

GRIEF, GRIEVING, AND LOSS IN HIGH MEDIEVAL HISTORICAL THOUGHT

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*This article investigates how and why medieval ecclesiastical writers thought and wrote about experiences of grief in human history. It examines the works of three late twelfth-century Latin writers from England: a foundation history of Waltham Abbey and its holy cross, a series of annals kept by Hugh Candidus at Peterborough, and Gerald of Wales's autobiographical and travel writing alongside his *De principis instructione*. Drawing on biblical, literary, theological, and iconographic models for grief and suffering in the western Christian tradition, the article situates these works in the exegetical and philosophical ideas they shared, and explains what is original and significant about their approaches to each instance of grief. It argues that the central problem these writers pondered in their narratives was the relationship between the universal and particular nature of grief. Grieving, they thought, had three key qualities: it impelled a desire to act; it could not be meaningfully measured; and it persisted in time. In prioritizing the experience of grief over its function, meaning, or morality, these writers considered the emotion rational, natural, and honest. The value these writers placed on human family or family-like relationships provides the context for understanding their priorities in thinking about responses to loss. Interest in grief's endurance, rather than its resolution in consolation, has been understood as more typical of secular, not sacred, thought. By showing how these writers' ideas about grief's nature lived alongside and within other ideas of Christian thought, this article illuminates a greater range of medieval ecclesiastical ideas about the dignity of human history and emotion.*

"Oh you who pass along the way, pay attention, and see if there is any grief like my grief."¹

Lamentations 1:12

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/S003673/1) funded the research for this article. I wish to thank the editors of *Traditio* and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and insights. All translations are my own.

The following abbreviations will be employed: *HC* = Hugh Candidus, *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus, a Monk of Peterborough*, ed. W. T. Mellows (Oxford, 1949); and *WC* = *The Waltham Chronicle*, ed. Leslie Watkiss and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1994).

¹ "O uos qui transitis per uiam attendite et uidete si est dolor sicut dolor meus."
Lamentations 1:12.

Traditio 77 (2022), 129–183

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doi:10.1017/tdo.2022.8

In the Middle Ages, many writers turned to the poetry of the Old Testament Book of Lamentations in order to write of sorrow, grief, despair, loss, and lamentation. It was a lament of many voices: its author was Jeremiah, his narrator a suffering woman, his theme a personified Jerusalem now destroyed. The book was popular because it provided a traditional, ready template for a narrative about loss. Yet it was also important because writers of history continued to find the themes and questions it raised helpful for understanding the experiences of the people they wrote about. One line in particular attracted attention and arrested thought because of the vital question it asked: is anyone else's grief like mine? This article examines ideas of grief, grieving and loss in the historical thought of three late twelfth-century writers from England: a foundation history of Waltham Abbey and its holy cross, a series of annals kept by Hugh Candidus at Peterborough, and Gerald of Wales's autobiographical and travel writing alongside his *De principis instructione*. These works by monastic and clerical writers range across personal memoir and community, family, and regnal history. Each wrote accounts in which bereaved individuals grieved in response to loss (real or anticipated) of a beloved person or people without the possibility of recovery. The emotional dimension of their narratives of loss — their ideas about past experiences of grief, and how they plotted those experiences in prose — has not been considered.

Ideas about grief in the Middle Ages tend to be studied in conjunction with other emotional and spiritual experiences. Grief is often packaged with the more glamorous emotion of anger.² Grief by itself is studied comparatively less because medieval reactions to parting, separation, and loss were once seen as signs of weakness, incompatible with other, more forceful emotions.³ Grief is also analyzed as a political performance or theological problem: a phase in a sequence of feelings meant to be consoled and resolved.⁴ Grief that challenged consolation, especially in ecclesiastical thought and writing, has received less

² Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 127–52; and Richard E. Barton, "Emotions and Power in Orderic Vitalis," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 33 (2011): 41–60.

³ Mary Garrison, "Early Medieval Experiences of Grief and Separation through the Eyes of Alcuin and Others: The Grief and Gratitude of the Oblate," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture*, ed. Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox (Farnham, 2015), 227–63.

⁴ For consolation, see Peter von Moos, *Consolatio: Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer, Band 1: Darstellungsband* (München, 1971). On consolation as an "interactive phenomenon" and helping response to grief, see Jill Anne Kowalik, *Theology and Dehumanization: Trauma, Grief, and Pathological Mourning in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century German Thought and Literature* (Frankfurt, 2009), 29 and 41. For resolution, see Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), 30.

attention. This is in part because questions about medieval emotions tend to seek after perceptions of an emotion's propriety or morality, or its social function or utility, more than ideas about emotional phenomena and experiences.⁵

I want to ask a different question: what was it to grieve, in the minds of medieval writers? What did they think it felt like to experience grief — and to what, if anything, could that experience be compared? How could any one historic experience be narrated in a valid and meaningful way? The article argues that the central problem these writers pondered in their narratives was the relationship between the universal and particular nature of grief. Grieving, they thought, had three key qualities: it involved an impulse to act; it could not be meaningfully measured; and it endured in time. In prioritizing the experience of grief over function, meaning, and morality, these writers considered the emotion rational, natural, and honest. The key point is that they did not discuss grief in terms of consolation, predictable trajectory, or cure. It is in grief's nature to persist. The value these writers placed on human family or family-like relationships, I suggest, provides the key for understanding their priorities in thinking and writing about grieving.⁶

I begin with a brief introduction to these writers' intellectual treasury of thought about grief and ways of writing about it, and a short discussion of

⁵ On propriety, morality, social function, and utility, see, for example, *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY, 1998). On narratives as means for learning "the cognitive and social uses of emotions" to "suggest how people might live well, or at least successfully," see Jeff Rider, "Positive Emotions in the Arthurian Lais of Marie de France," *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 4 (2016): 58–68, at 58–59. On emotion narratives as "scripts" for guiding and staging appropriate behaviour, see White, "The Politics of Anger." For emotions answering questions how one should live and as expressions of value judgments, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001). On feelings as "thought about and wielded," see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Angers Past and Present," *Emotions: History, Culture, Society* 4 (2020): 35–38, at 36. On how medieval writers thought gestures "should" express emotion, see J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, 2002), 11–68. On "phénomènes émotionnels," see Amélie Piolat and Rachid Bannour, "Émotions et affects. Contribution de la psychologie cognitive," in *Le sujet des émotions au moyen âge*, ed. Piroška Nagy and Damien Boquet (Paris, 2008), 53–84, at 55. Key advances in the direction of emotional experiences include Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto, 2011); Danielle Nicole Griego, "Child Death, Grief, and the Community in High and Late Medieval England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2018); and Damien Boquet and Piroška Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2018). For calls to investigate the experiential side of medieval emotions, see Stuart Airlie, "The History of Emotions and Emotional History," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 235–41, at 237; and Guy Halsall, "Review of Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 301–303.

⁶ On emotional understanding within early medieval communities, see also Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2007).

William of Malmesbury's twelfth-century *Commentary on Lamentations* as a point of entry into the exegetical and historical thought-world they inhabited. I then consider each text in turn, examining how their aims, personal experiences, education, relationships, and communities informed their thinking about grief. I conclude by assessing the implications of these ideas of grief in twelfth-century thought and historical writing, and their significance for medieval ecclesiastical thinking and emotion studies.

FRAMING GRIEF

Our writers inherited a long Latin tradition of highly developed thought about grieving. In ancient reflections on grieving, especially hortatory, advisory, or funerary writing, grief and tears were often paired with consolation.⁷ Writers normally emphasized mitigation or resolution of grief as a moral objective or imperative. Cicero posed eloquent links between grief and consolation: he held that an orator, in speaking well of tragedies past, was able and obliged to lessen sorrow; and he wrote that philosophy was medicine for the grieving mind.⁸ Speaking or writing about past griefs was a way to offer solace, and grief was often discussed in relation to its diminishing, its ending, or its moral value.

For many Christian and pre-Christian thinkers, grief required resolution or restraint. First-century writer Josephus, writing of his people and the sorrows of the Jewish war, thought that personal grief was inevitable, but required restraint in the business of writing history, and apology in his preface.⁹ Views differed as to the proper way to resolve grief: for example, through sensibility and expression yielding to the feeling (*affectus caritatis*) or through philosophical reasoning (*ratio fidei*).¹⁰ Boethius (d. 524), unjustly imprisoned and facing certain execution, adopted the latter approach as he searched for solace in writing of past trials. His much-admired *Consolation of Philosophy*, written in an Ostrogothic prison as he sought to reconcile himself to his fate, opens with the idea that tears

⁷ Also in poetry: for example, Statius, *Thebaid* 10:11. On the rhetorical tradition of consolatory writing and lamentation, see for example M. S. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400–1500* (Manchester, 2011), 52, 76–78, 103, 108–13, 161, 198–216, 242, and 511.

⁸ Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.9; and Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.6, 3.13, and 3.82.

⁹ Josephus, *De bello Iudaico*, 1.9–12, ed. Bernd Bader, in *Josephus Latinus, De bello Iudaico: Buch I* (Stuttgart, 2019), 51–52. This work was known to many twelfth-century writers in a Latin version attributed to Hegesippus. See Scott G. Bruce, “The Redemption of Flavius Josephus in the Medieval Latin Tradition,” in *Litterarum Dulces Fructus: Studies in Early Medieval Latin Culture in Honour of Michael W. Herren for His 80th Birthday*, ed. Scott G. Bruce (Turnhout, 2021), 53–69, at 57–60; and Neil Wright, “Twelfth-Century Receptions of a Text: Anglo-Norman Historians and Hegesippus,” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 31 (2009): 177–96.

¹⁰ This tension discussed by von Moos, *Consolatio* (n. 4 above), 80–83.

and lamenting are themselves a comfort, and ends with an admonition to hope and pray to Heaven with confidence.¹¹

Augustine (d. 430), considered a theological authority on grief and known for his vivid portrait of different kinds of grief for his friend and his mother, thought grief should conform to certain moral trajectories and social norms.¹² In his *Confession* of his sins to God, he measured grief in duration, compared it by its object, and discussed where and when it was permissible and proper. Grieving, he maintained, should end in heavenly consolation: one should aspire to console oneself in order to bring the spirit closer to God. Any display of grief, public or private, should be kept brief. Grief indulged for too long, or for the wrong reasons, detracted and distracted from love of God.¹³ For him, grieving was not suffering if it happened in a state of assurance that it would end.

Grief was ever a compelling subject. Why, after all, did Gregory the Great (d. 604) devote such energy to understanding Job? The story recorded a divine experiment in human capacity to endure grief. Job's suffering prefigured Christ's, and was comparable in depth and import. For Gregory, Job's grief was firmly rooted in the realm of Christian counsel. He explored the nature of Job's suffering within a solid moral framework: grief always has meaning; in intensity, it is balanced equally with the awe of revelation.¹⁴ The more acute one's consciousness of self, and one's place in time's continuum, the greater one's capacity to feel grief — and, thus, to know God's power.¹⁵ Gregory's commentary, in illuminating the general from the particular, made Job a beacon for any suffering Christian.

To resolve grief, or to find in it meaning: these were attractive ideas. For Seneca, knowing that personal suffering is one instance of common experience is consoling, and time should aid recovery from grief.¹⁶ For Orosius, contemplating shared sorrow across history lessens sorrow.¹⁷ In Gregory's exegetical thought, the greater the loss, the greater the grief, and the greater one's potential to know God.¹⁸ The

¹¹ Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis* 1.1 and 5.6.

¹² Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love," in *Inquiring about God: Selected Essays, Volume 1*, ed. Terence Cuneo (Cambridge, 2010), 182–222, at 184. For a refinement of Augustine's distinctions between different types of grief, see Paul Helm, "Augustine's Grievings," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 20 (2003): 448–59.

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions* 9.12.33–34.

¹⁴ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, preface.5.12, ed. André de Gaudemaris and Robert Gillet, in *Morales sur Job. Première partie, Livres I et II* (Paris, 1989), 156–60.

¹⁵ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 1.25.34, ed. Gaudemaris and Gillet, 214–16. For similar sentiments, see Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos* 4.12.8–13, ed. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, in *Histoires contre les païens* (Paris, 1990–91), 2:41–42; and Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis* 5.6.

¹⁶ Seneca, *De consolatione ad Polybium* 1.4; and Seneca, *De consolatione ad Marciam* 1.5.

¹⁷ Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos* 4.preface, 5.24.20, and 7.22.6–8, ed. Arnaud-Lindet, 2:8–10, 2:153, and 3:58–59.

¹⁸ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 1.5.6, ed. Gaudemaris and Gillet, 180.

appeal of these ideas is evident in the continued popularity of these patristic writings, early historical narrative, and classical philosophy (from Virgil's poetry to Seneca's letters) in the twelfth century.¹⁹

Yet appeals to ideals and universals had limited explanatory power for individual cases of personal grief. As guiding ideas, they were open to rethinking and qualification by later writers. Even those offering counsel and consolation expressed, at times, an awareness of the limits of what they offered. They saw lost human life as impossible to restore or replace. In the twelfth century, Otto of Freising suggested that in reading of past sorrows, present ones might be set aside, but to a certain degree and in a certain way.²⁰ Centuries earlier, Jerome (d. 420) counselled Heliodorus to find consolation for grief. Yet, when describing his own grief for Julia Eustochium, he wrote in language of violence, despair, total change, and the tyranny of old age.²¹ For Ambrose of Milan (d. 397), the dead could live again in the stories written about them, but in seeming. Remembering them could bring resolution, mostly; yet he acknowledged that such remembering could make grief grow.²² Could one forbid grief to grow? — or did grief forbid one to forget? — as Virgil implied of Daedalus, when the poet regretted the future that Daedalus's fallen son Icarus would have had “if grief had permitted” (*sineret dolor*).²³

The writers we will meet here probed the question of grief beyond the limits of consolation and resolution. Loss, that implacable void of human experience, was still here, in this world, for individuals, come what might hereafter. That void was what they wrote about. In different genres of Latin writing, all personal, intimate tellings of past events, they confronted the nature of particular and universal emotions in the lived experiences of individuals. Each reflected on grief's existence, and deemed the experience of grief a valid subject for historical writing. Our insights have the potential to be the richer because we have knowledge about each author, his relationship to the people and events he was narrating, and the intellectual world he explored.²⁴

¹⁹ See, for example, René Wasselynck, “Les compilations des «Moralia in Job» du VIIe au XIIe siècle,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 29 (1962): 5–32; and *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. 1: 800–1558*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford, 2016).

²⁰ Otto of Freising, *Chronica, sive historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Adolfus Hofmeister, in MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* 45 (Hannover, 1912), 2, preface, 67–68.

²¹ *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae* 60, 151, and 154, ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 54–56, 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1996), 1:548–75; 3:363–64; and 3:367–68.

²² Ambrose of Milan, *De obitu Valentiniani consolatio*, PL 16, col. 1357.

²³ Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.31. On the idea of grief for children's lost futures in biblical and early English writing, see also Harriet C. Soper, “A Count of Days: The Life Course in Old English Poetry” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2018).

