s “cum uxore et filio, seruos ducit quam plurimos” need hardly have relied on the exact phrasing of “cum uxore et filio seruorem etiam plurimo famulatu” to describe the father boarding the ship with his wife and son. And although the circumstances of the boy’s drowning are unique in each prose version, the poet’s use of the same verb to describe how the chalice slipped from his hands is the same: “de manibus elabitur” corresponds to “manibus eius elapsum,” which occurs in all three prose versions. Finally, the prose description of Nicholas as an old man below the sea, “uenerande uultus habitum gerens cum in mari cecidisset, ei senex apperuerit...et eum ulnis sustenans usque ad litus deportauerit” roughly matches the poetic “cum cecidi, senex michi apparuit....ueneranda spetie, cui ut mater piissima tenuit inter brachia.”

Table 1: Verbal Similarities between Shared Prose and Tiberius

Prose (CCCC9)	Tiberius B v
et variis gemmarum unionumque ordinibus; mirifice decorauit. ⁴⁵⁷ (14)	Auro gemmas inserere / uniones mirifice compositum...(16-17, 24)
...et illi non modicum pretiosi obrizi librauit talentum (12)	Instrumenta defitiunt, naturam perdit obrizum ... (41-42)
... rursus ad se conuocans aurifabrum similem prioris auri (23)	Rursus aurifax queritur, cui aurum committitur,/ Iubet uas restituere quod sit priori simile (33-36)
...et una [uelat] cum uxore et filio seruorem etiam plurimo (33)	Cum uxore et filio, seruos ducit quam plurimos (53-54)
...aurum quod detulerat pro uase super eius posuit altare seque protinus longius repulsum est quasi cum magna ui indignationis (44-45).	... indignans tali munere, / Mox ab altari reppulit quicquid miles apposuit . (94-96)
... unerandi uultus habitus gerens cum in mare cecidisset senex ei apparuerit eumque ulnis sustenans (58-59)	...Cum cecidit senex michi apparuit , / Uenustatis angelicae ueneranda spetie, / Cui ut mater miisima tenuit inter brachia (117-122)
... ducebat ad basilicam sancti Nicholai insinuauerit et sic subito ab eo recesserit (60).	... ducentem ad aecclesiam / Tunc subito arripuit sciphum... (132-133)

⁴⁵⁷ *ordinauit* in Harley and Namur

When the boy enters the church, the poet adapts the prose “Mira res” to the more musical “Ecce” to mark the miraculous scene. Both the poem and the prose present the father’s mourning as separate from the worship of onlooking pilgrims, celebrate his (and his son’s) reintegration into the society of festival goers, and conclude by reflecting on the power of Nicholas’s merits. One may conclude that the poem belongs to the same *miracula* group as the prose, even if none of these three was its direct source.

What the poem [almost] shares with Harley and Namur against CCCC9

CCCC9 and Tiberius exclude the homiletic digression in Harley and Namur, but potential verbal echoes in the poem demand that the content of the remonstrance against cupidity be considered. The digression in Harley and Namur opens with remarks on the viciousness of the father’s avarice before settling into a series of rhetorical questions. Referring to Psalm 74, (Vulgate 75:12) Harley and Namur ask, “Don’t you read what the Psalmist says, ‘Vow and give to the Lord your God’?”⁴⁵⁸ The context of this psalm reveals something of the inspiration for this story: Psalm 74 reflects on the awesome justice and judgment of God, who pours out a cup full of wine mixture across the earth. The Latin “uouete et reddite Domino Deo uestro” might seem a distant echo to that of the poem’s closing lines: “Nicholaus est cognitus cui quasi preposito uota reddunt ex debito,” yet the similarity could be nothing more than coincidence. A similarly tenuous link appears between the digression’s less carefully remembered quote from Proverbs: “as Solomon says: he who controls his soul is stronger than the man who takes cities.”⁴⁵⁹ CCCC9

⁴⁵⁸ “An psalmistam dicentem non legeras: Uouete et reddite Domino Deo uestro?” (Namur, 21-22, p. 152).

⁴⁵⁹ “dicente Salomone: qui dominatur animo suo, ualidior est expugnatore urbium” (Namur, 25-26, p.152). Proverbs 25: 8 reads, “sicut urbs patens et absque murorum ambitu ita vir qui non potest in loquendo cohibere spiritum suum” (Vulgate). The prose’s phrase might be taken from a

preserves no reference to this material, but the Tiberius poet could have remembered it when he described the goblet as finer than any other since Solomon's time. Ultimately, though, the connection between the poem's closing, which specifically references pledges to Nicholas, and the psalm's directive, to make sacrifices to God, is too tenuous to suggest direct influence. Likewise the poetic and prose references to Solomon, being in completely different contexts, are probably nothing more than coincidence. There is no textual correspondence to suggest that the poem is especially close to Harley or Namur. The same cannot be said for the poem's relationship with the CCCC manuscript.

What the poem shares with CCCC9 against Harley and Namur

All three prose texts describe the jealousy with which the father kept the vessel hidden from all except his wife and son.⁴⁶⁰ All three works also struggle to make sense of how the boy came to mishandle the vessel and fall overboard. The greatest disagreements among the prose texts occur in nautical scenes, and the Tiberius poem corresponds with CCCC's account of the circumstances which lead directly to the loss of the vessel and the boy.⁴⁶¹

Namur reads that the father revealed the flask to his son, who (somehow) dropped it into the sea.⁴⁶² The use of *expositum* to portray the father's act of display is consistent with earlier

commentary; it matches verbatim, for instance, Abelard's commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans.

⁴⁶⁰ Namur: "Tanto enim illud amplectebatur amore, ut neminem praeter se ex eo poculum uellet haurire" (2-3, p. 153). Harley: "...ut nemineim excepto filio siue coniuge alliquimodo liceret cotingere" CCCC 9: "Tanto enim illud amplectebatur amore ut nemini illud excepto filio coniuge aliquo modo liceret contingere."

⁴⁶¹ See Table 2 for line numbers and correspondences.

⁴⁶² "Expositum itaque uas ab adolsescete subito e manibus eius elapsum, currit in mare" (Namur, 3-4, p 153).

insistence on the father's cupidity and jealousy—there is something in the uncovering that triggers the ensuing events.⁴⁶³ Harley has a more vague, and slightly more tenable explanation: “He had wished to give it to his father when suddenly it slipped from his hands.”⁴⁶⁴ The Cotton Legendary's treatment of the scene evinces a remarkable connection between it and the Tiberius poem: The boy “wished to chill [the goblet] in the sea when suddenly, it fell from his hands into the ocean.”⁴⁶⁵ The unusual *refricdare* could be a conflation of Harley's “cum uellit patris dare” and Tiberius's “Quem priusquam miscuerit / refrigidare uoluit,” but it is much more likely that it is simply a distinctive spelling for *refrigidare*. Since both the CCCC and Tiberius are additions to texts which had been compiled decades before, the Worcester link might not shed much light on where the Tiberius poems were written or copied. Still, the similarity suggests that cooling the cup in the water was a sufficiently reasonable explanation for how the goblet and the boy were lost. This is yet another change made very early on in at least two items (Tiberius and CCCC) of Nicholas's Anglo-Norman dossier, and contextualizes the peculiarities of the Tiberius poem.⁴⁶⁶ While CCCC9 might not be the direct source of Poem 2, it is certainly a closer relative than the Harley or Namur version.

⁴⁶³ As the DMLBS notes, the primary definition for *exposito*, which is first attested at the end of the eleventh century, is especially liturgical: “bringing out, exposition (of Host).” via Logeion

⁴⁶⁴ “Adolescent uero cum uellet patris dare subito e manibus eius elapsum, corrui in mare” (Harley)

⁴⁶⁵ “Adolescens uero cum illud aqua uellet refricdare subito e manibus eius elapsus corrui in mare” (CCCC, 37-38).

⁴⁶⁶ Also, CCCC changes *oenophorum* to *uas*; in the same scene (ie, when the father presents the vessel as thanks to Nicholas), the poet writes *sciphum*.

Table 2: Overboard Passages

<p>Namur: Expositum itaque uas ab adolescente subito e manibus eius elapsum, currit in mare. Cumque iuuenis porrectus illud conaretur arripere brachiis, incaute prosiliens ipse etiam delapsus est in gurgite profundum maris.</p> <p>As it was shown to the boy, the wine vessel suddenly slipped from his hands and fell into the sea. When the boy tried to grab it with outstretched arms, carelessly leaping forward, he too fell into the abyss of the ocean.</p>
<p>Harley: Adolescent uero cum uellet patris dare subito e manibus eius elapsum, corruit in mare. Cumque iuuenis porrectus illud conaretur arripere brachiis, incaute prosiliens ipse etiam delapsus est in gurgite profundum maris.</p> <p>It happened that the boy wished to give [the wine vessel] straightaway to his father, but it slipped from his hands and fell into the sea. When the boy tried to grab it with outstretched arms, carelessly leaping forward, he too fell into the abyss of the ocean.</p>
<p>CCCC: Adolescens uero cum illud aqua uellet refricdare subito e manibus eius elapsus corruit in mare. Cuiquid iuuenis porrectis illud conaretur arripere brachiis incaute prosiliens delapsus est in gurgitem profundum maris.</p> <p>The boy wished to chill [the goblet] in the sea when suddenly, it slipped from his hands and fell into the sea. When the boy tried to grab it with outstretched arms, carelessly leaping forward, he falls into the deep abyss of the ocean.</p>

Tiberius: Currens puer quantotius arripit sciphum promptulus / Quem priusquam miscuerit refrigi
dare uoluit. / Qui cum in aqua tingitur de manibus elabatur/ Sed cum cupit retrahere/
simul ruit in equore.

Rushing as fast as he can, the boy grabbed the promised goblet which, before mixing [wine] in
it, he wished to chill. When he dipped it in the water, it slipped from his hands. As he tried to
recover it, [the boy] too fell into the ocean.

Distinct elements to the poem against all three prose

In the prose versions, the wine vessel offered to Nicholas is one from which wine is
meant to be poured out as an offering to the saint's spirit; in the poem, it is clearly a cup from
which wine is to be drunk. The distinction goes beyond that of diction, though. In the prose
versions, observing Nicholas's feast day entails the ancient practice of leaving victuals at
tombs—an ancient practice that articulated the idea of the saint's physical presence at the place
of their burial. The Tiberius poet seems to have been either unfamiliar or uncomfortable with this
ritual. Instead of depicting the service of food and drink at Nicholas's tomb, the poet implies that
the *paterfamilias* is donating a chalice to the altar, perhaps for liturgical purposes. Changing the
service vessel to a chalice also connects the poem to the practice of the Eucharist, which might
have been more relevant to an audience of monks and clerics.⁴⁶⁷

The prose distinctly employs *basilica* for the church and *scaua* (or *oenophorum* in Namur
and Harley) for the vessel, where the poet uses *aeclesia* for church and *sciphum* for goblet.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ Despite, or perhaps because of, the poem's lacking *expositum*.

⁴⁶⁸ Though both use *limina* and *uas* alternatively.

The poem uniquely refers to Nicholas as a *pontifex* and the wealthy man as a *miles*—a term which meant “thegn” before and “knight” after the Norman Conquest. The prose uses *xeniis* and the less exotic *bustus* to describe votive offering; neither is used by the poet, who prefers *munere/munero* for the same designation. Jasper, Arabian gold, the finery of Solomon’s treasure, and the image of gems, “like glass, fly[ing] from” the second work of the goldsmith are unique to the versification.⁴⁶⁹

The verse abbreviation lacks the egregious narrative redundancy regarding the goldsmith as well as the poetic, classical diction used to describe the ship under sail. In the poetic version, the father has not made a secret of the goblet, nor is his avarice so explicitly condemned. The poem also erases the mother after she boards the ship (the prose depicts her at the shrine). Yet the account of what happened to the boy between falling from the ship and arriving in the church is one of the most innovative distinctions of the poet.