²⁴ Waltham had an exceptional library of biblical, classical, and patristic writing: *WC*, xxix–xxx. Peterborough was especially rich in the biblical, patristic, and contemporary

In the High Middle Ages, new intellectual currents emerging in universities challenged individuals to discover the faith for themselves (famously, Abelard's *Sic et Non*). In their religious careers, writers like Guibert of Nogent, Heloise, and Abelard traced in prose the pleasures and sorrows of their own lives, endeavouring to make sense of their emotional experiences.²⁵ Suffering in which writers questioned, refuted, or ignored any meaning, purpose, and resolution of grief is normally thought to be a quality of high medieval secular or court poetry. Even there it is considered rare. Thomas of Britain's *Tristan* has been called one of the few true tragedies in the Middle Ages because it portrayed pain and sorrow without reward or consolation.²⁶ This idea of grieving is seldom associated with ecclesiastical writing in a monastic or clerical context, as though Augustine's guidelines about why, when, and how to grieve always satisfied members of religious communities.²⁷ The works examined here inform and enhance our understanding of medieval grief, for they reveal sophisticated thinking about grief, and of a kind not typically associated with ecclesiastical writing. We turn now to what that thinking comprises — and what it entails. Our way in is through one writer's thinking about that ancient, unanswered question in Lamentations.

LAMENTATIONS 1:12 IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

In the mid-twelfth century, the Benedictine monk William of Malmesbury wrote his first biblical commentary, a work of theological exegesis dedicated to a fellow monk: *Commentary on Lamentations*. Lamentations, though not a common book for exegesis, was the subject of two well-known Carolingian commentaries by Hrabanus Maurus and Paschasius Radbertus. It became better known in the twelfth century when Gilbert the Universal and William took it up for exegesis, who perhaps saw in this less-glossed text an opportunity to

theological material: M. R. James, *Lists of Manuscripts Formerly in Peterborough Abbey Library* (Oxford, 1926); and *Peterborough Abbey*, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen and James Wiloughby (London, 2001). Gerald's learning both abroad and in Britain is well known: for discussion, see below.

²⁵ See, for example, Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, ed. Alexander Andr e (Toronto, 2015); Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of a Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (New York, 1999); and Jay Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (London, 2002).

²⁶ Laura Ashe, "The Meaning of Suffering: Symbolism and Antisymbolism in the Death of Tristan," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York, 2006), 221–38.

²⁷ For example, a recent view sees Augustine as both determining and typical of medieval views before Rousseau: William M. Reddy, "The Unavoidable Intentionality of Affect: The History of Emotions and the Neurosciences of the Present Day," *Emotion Review* 12 (2020): 168–78, at 171.

meditate anew on an age-old theme.²⁸ In his comment on Lamentations 1:12, William distinguished the particular (*proprium*) essence of grief (*dolor*): “And it is characteristic of grief that it knows no limit, and is ignorant of a steady course. For just as a grieving spirit thinks on many things, so speech — the mind’s interpreter — keeps turning through many things” (*et est doloris proprium quia modum nescit, tenorem ignorat. Sicut enim dolentis animus multa cogitat, ita sermo mentis interpres per multa se uersat*).²⁹ William personified grief as an active, living force. Grief, a grieving spirit, and the words that express the feeling all shared a relentless activity, independent of bound or measure. In William’s understanding of grief, the inability to frame the emotion is not a human failing. Rather, grief has no experience of limit or steadiness; it has no quantifiable aspect. In his view, to conceive of grief generally in terms of magnitude or duration would be specious.

The implied question in Lamentations 1:12 (*si est dolor sicut dolor meus?*) was not always interpreted the same way. One way in which interpretations differed was in the concept of quantification. Was it meaningful to frame or compare grief in terms of degree? For some writers, in certain endeavours, it was. Paschasius implied a connection between Lamentations 1:12 and events of the New Testament: the ruin of the Temple, Christ’s passion, and Mary’s suffering.³⁰ When St. Bonaventure reflected on Mary’s suffering in the thirteenth century, he quoted the same open-ended question from Lamentations verbatim. However, when he adapted the passage for a sermon — a more instructive, narrative work — he introduced a comparison, writing that Mary’s experience of grief during the passion was stronger (*vehementem*) than anyone else’s because there was no grief like hers (*non est dolor sicut dolor eius*) except her son’s.³¹ Mary felt more grief because she was Christ’s mother and did not know he would rise again: an explicit sense that grief could be compared in its measure. William of Malmesbury, musing on Lamentations late in life, would not have agreed.

In writing about human history, long before he wrote the *Commentary*, William also tended to give grief a quality rather than a measure. In one case, his language for the force of grief (*ui doloris*) mirrored the language he used for the force with which mourners beat themselves, suggesting a unity of spirit and body in the

²⁸ On Gilbert and William’s exegesis of *Lamentations*, see William of Malmesbury, *Liber super explanationem lamentationum Ieremiae prophetae*, ed. Michael Winterbottom, Rodney M. Thomson, and Sigbjørn Sønnesyn, CCM 244 (Turnhout, 2011), xiii.

²⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Liber super explanationem lamentationum*, ed. Winterbottom et al., 69, commenting on Jeremiah 1:12.

³⁰ E. Ann Matter, “The Lamentations Commentaries of Hrabanus Maurus and Paschasius Radbertus,” *Traditio* 38 (1982): 137–63, at 160.

³¹ Robert M. Correale, “Chaucer’s Constance and the Sorrowing Mary: The Man of Law’s Tale (MLT), 841–854,” *Marian Library Studies* 26 (1998): 285–94, at 289–90.

experience.³² The activity of grief produced a result: an answer to the mourners' prayer for God's mercy. Grief could also be passive, lacking force. Ine's queen consoled her grieving husband with her single-minded strength and activity, leading him by her example.³³ William had never found ideas of measurement and comparison particularly useful for conveying universal, yet infinitely variable, experiences of grief.

William's *Commentary* is well known for its moral, didactic purpose, which was to provide models for meditation, so that fellow monastic readers might find spiritual union with God. In this model, suffering matters because it has meaning, as part of God's purpose.³⁴ William's insight about suffering also reflect his curiosity about feeling and his philosophy of human experience. William had thought and written — like speech, another form of *mentis interpres* — a great deal about the human past before he probed the meaning of Lamentations 1:12. He was unique among most biblical commentators in drawing on pagan, classical histories for ideas.³⁵ He thought with classical works, seeking, in writing, to make a real difference to his readers' lives.³⁶ Thinking in both exegetical and historical terms, he attempted to make a meaningful observation about individual experiences of grief. He commented on Lamentations and he used Lamentations to think with about timeless experience. To William, the famous line seemed to speak out for all those who had passed, and to all those who might pass and read his words in times to come.

We turn now to writing about grief by three authors who, like William, wrote about history. These writers worked and wrote soon after William, in the same realm, and in ecclesiastical environments. Two of them (Gerald and the Waltham chronicler) were, like him, also deeply steeped in classical literature, in which narratives of the afterlife seldom stressed resolution. All were drawn to

³² William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* 4.379.2, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson, and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), 1:674.

³³ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* 1.37.1, ed. Mynors et al., 1:54. For other examples in which a gender paradigm did not dominate views of grief, see Bernhard Jussen, "Challenging the Culture of *Memoria*: Dead Men, Oblivion, and the 'Faithless Widow' in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge, 2002), 215–32.

³⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Liber super explanationem lamentationum*, ed. Winterbottom et al., xviii–xix.

³⁵ William of Malmesbury, *Liber super explanationem lamentationum*, ed. Winterbottom et al., xvi; and R. M. Thomson, "William of Malmesbury and the Latin Classics Revisited," in *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose*, ed. Tobias Reinhardt, Michael Lapidge, and J. N. Adams (Oxford, 2005), 383–93.

³⁶ On William's philosophical affinity with classical literature, see esp. Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History* (Woodbridge, 2012), 3–5, and 21–41.

Lamentations 1:12 and the paradox it posed because it helped them understand the losses and griefs of past people.

GRIEF AND THE WALTHAM CHRONICLE

The Waltham Chronicle is a foundation history written by a secular canon (possibly a married one) between 1177 and 1189; its sources included Waltham's archives, the testimony of other monks, and personal memories of the chronicler, who had joined the community as a boy in 1124.³⁷ The impetus for writing the chronicle was the loss of this community. Henry II dissolved the secular college in 1177 with full (material) compensation, replacing it with Augustinian canons as part of his penance for his men's murder of Thomas Becket.³⁸ Waltham had been the hunting lodge of Tovi the Proud, who was messenger, standard-bearer, and chief thegn of King Cnut (d. 1035). More than 150 years later, Tovi was still remembered for rebuilding the church after a miraculous crucifix was discovered, and for the community of canons that formed around his old lodge. Waltham Abbey had long been famous for its legendary stone crucifix and the miracles surrounding it. It was among the multiple sumptuous life-sized crosses and crucifixes, commissioned as gifts for late Anglo-Saxon churches, that reflected the importance of the cult of the cross.³⁹ Late Anglo-Saxon poems and prayers expressed the belief that venerating the cross would protect the Christian at the moment of death and ensure safe passage to heaven through redemption of the soul.⁴⁰ According to Gerald of Wales, the Cistercian Baldwin of Ford wrote his *Sermo de sancta cruce* for the canons of Waltham in honor of their crucifix. This occasion was probably Henry's 1177 refoundation.⁴¹

³⁷ *WC*, xxxiii and 79, n. 6. For Waltham's post-Conquest archives, see Rosalind Ransford, *The Early Charters of the Augustinian Canons of Waltham Abbey, Essex, 1062–1230* (Woodbridge, 1989).

³⁸ Roger of Howden, *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1868), 2:118; and Ransford, *The Early Charters*, xxiv–xxv and 33.

³⁹ Mary Frances Smith, Robin Fleming, and Patricia Halpin, "Court and Piety in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Catholic Historical Review* 87 (2001): 569–602. Examples include Leofric's gift to Peterborough and Cnut's to Winchester, below; Stigand's cross gifts: *Liber Eliensis* 2.98, ed. E. O. Blake (London, 1962), 168; and Bishop Æthelwold's gift of crosses to Peterborough: S 1448, in *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (London, 1968), 406.

⁴⁰ Barbara Catherine Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography and the Art of the Monastic Revival* (Cambridge, 1990), 62–66. Examples include the Ælfwine Prayer-book; *Regularis concordia* 6.72–76 (*In die Parasceuae*), in *Consuetudinum saeculi X/XI/XII monumenta non-Cluniacensia*, ed. Kassius Hallinger (Siegburg, 1984), 61–147, at 115–19; and *The Dream of the Rood*, lines 119–21, ed. Michael Swanton (Liverpool, 1996), 99.

⁴¹ John Munns, *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Norman England: Theology, Imagery, Devotion* (Woodbridge, 2016), 80–81.

Not all, however, were happy with the change. The Waltham chronicler concentrated his history on the miracles of the image of Christ housed by the Abbey and the legacy of its founder, Harold Godwinson, briefly King Harold II.⁴² Harold's death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 deprived Waltham of a patron and protector.⁴³ From the chronicler's perspective, the community of monks at Waltham Abbey was deprived once again in 1177 — this time not of a king, but by a king. What the king had taken away was its existence as a community. The chronicler looked back in sorrow. Deeply invested in his now-lost community and its history, the chronicler reflected on the relationship between bereavements past and present. He revived oral and written tradition that Harold was buried at Waltham, as he probably was.⁴⁴ Yet although his narrative sought to resolve the fate of Harold's body, it did not resolve grief.⁴⁵ It communicated poignantly the idea that grief was erratic, unfulfilled, and helpless in nature — and his expressed desire to preserve these elements of experience in writing. In narrating personal bereavement, the realization that certain loss is imminent, and the aftermath of death in battle, he explored the emotional consequences of irrevocable loss.

The chronicler discussed losses of the Waltham brethren, including major loss of property, but material loss awoke in his prose no grief or great feeling. During the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, Geoffrey de Mandeville set fire to the village of Waltham, and the adjacent canons' houses burned too; the chronicler claimed that he can give testimony because he sustained the same loss as the rest (*qui et dampna cum ceteris sustinuimus*).⁴⁶ This loss (*dampnum*) was of damaged goods, not lives or livelihood, and our author did not treat the incident with emotional language. It was collateral damage, shared by the community. The chronicler thought the perpetrator duly punished; the brethren took down the cross to make Geoffrey reconsider the compensation he has refused to give, but in the same hour, Geoffrey received a mortal wound in battle. This loss was resolved.

⁴² *WC*, xv. For the cross as “miracle-working” and the community's focus, see Tracey-Anne Cooper, “The Monastic Origins of Tovie the Proud's Adoration of the Cross,” *Notes and Queries* 52 (2005): 437–40, at 438–39. King Edward supported and added to the gift, issuing an endowment and re-foundation charter in 1062: S 1036, in *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. Sawyer, 307–308. For Harold and the Chronicle, see Ann Williams, “The Art of Memory: The Posthumous Reputation of Harold II Godwinson,” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 42 (2020): 29–44.

⁴³ *WC*, xxv.

⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* 3.247.1, ed. Mynors et al. (n. 32 above), 1:460; and Simon Keynes, “Earl Harold and the Foundation of Waltham Holy Cross (1062),” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 39 (2017): 81–112.

⁴⁵ On the fate of Harold's body in narrative tradition, see Nicole Marafioti, *The King's Body: Burial and Succession in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2014), 116, 232–35, and 243.

⁴⁶ *WC*, 78–80.

But in the closure of his community at Waltham, the chronicler was effectively and permanently bereaved of his family. He remembered emotional experiences acutely. He recalled his childhood at Waltham, and how he alternately laughed and cried with the other young members of the community.⁴⁷ He felt pride in his community, past and present, and counted himself as belonging to it: God honored us (*nos*), he wrote, who were brought up (*educavit*) and taught (*instruxit*) by the church, to witness the early miracle in which blood oozed from the arm of the Christ figure when they attempted to nail plating onto it.⁴⁸ “We” the brethren, he thought, clearly had a special relationship with God. This sort of miracle would be unsurprising in a foundation history aimed at securing patronage, and the chronicler may have manipulated the truth to please his patrons.⁴⁹ However, the chronicler was writing of a community already lost, and he did not write of hope for its restoration. If he adorned some truths, he laid others bare.

Immediately after relating the miracle, he wrote poignantly of his misery on losing the community he belonged to for fifty-three years: “My gift in this life is to see my wretched self separated from my mother’s breast” (*Me miserum quod datum est uidere in hac uita quod separer ab uberibus matris mee*).⁵⁰ This is important because it is the only time in the text we hear the author’s voice raised in a personal lament for his own loss. Being rent from the mother’s breast is a raw and physical image of separation from a parent — a nurturing, educating parent church he has just remembered. This loving recollection of this relationship impelled him to voice his lone lament. Maternal imagery (to describe Christ’s spiritual nurturing, or to expand the familial qualities of a religious community) became more common in the twelfth century, especially (although not exclusively) in Cistercian contexts.⁵¹ Cistercian writer Aelred of Rievaulx, for instance, reportedly compared his love for his monks to that of a mother for her sons.⁵² The Waltham chronicler referred again to the mother church when he related the illness and suffering of a sinner, Matthew, who became fully contrite: the moment he asked to be saved as one Jesus has “fed from my mother’s breast with your bread in this church of your cross” (*pauisti pane tuo in ecclesia crucis tue ab uberibus matris mee*), the crucifix figure intervened and cured him.⁵³ Matthew framed his request for salvation, like the author framed his lament at loss, as a desire to return to the mother church. The author may have

⁴⁷ *WC*, 76.

⁴⁸ *WC*, 18–20.

⁴⁹ Cooper, “Monastic Origins” (n. 42 above).

⁵⁰ *WC*, 20.

⁵¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982).

⁵² Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. F. M. Powicke (Oxford, 1963), 58.

⁵³ *WC*, 74.

had his own unresolved grief in mind at the bitter irony of his own unwilling exile, set against the suffering contrition of the sinner Matthew.

Waltham's Grieving Crucifix: An Affective Miracle

A mid-fourteenth-century Harley manuscript of the Waltham Chronicle opens with the initial "C," in which a man kneels before a crucifix, the figure of which has an inclined head (London, British Library, Harley MS 3766, fol. 49).⁵⁴ Both the gesture and the episode it represents suggest a direct response to the emotional import of the twelfth-century story. Two centuries later, an artist chose to illustrate a moment of sorrow — and what is, in some ways, the chronicle's most remarkable miracle. After recounting King Harold's noble but headstrong and stubborn leadership in his victory at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, the chronicler explained that, in the intervening weeks before the Battle of Hastings, Harold came to Waltham and prostrated himself in a cross-shape on the ground, in prayer to the Waltham crucifix. The chronicler did not say what he prayed for — presumably, victory and the safety of his people — only that he came devoted to the holy crucifix. The image of Christ, previously looking directly ahead, then bowed his head "as in sorrow" (*quasi tristis*), a sign (*signum*) of future events. The chronicler reported that the sacristan Turkill witnessed the event, and that others nearby confirmed it.⁵⁵

To interpret a nodding crucifix as a gesture of grief for a contemporary event, and as miraculous for that reason, was unusual in medieval writing. Sculpture with a nodding crucified Christ normally prompted rather different interpretations.⁵⁶ The gesture could signal his humble submission to the will of his heavenly father, his loving compassion (by which writers stressed gap between Christ's selfless love and human sin), or his invitation for a devotee to express mutual love or mystical union.⁵⁷ A nodding, drooping, crying, or bleeding crucifix was often

⁵⁴ For the image as conventional, not necessarily an exact rendering of Waltham's crucifix, see Nicholas Rogers, "The Waltham Abbey Relic-List," in *England in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Carola Hicks (Stamford, 1992), 157–81, at 160.

⁵⁵ *WC*, 44–46.

⁵⁶ For a Carolingian example of a nodding crucified Christ, see Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra, 800–1200* (Harmondsworth, 1972), 100, fig. 3. For Cologne's Gero cross, see *Ornamenta ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik: Katalog zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle*, ed. Anton Legner (Cologne, 1985) 2:214, fig. E17. For a thirteenth-century example, see Paulus Hinz, "'Traditio' und 'Novatio' in der Geschichte der Kreuzigungsbilder und Kreuzifixe bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters," in *Traditio-Krisis-Renovatio aus theologischer Sicht: Festschrift W. Zeller zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Bernd Jaspert and R. Mohr (Marburg, 1976), 606–608, at 607.

⁵⁷ Signalling humble submission is the view of ninth-century Carolingian writer Candidus of Fulda: Elizabeth Coatsworth, "Late Pre-Conquest Sculpture with the Crucifixion South of the Humber," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), 161–93, at 184. On signalling loving compassion, Sara Lipton, "'The

thought to express Christ's own pain. Writers used these images to admonish devotees and stimulate affective devotion through empathy with Christ's long-ago physical suffering.⁵⁸ In the Waltham Chronicle, Tovi responded in this way to the miracle of discovering Waltham's crucifix. When he saw the Christ figure bleeding on the stone cross (its head as yet upright), Tovi experienced an epiphany. He claimed that the bleeding crucifix "represents for me a present likeness of your passion" (*michi representat presens istud exemplar tue passionis*), and that it offered a reminder of his unworthiness.⁵⁹

High medieval stories about a crucifix coming to life — speaking, acting, or intervening in earthly affairs — tended to illustrate a belief in, or hope for, Christ's power to effect a miraculous change.⁶⁰ For example, the eleventh-century *Vita S. Swithuni*, formerly attributed to Goscelin of St-Bertin, recorded that the statue of Swithun from Winchester (brought by Ælfwold, bishop of Sherborne to 1048) performed miracles.⁶¹ Chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg, who understood Christ's body as consolation, related that when Archbishop Gero put relics in the cracked head of the crucifix, wept, and prayed for it to be restored,

Sweet Lean of His Head': Writing about Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1172–1208, at 1188 and 1201. On signalling an invitation to express union, see Lieke Smits, "Wounding, Sealing, and Kissing: Bridal Imagery and the Image of Christ," *Medium Ævum* 88 (2019): 1–22, esp. 1–3; and *Kunsthistorische Zeitschrift*, ed. Arwed Arnulf (Darmstadt, 2007), 110–11.

⁵⁸ For example, Anglo-Saxon homilies: Wulfstan of York, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* no. 2, ed. Dorothy Bethurum, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1998), 121. For examples, see Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography* (n. 40 above), 39 and 65–66; Christopher L. Chase, "'Christ III,' 'The Dream of the Rood,' and Early Christian Passion Piety," *Viator* 11 (1980): 11–33, at 11–16; and *Die Vercelli-Homilien: I.–VIII. Homilie*, ed. Max Förster (Darmstadt, 1964), 154–55. See also S. J. Shoemaker, "Mary at the Cross, East and West: Maternal Compassion and Affective Piety in the Earliest Life of the Virgin and the High Middle Ages," *Journal of Theological Studies* 62 (2011): 570–606; Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996); Sarah Macmillan, "Imitation, Interpretation and Ascetic Impulse in Medieval English Devotional Culture," *Medium Ævum* 86 (2017): 38–59, at 38–40; *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture*, ed. Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox (Farnham, 2015); and Giles Constable, "The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ," in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995), 145–248, at 164–65 and 169.

⁵⁹ *WC*, 18–22.

⁶⁰ Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography* (n. 40 above), 18. English records of miracle-working crucifixes may reflect authentic Anglo-Saxon legend, but are first recorded in the twelfth century. See Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in the Medieval Religious Imagination," in *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park, 2010), 203–40, at 215–24. On the transactional relationship between prayer and miracle, see Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (Ithaca, 2002), 146 and 176–91.

⁶¹ Michael Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003).

the Lord miraculously fixed it.⁶² In the 1170s, Herbert of Clairvaux wrote that when Bernard of Clairvaux prostrated himself in prayer before a crucifix, the figure seemed to come to life and embrace him in a miraculous act of love.⁶³ These were effective miracles: they restored damage, helped the faithful, and consoled the devoted.

Why is the Waltham Chronicle's miracle special? The chronicler called it "pitiably to tell" (*miserabile dictu*) and incredible from an earthly perspective (*a seculis incredibile*).⁶⁴ In these regards it was a "cause of wonder," and contrary to what one would expect of stone in nature.⁶⁵ In saints' miracles, any intervention was ultimately, if not directly, made by God. Most miracles intervened in earthly affairs: they influenced the course of events, often offering a moral resolution to prayer and contrition (for example, most frequently by bringing healing), and at times punishment for sin or failure to repent.⁶⁶ Miracles brought gifts of aid, or help in war; they brought freedom or punishment. Saints appeared to offer aid, reproof, and advice.⁶⁷ These miracles cured, fixed, or solved a problem; as such, they performed a function.

The Waltham Chronicle's story of the portentous, sorrowing Christ-figure is important because it highlights, instead, the limits of intervention, and of power to intervene. Unlike most miracles, it effected nothing, no material change: it expressed and shared a feeling of empathetic sorrow. In an inversion from the more typical route of affective piety, the chronicler told a story not of an individual seeking to experience Christ's sorrow in the past, but rather of Christ on the cross seeming to experience sorrow in the present for the coming, inevitable loss of Harold, and for the grief of the English in conquest. The figure bowed his head *quasi tristis* when the king prostrated himself before the

⁶² Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 3.2, *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg*, ed. Robert Holtzmann, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* n.s. 9 (Berlin, 1935), 98–100; and Hanns-Ulrich Haedeke, "Das Gerokreuz im Dom zu Köln und seine Nachfolge im XI Jahrhundert," *Kölner Domblatt* 14–15 (1958): 42–60.

⁶³ Herbert of Clairvaux, *Liber Visionum et Miraculorum Clarevallensium* 44, ed. Giancarlo Zichi, Graziano Fois, and Stefano Mula, CCM 277 (Turnhout, 2017), 98–99 retold by Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium magnum Cisterciense, sive, Narratio de initio Cisterciensis Ordinis* 2.7, ed. Bruno Griesser, CCM 138 (Turnhout, 1997), 78–79. See also Anthony N. S. Lane, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Theologian of the Cross* (Collegeville, 2013), 230–31.

⁶⁴ *WC*, 46.

⁶⁵ For discussion of the meaning of miracles with examples, see Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, 2013), 333–409; and Benedicta Ward, "Miracles in the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge, 2011), 149–64.

⁶⁶ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, 349–65; and Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000–1215* (London, 1982), 192–200 (for miracles in a monastic context) and 214–16.

⁶⁷ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, 372–73.

crucifix in prayer.⁶⁸ There was sympathy in mirrored action, but the crucifix's imitation of Harold did not copy or gloss an action, in the way that late medieval devotees copied Christ's wounds onto themselves (like Bridget of Sweden) or imitated his crucifixion (like Elizabeth of Spalbeek).⁶⁹ The same gesture meant different things. Harold has bowed in respect and prayer; the vivified Christ figure has bowed his head in grieving for Harold and the English. The figure participated in Harold's story, the motion of his bowing head mirroring a movement of the spirit (*motus animi*) and a futile impulse to act.⁷⁰ Barbara Raw has stressed the "theme of compassion for Christ's sufferings" in crucifixion iconography.⁷¹ Here, the story's theme is Christ's compassion for the suffering of another.

This *affective* miracle is unique in the Waltham Chronicle because every other miracle in the chronicle was an *effective* miracle: it effected some material or physical change or altered the course of events. One of these effective miracles was a punishment that caused permanent physical harm: one would-be female thief was punished by divine intervention and crippled for life.⁷² The other effective miracles were all restorative, helping the Waltham community materially or curing illness. The story of the discovery of the Waltham crucifix is the most prominent example. A divine messenger appeared to a smith in three visions, each time giving instructions for finding the crucifix. After disobeying twice, the smith heeded the third vision only when the messenger prodded him with physical pain. The smith led the community to dig up the crucifix, a revelation of divine grace and sign of Christ's passion, destined to belong to Waltham.⁷³ When Cnut's thegn Tovi tried to relocate the cross and larger relics, he was physically unable to do so. The wagon refused to move, so preserving Waltham's assets, in a sign of divine favor for Waltham.⁷⁴ The crucifix figure healed the foot ulcer of the penitent sinner, Matthew, prompted first by his mother's grief and then by the man's contrition.⁷⁵ The final three surviving chapters recounted other "effective" miracles. The chronicler called it "marvelous to tell" (*mirabile dictu*) that would-be robbers, blinded in mind or eye, had their sense or sight restored by God's mercy.⁷⁶ The chronicler referred to many unrecorded miracles, and of the wider need for

⁶⁸ *WC*, 46.

⁶⁹ Macmillan, "Imitation, Interpretation and Ascetic Impulse" (n. 58 above), 39. On inclined heads as a gesture relationship, see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London, 2009), 129–30.

⁷⁰ On signs (here, meaning names) for showing the soul's inner workings, see Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 2.2.3.

⁷¹ Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography* (n. 40 above), 66.

⁷² *WC*, 26–29.

⁷³ *WC*, 2–10.

⁷⁴ *WC*, 14–16.

⁷⁵ *WC*, 70–74.

⁷⁶ *WC*, 82.

God, through Thomas Becket, to heal the illness of sin in the present age. In these stories, miracles healed, fixed or redressed an unwanted state in the world.⁷⁷ They resolved something.

The sorrowing crucifix, as an affective miracle, is unique in the Chronicle. It marked the story's dramatic turning point, whence the losses of a king, the English, and the Waltham community will follow, never to be restored. In bowing its head in grief, the crucifix acted miraculously, but effected no resolution, change, or event. A fellow mourner powerless to avert Harold's fate by working miracles because that fate was already destined, the figure expressed sympathy rooted in a shared experience of suffering. The chronicler ascribed virtues and vices to Harold, but this miracle involved no moral judgment of the king.⁷⁸ The behavior of the Waltham chronicler's crucifix illustrated not the earlier medieval theme of triumphing over death, nor the Carolingian development of accepting death, nor the sweet, summoning affection of high medieval devotional literature. Instead, it emoted likeness with a human wish to avert irrevocable loss. This miracle of a responsive crucifix sorrowing with a present grief reveals a variation on a wider theme of interest in Christ's humanity, written by one who well knew the feeling of futility at the impossibility of averting human loss.

Waltham's miracle bears comparison with another twelfth-century account of recent events in England, wherein an animate crucifix miraculously expressed suffering (emotion or physical pain) without a narrative of return, relief, or consolation. It occurred in one chronicler's account of the 1141 burning of Winchester — then Empress Matilda's stronghold in the civil war against Stephen — on the orders of Henry, bishop of Winchester. In the conflagration, the large, bejeweled cross given by Cnut (the famous frontispiece of the *Liber Vitae*) to Hyde Abbey (the church of St. Grimbald) caught fire, fell to the ground, and was later stripped of its jewels by the king's men.⁷⁹ The Gloucester continuator of John of Worcester related how Cnut's crucifix, before meeting its end, displayed miraculous evidence of awareness: "With the fire now closing in on it (it is remarkable to say), just as if perceiving beforehand the threatening danger, with the brothers there looking on, the cross responded by sweating and blackening — nay, rather, by expressing the blackness of the arsonists." (*Hec*

⁷⁷ *WC*, 64.

⁷⁸ Virtues: strong character, build, leadership, and a wealth of stunning treasure bestowed on Waltham; based on Waltham's relics, the latter is no exaggeration: Rogers, "The Waltham Abbey Relic-List" (n. 54 above); and Williams, "The Art of Memory" (n. 42 above). Vices: losing God's favour through pride (stubbornness, rashness, and excessive self-reliance), *WC*, 46–8.