That the son falls overboard cooling the cup is probably not new to the Tiberius poet. Since one cannot be absolutely certain that CCCC was penned before Tiberius, they may have simply shared a common source. Yet the narrative approach and substance of this event are notably different in the poem. The prose hagiography relates that the son tells his story in *clara uoce*, and puts the son’s words into third person narration:

The young man began to say, in a clear voice, he had been recovered by someone of venerable countenance and bearing; and when he fell into the sea an old man appeared to him and, holding him in his arms, carried him up to the shore, whence he lead the way to St Nicholas church, showed the boy in, and disappeared in an instant.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ All three references are from the Old Testament; they need not have been related to another recension.

⁴⁷⁰ “Iuuenis autem clara uoce referre cepit queam modum uenerandi uultus habitus gerens cui in mare cecidisset senex ei apparuerit eumque ulnis sustenans usque ad litorus deporta ad basilicam sancti Nicholai insinuauerit et sic subito ab eo recesserit” (57-60).

The child does not speak for himself, nor does he say anything about the goblet. The narrative choice to leave the child's account in the third person probably suited the prose versions, which might have been read aloud in a non-liturgical setting such as a shared meal.⁴⁷¹

The poet treats this scene with remarkable tenderness, perhaps befitting to the eleventh- and twelfth-century emphasis on the humanity and personal trauma suffered by Christ and Mary at the Crucifixion. Nowhere in any of the poems is human suffering so poignantly rendered than in the poetic depiction of the father's reunion with his son: "Exhausted, the father runs to him, falling around his son's neck. Stunned by joy, he can hardly speak to the boy, and after an adoring kiss, the father asks his child what had happened to him when he was under the waves."⁴⁷² The father is overwhelmed, and the reader is easily moved by the realistic depiction of emotion despite such fantastic circumstances.

In the poem, the boy responds not *clara uoce*, but in his own words: "When I fell in, an old man appeared to me, looking like an angel, in an image of worship, like that of the holy mother; he gave me the chalice, held me in his arms, and said, 'do not be afraid.'"⁴⁷³

Iconographic imagery is strongly suggested, but difficult to pinpoint: Does Nicholas initially take

⁴⁷¹ In the poem, the father's prayers are specifically verbalized, just like his son's story; these speaking roles make it easy to imagine how Nicholas material came to be some of the earliest dramatized hagiography. While Nicholas plays are attested as early as the twelfth century in Northwest Europe, the extant records do not include nautical narratives in their early stage.

⁴⁷² "Currit pater exanimis / ruens in collum filii. / Attonitus pre gaudio / uix potest fari puero / Tandem post pia oscula / pater natum interrogat / quomodo se habuerit / quando in unda corruit" (109-116). The father's exhaustion hardly needs explanation, but it is curious that the prose records him running full tilt from the shore to the shrine, and goes to great lengths to describe his prolonged and sorrowful laments.

⁴⁷³ "senex michi apparuit / uenustatis angelice / in ueneranda spetie / [q]ui ut mater piissima / tenuit inter brachia / Michique schiphum traditit et dixit 'ne timueris'" (118-124)

the “image of worship” with his arms crossed over his chest? Is he holding a chalice in the same manner in which saints and bishops of Byzantine art did? The “most pious mother” is likely a reference to Mary, and while the now- familiar posture of Mary’s *pietà* is difficult to find in visual art before the 13th century, the depiction of her with Jesus as a child was not unfamiliar, appearing on the lid of Cuthbert’s coffin and in the Book of Kells. Based on the iconographic tradition of the *theotokos*, images of Mary with her young son were spread throughout, and far beyond, the Byzantine empire. The Tiberius poem, then, could be one of the earliest literary unions of Mary and Nicholas’s cults, which “often travel hand-in-hand.”⁴⁷⁴ The eleventh-century hymn, *Congaudentes exultemus* is an early liturgical witness to the coupling, and Godric’s twelfth-century hymns to both are evidence of at least a century of close association.⁴⁷⁵ The oblique reference also makes the poet’s erasure of the mother somewhat ironic; she disappears from the narrative after she boards the ship, but is depicted as mourning and rejoicing with the father in the prose.

Yet another distinction between the prose and poetic versions of the son’s account is that in the prose, Nicholas carries the boy towards, and even seems to push him gently into, the church, whereas the terrestrial “guide” in the poem appears to be a separate figure. The poet also uniquely describes the boy’s own reaction to his miraculous rescue: “How [Nicholas] brought me from such a great peril, I do not know myself, but am still amazed by the miracle. Yet one thing I do recall: when I was carried out of the sea, a guide appeared and showed me the path to

⁴⁷⁴ Jones, 25. He does not offer a distinct timeline for the pairing.

⁴⁷⁵ Jones includes a transcription and translation of this hymn on pp 119-123. I cannot confirm that the hymn “was copied at least as early as the eleventh century” (p 123; note p 399), but the Cantus database records the chant from the eleventh century onwards. See cantus.uwaterloo.ca

the church.”⁴⁷⁶ Minimizing the importance of the boy’s walk from the shore to the tomb gives the poet an opportunity to emphasize, instead, the child’s understanding of his own experience. The nautical narrative of the legend, across all three prose versions and the poem, was the scene in which each distinguished itself from the rest. Like other maritime miracles, the story of Nicholas’s rescuing a boy from the bottom of the sea offered the greatest opportunity for each to shape the narrative to fit his needs. Though much shorter, the poem is more personal and affecting than the prose, which—with its Graecisms and frequent interjections from the author—might have seemed dated even a thousand years ago.

Poem 3

The Tiberius poet has easily adapted the vocabulary to fit his own time, and heightened the emotional register for his audience. Yet for all his “modernizing” efforts in the second poem, he seems perfectly comfortable with the equally ancient past in which the third poem is set. A Vandal looting Calabria (in the fifth century) discovers an icon of Nicholas.⁴⁷⁷ He is astonished by its beauty, and learns that it will protect any who believe in God. Having returned home he hangs the icon above his ill-begotten treasure and orders the sacred image, as if it were a person (*quasi viventi homini*), to protect his possessions. Despite the icon’s presence, the Vandal is robbed in the night, and in his anger he attacks the image. He addresses the object directly, threatening, “Taking my gods and all the idols I worship as witnesses, if you do not return [what

⁴⁷⁶ “[Q]ualiter me eduxerit / de tam magnis periculis / egomet ipse nescio / sed mirans adhuc stupeo / [H]oc unum tamen recolo / quod educto de pelago / ductor ostendit semitam / ducentem ad aecclesiam” (125-132).

⁴⁷⁷ Apulia and Calabria were adjoining duchies in Norman Italy.

was stolen], you will be burned.”⁴⁷⁸ From the Vandal’s point of view, Nicholas is the one indebted to him; the saint owes him service. In a rage he attacks the image, which feels the wounds but sustains them “without even a whimper.”⁴⁷⁹ The treatment of the icon, by both the late antique Vandal protagonist and the medieval Anglo-Norman poet, is remarkable. The poet would have had every chance to remove potentially heretical associations from the interaction, but he does not. On the contrary, he emphasizes the invisible but sensory relationship between the saint’s soul and his iconic likeness. What the icon experiences, the saint does, too.⁴⁸⁰

The poet’s humanizing efforts are even more pronounced when he remarks that St Nicholas begins to ruminate on his icon’s trauma “ad uespera”—in the evening, after the icon has been hung up again, and the Vandal has left. The saint is said to rush, rather than appear to, the band of thieves—his spirit is physically embodied. He reproaches them for taking what was in his custody, and reprimands them for being responsible for his injuries.⁴⁸¹ He threatens to tell the authorities about their misdeeds, then disappears. The thieves are terrified, and return the goods. The Vandal awakes to see his possessions restored, converts to Christianity, and builds a

⁴⁷⁸ “Si mea non reddideris, subiacebis incendiis” (154, p. 228).

⁴⁷⁹ “nec illa contramurmurat” (157, p. 228).

⁴⁸⁰ The Byzantine iconoclasts of the eighth and ninth centuries believed that revering icons was tantamount to heresy. Among the opponents of iconoclasm was Patriarch Nikephoros—the namesake of eleventh-century Nicephorus of Bari. Ultimately, the iconoclasts lost out to those who, like Nikephoros, accorded spiritual properties to certain images of divine figures. One result of this pro-icon stance is that it set up a framework for the greater dissemination of contact relics.

⁴⁸¹ in mea custodia haec fuerunt reposita; pro uestris latrociniis afflictus sum iniuriis (ll.166, 164)

church dedicated to Nicholas.⁴⁸² Ever since, the scribe relates, the *gens Affrice* have celebrated Nicholas more than any other region, though there is no Christian realm without a church to Nicholas, “whose name occupies all lands and seas.”⁴⁸³ Nicholas enforces others’ promises, but he keeps his word, as well.

The poem closes with a single petition: “May his intercession save us from crime.”⁴⁸⁴ This last prayer for intercession is curious; it might have struck a chord in an abbey founded as penance for slaughter and pillage (even at its sister house). Cecilia Gaposchkin's work on the “Liturgy of Departure” reminds us that staffs, purses, and even chalices were blessed before they were taken to, and perhaps also often taken from, pilgrimage shrines. Were these three posthumous legends gathered to welcome pilgrims to a Nicholas shrine (perhaps at Angers or Bec)? That they exist outside of the original stories of the *Vita*, and that the legends of the Goblet and Staff might have even travelled together, suggests a thematic justification for their being unified in this way. The first and the third miracles convert wealthy heathens into Christians; the second keeps a wealthy Christian on the right path, and within his community of traveling worshipers. Nicholas is, in all of these, a saint for those of means—those who travel far afield and are foreigners in the sites of their miracles. The poem of the Vandal assures the audience that Nicholas’s powers extend far beyond the shrine in Turkey; he is present across, and

⁴⁸² It was probably this church that was ransacked by Benarvet during the years of Roger Guiscard. (See Hayes, n. 38, p. 500).

⁴⁸³ Another version of this story, still attributed to Nicholas rather than Menas, appears in CCCC9 as well. There are virtually no overlaps in diction, but the plot seems to be the same.

⁴⁸⁴ In the *Ælfwine Prayerbook*, a prayer to St Nicholas is immediately followed by a charm against theft. See Walter de Gray Birch, *Liber Vitae: Register and Martyrology of New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*. Winchester, Simpkin & Co., 1892 p. 268.

even beyond, the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, these three poems delineate the extent of Nicholas's Mediterranean reach, tracing his cult west from Lycia to Calabria, then south to Africa. Yet if the miracles have proselytizing functions, they are nevertheless entirely void of monks, priests, bishops, and preachers. The conversions are not the work of missionaries or reformers. This is a cult, the poems suggest, which is propagated entirely by secular members of society, often when they engage in activities outside the church. Indeed, none of the first three poems even mention a monk, a priest, or a bishop.⁴⁸⁵ All three poems present the physical presence of St Nicholas at his altar, on the road, at his tomb, on the sea, and wherever an image of him exists.⁴⁸⁶

Poem 4

Like the first three poems, the fourth poem reflects the poet's interest in power of promises and the consequences of deceit. Poem 4, over twice as long as each of the previous three, is derived from the ninth-century Latin *Vita Sancti Nicolai* by John the Deacon and perhaps also the *Martyrologium* of Hrabanus Maurus.⁴⁸⁷ Unlike the first three, Poem 4 deals with a living, breathing, though nevertheless thaumaturgical Nicholas. In John the Deacon's version, about one half of the *vita* is committed to the early life and miracles of Nicholas; the latter half

⁴⁸⁵ Neither does Poem 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Thaumaturgy seems to have been somewhat uncommon in lives of English saints.