⁷⁹ The *Liber Vitae* frontispiece: British Library, Stowe MS 944, fol. 6r. On the Winchester fire, Edmund King, "Henry of Winchester: The Bishop, the City, and the Wider World," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 37 (2015): 1–24, at 11–12.

iam sibi approximante incendio, quod mirum dictum est, quasi imminens sibi presentiens periculum, intuentibus qui aderant fratribus, cepit sudare, nigrescere immo comburentium nigrendinem exprimere). As it caught fire, thunder sounded thrice — as though (*quasi*, again) from heaven.⁸⁰ The emotional tenor of the response differs: whereas the Waltham chronicler described the figure's bowing head in terms of sorrow, the Gloucester continuator claimed that the Hyde figure seemed sentient and conscious of danger. By blackening the cross revealed the evil of the arsonists.⁸¹

In comparison with medieval interpretations of other animated crosses and crucifixes, what is significant is that these responsive crucifixes exhibited, rather than invited, a human emotional response. This miracle story is like the Waltham chronicler's account in that neither is transactional, and both concern crucifixes given during Cnut's reign — an era that appeared to these twelfth-century writers, by contrast with the Norman Conquest and the civil war, as a golden age of lavish generosity to ecclesiastical centers. These likenesses are significant. Both authors recounted disasters that befell their respective communities because of warfare, and from these disasters there had been no earthly reprieve. Both stories featured a responsive crucifix: an animated Christ figure who expressed not his own ancient pain and passion, but a physical and emotional response to contemporary human events. The two crucifixes portended and seemed to perceive disaster, reacted to an earthly event, and were powerless to intervene and avert doom. For these authors, this seeming (*quasi*, used as a conjunction to introduce a comparison) humanity signalled the genuine emotional content of the situation.⁸²

A later reader, less invested in eleventh- and twelfth-century tragedies, read Waltham's miracle in an entirely different way. The writer of the *Vita Haroldi*, composed at Waltham early in the thirteenth century, used the Waltham Chronicle as a source for Harold's deeds. This author elaborated on the spectacular nature of this bowing-crucifix story, remarking on the unusual event of Christ deigning to acknowledge a king. But this later author had no vested interest in, or emotional connection to, the community of brethren broken apart in 1177. On the contrary, the *Vita's* author approved whole-heartedly of Henry II's decision to replace them with regular canons.⁸³ Whereas the Waltham chronicler

⁸⁰ John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. Reginald R. Darlington, P. McGurk, and Jennifer Bray (Oxford, 1998), 3:298–301.

⁸¹ For a different interpretation, that the crucifix lamented the suffering of the arsonists' victims, compare Edmund King, *King Stephen* (New Haven, 2010), 168–69.

⁸² For an example of *quasi* used differently, associated with feigned (*simulatam*) emotion, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge, 2016), 64–65.

⁸³ Alan Thacker, "The Cult of King Harold at Chester," in *The Middle Ages in the North-West*, ed. Tom Scott and Pat Starkey (Oxford, 1995), 155–76, at 156.

told a tale of painful loss or rending asunder, the *Vita* was an encomium of Harold, even asserting he was a saint and evoking his and Christ's shared roles as kings.⁸⁴ The *Vita*'s miracle was the mutual salutation: it was marvelous that the Christ figure was seen returning the greeting of the wretched mortals' king (*resalutare videretur regem mortalium miserorum salutantem se*), and marvelous that a stone figure deigned — and had the power — to do so.⁸⁵ The two bows collapsed into a single meaning of greeting, no longer prayer and sorrow. Whereas the Waltham chronicler marveled that the cross should appear to emote sorrow (for trying to avert inevitable loss would be futile), the *Vita*'s author marveled at its self-humbling ability to effect material change.⁸⁶ The two miracles meant different things. The reference to emotion vanished; the story was now about honor, not grief.

The Waltham Chronicle's emotional tenor is unique. The author conceived of grief as limitless, compounded, and unending, but not as dissolute, wild, or uncivilized.⁸⁷ Throughout the Waltham Chronicle, the author displayed an elevated confidence in the dignity of human emotion. By dignity I do not mean nobility (in the sense of a moral good, or something that should be emulated), but the idea that emotion — even enduring, uninhibited, or boundless emotion — was a rational and normal quality of human experience: and, crucially, neither immoral, nor excessive, nor in need of restraint.⁸⁸ Unlike the tenth-century prayers that were his model, which expressed fear of divine judgment, the author conveyed emotional concord between the crucifix as the human Christ and the Waltham community. This change of emphasis is visible in the chronicler's reworking of *Regularis Concordia*, which was essentially the handbook for Benedictine monks, widely promoted by Bishop Æthelwold during the tenth-century Benedictine reform in Anglo-Saxon England. The chronicler wrote a prayer to the crucifix — supposedly written by Tovi in the eleventh century, but more likely our chronicler's twelfth-century rendering — based in part on the prayer to the crucified Christ in *Regularis Concordia*.⁸⁹ Unlike the speaker in the *Regularis Concordia* prayer, Tovi feared no condemnation, nor did he pray to Christ for forgiveness instead of judgment. The *Regularis Concordia* speaker fervently wished that Christ would forgive, and used the subjunctive voice with several *ut*-clauses to

⁸⁴ *Vita Haroldi*, ed. W. de Gray Birch (London, 1885), 20.

⁸⁵ *Vita Haroldi*, ed. de Gray Birch, 58.

⁸⁶ See also Thacker, "The Cult of King Harold," 156–58 and esp. 162 for a different view, that the miracles were described in similar terms.

⁸⁷ See also Ingeborg Lechner, "Die Macht der Chronisten: Berichte über Tod und Reputation englischer Könige im Mittelalter" (M.A. thesis, University of Vienna, 2008), 136.

⁸⁸ In contrast with nobility as in C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 1999).

⁸⁹ In contrast with Cooper's view that Tovi wrote the prayer: see Cooper, "Monastic Origins" (n. 42 above). The relationship between the prayer and *Regularis Concordia* is demonstrated by Cooper, which transcribes the two texts in parallel; *WC*, 20–22.

express this state of uncertain, hopeful wishing. Tovi, on the other hand, thanked Christ for having already done these things: the passage is replete with past participles. He was confident that forgiveness had already happened. The tone of Tovi's first word is adoration (*adoro*), not the self-deprecation or fear of reproach that the crucified Christ seemed to expect of devotees in other Anglo-Saxon poems, homilies, and sermons. This new twelfth-century prayer affirmed the confident and affectionate relationship the chronicler imagined between sharers of human suffering: Christ and the brethren of Waltham.

The Search for Harold

The Waltham chronicler developed the theme of grieving in his narrative of the events after the Battle of Hastings. He attempted to conjure the feelings and activities of two men, Osgod Clapa and Æthelric Childemaister, who went in search of Harold's body. The portentous, grieving crucifix left the canons "seized by intense grief" (*multo dolore correpti*).⁹⁰ Their grief impelled action: in this emotional state, they entrusted two of the brethren with responsibility for the king's body should things go ill. The Waltham chronicler expressed the two men's grief and tried to elicit sympathy for them, not by defining the emotion, but by referring to that story of grief universal in the Christian world, the passage from Lamentations 1:12:

The aforementioned brethren Osgod and Æthelric had followed these fatal events for the king from afar in order to see [his] end. After the pitiable events of battle, and the inauspicious omen for its contenders, what were their feelings, their anguish, their supreme grief? — one will be able to ponder in spirit by fixing the mind on this verse: "Oh you who pass along the way, pay attention, and see if there is any grief like my grief."⁹¹

The analogy was meaningful and considered in every particular. Like the speaker in Lamentations, Osgod and Æthelric had to endure at a distance, across a separation. The speaker called to passers-by travelling another road. Likewise, the two men walked apart (*a longe*) from Harold in his last days, and could not follow him in death. This chronicler invoked Lamentations 1:12 not by answering the question, but by suggesting that reflecting on the question was, itself, a form of understanding another's grief. The Waltham chronicler invited the reader to meditate on grief's nature, and on the more recent grief of two men on a battlefield full of faceless, nameless corpses.

⁹⁰ *WC*, 46.

⁹¹ "Post miserabiles belli euentus et infaustum omen certantium, quid animi, quid angoris, quidue suppressi doloris fuerit fratribus predictis Osegodo et Ailrico qui fatales hos regis euentus secuti fuerant a longe ut uiderent finem, pensare poterit cuius animo hoc fixum sit, 'O uos qui transitis per uiam attendite et uidete si est dolor sicut dolor meus.'" *WC*, 50–51.

Earlier recorded traditions reported that Harold's mother pleaded for his body, possibly borrowing the idea of a parent pleading for a child from Priam pleading for Hector.⁹² In giving the task to Osgod and Æthelric, the Waltham chronicler may have wished to give Waltham a more prominent place in the tragedy. Regardless of what really happened, the chronicler imagined what these intercessors would have felt, and what their experience of recovering a body would have been like. When the two brethren persuaded King William to permit them to recover their dear king and patron for proper burial, they comforted the difficulty of their charge:

Thus the brethren, cheered by inestimable joy, ran to the corpses and, turning them over this way and that, [were] unable to recognize the king's body, because a person's dead, bloodless body is seldom accustomed to exhibit the appearance of its prior healthy state. Only one solution was acceptable: that Osgod himself should return home and lead back with him the woman whom Harold had loved before assuming rule of the English: Edith, known as "Swanneshals," meaning "Swan Neck." Once the intimate companion of the lord king, she — admitted farther than anyone to his most intimate secrets — knew the distinctive marks on his body better than anyone. By her knowledge they might be certain with private proof, who could not be certain with external evidence. [This was] because, as soon as he was pierced with his lethal wound, whatever royal insignia he wore were borne away to the duke as a sign the king was slain.⁹³

Why were the men inestimably joyful at this moment? The urge to act in grief, and recover the lost person, had now been given both sanction and outlet. The men then pursued that desire, even if success was inevitably hollow.

In this passage, the chronicler invited the reader to join Osgod and Æthelric, sharing in their search and their keen awareness of their own uncertainty. In this way he used narrative to draw attention to their suffering, similar to writers of passion narratives in his concern to narrate not only past events, but also the emotional reality of that past. In Marian devotion and affective piety, ignorance fueled anguish and enhanced despair. One of the reasons Mary could not be consoled in her grief, when she witnessed Christ's passion, was that she

⁹² On Harold's mother making the plea, see James Plumtree, "'How the Corpse of a Most Mighty King . . .': The Use of the Death and Burial of the English Monarch (From Edward to Henry I)" (Ph.D. diss., Central European University, 2014), 65.

⁹³ "Gaudio igitur inestimabili fratres confortati, currunt ad cadauera, et uertentes ea huc et illuc, domini regis corpus agnoscere non ualentes, quia corpus hominis ex[s]anguie non conueit mortuum formam prioris status frequenter exprimere; unicum placuit remedium, ipsum Osegodum domum redire et mulierem quam ante sumptum regimen Anglorum dilexerat, Editham cognomento Swanneshals, quod gallice sonat 'collum cigni,' secum adducere que, domini regis quandoque cubicularia, secretoria in eo signa nouerat ceteris amplius, ad ulteriora intima secretorum admissa, quatinus ipsius noticia certificarentur secretis inditiis qui exterioribus non poterant, quia statim letali uulnere confosso, quicquid in eo regalis erat insignii duci deportatum est, signum scilicet prostrationis regie," *WC*, 52–54.

did not know her son would rise again. Maximus the Confessor, in the seventh century, claimed that Mary suffered more than Christ precisely because she did not yet know about the Passion's mystery.⁹⁴ Likewise, if the Waltham brethren could have been assured in advance that they would find Harold, they could have taken some consolation in their search. The chronicler detailed instead, with graphic precision, the problems the brethren faced in identifying and recovering Harold's body, how Harold must have been robbed as he lay dead, how corpses appeared after death in physical state and in dignity.

The chronicler was aware of the key question: grief is universal, but can one share another's suffering and know exactly what it is like (*sicut*)? Lamentations was quoted often; the way in which he deployed this passage is special for two reasons. First, in preserving the "if" (*si*) from Lamentations, the chronicler preserved that open question. Rather than comparing degrees of grief, the Waltham chronicler sought to convey the specific feelings of two men by appealing to a story universal in Christendom, and evoking their uncertainties and doubts. Second, in reflecting on the basis on which the reader will understand the men's emotions — fixing the mind, or meditating, on the verse — he differed from those writers who quoted Lamentations silently or adapted the words to a new purpose.⁹⁵ He cited explicitly the affective power of recalling the Lamentations passage, which is important: he thought that musing on a story of grief well known to his readers would best realize the emotion for a reader, even though they could experience the speaker's grief only in the imagination.⁹⁶ When he paused his story to think "out loud" about how to share an emotion across time and space, we glimpse candor in his desire to find the right words for what he thought they felt.

The chronicler did not see earthly grief as having a function, nor could it be controlled; where it was present, it was a perfectly reasonable thing to continue feeling. If formal mourning ended with Harold's burial, grief did not: the relationship with Harold continued. The chronicler prayed to Harold as "consolation of the desolate" (*consolatio desolatorum*) — an epithet for the Virgin Mary in the prayer *Obsecro te* in which she, too, is crowned — and as "glorious king" (*rex*

⁹⁴ Discussed in Shoemaker, "Mary at the Cross, East and West" (n. 58 above), 580.

⁹⁵ On fixing the mind or meditating on a verse, see Thomas H. Bestul, "Meditatio/Meditation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York, 2012), 157–66; and Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁹⁶ On late twelfth-century writers using the biblical past to illuminate the present (and not vice versa), see Michael Staunton, "Did the Purpose of History Change in England in the Twelfth Century?," in *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World: Manuscripts, Makers and Readers, c. 1066–1250*, ed. Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm (Woodbridge, 2018), 7–28; and idem, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford, 2017).

glorioso).⁹⁷ He highlighted Harold's virtues and deeds for the faith, and wished that the Lord do him justice in hearing the prayers of Waltham's sons (*fili Walthamensis cenobii*). "I doubt not what awaits you," he said to Harold, "for if our tongues were silent, your gifts would pray for you, as would the emotions of those whom God esteems more highly than those same gifts" (*Quod quidem futurum non ambigo, si enim sileat lingua nostra, orant pro te beneficia tua, et eorum affectus quos ipsis beneficiis magis pensat Deus*).⁹⁸ In his view, the canons' emotions — their enduring feelings of love, loss and grief for Harold — articulated their prayers and hopes for keeping Harold in heaven. Grieving for a person did not supplant or detract from spiritual feeling for God. God admired the canons' emotions (*affectus*) more than prayers or gifts because *affectus* were as genuine as feelings for God: the true feelings of the soul.⁹⁹ Material goods were of no value to God; prayers were just words if not meant. Neither goods nor prayers assured sincerity, but emotions did.

There was one hopeful element in the author's preoccupation with the two men's suffering: shared grief, although unresolved and unconsoled, could create a community of sympathetic affinity. The purported reburial of Harold, he claimed, was the first occasion on which Normans and English paid respect to the former king: "never before had the English known the fellowship of the Normans" (*nunquam fuit Anglis cognata Normannorum societas*).¹⁰⁰ This occasion for shared sorrow diminished mutual enmity. Grief, however, had augmented its reach with time. The chronicler ended his story of Harold with grief and separation, without consolation: despite the legends that he lived on, Harold reigned only very briefly and is now dead, lost, and will never return.¹⁰¹

Osgod and Æthelric had argued to King William that, if he returned Harold's body, they would be consoled (*confortatus*). But, in the end, they were not. They used the idea and hope of consolation to argue that this generous deed would bring a felicitous outcome, and so move the king to act with justice and compassion.¹⁰² The body consoled no one. The quality (*quale*) of the time of desolation, he

⁹⁷ In the *Obsecro te* prayer, Mary can respond because she has experienced pain. For an edition and comment, see Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York, 1988), 42–43 and 163–64.

⁹⁸ *WC*, 48–50.

⁹⁹ On ideas about emotions as virtues in ecclesiastical communities, see Lauren Mancina, *Emotional Monasticism: Affective Piety in the Eleventh-Century Monastery of John of Fécamp* (Manchester, 2019), 8; and Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 821–45.