⁴⁸⁷ The work of Hrabanus Maurus of Fulda testifies to the rapid transmission of the saint's veneration; his *Martyrologium* includes the last half of the *stratilates* episode, like the Tiberius poem. Maurus's martyrology exists in Mainz, and its rubrication of Nicholas puts the saint's day on the same level as the Assumption of Mary, St Martin's Day, and Christmas. Later ninth-century martyrologies in Lyons, Vienne, Prum, and Germain-de-Pres mention Nicholas, but when any narrative is given, it is only that of the *stratilates* episode. (Treharne 33-34). It seems that Maurus's version, and John's seven-part version, travelled separately for a time.

tells one extended miracle story, known as the *stratilates* (military commanders) episode.⁴⁸⁸ The Tiberius B.v scribe exaggerates this narrative imbalance, committing less than a third of his text to the early miracles, and the rest to the latter half of the *stratilates* story.

Although it is too short to be a *vita*, the fourth poem follows the basic seven-story structure of John the Deacon's *vita Sancti Nicholai*. First are Nicholas's holy infancy and virtues, his rescue of the three sisters from prostitution, and appointment as bishop.⁴⁸⁹ In John's text, Nicholas's episcopal status demarcates the first miracles from the next set, of which all occur at sea. John writes that Nicholas remains humble even after he becomes bishop, still reaching out to "widows and orphans," and utterly egalitarian in his aid. After his ordination, Nicholas did not attribute any of his miracles to his own power but to God's, and "so he began to manifest miracles not for his own sake, but for the honor of others who were oppressed, and granted relief to those who called his name."⁴⁹⁰ His status as bishop changes the nature of his miracles in the hagiographer's eyes, but not in his own.

The Old English prose translation of the *vita*, composed in the eleventh-century and surviving in a twelfth-century copy, adds a similar remark to its Latin source: "Then he became so glorious and so honoured as was God's desire, that he could cure each man's sorrow whether he was on land or at sea, and he called to the saints to help him whereupon he himself was

⁴⁸⁸ Preserved, for instance, in Tiberius D.iv, written in Winchester in the eleventh century, and also CCCC9, already mentioned. Treharne "collated from [these] two close versions" of the Latin a text that would be closest to the Old English prose of CCCC 303, pp. 174-197.

⁴⁸⁹ de Gray Birch, 186-200, p. 229.

⁴⁹⁰ "...et nichil sibi sed totum dei gratiae tribueret; coepit ita choruscare miraculis ut non tantum sui sed etiam alieni quibuslibet oppressi augustiis, inuocato nomine eius statim sentirent leuamen." Treharne, 186. The translation is mine.

released from all his distresses.”⁴⁹¹ At the end of the Old English version, some of the commanders’ final words to Nicholas echo the same sentiment in yet another invention of the translator: “Truly, your name ought to be in the mouths of all people because you are the helper of all men on land and at sea.”⁴⁹² A late eleventh-century Old English entry for Nicholas’s relics at Exeter preserve a similar message: “From the relics of St Nicholas, the pious and esteemed bishop who, through God’s power, makes known many good things on land and sea to those who call on him in the name of God with inward faith.”⁴⁹³ All of these vernacular passages describe Nicholas’s egalitarian aid across land and sea—a detail preserved in the final lines of Poem 4: “Terra marique nouimus Nicholaum pre omnibus / Succurere quantocius cunctis se invocantibus. / Dum sumus in hoc seculo postulemus a Domino, / Ut huius sancti preciubus conjugamur caelestibus.”⁴⁹⁴ The knowledge of Nicholas “across the land and sea” appears to be an insular invention—one that might have started with Poem 4.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ Treharne, p. 106.

⁴⁹² Treharne, p 116.

⁴⁹³ “From the relics of St Nicholas, the pious and esteemed bishop, who, through God’s power, makes known many good things on land and sea to those who call on him in the name of God with inward faith (Of Sanctus Nicolaus reliquion þæs arfæstan 7 þæs bentydān biscopes þe þurh Godes mihte manege godnissa gehwær kyð on sæ 7 on lande, þam þe him innwerdlice mid geleafan on Godes naman to clypiað).” Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Aurct D.216. fos 8r-14r edited and translated by Patrick W. Connor in *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*. Boydell, 1993, pp.182-183.

⁴⁹⁴ de Gray Birch, 317-320, p. 232.

⁴⁹⁵ I have not looked at Continental counterparts; my point is only that John the Deacon did not include anything like this comment, which agrees across some vernacular treatments of the saint as well as the Tiberius poem.

The Tiberius poet preserves John's demarcation between pre-episcopal Nicholas and Nicholas the bishop: "These kindnesses inherent in the nature of such a youth made [Nicholas] divinely deserving of being made a bishop."⁴⁹⁶ As bishop, Nicholas's next three miracles are those which occur at sea; all of them depict the saint as a person of nautical and/or political expertise. The first seems like a traditional rescue from a storm at sea: "After [becoming bishop] he appears to sailors broken by the blasts of the sea, responding to their call in the very place where he had been summoned."⁴⁹⁷ They pray to Nicholas based on hearsay: "Nicholas, if what people say is true, save us before we are crushed by the waves."⁴⁹⁸ If the audience of the poem are monks, they would certainly recognize the "succurre nobis citius" from their own liturgical prayers. Here as in the earlier poems, Nicholas is described as appearing to those who call him, immediately responding to "those shouting in fear of danger."⁴⁹⁹ But the poet is taking no chances; he states his point for a third time: "He whom they invoke—the one who is named Nicholas—laid his hands on the sail and the sheets, and the many parts of the rigging, and he calmed the ocean swells."⁵⁰⁰ Given the shortness of space, the thrice-articulated claim that

⁴⁹⁶ "Talibus beneficiis indolis tantae iuuenis / divinitus promeruit presul prepotens fieri" (201-202, p 229).

⁴⁹⁷ "Ex hinc nautas in aequore fractos aduerso flamine / Seque vocantes, uisit, dum loquerentur talia" (203-204, p 229).

⁴⁹⁸ "Nicholae, si uera sunt quae de te plures referunt/ Succurre nobis citius, ne obruamur fluctibus" (205-206, p 229)

⁴⁹⁹ "Pre timore periculi / clamantibus apparuit" (207, p 229).

⁵⁰⁰ "Quem inuocant se indicat, Nicholaum se nominat, / Antennis et rudentibus, et armamentis pluribus, / Postquam manus iniecerat, tumida placat aequora" (208-210, p 229). John's *vita* and its Old English translation remark that Nicholas helped right the ship before he calmed the waves. The Old English translator goes so far as to write that he helped them on board "as if he were one of them (swilce he wære an of heom)" (Treharne, p 89).

Nicholas appears wherever and whenever he is called is remarkable. The other two maritime miracles lack this kind of interpretive commentary: the poet perhaps assumes, by now, that his point has been made.

The second maritime miracle begins without transition, and with very little context: “The Alexandrian sailors were truly baffled when they saw the abundance and surplus of their grain. Pouring out the untouched load they return a weight [of grain] surpassing that which Nicholas had, just as he asks.”⁵⁰¹ The gist of this vignette is that merchant mariners asked Nicholas for something, and he gave them more than they requested. But how would the listener understand what this episode is about, if he had not heard the story from the lengthier source? Are the sailors of the first episode meant to be imagined as those of the second? Surely more context is needed.

From John’s account one learns that God had cursed Lycia with a famine. When Nicholas saw the traders arrive with ships full of grain, he asked that they provide some for his starving town. The merchants seem to have known Nicholas—they reply that they would gladly donate to his cause, but that the weigh-station officials at Alexandria and Constantinople were too scrupulous to accommodate such charity. Nicholas promises that the merchants will have the grain back on board before customs officials can object, so the merchants give generously of their cargo, with the assurance that it will somehow be restored. A good wind takes their ships back to Alexandria, and thence to Constantinople; in both ports their cargo has been miraculously replenished.⁵⁰² The fourth poem lacks the miraculous nature of the exchange,

⁵⁰¹ “*Naucleri Alexandriae obstupuerunt ualide, / Cum farris abundantiam aspicerent superfluum. Demetientes integra mensurae reddunt pondera, / Preter illud quod habuit Nicholaus, ut petit*” (de Gray Birch, 211-214, p 230).

⁵⁰² The Old English translator might have been confused; he writes that the seamen “sail home to Constantinople (mid spedigum winde segledon ham to Constantinopole)” (Treharne, 91).

removing any chance for reflection on the wonder of Nicholas's thaumaturgical powers. It also erases a narrative of merchants clandestinely taking possession of their wares without the consent or knowledge of the port reeves.

The third maritime episode begins as abruptly as the second: "The terrible insidiousness was revealed..." As with the Alexandrian sailors, the plot lacks any transitional cue. The reader (or listener) must wait to learn that this treachery came not from the grateful grain merchants but from the goddess Diana. John writes that Diana disguised herself, rowed up alongside a ship carrying pilgrims to Nicholas's shrine, and asked the mariners to take a vial of oil to the altar on her behalf. They oblige, she hands them the oil, and instantly Nicholas appears. He commands the pilgrims to throw the vial overboard; as soon as they do, the oil explodes across the waves. It was *mediacon*, or Greek fire, which ignites upon contact with water.

The Tiberius poet summarizes: "By means of this revelation the evil tricks became clear, which Diana sent in the guise of a deceptive gift. Taking the object of sorcery away, they throw it into the sea; it burns like an oven and destroys everything it touches."⁵⁰³ Again, deception is revealed, as it had been in the first and second poems. It is not immediately clear that these sailors were any different from those of the previous episode; one wonders whether the poet wanted to lump both sets of sailors together, or if he had not been able to distinguish them himself. And since his description of the explosion does not preserve John's enlivened account, it is tempting to imagine that he had not quite understood what Greek fire was.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ "[H]oc revelante pessimae patuerunt insidiae, / Quas Diana fantastico mittebat pro munusculo. / Deferentes ut iaciunt in mare maleficium, / Velut fornax exaestuat, et quicquid tangit concremat" (de Gray Birch, 215-218, p 230).

⁵⁰⁴ Compare the poet's diction with that of John, in Treharne's collated edition of Tiberius D: "Mox autem ubi oleum illud aequoreas tetigit aquas: mirabile dictu: illico accensus est ignis; et

The seventh element of the *vita* is the *stratilates* episode, the tale of three commanders falsely imprisoned by an envious governor under Emperor Constantine. John the Deacon's *stratilates* episode tells two, related stories of Nicholas saving three men from being (wrongly) executed. First, three commanders of Constantine's army head west to quell uprisings in Phrygia (inner Anatolia). En route they are lead by adverse winds to *Adriaticus*, where Nicholas meets them and offers to accompany them through the city to avoid civic disruption—this region of Turkey was one of the most embattled areas of the Byzantine empire.⁵⁰⁵ As Nicholas walks them through the city, he hears of the false imprisonment of three other men, and runs to their rescue, dramatically staying the sword of the executioner and reprimanding the official who had been bribed to condemn them. After witnessing these events, the three commanders go on their way to Phrygia and straighten out the rebels (this scene is not really narrated), then return home in triumph. When they arrive in Constantinople, they are themselves imprisoned by an envious governor, and call out to the living saint for aid. He arrives immediately, uncovers the perfidy under Constantine's command, frees the men, and secures lifelong devotion from the emperor and his family. The importance of the first half of the story is that the three commanders learned about Nicholas when they were abroad; his fame had not yet reached Constantinople.

Poem 4 compresses the first part of the *stratilates* episode considerably, focusing on the interactions between Nicholas and three kinds of characters: the worthy seamen, the evil

contra naturam elementi prolyxo maris spatio uisus est ardere. Haec uero dum nautis stupenda uidentur..." (Treharne, p. 189).

⁵⁰⁵ *Adriaticus* probably means the coast of the Adriatic, though it is tempting to imagine this as a misspelling of Andriaca, which Ptolemy, Pliny, and Strabo describe as Myra's port town. St Paul is said to have stopped here en route to Alexandria.

lawman, and the too-trusting emperor.⁵⁰⁶ The episode begins: “Three innocent young men were given over to death; Nicholas saved them, freeing them by his powerful strength.”⁵⁰⁷ This fits with John’s narrative of Nicholas staying the sword of the executioner with his own hands. Later the poet writes that: “Constantine, not long after [this event] took hold of other captured men; I will tell you how it happened that Nicholas delivers them from death.”⁵⁰⁸ Only someone familiar with the Nicholas cult would know, at this point, that the *stratilates* would be these “other captured men.”

The *stratilates* go to Phrygia because the people there “had neglected to pay what they owed to the king”—a transgression that synchs with the transactional interest of the other poems.⁵⁰⁹ The three men “return successfully, having conquered the enemy” but “other people, motivated by envy, made up a lie ” that the three commanders “had wanted to become kings.”⁵¹⁰ The malicious lie engages the civic responsibilities of soldiers, civil servants, and rulers.⁵¹¹ The emperor had to condemn them “so that no one else of similar pride would perform such an act.” Constantine acts not (exclusively, at least) out of personal enmity, but for the sake of his

⁵⁰⁶ Maurus excludes the first half altogether; one could guess that the Tiberius poet had versions of both John and Maurus.

⁵⁰⁷ “Tres iuuenes innoxii morti fuerunt dediti, / Quos liberauit ualidam solutos per potentiam” (de Gray Birch, 219-220, p 230).

⁵⁰⁸ “Constantius non multum post captos tenebat alios; / Sed quod a morte eruit, dicam qualiter accidit” (221-222, p 230).

⁵⁰⁹ “superba gens de Frigia regi negabat debita” (223, p 230).

⁵¹⁰ “Aliqui per inuidiam inuerunt fallaciam / Mentiti sunt quod socii...Reges uolebant fierie ablato regno Caesari” (226-228, p 230).

⁵¹¹ The poet seems a little unclear on the details of governance. “Rex” is sometimes used to describe a prefect, when it might be expected to have been applied to Constantine.

kingdom's stability.

The commanders' jailer is the first to learn about the deception, and he tearfully tells the prisoners that they will be executed under the cover of night. All he can offer is advice that "pleas and sobs will not save you; only the highest virtue can help you tonight."⁵¹² They know that no mortal help is left, but when they remember what Nicholas did for the Turks, they "pray in their supplications that he who frees others will not neglect his servants."⁵¹³ The Latin here is subtle—"orant in suis precibus ut qui alios liberat, seruos suos non negligat"—but its message is that if Nicholas saves the Turks (*alios*), then he should also save his own servants (*seruos suos*), who are in the heart of Constantine's Christian empire. The poem's readers might have been reminded of other *alios* like the Jew and the Vandal, who were also benefactors of the saint's merciful aid. By reiterating the extent to which Nicholas helps believers and non-believers alike, the poet of all four poems preserves the work of a man who brings converts to the faith and leads misguided Christians back to the fold.

Nicholas rushes to the king's quarters in Constantinople "within the hour" and, chillingly, "asks Constantine if he wakes or if he sleeps."⁵¹⁴ Constantine seems unruffled, and without replying asks him to identify himself. The saint answers in terms already familiar to the reader: he is the bishop of Lycia, and he has come out of compassion so that the men, "whom I order you not to touch lest you die immediately" be spared.⁵¹⁵ Nicholas's reasoning is simple: "Know that a

⁵¹² "Quia planctus et lacrimae nequeunt uos redimere, / Uirtus uobis altissima in hac nocte subueniat" (243-244, p 230).

⁵¹³ "orant in suis precibus ut qui alios liberat, seruos suos non negligat" (252, p 230).

⁵¹⁴ "Eadem hora concite...Constantinum interrogat utrum dormit an uigilat" (223, 224, p 230).

⁵¹⁵ "Quos ne tangas precipio nisi vis mori subito" (257, p. 230).

King mightier than you will wage war against you, against whose powerful victory you will be unable to make a stand. If you go into battle, and join forces against [God], you will be defeated and die, because you do not believe in Him.”⁵¹⁶ Nicholas speaks to Constantine not just as a king, but as a conquering emperor; military strategy echoes through his admonition. Constantine is terrified, and convinced.

Then, “after terrifying the king” Nicholas hurried to the governor, with whom he took a decidedly more macabre tone: “Impious thief, traitor, deserving of a miserable death...you will be consumed by worms, just as a rotten dog; from your festering corpse everyone will flee far away.”⁵¹⁷ Nicholas speaks to each person according to their kind; he takes a different persuasive approach for the emperor than he does for the envious prefect. Never abiding treachery, Nicholas graciously offers to rescind punishment if the envious man confesses all. Rushing to unburden himself of the secret, the man runs through the night to the palace, where Constantine is waiting with barbed insults to hurl at the legate upon his arrival.

The three prisoners are brought out of jail, and unaware of Nicholas’s visits to the emperor and the prefect, expect to be executed. Constantine asks them where Nicholas is, “by whose clemency...you would be freed.”⁵¹⁸ His name immediately induces change: “to the sound of the bishop’s name they exclaimed; shedding tears they raise their heads to the heavens and

⁵¹⁶ “Scias quod rex fortior te bellum mouebit contra te, / Cuius forti uictoriae non ualebis resistere; / Si ad pugnam exieris, et cum eo te iunxeris, / Uictus eris et mortuus, eo quod es incredulus” (259-262, p 231).

⁵¹⁷ “Impie, latro, proditor, digne exitu misero...Consumptus eris uermibus ueluti canis putridus, / A te fetente longius fugiet omnis populus” (265, 267-268, p. 231).

⁵¹⁸ “Qui pro clementia velim vos liberat” (280, p 231). It is difficult to detect if this is gloating on Constantine’s part; earlier he seems to have been convinced that the charges were trumped up.

praise the works of God.”⁵¹⁹ They continue to praise him in a kind of litany: Nicholas is the bishop of Lycia, where he works “to the Glory of God (*dominus glorificat*)” with more prudence, patience, and humility than any other man. Despite these characteristics, his greatest virtue is charity, which is “the best virtue of them all (*quae omnium est maxima*).”⁵²⁰

They had witnessed his charity when they “were in naval battle against the barbarians”—and they remind Constantine that their success abroad had been met by false imprisonment at home.⁵²¹ They end by proclaiming that the “merits of Nicholas (*per Nicholai merita*)” would be the only reason for God not to abandon them.⁵²² The poet remarks on the soldiers’ eloquence, claiming that none could be so hard-hearted as to resist their pleas for mercy, or their high praise for Nicholas. Constantine sets them free, then asks them to take gifts to Nicholas so he may serve the bishop, and so the bishop will “no longer frighten” him.⁵²³

All four poems preserve the language of exchange in a mercantile milieu. They also stress the importance of vows and votive offerings. Nicholas rescues those who are marginalized or lost; he corrects those who are covetous or duplicitous. And he does so not only in a church,

⁵¹⁹ “[A]d notum nomen presulis exclamant fisis lacrimis / Tollunt manus ad sidera laudant Dei magnalia” (281-282, p. 231).

⁵²⁰ 288, p. 231.

⁵²¹ This naval conquest is evidently how they “collected the debt” that was owed the emperor. It is easy to understand why John relates that Nicholas asked if they had come in war or peace, and also explains why Nicholas offered to escort them through town.

⁵²² In the first poem, the Jew rejoices, “Now I will become a Christian, thanks to [Nicholas’s] merits (*Amodo iam Christicola fiam per tua merita*).” Like the closing speech of the convert, the closing speech of the three officers acts like a prayer in itself. Witnesses of his miracles testify publicly to his powers.

⁵²³ “Ferte sancto pontifici de quo tanta loquimini” (De Gray Birch, l. 304, p. 232).

but also on a voyage, at a home, and in a prison.⁵²⁴ But more than his democratic outreach, urban savvy, and thaumaturgical powers unify these disparate pieces. Each of the four poems witnesses the transmission of Nicholas's cult itself. The first begins, "In the province of Lycia lived a certain Christian..." and ends with "May all the world who hears this, love Nicholas."⁵²⁵ The second also starts with a regional observance, and closes with a global statement: "To all who sail the sea Nicholas is well known..."⁵²⁶ The third opens with a Vandal raiding Calabria who is ultimately responsible for establishing churches dedicated to Nicholas in Africa. Finally, the fourth documents the transmission of Nicholas's fame even during his lifetime. When the three *stratilates* introduce Nicholas to the emperor of the western Christian world. Constantine's gifts are sent quickly to what is now one of the most southern ports of Turkey, perhaps marking the very first offering to Nicholas from across the sea. In all four of these poems, sailing is absolutely vital to the spread of the saint's cult. To a newly-arrived Norman in England, it might have been tempting to imagine oneself as extending the nautical transmission of Nicholas's cult across a different sea.

⁵²⁴ No version of the substituted cup describes Nicholas walking into his own shrine; he stops on the *limina* and disappears, or he does not travel beyond the shore.

⁵²⁵ "Totus mundus hoc audiat Nicholaumque diligat" (55, p. 224).

⁵²⁶ "Cunctis mare currentibus Nicholaus est cognitus" (125, p. 22).

3. Poem 5: The account of Nicholas's translation

All four poems take as their subjects people who are out of place—on the margins of society, in a far away land, or even at the bottom of the sea. Nevertheless, these people on the fringe tie Nicholas to the maritime region they transverse.⁵²⁷ He is involved with traders, moneyers, pilgrim-ship owners, pagan pirates and officers of a Christian military. He restores the lost and the stolen; he commands and enforces justice; he is a keeper of things and promises alike. The sea is uniquely accessible to him: he could cross the Adriatic in a moment, even while he was still alive. But it is the posthumous voyage of his body that makes Nicholas's cult rise to unprecedented fame.

In 1087, Italian merchants sailing west from Antioch stopped in Myra to take possession of St Nicholas's relics, which they reinterred at their home port of Bari. Nicephorus, a monk at Bari, wrote the first account of this event shortly after it occurred.⁵²⁸ John, an archdeacon of Bari who served under the Norman Robert Guiscard, wrote a similar account of the events within a year. Although St Nicholas had been popular across Europe (and even in England) before 1087, the *translatio* was a tipping point for his cult, which reached popularity once known only to the

⁵²⁷ Lifshitz writes that Nicholas was much like Archangel Michael, who shared an “oriental” origin and was also a “definitively ‘Carolingian’ saint, one who was not tied to specific localles, but who was capable of interfering universally, and even of being in more than one place at the same time.” For her, both saints “had already functioned...as an imperial saint, as a saint for a unified symbol of Byzantium, standing against the Muslim world.” She sees the “standard of Nicholas” in the “noted office of Reginold of Eichstatt [which included] two gold-giving miracles, one rescue at sea, an infantile refusal of nurses's milk, a chastizing of Constantine, and the exuding of Myrrh” (210). Like so many others, she boils that down to “ships and money”—and does so prematurely (211). Lifshitz, Felice. *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Saintly Relics, 684-1090*. Toronto, 1995.

⁵²⁸ Appearing in Vat. Lat. 5084, ff 5v-10v. Nitti de Vito titles it “Legenda del Monaco Niceforo,” though from its prologue it was probably referred to as *translatione Sancti Nicholai confessoris* (p 336).

apostles and the Holy Family. Alison Binns found that between 1066 and 1100, Nicholas tied with the Holy Trinity for the third-most monastic dedications, falling only behind the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Peter.⁵²⁹ And while 1101-1150 saw the emergence of many new cults like that of James, the old cults of Mary Magdalene and Nicholas expanded immensely. Gameson's survey of Anglo-Norman manuscripts confirms this upward trajectory of the Anglo-Norman interest in Nicholas: between 1066 and 1090, his name appears in 60 such manuscripts, 8 of which are continental; between 1080 and 1100, he appears in 124, 20 of which are continental; between 1100-1120, Nicholas is found in 209 manuscripts, 29 of which are continental.⁵³⁰ There is no post-1100 liturgical calendar in England without Nicholas's name in it.