¹⁰⁰ *WC*, 54–55.

¹⁰¹ *WC*, 54–56. Compare Plumtree, "How the Corpse" (n. 92 above), 67, for the view that narrating Harold's end was intended to win Norman support.

¹⁰² Grief was sometimes considered a stimulus to clemency in late Anglo-Saxon England. See Nicole Marafioti, "Unconsecrated Burial and Excommunication in Anglo-Saxon England: A Reassessment," *Traditio* 74 (2019): 55–123, at 99.

wrote, was unknown since the beginning. Like William of Malmesbury, he did not think grief could be measured or quantified. Its quality could be conveyed in words and shared stories. “Yet in what time remains, mourn, Waltham, and grieve” (*Set quid restat, plange, Waltham, et luge*), wrote the chronicler; and, remarking that God had deprived Waltham of the promise of delight (*sponso iocunditatis*), he quoted Jeremiah and Lamentations yet again to say: let the eyes not cease from weeping (Jeremiah 14:17 and Lamentations 2:18).¹⁰³ In this passage, the author, moving from specific to general, was deliberately imprecise about which loss — the disasters of 1066, or Henry II’s closure of the community in 1177 — gave Waltham reason to grieve ever after. In so doing he merged his own regret at losing Waltham altogether, creating a narrative of augmented grieving that mirrored, in form, grief’s persistent nature.

Grief endured: and the seeming grief of the crucifix confirmed this quality visually. No transient portent, the figure’s nodded head remained inclined forever. The chronicler wrote to the reader, “you can still see it with its head bowed” (*quam cernere potestis obstipo sic capite*).¹⁰⁴ The chronicler was neither detached nor impartial.¹⁰⁵ He lamented absence of parity as the Normans, a “savage race” (*effere genti*), triumphed over a weaker, nobler force led by his community’s patron. In his own words, “It was not possible to contend on equal footing” (*Non potuit de pari contendere*).¹⁰⁶ He addressed God (quoting Ps. 73 74:1), asking why God punished his flock.¹⁰⁷ He reported no answer. In his story, the English did not submit to Norman rule: the Normans submitted to English grief. The idea of grieving gave his work a thematic unity, in which his own loss resonated with the losses of Lamentations, of child and mother, canon and church, the Waltham community, Harold, and the English lost or oppressed in conquest. For him, grief was a universal experience with individual variation. One could imagine it, and empathize, by thinking with well-known stories in new contexts. Yet neither burial, nor consolation, nor time could be relied on to diminish it.

THE MANY PARTINGS OF HUGH CANDIDUS

Hugh Candidus (d. ca.1160), a monk of the abbey of Peterborough, joined the community in his childhood when Ernulf (d. 1124) was abbot, and served as sub-prior during the abbacies of Martin de Bec (d. 1154) and William de

¹⁰³ *WC*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ *WC*, 72. The phrase *obstipo capite* appears in Persius, *Satires* 3.80, in which the gesture is associated with philosophers who despair of knowledge.

¹⁰⁵ Compare *WC*, xxv, for the view the chronicler was detached from the Norman Conquest. For the view that the chronicler was balanced in spite of grief, see Lechner, “Die Macht der Chronisten” (n. 87 above), 136–39.

¹⁰⁶ *WC*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ *WC*, 48–49.

Waterville (d. 1175).¹⁰⁸ While still a young monk he became seriously ill, but recovered and went on to write a history of his monastic house covering the period from its foundation to the mid-twelfth century.¹⁰⁹ Hugh's chronicle resembles the Peterborough chronicle (a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles), which was written and revised at Peterborough while Hugh was a monk there. It is likely that the two chronicles were created independently of one another, but shared common sources.¹¹⁰ Hugh's original chronicle, which included several additions by other monks after his death, was destroyed in the fire of 1731, but transcripts survive. Later emendations appear to have left intact Hugh's own observations and remarks, so to distinguish Hugh's chronicle from these later changes, we will call the author of the pre-ca.1160 version "Hugh."¹¹¹

Hugh was, unsurprisingly, fiercely loyal to the community of monks at Peterborough, more so than to English rulers or to the cause of English resistance. In this regard he differed from the Peterborough Chronicle's more palpable anti-Norman tone in its local and national despair.¹¹² He evaluated abbots and rulers alike in relation to his community: did they aid, or did they threaten, his monastery? He took a negative tone towards King Edward the Confessor and his wife Edith for trying to take Peterborough's lands away.¹¹³ And Hereward, whose Fenland-composed life made him a became a symbol of heroic English resistance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, appeared in Hugh's work as a thug because he raided the monastery.¹¹⁴ Robbers were robbers: Hugh doubted that Hereward raided only to protect stolen objects from King William.¹¹⁵ On

¹⁰⁸ Edmund King, "Hugh Candidus [Hugh Albus] (c. 1095–c. 1160), Benedictine Monk and Chronicler," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); and *HC*, xv–xvi.

¹⁰⁹ For the story of *Hugo monachus* and his illness, see *HC*, 92–95.

¹¹⁰ The Peterborough Chronicle is preserved in the Laud manuscript Misc. 636, known as MS E, the first section dating to ca. 1121–1131, with additions made around the time of Martin de Bec's death, and again in the thirteenth century. For a detailed account of the relationship between it and Hugh Candidus's chronicle, see Susan Irvine, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, MS E* (Cambridge, 2004), xc–ci; *HC*, xxiii and xxix; and also Pauline Stafford, *After Alfred: Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and Chroniclers, 900–1150* (Oxford, 2020), 302. Malasree Home, *The Peterborough Version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Rewriting Post-Conquest History* (Woodbridge, 2015), 146–71, at 152, argues that Hugh translated directly from the Peterborough Chronicle. In my view there is not enough evidence to support this conclusion.

¹¹¹ For Hugh's version, see *HC*, xvii–xx.

¹¹² See, for example, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E) 1066, ed. Irvine, 86–87.

¹¹³ *HC*, 67.

¹¹⁴ On Hereward as a heroic symbol, see *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake (n. 39 above); and *Hereward, the Siege of the Isle of Ely and Involvement of Peterborough and Ely Monasteries: Together with De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis*, ed. Trevor Allen Bevis (March, Cambs., UK, 1982).

¹¹⁵ *HC*, 76–82. See also Peterborough Chronicle — Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E) — which describes him assaulting and raiding the abbey in 1070 and refusing Earl Morcar's courageous surrender to William I in 1071 (ed. Irvine), 88–90. See also Home, *The Peterborough Version*,

the other hand, he honored Edgar Ætheling as being of royal stock, claiming the monks summoned Edgar to make Brand their new abbot. Hugh also mentioned their expectation that Edgar would be king, and their awareness of the prospect of more material gains, namely, land.¹¹⁶ Although some twelfth-century writers defamed Edgar, Hugh saw no reason to obscure the memory of the monks investing him with their hopes.¹¹⁷

In Hugh's eyes, the real wealth of his community was its relationships. The most recent extended discussion of Hugh's chronicle has argued that Hugh focused consistently on "valuable things" — "material resources" like money, gifts, land, and relics — and asserted Peterborough's identity by writing about documents and possessions.¹¹⁸ As Jennifer Paxton has noted, the proof for Hugh that Peterborough "was much loved and admired" was that even bishops who were not wealthy chose to be buried there.¹¹⁹ Hugh had an interest in the abbey's assets, but it was by no means his only concern, nor his most distinctive.

The occasions on which his account differs markedly from the Peterborough Chronicle share an important feature: Hugh elaborated on stories of loss and a grieving response to loss. As a survivor of a near-death experience supported by his surrogate family, a chronicler of a community's history, and a preserver of memories, Hugh Candidus was intrigued by the personal consequences for the individuals involved in or affected by desperate circumstances, anguish, and grief. Hugh's chronicle shifted historical focus away from recording the events of a crisis, to recording the feelings and memories events it stirred.

Illness and the Prospect of Bereavement

We encounter grief beyond measure (*nimio dolore* and *dolentes nimium*) twice in Hugh's autobiographical account of his near-death experience and miraculous recovery.¹²⁰ This story related grief in anticipating loss. Hugh wrote as an eyewitness to events, but chose to tell the story of his illness in the third person, and from his fellow monks' point of view.¹²¹ The narrative focused not on Hugh's experience

151–52, noting Hugh's greater detail on stolen goods, but attributing absence of details to the Peterborough chronicler's ignorance rather than to different historical priorities.

¹¹⁶ *HC*, 76.

¹¹⁷ For other twelfth-century views of Edgar, see Emily A. Winkler, "1074 in the Twelfth Century," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 36 (2014): 241–58.

¹¹⁸ Home, *The Peterborough Version*, 146–71, esp. at 150–57, 161–62, and 165.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer Paxton, "Textual Communities in the English Fenlands: A Lay Audience for Monastic Chronicles?," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2004): 123–38, at 133. See also *HC*, 72.

¹²⁰ For the case that Hugh wrote this himself, as he refers to an event that took place in his lifetime, see *HC*, 93; and Charles Mellows et al., *The Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, 1966), 49.

¹²¹ On Hugh as eyewitness, see King, "Hugh Candidus" (n. 108 above). It might be quibbled that the chronicle was transcribed; however, other first-person claims are left in

of physical suffering, but on the brethren's experience of witnessing his illness, their suffering on Hugh's behalf and at the prospect of losing him, and their agency in appealing to save his life with despairing prayer. When the Peterborough brethren saw (*quod uidentes fratres*) the amount of blood Hugh had lost, they anointed him "with grief beyond measure and lamentation" (*cum nimio dolore et fletu*). Their prayer and vigil were constant; again, wrote Hugh, they were "sorrowing beyond measure" (*illi dolentes nimium*).¹²² The brethren prayed for Hugh's recovery not directly to God, but to saintly sufferers — humans like themselves — who lived through Christ's passion: Mary and Peter. One monk, Æthelbert, said as others did likewise (*alii similiter*) before they entered the chapel: "Brothers, let us all go swiftly into the church, that we may implore the Lord's help; and he will not refuse us one man" (*Eamus omnes fratres cicius in ecclesiam, imploremus domini auxilium, et non negabit nobis unum hominem*).¹²³

One purpose of the story's ending might have been to highlight the ultimate effectiveness of the Peterborough community's prayer. After all, Hugh recovered. But Hugh's story as a whole had another purpose: to show that the nature of the monks' human experience of grief was not one of calm, assured trust in divine providence, but of desperate action and worry. There are three key points about how Hugh narrated the experience of grieving. First, it is highly unusual that Hugh's Chronicle employed direct speech: he reserved it for moments of high drama and desperation. The only other occasion was during another near-disaster, the 1114 fire, when through carelessness the whole monastery burned (*per incuriam combustum*).¹²⁴ With direct speech he sought to capture the acuity of their despair. The quality of the feeling might be beyond measure, but he did not think it beyond the reach of prose. Second, the monks tried to act in their grief by speaking as though there were a systematic method for averting loss, or a calculable way to bargain for a life. If all (*omnes*) implore, one (*unum*) will be saved. This bargaining behavior has been observed among those facing bereavement or death in other eras.¹²⁵ Within its monastic narrative context, the way the monks rationalized God's imagined response denied the ineffable and marvelous quality normally attributed to divine justice. Third, Æthelbert's fervent plea expressed absolute certainty that God will let Hugh live. Yet this verbal certainty directly contradicted the foregoing narrative: the monks were already grieving and despairing. Furthermore, Æthelbert's call to act swiftly (*cicius*) conveyed a feeling

place, and other glossing comments refer to his narrative as a discrete piece, so there is no reason to doubt Hugh's authorial voice.

¹²² HC, 92–93.

¹²³ HC, 93.

¹²⁴ HC, 97–98, discussed below.

¹²⁵ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York, 1969), 66–68.

of urgency, which belied his spoken assurance of a positive outcome. By juxtaposing word and behavior in this way, the narrative implied that he spoke to inspire his fellow monks, in denial of the grief he felt, and in stubborn hope of Hugh's recovery.

These narrative choices show that, in Hugh's mind, the monks were not reconciled to the prospect of their brother's death, even though religion provided both their vocation and the promise of heaven. In his account of their grieving and acting, they did not think philosophically, nor with the virtues of prayer in mind, nor in hopes of spiritual consolation. They exhibited a desperate desire to act and, paradoxically, to prevent what they already felt was inevitable. For Hugh, these behaviors — avoiding the topic of death, denial, and bargaining — were sometimes part of how people experienced grief for others. Rather than judging boundless grief as moral or excessive, Hugh's story suggested a sense of shared endeavor among humans suffering grief now and in the biblical past. There are important parallels with devotional attention to Mary's suffering as witness to Christ's passion. Her suffering was acute because she faced the death of a child and unrelenting grief, whereas Christ's pain would end.¹²⁶ He knew it would: his mother did not. Mary and Peter, the honored and ancient saints to whom the Peterborough monks prayed, were well placed to understand what they the monks felt and why they wished to keep their friend with them on earth for as long as possible.

Losing Spiritual Fathers

Hugh's narrative stressed another realm of grief: the feelings, desires and actions of the monks on losing their abbots — fathers to the monastic family. First he asserted effusive affection for Leofric (d. 1066), abbot before Hugh's time. One of Peterborough's best and brightest abbots, he claimed, Leofric acquired and gave many lands to the church, which enriched it "beyond belief" (*incredibiliter*). Hugh singled out one of Leofric's many gifts: a great cross "with wondrous working of silver and gold" (*mirabili opere de argento et auro*) that still hung above the altar. No one before him had done more, nor will his successors, Hugh concluded.¹²⁷

Hugh reported that grief for Leofric's loss after the Battle of Hastings was, like the brethren's for him, without measure. As in the Waltham Chronicle, grief created a new community of shared feeling by joining two existing ones: there, English and Norman; here, lay and monastic:

¹²⁶ Shoemaker, "Mary at the Cross, East and West" (n. 58 above); and Rubin, *Mother of God* (n. 69 above).

¹²⁷ *HC*, 65–66.

The same Abbot Leofric was in the battle and there he became ill; having returned home, he died on 1 November on the night of the feast of All Saints, much mourned and wept over as much by monks as by laymen, and scarcely anyone was found who would place him in a tomb, because of grief beyond measure.¹²⁸

Hugh's paratactic structure left ambiguous both Leofric's role in the battle and the cause of his illness. Given Leofric's office, he should not have taken part in the fighting. Whether the abbot died of a wound sustained in battle or as custodian of souls, Hugh considered Leofric a casualty of war. Compared with the Peterborough Chronicle's account of the battle, Hugh more explicitly related Abbot Leofric's death to the illness he contracted while at the battle, and stressed the emotional suffering of those who did not wish to part with him by highlighting their refusal to bury him.¹²⁹ Hugh left the story unresolved: it did not end with consolation or acceptance. The final word is, literally, *dolore*.