The fifth Nicholas poem, which deals with the translation, was likely composed very shortly after the holy theft (*furtum sacrum*) occurred, and the poet seems keen to emphasize his temporal proximity to the event it memorializes. Even if this is a rhetorical exaggeration, scribal attributes discussed below suggest that the work was copied into Tiberius c.1100. Its main source was the *Translatio Sancti Nicholai* by Nicephorus, and despite the fact that it was probably the earliest version of the *translatio* in England, it was not the most influential; neither Nicephorus nor the Tiberius poet seem to have influenced the work of William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, or Wace—three Anglo-Norman authors who were instrumental in propagating the cult of Nicholas and the story of his posthumous journey to Bari.⁵³¹ That the act of *translatio* was so

⁵²⁹ Binns, Alison. *Dedications of Monastic Houses in England and Wales, 1066-1216*. Boydell Press, 1989.

⁵³⁰ Gameson, Richard. *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066-1130)*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁵³¹ Orderic even adapted John the Archdeacon's version of the *translatio* in Book VII, Chapter xii of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Nicephorus and John the Archdeacon were political rivals. It

instrumental in the saint's success, and that Nicephorus's version is not invoked by these Anglo-Norman authors, makes the fifth Nicholas poem a unique testimony to the cult's transmission in England.⁵³²

Nicephorus's account of the translation employs over six hundred lines of dense prose, occasionally interrupted by poetic speech (lines 111-115; 559-564) or homiletic injunction (289-434), to recount the circumstances, undertaking, and consequences of the *furtum sacrum*.⁵³³ The idea to move Nicholas's body from Myra to Bari is inspired by God and motivated by local rivalry: "divine Providence" underwrites the plans of the Barians as they sail east to trade in Antioch, but only the rumor that the Venetians are plotting the same scheme spurs them to action from Alexandria. The Barians leave Antioch and arrive in Myra, where they send out two Jerusalem pilgrims to confirm that the area is safe from Turks. Then a party of forty-seven armed sailors and priests arrives at the tomb, where the Myran monks who guard the relics wrongly assume that the group is there to make votive offerings, and gladly show the visitors to the shrine. As soon as they do, the guardians become suspicious, and the Barians confess their intentions, which they justify with lies and implement by force, eventually tying up the monks so

may be that the success of John's version of events corresponds with his (or his successors') political success.

⁵³² The cult of St Nicholas is especially difficult to trace. See summaries by Treharne (pp. 28-45) and, more recently, by Blacker *et al* (pp. 249-254). Regional studies drawing on the cult's history include those of the "Early Christian North" by Garipzanov and Bari by Hayes. Charles W. Jones wrote sprawlingly about the cult, building upon the foundational work of Anrich and Meisen.

⁵³³ All quotations from Nicephorus and John the Archdeacon refer to lines in the editions by Francesco Nitti di Vito: "La traslazione delle reliquie di San Nicola." *Iapigia* 8, 1937. Jones translates all of Nicephorus's text (pp. 176-193), and a very short part of John's (pp. 195-197). Quotations from Jones's translation refer to page numbers.

none can escape.⁵³⁴ A young man named Matthew violently breaks open the tomb and confirms that the relics are intact before the party processes triumphantly down to the shore. Their celebratory chants clash with dirges howled by the Myrans, who have discovered the theft and waded into the harbor to beg for the return of their “great patron.”

Having shoved off from the Lycian shore, the sailors experience three maritime miracles en route to Bari. The first miracle begins with a storm forcing sailors off-course and ashore, where the restless men accuse one another of pilfering the relics. The rumors prove true, and after a handful of men confess their crimes and restore the remains, they all set out to sea. Nicephorus comments that God will always keep the relics together.⁵³⁵

A good wind brings the happy (*gaudentes*) sailors beyond a place called *Culfum Trache* when the second maritime miracle begins. Nicholas visits a sleeping sailor in his dream, assuring the mariner that the crew should not be afraid and that the ship will arrive in Bari after twenty more days at sea. The sailor shares his dream with the rest of the crew, who all rejoice at the new promise of a safe voyage. This affirmation hints at a sense of communal guilt—there is no obvious (literary) reason why the cheerful sailors under good wind would need further assurances for their journey.

The final miracle, also occurring under sail, describes a lark’s visit to the saint’s remains, where he chirps a song of praise and kisses the body. To Nicephorus, this final miracle is not

⁵³⁴ A monk confesses to the Barians that, a year before, Nicholas warned his guardians that he would relocate if they could not convince the Myrans to return to their city after fleeing the Turks (Nicephorus, lines 165-170). The mariners’ arrival, then, is not only a recent inspiration but also prophetic fulfillment.

⁵³⁵ “They were thereby given to understand that the confessor of God himself willed that his relics should never in any way be divided” (Jones, 186). “Unde datur intelligi, quod idem dei confessor, nequaquam vult ut sue aliquando partiantur reliquie” (Nicephorus, 330-332).

only an act of veneration to the saint, but also a “blessing for what [the sailors] had done for the magnificent, miracle-working shepherd.”⁵³⁶ All three of these miracles authorize the theft to different degrees: the first confirms that the relics are now intact; the second articulates that the voyage is approved by Nicholas; the third supposes that their task has been pleasing to God.

Yet despite the many avowals of the theft’s legitimacy, the saint’s arrival in Bari is not without incident. The question of Nicholas’s new burial place turns the town against itself, culminating in violence that takes the lives of two young men.⁵³⁷ Ultimately, Nicholas is reinterred according to the wishes of the mariners and the local priest, Elias, over those of Bari’s archbishop Ursus, who had been away from his post when the *furtum sacrum* occurred. Nicephorus concludes his work by recording the miracles performed in the week after the reburial as further evidence of divine approval of the saint’s new resting place (ll. 521-589).

John the Archdeacon wrote a similar, though shorter, account of the translation within a year of Nicephorus’s work.⁵³⁸ John’s is more measured, perhaps befitting an author who seems to have had an interest in maintaining the reputation of his archbishop Ursus, and ultimately proved more popular than Nicephorus’s.⁵³⁹ Nevertheless, the Tiberius poem is the first testament

⁵³⁶ “Que canendo circumiens unamquamque ratem simul et homines visa est omnibus dare beatitudinis laudem, eo quod tam magnificum mirabilemque gestabant pastorem” (Jones, 187; Nicephorus, 370-373).

⁵³⁷ Nicephorus pauses the narrative to reflect on the deserving city of Bari and admonish his brethren, whom he directly addresses, to live more holy lives under the surveillance of their new patron (389-484).

⁵³⁸ John’s text does not contain any homiletic insertion or poetry; he excludes the bird miracle, topographic details of the voyage, and the narrative redundancy found in Nicephorus.

⁵³⁹ Jones writes that John’s account “found wider circulation than did Nicephorus” and that “[a]dditions to it snowballed, so that *BHL* lists it in eight parts with two variants (nos. 6190-6199), only the first of which I take to be John’s original composition” (416).

to either version in England; it predates the Anglo-Norman mentions by Orderic, Malmesbury, and Wace.

Both Italian authors are clearly embroiled in the civic and ecclesiastical politics of the Adriatic, and both respond in different ways, for different audiences, to the pressures besetting the region in the last two decades of the eleventh century. Nicephorus's brazen prose ventriloquizes the victors—not only the Barians over the Myrans, but also the local merchants and priest over the city's archbishop. John, being an archdeacon rather than a monk, sympathizes with Ursus, and describes the relics' theft and reinterment with more sensitivity, perhaps for the sake of being politic. Formally and stylistically, then, these two accounts are separate; if John used Nicephorus's text, he did so to write a new account. Because these can be understood to be different works, they can be considered separate candidates in the search for the source of the fifth Nicholas poem in Tiberius.⁵⁴⁰

Four verbal parallels tie the Tiberius work to Nicephorus's text. In describing the *translatio* as an act of divine providence (1-4), the poem echoes Nicephorus's *actum est eius divina providentia* (His divine providence was the act itself) (29-30).⁵⁴¹ The Tiberius poet also prefers Nicephorus's count of four custodians against John's three, but even more convincing

⁵⁴⁰ Two other accounts of the *translatio*, one Greek, and one Russian, cannot be counted as potential sources because they were written after 1100. The Russian account, from the 14th century, cannot be confirmed as a copy a 12th century original. For a summary of this issue, see Patrick Geary's *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Revised ed., Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 94-103.

⁵⁴¹ As an apologist for archbishop Ursus, John was probably careful to avoid using the word *providentia* to describe an act of episcopal subversion. Compare Tiberius's "Dicamus deo gloriam/ per cuius prouidentiam Nicholaus fit proprior quam foret ab initio" (1-4) and Nicephorus's "Apulie regionem serenissimo ac perpetuo uisitaret immo decoraret splendore. Actum est eius divina prouidentia" (28-30).

evidence is the poetic description of the holy oil's scent from the Myran scene. Nicephorus writes that, when the tomb was broken open, the smell was so sweet that the sailors felt "as if they had been placed in the paradise of the Lord."⁵⁴² The poet of the Tiberius poem writes, "the intensity of the smell issued so very sweetly, as if they were in the paradise of the lord."⁵⁴³ Finally, the poet uses Nicephorus's *pauere* (Old Latin) rather than John's *timere* (Vulgate) in Nicholas's reassurance to the sleeping sailor (using Christ's words).

On a broader narrative scale, the Tiberius poet agrees with Nicephorus on the timeline of the theft. John describes the Barians stopping in Myra en route to Antioch, and being dissuaded from their purpose on seeing the place overrun by Turks, where Nicephorus and the Tiberius poet write that the Barians went to Myra only once, as they were sailing west on their return.⁵⁴⁴ Since the poem shares neither unique narrative chronology nor exact verbal parallels with John to the exclusion of Nicephorus, I suggest that the latter is the main source of the poem in Tiberius. Working from this claim, the remainder of this chapter examines alterations (deletions, modifications, and additions) the poem makes to its source.

The first and most obvious alteration is form: Nicephorus's lengthy prose account is shrunk to fewer than 500 words by the versifier, whose octosyllabic couplets fit the meter and

⁵⁴² Nicephorus, 135-137.

⁵⁴³ Compare Nicephorus's "Pretera tanta odoris flagrantia subiti secuta est, ut omnes putarent se in dei paradiso consistere" (135-137) and Tiberius's "Ex quo ictu plurimas partes scinditur tabula et odoris flagrantia exit tam suauissima et quasi essent positi in paradiso domini" (57-62). John has no corresponding comment: "Quibus electis, forisque piramide detecta, predictoque iuvene malleo percussa, unoque in latere fracta fragrantissimus, subito ac suavissimus odor exiit, qui mira eos, qui aderant, delectatione suavitatis implevit" (169-171). Nicephorus uses the paradise simile again in ll. 563-565, when he describes an odor attending cured pilgrims.

⁵⁴⁴ The poem does state that the sailors considered acting on both eastbound and westbound voyages: "qualiter sive euntes, uel redeuntes" (34).

rhyme of the other four poems in the manuscript. This does not demand that the poet of the fifth knew of the first four poems, but instead could imply that the genre was popular by c. 1100, when they had all been copied into Tiberius.

Dumville leaves the question of scribal hands open but I see the scribe of the first four poems, presumably copied before 1087, as different from him of the fifth, which was written in or after 1091. Dumville has already recognized that the script of the fifth poem is less consistent and more prone to mistakes than that of the first four. But three distinct paleographical habits reveal that the final poem was indeed copied by a different scribe: (1) the use of the *spiritus asper* symbol, which is nowhere present in the first four poems; (2) the abbreviation of the prepositional *pr(a)e-* with two suprascript markers, where the scribe of the other four writes the prefix in full; and (3) the frequent drawing of the tilde in a rising form, with hardly any evidence of finials, in contrast to the horizontal tilde with consistently defined finials at both ends, present in the other poems.

The Tiberius poet avoids personal names almost entirely,⁵⁴⁵ easily doing away with Nicephorus's naming individuals of the city. That Ursus and Elias do not make it into the poetic record is no shock, since the scenes in which they appear have been eliminated by the streamlined plot.⁵⁴⁶ But two sailors, Matthew and Disigius,⁵⁴⁷ whose roles are important to the

⁵⁴⁵ Even Nicholas is once elliptically identified only as "cui" (75).

⁵⁴⁶ It should not be surprising that the poet reduces the narrative of the arrival at Bari to match the length and tone of the departure: 'Sanctus ad ripam exiit/ cui gaudens Apulia/ tota concurrit obuia.' But historically, there was a notable absence in the welcoming party on the Barian shore: archbishop Ursus, who had absented Bari even before the merchants sailed for Antioch. According to the Barian narratives, the political fallout of the translation was extraordinary and violent. Elias took Ursus's place in 1089, when Pope Urban II came to consecrate Nicholas's basilica.

poem, are also left unnamed, so their anonymity is worth addressing. Matthew, the young Barian responsible for breaking open the tomb, is often named by Nicephorus, who perhaps expected his work to be used as a civic and ecclesiastical record. Hayes finds that “[t]he sixty-two sailors who took part in the translation received numerous privileges for having participated in such an important event, benefits that even extended to their descendants.”⁵⁴⁸ Both Matthew and Disigijs, the sailor visited by Nicholas in his dream, might well have benefited from fortune and fame as witnesses to the saint’s miraculous powers. None of this matters to the Tiberius poet, who adamantly subordinates the local to the regional, and for whom the Barians matter only as a stable and unified community.

It should not surprise us that the Tiberius poet is considerably less interested in the civic and diocesan details of the Adriatic than his Italian counterparts. But he does more than smooth over the wrinkles of unrest in Apulian governance. Throughout his text, the Tiberius author waters down the invective tone of Nicephorus, thoroughly avoiding the rancor exploited by his source. Where Nicephorus blames the Myrans for failing to provide a suitable resting place for Nicholas, the Tiberius author describes the Myrans as unlucky: it is not their fault, but rather their “misfortune (offensio)” that Nicholas abandons Lycia. The Barians are similarly passive in

⁵⁴⁷ Nitti takes Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 5074 as the main text for his edition. In the margins, he marks variants from Putignani’s 18th century edition of a Beneventan manuscript. We can see that where Disigijs remains anonymous in the Vatican text (1937: 345), he is named by the Beneventan scribe. It is tempting to see the Tiberius author’s *desidijs* (73) as a clever reworking of ‘Disigijs’ (344), but I cannot connect the poem to the Beneventan manuscript in any other way.

⁵⁴⁸ p. 504.

their good fortune, being acquiescent to, rather than executors of, God's goodwill: "the city of Bari earned the favor of receiving Nicholas joyfully."⁵⁴⁹

The poet's tempered tone extends beyond the pitiful Myrans to the Venetians, almost rendering these considerable foes into accomplices of their Barian adversaries. Nicephorus and John both write that the Barians race the Venetians to Myra, but there is neither mention of the rivals' plan, nor any hint of animosity towards the northern republic in the poem. Instead, the lines "The Barese and the Venetians with the most powerful ships often sail across the seas for the sake of trade" imply that the two groups worked together.⁵⁵⁰ The third person plural referent of "uenerunt Antiochiam (they reached Antioch)" and "quod dixerant (what they said)" could, grammatically and collectively, refer to the Barians and the Venetians; nothing suggests that they were not united until the qualifier, "unus e uarensibus (one of the Barese)" at the moment of the tomb's destruction.

A slight but important modification is the poet's change in Nicholas's command to the dreaming sailor—the only maritime miracle to be preserved by the Tiberius poet. All three versions describe this dream visitation, but Nicephorus and John write that Nicholas delivers a plural imperative to the single sailor. Nicephorous's "Nolite pavere, ego enim vobiscum sum (Do not fear, for I am with you)" and John's "nolite timere, sed constantes estote, quia vobiscum ero (Do not fear, but be constant [in your faith] and I will be with you)" are both very close to Jesus's words to his storm-tossed disciples: "Habete fiduciam: ego sum, nolite timere (Be of

⁵⁴⁹ "urbs uarensis promeruit/ Nicholaum cum gaudio/ suscipere" (22-24).

⁵⁵⁰ "Uarenses et uenetici / cum nauibus firmissimis/ sepe transcurrunt marria mercationis gratia" (25-28).

good cheer! I am him [of whom you speak]; do not be afraid)”⁵⁵¹ If the variant “pauere” obscures the biblical connection in Nicephorus, the use of the singular “ne paveas” in Tiberius takes a further step away from scriptural tradition. In using a plural, Nicephorus’s Nicholas assumes that a communal sense of unease persists on board despite the previous miracle, good wind, and happy crew. This fear, perhaps even guilt, is assuaged when the dreamer shares his vision with his fellow sailors, who “were all joyful and greatly delighted” by the assurance of the saint.⁵⁵² Shortly thereafter, they stop to pick up provisions and sail quickly on.

The poet keeps a “prosperous journey (*prospera nauigatio*)” and “jubilant crew (*letos...socios*)” for the context of the dream, but changes Nicholas’s imperative to a singular subjunctive, suggesting that the dreamer is alone in his anxiety. In order to reinforce this change, the poet refashions Nicephorus’s providential speed as the source of the sailor’s fear and adds his own words to St Nicholas’s speech: “In the meantime, on the sea, there will be no trouble.”⁵⁵³ The poet removes any ambiguity from the purpose of Nicholas’s visitation: the saint appears to calm a nervous seaman, not to validate a crew of thieves.

⁵⁵¹ Nicephorus, 345-346; John, 275-276; Matthew 14:27, Vulgate. John seems especially concerned with the scriptural passage since he also includes the dreamer’s question, “*quis tu...es Domine?*” (l. 276) as a sort of reversal of Peter’s response, “*Domine, si tu es, jube me ad te venire super aquas*” (Matt. 14: 29).

⁵⁵² “*omnes immenso iocundantes gaudio*” (348-349).

⁵⁵³ “*Interea in pelago nulla fit commotio*” (79-80). Here, I have taken *interea* as “in the meantime” rather than as a marker of a shift to a new subject. Consequently, I read the present *fit* as future indicative.

Nicholas's briefly extended speech is one of only a few insertions made by the Tiberius author to his source. The very first poetic addition is geographic;⁵⁵⁴ it describes an international reaction to the relics' relocation: "The people of Greece mourn, and the neighboring peoples of Asia, and especially the people of Myra."⁵⁵⁵ He augments this ethnographic catalog by enumerating two nomadic groups who were hostile to Nicholas: the Turks and Pechenegs. That he includes the latter "tribe," which is not mentioned by Nicephorus or John, is curious. But whether it is the group's absence in the prose accounts or presence in the poem that is more remarkable, the effect is that the poem, despite all of its personal name erasures, is still heavily invested in the people of the Byzantine region it describes.

In any event, the ethnographic details serve the poet's most extensive intervention: endowing Nicholas with a proclivity for peace.⁵⁵⁶ The poet supports his claim that Nicholas "lived as a lover of peace while he flourished in the world" and "after his passing always holds dear to him peaceful peoples" by bringing the language of hospitality into his verse.⁵⁵⁷ The Myrans lose their guest (*hospes*) as quickly as the Barians receive him: "joyfully, with

⁵⁵⁴ This makes the poem's placement across from the *mappa mundi* seem more than accidental. I am grateful for the remarks of Alfred Hiatt and Margaret Tedford, who are independently working on the Cotton Map.

⁵⁵⁵ "Hinc defleat gens Gretiae/ et finitimi Asiae/ Myrreaque praecipue" (5-7).

⁵⁵⁶ Nicephorus describes the angry mob at Myra, who mistakenly attack one of their own (285-292), and does not shirk, as his later contemporary, John, does (328-330), from sketching the violent deaths of two young men in the civil unrest following Nicholas's arrival in Bari (493-499).

⁵⁵⁷ "Pacis amator extitit / dum in seculo floruit / Post transitum pacificos /semper diligit populos" (13-16).

hospitality.”⁵⁵⁸ This diction has two effects: (1) it makes Nicholas seem itinerant, and therefore his place in Myra inherently temporary; (2) it shows the Barians to be gracious hosts, rather than sacreligious pirates. The poet further emphasizes the mariners’ humility by inventing a pious reaction to the opening of the tomb. When they smell the oil, they “did not long for any other future glory after [experiencing] that.”⁵⁵⁹ The thieves’ contentment precludes pilfering of the relics en route, which had necessitated the first maritime miracle in Nicephorus’s text.

After the narrative of the *translatio* concludes, the poem’s focus shifts from the localized action of Apulian sailors to the universal efficacy of Nicholas’s miracles: “The abundance of miracles performed by his merits stirs the willing people of the whole world.”⁵⁶⁰ The perspectival dilation from the Adriatic to the global, reflective of the ethnographic expansion in the beginning of the work, quickly extends beyond geography to encompass a socio-economic ubiquity as well: “The rich and the poor hasten in such a way that they may see the place where the feeble are made strong, having been touched by the oily liquid.”⁵⁶¹ These lines might remind the reader of similar remarks in the first four poems; even if it were composed at a later date, it seems to have had their lessons in mind. Indeed, in such a condensed account, the poet’s attention to the variety and quantity of visitors is remarkable. He continues to itemize, “Counts

⁵⁵⁸ “cum gaudio / suscipere ospicio” (23-24).

⁵⁵⁹ “Nullam sperabant alteram/ post hanc futuram gloriam” (63-64).

⁵⁶⁰ “Miraculorum copia / facta per eius merita/ commouet uoluntarium de toto orbe populum” (85-88).

⁵⁶¹ “Diues et pauper properat / qualiter locum uideat ubi sanantur languidi / tacti liquore olei” (89-92).

and bishops, abbots and priests, and all kinds of people hasten to the holy tomb.”⁵⁶² People from all over the world are descending upon the shrine of St Nicholas to witness and benefit from his miraculous oil. The high and the low profit equally from his holy presence, and make good company for presumptive pilgrims of Poem 5.

A sense of urgency attends these visits; “currunt” echoes the “properat” of the previous sentence, and nuances the pervasiveness of time of the following lines: “Aestas hiems et maria/ non retardant itinera/ peregrinorum hospitum/ ad ipsum concurrentium (Summer, winter, and the seas cannot delay the journeys of the pilgrims who hurry together to that place).”⁵⁶³ In describing the shrine’s accessibility, the poet leaves very little room for excuses.⁵⁶⁴ Nicholas is an approachable and popular saint; those who visit his tomb are not hindered by nature, space, resources, or time. Echoing poem 2, the fifth poem reminds its audience that sailing to Nicholas’s resting place should not be put off.

In the last two quatrains, the poet acknowledges Christ as the source of Nicholas’s fame, prays for the return of the departing travellers, and asks that the souls of those who stay behind be enriched by the deeds of those who go.⁵⁶⁵ The poet abandons the declarative mood, which

⁵⁶² “Comites et episcopi/ Abbates et presbyteri/ et omne genus hominum/ currunt ad sanctum tumultum” (93-96). The use of *comes* in this sense is probably Continental rather than English, though its meaning “count” is attested in England as early as 1070, and its use for “official, magnate” appears in the seventh, tenth, and very early twelfth century (DMLBS, *comes*, p 98).

⁵⁶³ (97-100). “Summer” and “winter” could also refer to Nicholas’s two feast days, on December 6 and May 9.

⁵⁶⁴ Except, of course, for monks, who were bound by their vow of *stabilitas* to stay within their monastery.