The claim that none wished to bury Leofric conveyed the quality of the grief Hugh imagined. Laymen and monks alike knew that burial was crucial. Needed to ensure the safety of the soul, burial permitted the deceased to rest in peace and brought closure for the living.¹³⁰ Hugh described some losses as moving seamlessly into consolation: he claimed that death brought peaceful rest for Saint Cynesige (d. 1060), the archbishop of York buried at Peterborough, whom the community claimed as a former monk.¹³¹ Yet the unwillingness to bury Leofric revealed the impulse to "do something" to be reunited with the lost one. Resisting the loss, not accepting it, was an event worthy of record for Hugh. Hugh communicated the idea of limitless grief by narrating the people's resistance to the Christian ritual for parting. It resembled lamentation lyrics that asked where the lost person was, or expressed a wish to embrace the body.¹³² In the context of Hugh's admiration for Leofric and devotion to his community of monks, this grief-stricken behavior showed the people's affection for Leofric.

In writing of Abbot Martin de Bec in his own time, Hugh contrasted the monks' joy on welcoming him with a fourfold reaction in grief (*dolor*) to the death of their father: mourning, lamenting, weeping, and crying out.¹³³ Hugh described

¹²⁸ "In illo exercitu fuit ipse Leoricus abbas et ibi infirmatus est; domumque reuersus mortuus est, kalendis Nouembris in nocte solennitatis omnium sanctorum, multum lugentibus et flentibus tam monachis quam laicis, et uix inuentus est aliquis qui eum in sepulchro poneret pre nimio dolore." *HC*, 75.

¹²⁹ *HC*, 75; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E) 1066, ed. Irvine (n. 110 above), 87. See also Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), 190–92.

¹³⁰ Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (London, 1997).

¹³¹ *HC*, 73. Compare William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, ed. Michael Winterbottom and Rodney M. Thomson, in *William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives* (Oxford, 2002), 146–48.

¹³² von Moos, *Consolatio* (n. 4 above), for comprehensive discussion of lamentation lyrics.

¹³³ *HC*, 120–21.

responses to loss not only through death, but also through separation, that stress wishing to prevent parting (though in vain) and the frustrating powerlessness of the feeling. When their Abbot Ernulf (leader of the monastery when Hugh joined, and probably a close friend) was compelled by King Henry I to accept the post of bishop of Rochester, Hugh wished that Ernulf had been less favored (*Et utinam nunc [non] tantum dilectus esset*) by the king. He then recorded the monks' lament: "Nevertheless, when the monks of Burch [Peterborough] heard that their father and pastor was borne away from them, they wept and added tears to tears, because they could not do anything else" (*Monachi autem Burgenses cum audissent patrem et pastorem suum sibi ablatum esse, flebant, et lacrimas lacrimis addebant, quia nichil aliud agere poterant*).¹³⁴ This was no conventional expression meaning torrents (or an effusion) of tears, because the verb *addebant* suggests increase over time. The point was not that there were many tears, but that they accumulated. Hugh's image suggested that time compounded the monks' experience of loss, rather than bringing acceptance or consolation. Hugh associated grieving with doing (*agere*), consistent with feelings of unwanted separation and a desire to recover Ernulf. Tears were a frustrating substitute — but crying was, at least, something the monks could do. By presenting weeping as a last resort, chosen in the absence of other options, Hugh portrayed the monks as frustrated agents trying to act in their own grief.

These episodes of losing spiritual father-like figures are worth comparing to an episode in William of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani*. This is because William (a fellow Benedictine monk, whose thoughts on Lamentations we have already encountered) wrote with different words about a like situation, in a similar community, to the same effect. As St. Wulfstan's body was prepared for burial, his followers gathered to grieve and to lament his loss. William conveyed the idea that, for these bereaved mourners, their experience of grief was special, unique, and new. They wept, he wrote, "as though there had never been weeping before" (*quasi nichil ante fletum esset*).¹³⁵ He did not compare their grieving in degree, but tried to describe their experience in terms of what it felt like to them — and without compromising it by associating it with grief and lamentation in general. His point was that even if grieving is universal, these people experienced it as something new: their feeling was not dulled in individual intensity for being common to human experience.

First, William narrated the behaviors that accompanied grieving for Wulfstan only as magnifying and compounding: never as fading or subsiding. These verbal and physical actions included groaning, weeping, and calling out. In the vault, the tumult (*turba*) of their outcry both reverberates and multiplies (*quem repercussum*

¹³⁴ *HC*, 93.

¹³⁵ *Vita Wulfstani* 3.24, ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, 146.

testudinum conuexa multiplicabant).¹³⁶ One imagines the cries subsided. But, crucially, William did not narrate that part of the story. William was not interested in the decay of an echo, but in its ability to multiply sounds. His theme, likewise, was not the passing of grief, but its increase.

It is a story without an ending. William wrote that they interred (*sepulchro*) Wulfstan's bones, "but [his] memory was never interred in their spirit" (*sed memoria numquam in eorum sepulta est animo*). To refer to a state of the spirit shared by many, William used the singular for spirit (*animo*), but the plural for them (*eorum*). William explained that the people maintained their reverence (*cura . . . reuerentia*) for the saint after his death, evidence for the enduring relationship.¹³⁷ The story then cut directly to Wulfstan's saintly miracles, in which he tried to make his faithful happy and to solve their problems. Burial and reverence did not resolve the loss. Yet at no point was their grieving for him said to end, nor consolation to follow. In spirit, Wulfstan was still unburied.

Second, William made the explicit point that these grieving behaviors were genuine, and consistent with true grieving and suffering: "Not only was it weeping neither ingenuous nor feigned, but also the tears were squeezed out by genuine sobbing — [tears] bearing witness to the ruin of religion and the suffering of the country in one human being" (*Nec erat simplex fletus aut simulatus, sed exprimebantur ueris singulibus lacrimae, religionis ruinam, patriae miseriam in uno testantes homine*).¹³⁸ The word *simplex* matters to William's thinking, because it was a charge William thought he might have to answer. It means "naïve/ingenuous" or "uncompounded," and both senses are present here. This weeping showed compounded grieving, for they wept for the loss of Wulfstan, the state of religion, and the nation's suffering. William wrote of their grieving as knowing — not naïve or ingenuous — in stating that those assembled were well aware of, and were at that moment thinking of, the wider losses embodied in this one human loss. Furthermore, the awareness and consciousness with which the mourners acted in grief shows that William thought of their grief as a multi-layered experience. Their weeping was genuine, but not in the sense of being an automatic physical reaction to an external trigger: hence weeping accompanied, rather than manifested, an emotion. He made the point that their knowledge of wider problems affected how they felt about, and responded to, Wulfstan's death. This gathering of memories and thoughts explicitly shaped their experience of loss. He thought they had agency in their own experience of grief.

¹³⁶ *Vita Wulfstani* 3.24, ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, 146.

¹³⁷ *Vita Wulfstani* 3.24, ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, 146–48.

¹³⁸ *Vita Wulfstani* 3.24, ed. Winterbottom and Thomason, 146. Compare the edition's translation of *simplex* as "superficial(?)" (147). William had already established the depth of true feeling for Wulfstan; he had no reason to do so again.

Third, and most critical, William — here addressing the reader directly — considered these behaviours to be just, rational, and reasonable. He wrote: “And you would have found it difficult to determine who could plead a more just cause for his weeping” (*Difficulterque discerneres qui iustiores fletus sui causas allegarent*).¹³⁹ In framing his comment in terms of just cause, William assigned to the reader the office of judge hearing a plea almost legal in tone. The question was not whether this quantity of crying was rational, but how to distinguish among, and to judge, what were equally just causes and rational reasons. His point was that everyone had lost something of great value, and that to compare their emotions would be an experientially invalid way of writing about the past.

Fire and Feeling

The specter of fire was a solid, present danger in medieval monasteries. Whether planned arson (as in Winchester in 1141, discussed above) during warfare, or mysterious in origin (as in Glastonbury in 1184), fire devastated monks’ lives, dwellings, wealth, and records. A fire might be considered a reason for grief, a cause of rebuilding a better monastery, an incentive for material and spiritual reform, an occasion for discovering the true Christian generosity of patrons, and a stimulus for rewriting a community’s past. Although monastic communities shared the experience of loss in fire, these similar catastrophes yielded different interpretations depending on each writer’s historical priorities.

Hugh Candidus gave a detailed account of the monks’ personal experience of grief in the fire of 1116 that ravaged the monastery. His account was more expansive here than the Peterborough Chronicle in detail and in Hugh’s observations about how he, as author, wanted to discuss it. He first alluded to the fire indirectly when he recounted the prophecies of future troubles reportedly made by the Devil (in the fateful year 1066) to Bishop Æthelric, the former bishop of Durham who retired to Peterborough. Hugh wrote that he does not wish (*nollem*) to record the third prophecy — which is, we learn, the fire.¹⁴⁰ Hugh, of course, knew what happened, and could not change it; his remark evokes the brethren’s denial, a wish the loss had not occurred. Hugh attributed the fire to two causes: the work of the Devil (who called on the Lord to punish their sins) and negligence (*per incuriam combustam*). He listed the damage, and outlined how the story of damage unfolded as news over time: the church and estate were wholly burnt, all the crosses broken; the fire in the tower lasted nine days. On the ninth day, wind blew live cinders onto the abbot’s abode. Only at this moment did the monks (“we”) think all was lost.

¹³⁹ *Vita Wulfstani* 3.24, ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, 146.

¹⁴⁰ *HC*, 75–76.

The distinctiveness of Hugh Candidus's account emerges sharply in comparison with his peer who had recorded the same fire of 1116. The fire is prominent in both accounts, but each understood and treated it in different emotional registers. The day of which Hugh wrote "that day was a day of sadness and grief" (*Dies tristitie et doloris erat dies illa*) was not the day the fire broke out, but this ninth day, on which all the monks came to believe they would lose all remaining buildings: in particular, their homes.¹⁴¹ The Peterborough chronicler dated the nine-day 1116 fire to its beginning on August 4, the day on which flames were first witnessed: "All this happened on a Friday, 4 August" (*Eall þis belamp on an Frigdæg. þæt wæs ii Nonæ Augusti*).¹⁴² For Hugh, the day seared into emotional memory — the day he named — was not the fearful day of dramatic burning and destruction, but the day the monks felt loss. The emotional tenor of Hugh's fire story was highest when they felt despair at the prospect of irrevocable loss. Even though he explained that these buildings were saved, he thought these feelings of communal grief worthy of record. In his view, the most significant event of the fire was not a flame, but a feeling.

Writers of annals in mid-twelfth-century Peterborough considered loss, and human responses to loss, the most important events to record. Where they differed was in purpose and perspective. The Peterborough chronicler adopted a historical standpoint toward loss more external and visual in orientation than Hugh's internal, emotional perspective. The Peterborough chronicler dwelt on losses of men, land, and chattels after 1066. Hugh Candidus mused on the nature of emotional responses to loss within the community of monks.

In this respect, Hugh's account of the 1116 fire at Peterborough merits comparison with that of the Glastonbury fire in 1184. Both described loss and grief as consequences, but portrayed them in markedly different ways. In the twelfth century, the Glastonbury monks commissioned William of Malmesbury to write *De antiquitate ecclesiae Glastonie* in order to confirm the community's long history to critics who doubted it.¹⁴³ After Glastonbury's 1184 fire, a Glastonbury

¹⁴¹ *HC*, 98.

¹⁴² Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E) 1116, ed. Irvine (n. 110 above), 118–19. This date is consistent with that given in the Peterborough Easter table (likely written between 1122 and 1135 by the same scribe) preserved in British Library, Harley MS 3667, fols. 1r–2v, at fol. 1r. See also Cecily Clark, "Notes on MS. Laud Misc. 636," *Medium Ævum* 23 (1954): 71–75, at 71.

¹⁴³ *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation, and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, ed. John Scott (Woodbridge, 1981), 27, 29, and 34–35; Antonia Gransden, "The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions and Legends in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976): 337–58, at 342; William Page, "Houses of Benedictine Monks: The Abbey of Glastonbury," in *A History of the County of Somerset* (London, 1911), 2:82–99; William Wells Newell, "William of Malmesbury on the Antiquity of Glastonbury," *Publications of the Modern Language*

monk (or monks) made several interpolations into *De antiquitate* that described the experience of the fire and its meaning. The writer enfolded the monks' grief into a moral narrative of material loss and divine punishment that yielded clemency, consolation, and better times for Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury monk detailed the buildings the fire consumed (*consumpsit incendium*) and reduced to a mound of ashes (*in tumulum cineris rediguntur*). The author made a point of crediting the lost building's lofty history, noting that their abbot (from 1126) Henry, bishop of Winchester (d. 1171), had built them. The relics and other precious objects lost, he explained, merited the lamentation they received. He described the tears and laments which followed as something endured to a complete degree (with the verb *perpetior*), which implies that the monks' suffering, though full, did have a limit. Indeed, in this story, it had both limit and moral function. Although "grief choked the monks violently" (*dolor angebat uehemencior*), the monk read it as part of divine castigation for their sins. God, in his clemency, transmuted this sentence by bringing them great gifts and "consolation in their grief" (*doloris sui . . . solacium*). The story illustrated the nature of these consoling gifts by turning to praise of the generosity and support of Henry II, who helped Glastonbury financially with its rebuilding.¹⁴⁴

According to this writer, the emotions and expressions of grief responded primarily to the loss of chattels and relics, rather than buildings. This emotional emphasis might well reflect the monks' attachment to precious things as evidence of their community's historic identity and integrity. Glastonbury had neither an ancient patron nor wealth in relics, and the fire increased the monks' incentive to acquire evidence of these. After the fire, the Glastonbury monks helped to stage the discovery of a powerful patron saint and relics, in the person and body of King Arthur, exhumed there (the stories went) in 1191. The fire even prompted a later Glastonbury chronicler to concoct a story about another fiery rescue, in which Glastonbury monks rescued the relics of St. Dunstan from a destructive fire in Canterbury in 1012.¹⁴⁵

Monastic writers differed on what a fire meant, if it had a meaning. The Glastonbury writer stressed grief for material losses, but these were losses closely wrought up in the community's threatened relationship with its own past. He read the fire in a moral way: of his own accord God punished sins, of which grief was a full but short-lived phase, and then showed mercy. In Peterborough, the fire had at most a tenuous connection to morality: for Hugh, the Devil

Association of America 18 (1903): 459–512; and J. Armitage Robinson, "William of Malmesbury 'On the Antiquity of Glastonbury,'" in *Somerset Historical Essays* (London, 1921), 1–25.

¹⁴⁴ Adam de Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus*, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1727), 2:333–34.

¹⁴⁵ Gransden, "The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions," 347.

was the prime instigator of the fire. The Peterborough chronicler recorded loss without ascribing meaning to it, but placed a premium on hope and prospect of recovery. Hugh Candidus gave priority to the fearing, despairing experience of loss. Each writer's narrative of grief depended on what they thought the monks valued most, and on what kind of story each wished to tell.

Hugh wrote about his community, but not with the same institutional motives as his peers. This helps to account for the lack of direct borrowing between the chronicles of Peterborough and Hugh. Neither chronicler had cause to duplicate or rewrite key events in the other, because their aims differed. Hugh was most interested in thinking about the personal experiences of the monks in times of crisis. He might have had a more intimate audience of Peterborough monks in mind than his fellow annalist. Yet he may have thought these emotional elements of experience were those aspects of past loss most worth recording and remembering for anyone.

GERALD OF WALES AND THE WOUND OF GRIEF

Gerald of Wales (d. 1223), born in Pembrokeshire, studied at Gloucester Abbey and at the University of Paris; he worked as an archdeacon and a royal clerk; among his many works were saints' lives, an account of his travels to Wales and Ireland and a history of the conquest of Ireland.¹⁴⁶ Throughout his travels he observed people, formed opinions, and shared them in dramatic language. Unlike Hugh Candidus and the Waltham chronicler, the better part of Gerald's life was not given to a single community abiding by one rule. As a secular cleric, Gerald set himself apart from such communities, and pursued a court career as a diplomat and mediator which involved extensive travel. He returned often to study and teach at the university in Paris.¹⁴⁷ Later in life, he described himself wandering between centers of learning, seeking always whatever place would be, at a given moment in time, best suited to be his intellectual home in its rigor of study and remoteness from war.¹⁴⁸ Gerald felt he belonged to a community of learning with ecclesiastics across institutions, and with his lifelong companions: books.

Most of Gerald's autobiographical writing detailed episodes of his successes: his rhetorical victories in debate, his political victories over ecclesiastical rivals, and his moral victories over himself. Gerald dealt little in loss when recounting and

¹⁴⁶ Georgia Henley and A. Joseph McMullen, "Gerald of Wales: Interpretation and Innovation in Medieval Britain," in *Gerald of Wales: New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic*, ed. Georgia Henley and A. Joseph McMullen (Cardiff, 2018), 1–16.

¹⁴⁷ Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 1.2, ed. J. S. Brewer, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91), 1:23.

¹⁴⁸ For example, Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 3.1, ed. Brewer, 1:89.

defending own career and causes. The few personal and biographical griefs he retold, however, he narrated with ardor. Gerald's attitude towards his own experiences of grief and those of others offer an insight into what he valued, and how he understood the nature of earthly loss.

Enduring Wounds and Personal Loss

Gerald was interested in the enduring nature of serious wounds. Because Gwenwynwyn of Powys (d. 1216) refused to honor St. David, and had allied with the English against peaceful Welsh kings, Gerald claimed, the prince suffered divine vengeance: an injury to his foot. Gerald was writing to defend the metropolitan rights of the see of St. David, the cause about which he was most passionate, and he viewed Gwenwynwyn as an obstacle.¹⁴⁹ Gerald described the experience of the prince's suffering (*dolens*) in terms of its resistance to either improvement or treatment: the injury (*laesionem*) was so great "that he met with serious lameness and infirmity hardly able to be treated" (*ut claudicationem incurreret gravem et imbecillitatem vix curabilem*).¹⁵⁰

The pain of loss, Gerald thought, could be felt in a similar way. Gerald described another experience of personal loss — that of a friend and of his own reputation — through treachery. He framed the whole episode in terms that equated grievous losses with wounds that do not heal. In a response to an insulting letter from Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury, Gerald defended himself against accusations of treason made by a monk, whom he once thought was his friend. The surest way to corrupt someone's life is in the guise of friendship, wrote Gerald. In his own defense, Gerald explained (with the support of classical authorities) of his initial misplaced trust that it would have been preferable to have avoided injury, rather than to seek treatment after a wound (*laesionem vitasse, quam post vulnus acceptum remedia quaerere*). The point here was that there is no guarantee that wounds can be healed or cured. The monk's defamation so harmed Gerald's renown and reputation "that the wound to him [Gerald] may hardly be fully overlaid with scar tissue in any period of time" (*ut vix ei ad integrum ullo cicatrix tempore possit obduci*).¹⁵¹ Applying the maxim to his own case, Gerald argued that his loss was so acute that the injury was permanent. Even a

¹⁴⁹ David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys: Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132–1293* (Woodbridge, 2016), 75.

¹⁵⁰ Gerald of Wales, *De iure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae*, dist. 4, ed. J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91), 3:226.

¹⁵¹ Gerald of Wales, *Symbolum Electorum* (ep. 28), ed. J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91), 1:295–96. Cicero, in his short treatise on grief, viewed scars as evidence that the wound of grief heals with time, attention, and care: *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.54.

full scar would not erase the wound; here, the scar may never finish forming because the damage is so great.

There was a strong and consistent sense across Gerald's works that grief does not go away, and cannot be healed. The best one can hope to do is to "be strong enough to mitigate the intensity of a present instance of grief" (*doloris instantis uehementiam uel sic mitigare ualeret*), for example by avoiding solitude (following Ovid's advice in *Remedia Amoris*), or sometimes by thinking on other things (*aliud et aliud . . . interdum cogitare*), as Gerald had tried to do when he thought his books and writings lost.¹⁵² The mind might temporarily divert attention from the pain of a wound, but the wound remained. Similarly, he related the story told by the priest Elidyr, who reported meeting with a dwarvish folk as a child but, after he betrayed their friendship and stole a golden ball from them, he could never find them again despite searching. They were, as in death, utterly lost to him. This story caused Gerald to step outside narrative and reflect on what the experience of sorrow is like. Rational thinking, in his view, had little effect on forgetting or diminishing sorrows. Whenever Elidyr was asked about the story and retold it, he wept. Gerald marveled at the acuity of the aged Elidyr's memory of these people so late in life. Thinking about an experience again did not assuage sorrow, but caused the person to experience it anew.¹⁵³

The personal losses on which Gerald dwelt most were not of material goods, or of beloved friends and family, but of books. In substance, books were things; in Gerald's relationship to them, like living loved ones.¹⁵⁴ When Gerald's packhorse (bearing his books) was caught in quicksand during his journey through Wales, Gerald noted that servants risked their lives to rescue it.¹⁵⁵ Gerald described a theft in which three categories of thing, each a loss more severe than the last, were taken from him. Silver and gilt cups could be replaced; but books — especially books he had written — were a grievous loss because he could not regain the time he had spent writing them, nor the study he had devoted to them.¹⁵⁶ It was like he had lost a year of his own life, a small death of self.

In the episode of loss he recorded with most fervor, Gerald he explained how he had entrusted his collection of books to the monks of Strata Florida.¹⁵⁷ The monks took his books under false pretenses, for they then claimed they could only buy his

¹⁵² Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 2.21, ed. Brewer, 1:83. Ovid advises avoiding solitude to treat love in *Remedia Amoris*, lines 579–608.

¹⁵³ Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae* 1.8, ed. James F. Dimock, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91), 6:75–78.

¹⁵⁴ See also Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 2.1, ed. Brewer, 1:45.

¹⁵⁵ Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Cambriae* 1.8, ed. James F. Dimock, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91), 6:72.

¹⁵⁶ Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 2.21, ed. Brewer (n. 147 above), 1:82–83.

¹⁵⁷ Gerald of Wales, *Speculum Ecclesiae* 3.5, ed. Brewer et al., 4:154–5; and Brynley F. Roberts, *Gerald of Wales* (Cardiff, 1982), 31.

books, not keep them for him: they paid him money, but refused to return the books. Gerald wrote that the monks were perverted and intentionally evil, but was silent on his own feelings towards them. He described no emotions of anger at them or their treachery. The only emotional experience he chose to narrate here concerned his relationship not with the treacherous monks, but with his beloved books. He described the experience of having to leave his books behind as just like having his guts drawn out of his stomach (*tamquam extractis a uentre suo uisceribus*). Here again, Gerald found an intimate similarity between mental and physical pain. In being forced to take money for such an inestimable treasure gathered with such diligence, Gerald “did what he could” (*fecit quod potuit*) — an expression of futile acting in grief that resembles the monks of Peterborough deciding to weep because there was “nothing else they could do.” Then, “grieving and in permanent anguish beyond what could be believed” (*dolens enim et ultra quam credi posset anxius*), Gerald seized upon (*arripuit*) his journey. *Anxius* refers to an enduring mental state of anguish or mental distress (*angor*): the English word “anxious” has too mild a connotation for Gerald’s metaphor of disembowelment and irrecoverable loss. He found the loss of books an occasion for grief because he considered them his spiritual companions, so much so that they were — like loved ones — part of himself. In describing a personal experience of grief, Gerald resisted comparison, and noted no limit in measure or time. The limit it surpassed was rather that of belief, and his anguish never left him.

Grieving Parents

In Gerald’s stories of grieving parents, he highlighted the enduring nature of grief without imbuing it with any meaning. When an escaped prisoner took hostage the son of the lord of Chateauroux, the prisoner threatened the lord three times that he will kill the lord’s son unless the lord cut off his own testicles. Although the lord did so, the prisoner reveled in the lord’s suffering and his inability to have any more sons, then leapt to his own death, bringing the lord’s son with him. The father built a monastery on the spot to save his son’s soul. This observation seems to strike a note of consolation to conclude the tale. Gerald’s next editorial remark as narrator, however, struck a minor chord instead. He remarked that the monastery still stands to this day, and bears the name *De doloribus*.¹⁵⁸ In his narrative, what lingered was the testament to a father’s enduring sorrow.

In his account of a mother weasel who believes her baby weasels lost (a man has carefully moved them elsewhere), Gerald ascribed to her a very great amount of grief (*tandem mota dolore*). Gerald described her acting in grief in two ways. First, she searched in vain: “driven to seek the babies everywhere, she found none” (*undique quaerendo nec inueniendo*). Then, she poisoned the man’s milk,

¹⁵⁸ Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, 1.11, ed. Dimock, 6:85.

planning to take revenge by killing his son. Lastly, she repeated the fruitless search, which Gerald described as a sign of maternal care (*maternal solitudine*) in being anguished amidst hope and dread (*inter spem et metum anxia*). Though she had no evidence they might be there, nor reason to return, she continued to seek them. This time, she found them, the lord having returned them, and called off her revenge. Gerald described another weasel's grief as characteristic of a mother's grief. This weasel took revenge on a bird who stole one of her babies by playing dead and then poisoning the bird. The impulse to act and the subtlety of the revenge, evident in the degree of her grief and depth of planning, is what Gerald thought made these stories worth recounting.¹⁵⁹ In both examples, he suggested that a parent's grief was singularly great, when compared (from his outside perspective) with others who grieved.

The quality of the first weasel's intended revenge on the man is important, because her goal was to make him feel what she feels — to create a grief like her own, as a parent. In his interpretation of the Crusades, Gerald also related revenge with a desire to create a like grief “like my grief,” but to very different effect. Gerald thought Christ wanted to incite the heavenly court to take vengeance (on the heathen) by making Christians feel “in sympathy” (*per compassionem*) with a display of his great suffering (*tanti doloris*).¹⁶⁰ Grief and suffering might yield an impulse to act: but for mortals bound in their mortal relationships — not called by some cause distant and divine — grief sometimes had no function beyond self-perpetuation.

The Grief of a Father and King

Gerald's ideas about grief seemed, to him, united — and most clearly manifest — in Henry II, king of England and suffering father. When Gerald retired from court life in 1191 to pursue his studies, he probably composed the first draft of his *De principis instructione*, which he completed in 1216–1217. Gerald knew the key figures of court personally. In this work, steeped in his clerical education and long experience, he gave moral advice for rulers and reflected on the reign of Henry II. Gerald of Wales's comments about kings are normally read as evaluations and judgments: to what extent and why did he praise, or attack, rulers? His account of the invasion of Ireland, *De expugnatio Hibernica*, is famous for its admiring portrait of Henry II. *De principis*, written later, has been classed as a personal attack on Angevin rulers that reveals his deep hatred for them.¹⁶¹ The second and third books of Gerald's *De principis* criticized Henry for lacking

¹⁵⁹ Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, 1.12, ed. Dimock, 6:91.

¹⁶⁰ Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica* 2.30, ed. F. X. Martin and A. Brian Scott, in *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978), 216.

¹⁶¹ Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales, 1146–1223* (Oxford, 1982), 69 and 71–91.

good judgment and other moral failures (including failing to go on crusade), and Gerald has been seen as telling a gleeful tale of a tyrannical king cut down by divine justice.¹⁶² The tragedy of Gerald's tale — how Henry's rebellious sons and enemies drove him to death — tends to be read based on how it ended, rather than how it happened.¹⁶³ What, exactly, is the nature of this tragic story?

Gerald indicted the king, but also chose to show what Henry suffered. A key element of the tragedy that has not been discussed is how Gerald imagined Henry's emotional experience. Gerald reflected on how Henry felt the loss of his rebellious sons in death, and accounted for how that feeling drove the father's futile wish to restore these broken relationships and reclaim his sons. Alongside his loud and many judgments, Gerald thought and wrote about what people tried to do in grief, and how they sought to counter impassive and impersonal fortune. In *De principis* even their unfulfilled desires are, like their actions, events of history.

Henry II was a man who, by all accounts, knew grief of different kinds: betrayal by his family, the gross competitive misunderstanding and loss of former friend Thomas Becket, and the deaths of his children (including his first-born son, William, who died aged three). Henry had crowned king his eldest surviving legitimate son, Young Henry, during his own lifetime, a move that backfired because of the Young King's growing resentment about being denied not only important rites of passage to adulthood, but also any real financial autonomy or regal responsibility.¹⁶⁴ King Louis VII of France (d. 1180) was only too happy to support the Young King (along with the Young Henry's brothers and mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine) in leading a rebellion against Henry II in the Great Revolt of 1173–1174. The family was reconciled, but another rebellion followed in 1183, this time led by the Young King and his younger brother, Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, with the support of France's King Philip Augustus. Young Henry died at the age of twenty-eight that year; three years later, Geoffrey followed. Gerald, like his contemporaries, compared Henry II and the Young King to the Old Testament figures David and Absalom. In both cases, the rebellious son died before a reconciliation could occur, and writers interpreted rebellious children as instruments of divine vengeance for the king's sins.¹⁶⁵ According to Gerald of Wales, the anger and enmity between father and sons did not lessen the father's grief in losing them.

¹⁶² Henley and McMullen, "Gerald of Wales" (n. 146 above); and Laura Slater, *Art and Political Thought in Medieval England, c.1150–1350* (Woodbridge, 2018), 1–2 and 41–43.

¹⁶³ Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 88.

¹⁶⁴ Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King, 1155–1183* (New Haven, 2016).

¹⁶⁵ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.2, ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2018), 448; and Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica* 1.45, ed. Martin and Scott, 120–24. See also Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium* 4, prologue and 4.1, ed. M. R. James et al. (Oxford, 1983), 278–82; and Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (n. 96 above), 79, 181–84, and 185–215.

For Gerald, grief was a shared experience that transcended enmity, and was distinct from the judgments of reward and punishment. Gerald interpreted the battle of Colehill (1157) between English and Welsh forces as God punishing Henry II.¹⁶⁶ Yet he dwelled longer on an experience of grief after the conflict than he did on the battle. After a young man was killed in battle, his loyal dog stayed with him and stopped eating food, though neither would bring the man back to life. Although not a rational response, Gerald presented it as an understandable one, and he praised it in classical, heroic terms of loyalty. It inspired English and Welsh to join together to bury the man. The dog's devotion — characterized by neglect of self, and unwillingness to accept the man's death — and the event of loss caused an empathetic response that transcended cause or identity, as in the Waltham Chronicle, where Normans and English joined in grief for Harold. As Gerald portrayed it, grief, though futile in its activity, created an impulse to share sorrow.