⁵⁶⁵ This seems to be a trend in hagiography of the late 11th century. Treharne (1991: 75) finds that the translator shifted Nicholas’s power to Christ’s power, exercised through Nicholas.

had described the pilgrimages of others, for the precatory subjunctive, with which he seeks Nicholas's direct intervention for the present departure.⁵⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the quasi-liturgical⁵⁶⁷ diction of the invocation, "Te, Nicholae petimus (We ask you, Nicholas)" and of "participes," a term used by Christian supplicants desiring to share in a saint's *uirtus*, place the poetic form in a spiritual context that ties the present excursion to an ongoing tradition of Christian pilgrimage.⁵⁶⁸ The poet assumes a plural, collective persona in the first plural subject of *petimus*, *possumus*, and *simus* (we ask, we can[not], that we be). As for the group who will remain behind (remanentium), this collective persona is further distinguished from the poet's potential audience: those who are traveling (euntium).

Against an imagined backdrop of a stable mercantile Mediterranean, the poet rewrites fraction and disjunction across the region, and even the violence that Myra and Bari brought on themselves, into an idealized, cosmopolitan Christian unity. He does so, it seems, to encourage and reassure the pilgrims who are his presumed audience—those who will go to Bari and return home to the glory of Christ and for the benefit of their community. As for the audience of these verses, the pilgrims were not monks bound to a monastic locus, but presumably laypeople or secular ecclesiastics—priests and deacons who lived beyond the walls of the monastery, and who

⁵⁶⁶ If this poem were composed in preparation for a particular journey, it could still have been used on later occasions, since Bari was so frequently visited by pilgrims (and Crusaders).

⁵⁶⁷ I have found no evidence to suggest that this poem (or any of the five Nicholas poems) had been originally used as part of the Divine Office. Nor have I found any parallels in 'liturgies of departure,' which were emerging at this time. See Gaposchkin.

⁵⁶⁸ Literally, the last two lines may be translated as, "that we be made partakers in all of the benefits of those who do [go]," making *participes* "partakers." My preferred translation, which precludes translating this word directly, reads, "that we may share in all of the benefits of those who do [go]."

might have found the travel narratives, maps, and computistical charts in the rest of Tiberius interesting, or even useful.

No obvious linguistic features or content reveal the place of composition for this final Nicholas poem, or the four which precede it. The fifth poem distinguishes itself from the others by being precisely datable and paleographically distinctive; by the same token, the four other poems likely precede it, and could be counted among some of Norman England's earliest verses. On the other hand, the occasional laxity of the script and distinct, singular column of Poem 5 notwithstanding, it is possible that the voyage mentioned in the final poem motivated the copying, or even authorship, of all five poems. Moreover, since their placement was not entirely coincidental (the front flyleaves were also blank); one wonders if the copyist imagined the blue-green face of the *mappa mundi* to be an especially apt marker between the Nicholas' early Byzantine roots and his nautical, northwesterly supersession.

Together, the five poems witness Tiberius's re-use in the early, transitional decades of Anglo-Norman rule. This skillfully worked piece of summation could have been used to promote pilgrimage to Bari (or another Nicholas shrine) from England or the Continent, and speaks to the popularity of nautical, holy travel throughout the West. Most importantly, it is the the earliest manuscript evidence of a poetic *translatio Nicholai* in England.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ The British Library has discovered that Harley MS 3097 contains an abbreviated prose *translatio* that might have been copied around the same time as the Tiberius poem. It would surely be fruitful to compare both abbreviations.

APPENDIX 1: POEM 2 TIBERIUS BV, POEM 2. [73V]

1. Quidam paterfamilias
2. multas habens diuitias
3. [E]rat solitus pergere
4. ad limina aecclesiae
5. [I]n qua corpus sanctissimi
6. humatum iacet presulis
7. [A]tque⁵⁷⁰ quot annis debita
8. persolvere munuscula
9. [Et] se facturum uasculum
10. pollicitus est inclitum.
11. [In honore] sanctissimi
12. Nicholai pontificis
13. [Ta]ndem queritur aurifex
14. doctus in tali opere
15. [Q]ui pulchre sciat sculpere
16. auro gemmas inserere
17. [Un]iones [?] cum iaspide
18. auro miscet arabiae
19. [A] Salamonis tempore
20. uir fuit opus simile

⁵⁷⁰ [I]tque in de Gray Birch

21. [F]actum⁵⁷¹ est uas aureum

22. cuiuis regi congruum

23. [L]apidibus circumdatum

24. mirifice compositum

25. [Se]d pulchritudo uasculi

26. oculos dantis illicit

27. [T]rahens ad auaritiam

28. per demonis inuidiam

29. [Qu]od sua sponte uouerat

30. abnegare non dubitat

31. [U]ertens ad usus proprios

32. retinuit dominio.

33. [Ru]rsus aurifex queritur

34. cui aurum committitur

35. [I]ubet uas restituere

36. quod sit priori simile.

37. [Et qu]⁵⁷²e dat iste recipit⁵⁷³

38. cepto insistens operi

39. [L]aborare non desinit

⁵⁷¹ [Per]actum in de Gray Birch

⁵⁷² [Il]le in Wright

⁵⁷³ recepit in de Gray Birch

40. & tamen nichil proficit.
41. [In]strumenta defitiunt [checked]
42. naturam perdit obrizum
43. [U]elut uitrum perfragile
44. gemmae ruunt ab opere
45. [Ce]rn[e]ns⁵⁷⁴ magister
46. propriam nil ualere industriam
47. [Si]mul inunum colligit
48. aurum gemmasque reddidit
49. Cum prope esset annua⁵⁷⁵
50. Nicholai festiuitates
51. miles iste cum ceteris
52. nauigare disposuit
53. Cum uxore & filio
54. seruos ducit quam plurimos
55. qui sibi necessarium
56. ad impleant obsequium.
57. Sed cum foret in pelago
58. pater petit a filio
59. ut predictum uas capiat

⁵⁷⁴ [Ce]rnens in Wright and de Gray Birch; the MS must have been in better shape; the e is now utterly invisible

⁵⁷⁵ This is the first line of the second column.

60. sibusque potum tribuat
61. Currens puer quantotius
62. arripit sciphum promptus
63. Quem priusquam miscuerit
64. refrigerare uoluit
65. Qui cum in aquam⁵⁷⁶ tingitur
66. de manibus elabatur
67. Sed cum cupit retrahere
68. simul ruit equore
69. Exclamat pater pueri
70. suffundens ora lacrimis
71. “De tua morte iuuenis
72. omnino sum culpabilis.
73. Te Nicholae deprecor
74. indulge mihi misero
75. Nec uicem tanti criminis
76. rependas ut promerui
77. Ut quid dixi mendacia
78. nulla pressus inopia.
79. Nulla mihi necessitas
80. incumbibat nec orbitas.”

⁵⁷⁶ aqua in Wright

81. Ut cumque⁵⁷⁷ lamentabilis
82. miles ad terram exiit.
83. Nota limina repetit
84. Nicholai pontificis
85. Non est ulla facundia
86. quae narrare preualeat
87. Quantum se accusauerit
88. vel quam amare fleuerit.
89. Tandem post multas lacrimas
90. offert ingrata munera
91. Quae aurifex reddiderat,
92. nunquam⁵⁷⁸ sancto placentia.
93. At gloriosus pontifex
94. indignans tali munere,
95. Mox ab altari reppulit
96. quicquid miles apposuit.
97. Tunc res aperte claruit⁵⁷⁹
98. quam propter⁵⁸⁰ infans periit

⁵⁷⁷ Utcumque in de Gray Birch and Wright.

⁵⁷⁸ numquam, Wright.

⁵⁷⁹ “res aperte claruit” in Greg’s Dialogues, 4.57.16-17, in the context of the power of Mass.

⁵⁸⁰ quampropter in de Gray Birch

99. Qui tenere non poterat
100. sciphum quod pater uouerat
101. Dum in sacris solemniis
102. festa peragunt populi
103. Et sua infortunia
104. plangit pater familias.⁵⁸¹
105. Ecce puer ingreditur
106. sciphum ferens in manibus
107. Qui corda contuentium
108. mox conuertit in gaudium
109. Currit pater exanimis
110. ruens in collum filii
111. Attonitus prae gaudio
112. uix potest fari puero
113. Tandem post pia oscula
114. pater natum interrogat
115. Quomodo se habuerit
116. quando in unda corruit
117. [55r] [I]nfit ille cum cecidi
118. “senex michi apparuit
119. uenustatis angelice

⁵⁸¹ Two words in the MS

120. in ueneranda spetie
121. [q]ui ut mater piissima
122. tenuit inter brachia
123. Michique sciphum tradidit
124. & dixit ‘ne timueris’
125. [Q]ualiter me eduxerit
126. de tam magnis periculis
127. Egomet ipse nescio
128. sed mirans adhuc stupeo
129. [H]oc unum tamen recolo
130. quod educto de pelago
131. Ductor ostendit semitam
132. ducentem ad aecclesiam.”
133. [T]unc subito arripuit
134. sciphum de manu filii
135. Atque libenti animo
136. offert spectante populo
137. [C]unctis mare currentibus
138. Nicholaus est cognitus
139. cui quasi preposito
140. uota reddunt ex debito.

APPENDIX 2: CCCC9: ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPTION (FF. 23V– 24R)

1. Opere pretium remur ut ea quae nostris temporibus per sancti Nicholai merita gloriosa
gessit omnipotens Deus breui elogio depromamus. Cum longe lateque uirtutum
beatissimi Nicholai propalarentur insignia ex diuersis et semotis mundi partibus
nobilium et ignobilium diuitum quoque et pauperum cateruae. Ad eius uenerabilia
5. cepere conuolare merita. Itaque quidam uir prepotens incola ipsius patriae, degens
etiam trans mare quod illas suo uolumine circumgirat nationes, optimis multisque
ditatus rerum copiis annuatim nauigio ad eius consueuerat sanctissima properare menia
eiusque; tumbam post multarum orationum fusa libamina suis honorare xeniiis⁵⁸² sicque
letus et alacer remeare ad propria. Quodam ergo tempore secundum morem consuetum
10. ad eius ueniens bustum, uoto se constrinxit aureum uas se facturum iri in eius
seruitiis sibi delaturum. Domum uero regressus aurificem peritissimum accersiri
iussit, et illi non modicum pretiosi obrizi librauit talentum, et quid de hoc facere uellet
indicaui. Artifex autem accepto auro diligentissime illud prout decebat sanctum
Nicholaum operari cepit et variis gemmarum unionumque ordinibus; mirifice decorauit.
15. In tantum itaque in sculptura illius uasis illi affuit pietas iam dicti praesulis ut ipse
quoque; aurifex ingenium sibi collatum miraretur opus manuum suarum. Tandem
strenuissime⁵⁸³ peracto opere, patrem familias repetiit. quodque sibi commiserat retulit
integro libramine. Satis denique opus admirans artificemque collaudans, qualem profecto
opere decebat recompensauit talionem. Uerum ceca animo pellectus cupiditate et

⁵⁸² initial“e” has been erased

⁵⁸³ *strennuissime*] *punctus delens* under the first “n”

20. perfossus cuspidē tenacis⁵⁸⁴ auaritiā, tantī pretiī uas suis uisibus deputauit
retinendum ma[l]lens ex eo sibi diatim uinum propinare quam sancto Nicholao cui illud
deuouerat deferre. Cum itaque praefatus locuples iam dictum uas ambitiose suis
delegasset obsequus, rursus ad se conuocans aurifabrum similem prioris auri illi proferri
iussit quantitatem. omnibus modis obsecrans ut exinde alterum uas in seruitium sculperet
25. Nicholai. Quod ille libentissime annuens, auri summam secum tulit; et sepius ut
ars expostulat fundendo et tundendo. nullatenus secundam sui uelle aliquod opus exinde
efficere preualuit. Rediens uero ad memoratum uirum quod ei dederat reconsignauit, et
que sibi contigerant retulit. Ille uero hoc audiens et in sua cupiditate permanens decreuit
illud aurum et gemmas paritum sancto Nicholao deferendas. Interea orbita anni uolente
30. secundum tempus quo sancti limina consueuerat inuisere scauam sibi iussit preperari
honorifice. et omnia necessaria poni in ea affluentissime. Itaque remigio remigum fultus
uelis quoque tantae nauigationis aptis adumbratus euro flante secundo, uela uentis
commisit. et una cum uxore et filio seruorum etiam plurimo famulatu nauigationem est
aggressus. Cum igitur in maris deuenissent medium nimia siti exardenscente filio suo
35. praecepit, ut uini propinaret haustum cum uase iam sepius praelibato. Tanto enim
illud amplectebatur amore, ut nemini illud excepto filio uel conuiuge aliquo modo liceret
contingere. Adolescens uero cum illud aqua uellet refricdare, subito e manibus eius
elapsum corruit in mare. Cumque iuuenis porrectis illud conaretur arripere brachiis,
incaute prosiliens delapsus est in gurgitem profundī maris. Nauis quoque ut ceperat
40. percurrens cursum uolucrum, ulterius eum inueniendi nauigantibus omnem abstulit

⁵⁸⁴ Begins column 2.

spem. Ecce quid promeruit inepta cupido. Tum mestus et lugubris quod erat nauigationis residuum peregit et illo⁵⁸⁵ usquequo tendebat peruenit. Attamen pietas sancti Nicholai non diu passa est tantam in eo permanere mestitiam. Denique potitus obtata litoris statione, extimplo⁵⁸⁶ ad tumulum conuolauit, et aurum quod detulerat pro uase super eius 45. posuit altare, seque protinus longius repulsum est quasi cum magna ui indignationis. Quod ille cernens, ante sancti memoriam prostratus se reum se culpabilem clamitabat. et quid egerat qualiterue uas quod sancto Nicholao se daturum sponderat⁵⁸⁷ fraudulenta cupiditate sibi retinuerat coram omnibusque intimauit, necon et amissionem filii sui uasisque illius lamentatione professus est lugubri. Igitur post longa orationum suspiria 50. uoto sese astrinxit plurimam suarum rerum copiam in obsequium sancti Nicholai expositurum fore, si suis meritis et intercessionibus sibi suum redderet filium. At uenerabilis confessor qui semper presto adest omnibus se cum fide inuocantibus, non distulit illius adesse inuocationibus. Mira res. Cum enim idem uir sua infortunia lacrimabili querimonia defleret, repente filius eius quem fluctibus absortum deflebat, uas 55. illud quod amiserat manibus baiulans, insperate limina templi ingressus ueniebat. Quem pater eius et mater omnisque astantes considerantes, maximis exhilarati gaudiis grates immensas deo, et suo adiutori magnifico detulerunt Nicholao. Iuuenis autem clara uoce referre cepit quemadmodum uenerandi uultus habitus gerens cum in mare cecidisset senex ei apparuerit. Eumque ulnis sustentans usque ad litus deportauerit et ei iter quod

⁵⁸⁵ Begins fol 24r.

⁵⁸⁶ templo] MS extimplo

⁵⁸⁷ sponderat] MS spondonderat

60. ducebat ad basilicam sancti Nicholai insinuauerit et sic subito ab eo recesserit. Haec et his similia illo referente, prae magnitudine gaudii lacrimas lacrimis addentes, collaudabant clementiam sancti Nicholai. Sicque uir suo uota persoluens et uas quod prius abstulerat reddens, gaudens et alacer cum filio uniuersoque comitatu remeauit ad propria, laudans et glorificans deum, qui per sanctum suum taliaet tanta dignatus est

65. patrare magnalia.

APPENDIX 3: TRANSLATIO TRANSCRIPTION, TRANSLATION

Based on the British Library's recent digitization (June 2016) of the Tiberius manuscript, I have provided an updated transcription and translation of the fifth Nicholas poem, which was originally copied across from the *mappa mundi* on fol. 56v, but is now numbered fol. 77r.⁵⁸⁸ The images prove what McGurk and Dumville had suspected: that some, if not all, of the initial capitals were at least outlined.⁵⁸⁹ I supply all initial capitals in brackets.

Previous editions of the text can be found in Wright (1845) and De Gray Birch (1888), who both transcribe the poem across lines of sixteen syllables. However, in keeping with the poem's meter and structure as well as the scribe's punctuation, I have arranged my transcription of the text in quatrains, consisting of two rhyming octosyllabic couplets. Conventional abbreviations and contractions are expanded silently. Capitalization is supplied for proper names and place-names, but I have decapitalized the frequently capitalized words which are not proper nouns. The only punctuation our scribe consistently provides is the *punctum*, which marks syntactical and metrical units of eight syllables. Some modern punctuation is provided to assist the modern reader.

⁵⁸⁸ Considerable reshuffling during the early modern period has made a mess of foliation and pagination. See Foys (2015) for an invaluable overview of the manuscript's 'media archaeology,' which is problematically erased in the British Library's digitization.

⁵⁸⁹ The initial 'D' of 'Dicamus,' with which the poem begins, is filled in.

1. [D]icamus deo gloriam 2. per cuius prouidentiam 3. Nicholaus fit proprior 4. quam foret ab initio.	Let us give glory to God, by whose providence Nicholas is brought closer than he was at the first.
5. [H]inc defleat gens gretiae, 6. et finitimi asiae, 7. Myrreaque praecipue, 8. quae tanto caret hospite.	For this reason the people of Greece mourn, and the neighboring peoples of Asia, and especially the people of Myra, who are deprived of a great guest.
9. [H]uius fecit offensio, 10. ne haberet in proximo 11. patronum tantae gratiae 12. nec talis excellentiae.	It became their misfortune that they do not possess close at hand a patron of such great power, nor of such excellence.
13. [P]acis amator extitit 14. dum in seculo floruit 15. Post transitum, pacificos 16. semper diligit populos.	He was a lover of peace while he flourished in this world. After his death, he always holds dear to him peaceful peoples.
17. [F]ugit Turcos et Pincenas 18. scilicet gentes pessimas 19. quae creatori omnium 20. nullum reddunt officium.	He flees Turks and Pechenegs, surely evil tribes which do not render any service to the creator of all things.
21. [U]alde Deo amabilis, 22. urbs uarensis promeruit 23. Nicholaum cum gaudio 24. suscipere ospicio.	Greatly loved by God, the city of Bari earned the favor of receiving Nicholas joyfully, with hospitality.
25. [U]arenses et uenetici 26. cum nauibus firmissimis 27. sepe transcurrunt maria 28. mercationis gratia.	The Barese and the Venetians, with most powerful ships often sail across the seas for the sake of trade.

29. [M]odo nostris temporibus, 30. plenis frumento ratibus 31. post Myrreae prouinciam 32. uenerunt Antiochiam.	Just now in our time, with ships full of grain, past the province of Myra, they reached Antioch.
33. [F]arribus ibi uenditis. 34. Diuinitus admoniti, 35. inuenerunt consilium 36. nutu Dei dispositum,	There, the grain having been sold, they (divinely inspired) hit upon a plan arranged by God's authority,
37. [U]t redeuntes tumulum 38. sancti frangant marmoreum 39. cum instrumentis ferreis 40. paratis huic operi.	that on their return voyage they would shatter the marble tomb of the saint with iron instruments prepared for the task.
41. [P]er uoluntam domini 42. et auxilio praesulis 43. intrauerunt aecclesiam 44. ut facerent quod dixerant.	According to the will of God, and with the help of the patron, they entered the church to carry out what they said they would do.
45. [C]ustodes ibi quatuor 46. inuenti sunt in atrio 47. qui extrahunt peniculo 48. liquorem, more solito.	There, four guards were found in the atrium, who extract liquid [issuing from the saint's tomb] with a sponge, following the usual custom.
49. [H]i, putantes quod solita 50. uellent offerre munera 51. non dubitant ostendere 52. quicquid uolunt inspicere	They, assuming the visitors wished to offer the customary gifts, do not hesitate to show whatever they wanted to examine.
53. [T]unc unus e uarensibus, 54. audax et fortis uiribus, 55. ferreum ferens malleum 56. de quo percussit tumulum.	Then one of the Barese, bold and endowed with vigor, wields an iron mallet with which he struck the tomb.

57. [E]x quo ictu per plurimas 58. partes scinditur tabula 59. et odoris flagrantia 60. exit tam suauissima	By this blow the lid of the tomb was shattered into many pieces, and the intensity of the smell issues so very sweetly,
61. [e]t quasi essent positi 62. in paradiso domini. 63. Nullam sperabant alteram 64. post hanc futuram gloriam.	as if they had been placed in the paradise of the Lord. They did not long for any other future glory after experiencing that.
65. [H]inc thesaurum arripiunt 66. excellens omne pretium. 67. Impellunt rates pelago, 68. uela dant uentis subito.	From there they seized the treasure exceeding all value. They pushed their ships into the sea, immediately giving their sails to the wind.
69. [P]rospera nauigatio 70. letos perduxit socios 71. qui corpus uenerabilis 72. deferebant pontificis.	A prosperous journey conducted the jubilant crew who were conveying the body of the venerable bishop.
73. [Q]uidam nauta desidius 74. per somnium est monitus; 75. cui dixit, 'ne paueas 76. quia strenue nauigas	One sleepy sailor in a dream is advised; to him someone said, 'do not be afraid because you are sailing quickly;
77. [c]ursui tuo terminus 78. herit dies uicesimus. 79. Interea in pelago 80. nulla fit commotio.'	The end of your trip will be on the twentieth day. In the meantime, on the sea there will be no trouble.'
81. [U]t dictum est, sic accidit. 82. Sanctus ad ripam exiit 83. cui gaudens Apulia 84. tota concurrit obuia	As it was foretold, so it happened. The saint disembarked on the shore. All of Apulia, rejoicing, flock to meet him.

85. [M]iraculorum copia 86. facta per eius merita 87. commouet uoluntarium 88. de toto orbe populum.	The abundance of his miracles performed by his merits stirs the willing people of the whole world.
89. [D]iues & pauper properat 90. qualiter locum uideat 91. ubi sanantur languidi, 92. tacti liquore olei.	The rich and the poor hasten in such a way that they may see the place where the feeble are made strong, having been touched by the oily liquid.
93. [C]omites et episcopi 94. abbates et presbyteri 95. et omne genus hominum 96. currunt ad sancti tumulum.	Counts and bishops, abbots and priests, and all kinds of people hasten to the tomb of the saint.
97. [A]estas, hiems, et maria 98. non retardant itinera 99. peregrinorum hospitum 100. ad ipsum concurrentium.	Summer, winter, and the seas do not delay the journeys of the pilgrims and visitors who flock to him.
101. [S]it grata remanentium 102. deuotio fidelium 103. Christo qui suum famulum 104. facit ubique cognitum.	May the devotion of the faithful who remain behind be pleasing to Christ, who makes known his servant (Nicholas) everywhere.
105. [T]e Nicholae, petimus, 106. ut qui ire non possumus 107. simus bonorum omnium 108. participes euntium. Amen.	We ask you, Nicholas, since we cannot make the journey, that we may share in all of the benefits of those who do. Amen.

Critical Apparatus

3. *Nicholaus*] <h> represented by the *spiritus asper*
10. *habere*] <h> represented by a very faint *spiritus asper*
34. *diuinitus*] diuitius
38. *marmoreum*] “u” corr. from “a”
77. *tuo*] “o” corr. from “i”; *terminus*, “u” corr. from “o”
80. *fit*] *punctum delens* under “a” *fiat*
85. *miraculorum*] “o” corr. from “a”
101. *remanentium*] remanantium
105. *Nicholae*] <h> represented by the *spiritus asper*

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