In two cases of the deaths of Henry II's sons, Gerald claimed that opposing sides shared the feeling of grief, an idea of emotional fellowship common to the chronicles of Waltham and Hugh Candidus, and his own account of Colehill in *Itinerarium Cambriae*. When the Young King died, both armies (*exercitus utriusque*) grieved in no small measure (*dolore non modico*) for the virtuous Young King's premature death.¹⁶⁷ When Geoffrey died, all of France, chiefly the king, experienced the utmost grief (*dolore permaximo*). He imagined in more detail the personal grief of the French and English kings, characterizing it as immeasurable, isolated, and unresolved. Gerald expressed King Philip's grief by telling a story of his impulse to act to recover the lost person. Philip sorrowed so at Count Geoffrey's death, and grieved so severely (*uehemenciam doloris*) that he would have leapt into the grave with Geoffrey, were he not violently restrained by his men (*nisi uiolenter a suis retractus fuisset*).¹⁶⁸ Gerald never suggested that Philip's grief was resolved in his spirit. The restraint was violent, physical, and external; Philip exhibited no self-restraint nor mental effort to overcome or manage grief. This story resembles Hugh Candidus's tale of the reaction to Leofric's death, in that both stories showed the fervent, impulsive action of the bereaved, the reluctance to part, and the desire to cross that ineffable boundary between life and death — to rejoin the lost one, whether above or below ground. Both writers showed the bereaved attempting to forestall or deny the feeling of isolation and loss by clinging to the lost one's body.

Gerald engaged readily with the universal-particular paradox in thinking about one person's grief: Henry's. The experience of the father, Gerald maintained, was

¹⁶⁶ Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae* 2.10 and 2.7, ed. Dimock, 6:138–39 and 130, respectively.

¹⁶⁷ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.10, ed. Bartlett, 472.

¹⁶⁸ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.10, ed. Bartlett, 478.

altogether unique and warranted separate treatment. At the same time, he thought the intensity and duration of Henry's grief embodied wider truths about human suffering. Not only did Gerald outline a story of unresolved grief, but he also described a Henry who did not want that grief to be resolved. Henry's grief for both sons Gerald called "incomparable" in how Henry felt it:

Indeed such great, limitless grief came upon the father, with mourning wholly incomparable, that he spurned all consolation; caught between two evils, he by far rather wished that his son should triumph over him than that death should triumph over his son.¹⁶⁹

Here Gerald ascribed a key quality to grief: active rejection of consolation. Henry did not want to be consoled or cured. Gerald may have thought this was because Henry felt he deserved to suffer (contemporary commentators agreed his compunction and sorrow on account of Becket's death were genuine); or because Henry believed that accepting consolation would admit his already vast emotional distance from his son.¹⁷⁰ In describing Henry's longing, Gerald attempted to communicate a moving point about Henry's personality, visible primarily in his grief: he was a father before he was a king.

Gerald of Wales employed the Lamentations 1:12 passage in describing Henry's isolation in feeling grief on the death of his son, Count Geoffrey, in 1186. Gerald eliminated the speculative, querying tone of the biblical passage, definitively claiming that Henry II, as a father, felt incomparable grief because there was no grief like his (*Porro pre omni dolore patris dolor incomparabilis erat; non enim erat "dolor sicut dolor" eius*).¹⁷¹ Gerald had already used the word *permaximus* ("thoroughly greatest") to characterize the grief of Philip and the French. To distinguish between these personal experiences of grief by ally (Philip) and father (Henry), he had nowhere left to go but to the realm of the incomparable, with the aid of Lamentations.

Gerald stressed the profound resilience of grief, inferring a general truth from Henry's experience, in a way that belied any sense that grief was short-lived, repetitively-felt, or easily quelled by meditation:

¹⁶⁹ "Patri uero pre omnibus incomparabili m[a]lerore tantus dolor et tam immoderatus accessit, quod solacium respuens omne, inter duo mala perplexus, longe maluerit filium de se quam mortem de filio triumphasse." Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.8, ed. Bartlett, 472.

¹⁷⁰ For contemporary views that Becket was genuinely contrite after Becket's death, see, for example, Roger of Howden, *Chronica* (n. 38 above), 2:35–39 and 61–62.

¹⁷¹ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.10, ed. Bartlett, 478, but see Judith Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins: Province and Empire, 1158–1203* (Cambridge, 2000), 145, for the view that Gerald wrote that Henry grieved mainly because Geoffrey's death reminded him of the Young Henry's.

Truly, the former grief for his son [Young Henry], by now put to sleep by time's kindness, this following grief revived; for then the wounds, over which long duration had drawn emotional scars, began to worsen. Naturally, the most recent blow still rips open most former wounds with grief: for remembering causes a wound of the spirit, which time and reasoning have tended, to fester again.¹⁷²

Gerald was explicit: Henry's grief for his elder son, Young Henry, had never been healed or cured. He emphasized grief's persistence, strength and omnipresence by animating it, showing it behaving, as William of Malmesbury did, like a living entity: it was put to sleep (*sopitum*), then revived (*resuscitauit*) by a fresh injury. Furthermore, in writing of grief as "a wound of the spirit," he drew analogies to festering, long-term, deep wounds liable to be reopened by new pain and suffering. The scars were not healing tissues of a flesh wound, but sheaths over an affliction very much alive. He thought of Henry's physical wounds this way, too: he wrote about Henry's ulcer worsening over time, and thought that Henry's lifestyle increased the ill effects of an injury and accelerated the aging process.¹⁷³ Gerald's analogy between bodily and spiritual suffering reflected his wider learning and thinking. He was no stranger to medical knowledge, even recommending doctors, and appears to have upheld the humors, believing the body behaved predictably.¹⁷⁴ The same, he thought, was true of the soul.

In Gerald's view, the episode highlighted a wider truth about the limitations of the consolatory powers of time and reasoning. At most, they could mollify an incomparable grief; emphatically, they could not cure the wound. *Curare*, which can in some contexts mean "to heal" or "to cure," here means "to treat" or "to tend": a "cured" wound would not still be living, nor could it return revived. Indeed, most of the verb's variant meanings (among them "to attend to," "to take up," "to care about") stress an ongoing undertaking rather than its resolution. Gerald's view of the persistence of profound wounds was not original.¹⁷⁵ The key point about Christ's wounds on the cross, often invoked in medieval

¹⁷² "De priori nempe filio dolorem, beneficio temporis iam sopitum, dolor iste sequens resuscitauit; quoniam et tunc crudescere uulnera ceperunt quibus cicatricem diuturnitas obduxerat. Ictus quippe nouissimus eciam ueteres plerumque plagas dolore rescindit; uulnus enim animi, quod tempore et ratione curatum est, commemoracio rursus exulcerat." Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.10, ed. Bartlett, 478–80.

¹⁷³ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.29 and 3.13, ed. Bartlett, 544 and 618–20.

¹⁷⁴ Owain Nash, "Elements of Identity: Gerald, the Humours and National Characteristics," in *Gerald of Wales*, ed. Henley and McMullen (Cardiff, 2018), 203–19, at 208–10.

¹⁷⁵ On the spread of awareness and precision about types of wounds and their treatment, see for example Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries, "Introduction: Penetrating Medieval Wounds," in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden, 2015), 1–23, at 10–12.

devotion to move the faithful to prayer, was that they did not heal.¹⁷⁶ As the context of Gerald's story made clear, Henry never recovered from the loss of the Young King. According to Gerald, the earlier experience of grief in losing a son left Henry more vulnerable to greater suffering. In the same way as Elidyr's childhood loss tormented him yet, time had only covered Henry's wound. Repeated suffering, rather than deadening or inuring the bereaved, compounded the long-term effect of living with grief. Grief remained a powerful driver of action. This redoubled grief directly caused (*effectiuum*) Henry to be unable to live without his sons, whereas until recently he had refused to do so.¹⁷⁷ His actions may have shown him atoning, but his urge to act showed him seeking to overcome his isolation by recovering his sons, both lost and living.

Gerald's characterization of Henry's grief as an incurable wound is significant because other contemporaries ascribed, or proscribed, restraint in grief to Henry. After reporting Henry's desperate mourning, Roger of Howden wrote a speech for Henry in which the king began by excusing his tears as a father, and then exhorted his followers not to grieve for too long because everyone dies, because death is an occasion for rejoicing in God's aid, and because this energy is better spent on pursuing the enemy.¹⁷⁸ In his later chronicle, Roger wrote (or adapted) a text that counselled Henry not to mourn at all, even as a father, because the Young King, as a would-be parricide, was not really the king's son.¹⁷⁹ Another contemporary and diplomat, Peter of Blois, wrote to Henry expressly to console him. He encouraged the king to replace grief with joy: that his son died penitent and was with Christ, should inspire the king to reform himself. Peter conceded that weeping for the dead is "devoted" (*pius*), and as natural as the fatherly griefs of Job and Jacob, or the spousal grief of Abraham. Thus he would not chide Henry for the emotion of grief (*doloris affectum*) but for excessive grieving (*dolendi excessum*). He begged Henry to have moderation in grieving "lest grief seize you beyond measure" (*ne vos dolor rapiat ultra modum*).¹⁸⁰ Although with these latter words Peter characterized grief as an active, aggressive force, he nevertheless perceived it as something that could, and should, be measured and controlled. For Gerald, even if God meant Henry to suffer, the vengeance play was played out. The father's experience of grief had to be lived with, and knew

¹⁷⁶ Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr, "Introduction: Wounds in the Middle Ages," in *Wounds in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr (Farnham, 2014), 1–16, at 1–6, esp. 5.

¹⁷⁷ Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.10, ed. Bartlett (n. 165 above), 480.

¹⁷⁸ Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1867), 1:300–302.

¹⁷⁹ Roger of Howden, *Chronica* (n. 38 above), 2:279–80; on which, see Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (n. 96 above), 62–66 and 205–206.

¹⁸⁰ PL 207, cols. 4–7. On Peter's hortatory words, see Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (n. 96 above), 210–11.

neither function nor limit. Gerald moralized about Henry's sins, but not about the emotion of grief itself, as Peter did.

The sense that the experience of grief is meaningless and deceptive was consistent for Gerald in cases of actual or imagined loss. In his first mother-weasel story, Gerald had described the quality of grief as vain and deceptive because the mother weasel's children were later proved to be alive.¹⁸¹ The loyal dog refused to leave his master and to accept his death. Henry really did lose his sons, and his self-deception (that he can restore his relationships with his sons or recover them) was, for Gerald, a natural part of the experience of grieving. Like a wound, the feeling had neither meaning nor purpose.

Critical as Gerald was of Henry for what he thought the king brought on himself, he attempted to understand and to convey what, and how, Henry suffered. In his general comments about how new wounds — like *dolor*, physical or spiritual — affect old ones, he also extrapolated from Henry's experience a wider observation about human experiences of grief. Henry appeared, in heart and *animus*, as a human man who had lost two sons. As a human, he was vulnerable to deep wounds of body and spirit. Gerald shows us a Henry who was not only a sinning king and tyrant suffering at the tribunals of God and Fortune, but also a mirror of human experience and suffering. Thus in his *De principis instructione*, Gerald offered a lesson of how one ruler's experience illustrated an instructive truth about emotional experience. Grief is isolating, incomparable, incurable, festering; something one learns to live with, that nonetheless drives one to action, futile or no; it compounds itself; it can get worse.

In creating a moral tragedy around the deeds and death of Henry II to please the king's successors, Gerald shaped the past for present ends. He could, and did, draw a moral lesson out of what he considered Henry's faults. This was not all he did. He loved a well-put idea, and he tried to shape present perceptions to illuminate what he thought of the past. He wrote about emotion in empathetic and experiential terms, for he construed what he thought kings felt in terms not of their public office, but of their personal and familial relationships. In so doing, he related the unique and intimate qualities of an experience in terms he thought meaningful for wider humanity. Here, in narrating the loss of two young leaders — and two young sons — he sought to guide his readers' imaginations so they might better understand the feelings of the *dramatis personae* of the past. Gerald's philosophy was that grief remained. Time could remove it from the sphere of immediate attention, but any question, suggestion, or act of memory (willing or unwilling) could quicken the original feeling with the same intensity. Sorrow and loss lingered, leaving scars and open wounds.

¹⁸¹ Quoting Ovid's *Amores* 2.19.11 (*mentita dolores*). On Gerald's classical borrowings, see Georgia Henley, "Quotation, Revision, and Narrative Structure in Giraldus Cambrensis's *Itinerarium Cambriae*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 24 (2014): 1–52.

GRIEF WITHOUT CONCLUSION

Lamentations 1:12 raised the key philosophical question about grieving, and how to think and write about it. In their stories of loss, the question that interested these twelfth-century writers most — Lamentations’s question — was how to navigate the gulf between grief’s universal aspects and the particular nature of one individual’s feeling. The Waltham chronicler, Hugh Candidus, and Gerald of Wales wrote narratives of loss that resonated with William of Malmesbury’s idea of grief’s nature. Grief’s individual course was dynamic, unpredictable, capricious. As a facet of human experience, grieving was worth remembering and commemorating, often more than details of battles, means of death, and dates of flames. As writers who imagined the past for their ecclesiastical and unknown future readers, they found the emotional quality of the past a subject of historical value. Feelings of loss were a part of history that ought not to be lost. Doing justice to grief meant conjuring the feeling. These writers sought to communicate meaningful ideas about grief’s nature, and to give a valid account of experiences of grief in a way that invited both understanding and sympathy from readers. In order to create that shared understanding, they appealed to common knowledge (as of Lamentations), common experience (as in injury), and an ability to imagine (as with Christ’s passion).

The works examined here illuminate a greater range of ideas about grief in high medieval ecclesiastical circles, and its theological and historical implications, than previously thought. Readers have studied how Christian morality framed ecclesiastical thinking about the “oughtness” of grief, and attitudes of restricting or proscribing grief in certain degrees and durations. This article has shown that, in these twelfth-century accounts, grief wound its own way independent of these strictures. This interest in the reality of grief did not supplant beliefs about an afterlife, consolation, justice, or the meaning of suffering. Such beliefs did, however, fade into an indistinct background in these stories, reappearing neither as grief’s ends nor endings.

Grief, they thought, formed communities of grieving. It brought together different mourners (William’s *Vita Wulfstani*), lay and ecclesiastical (Hugh), political allies and enemies (Waltham chronicler, Gerald), and, if only in wishful thinking, estranged families (Gerald). It could even bring authors, readers, and past people together in empathetic understanding across time. To this end, the Waltham chronicler paused in the telling of Osgod and Æthelric’s grief, and he invited the reader to muse with him on the insight of Lamentations 1:12. However, although they thought people experienced fellowship in grief, this fellowship did not cure the soul or have any palliative effect on grief itself. It did not console. The bereaved had been separated from those held dear, and they continued to remember and suffer. Grief was powerful only in augmenting itself.

These writers valued human relationships, which provides context for their interest in precise experiences of human grief. William, the Waltham chronicler and Hugh Candidus belonged to close-knit, mutually dependent communities, which they described in familial terms.¹⁸² For Gerald, Henry's parental and political hopes were wound up in his sons' lives. To be torn from family members, these writers thought, was devastating in prospect or reality, a form of endless, earthly exile. The griefs they described followed unexpected, unwilling loss of family (Henry and his sons) or those like family (the houses of Hugh and the Waltham chronicler, or William's Wulfstan). In these cases the predominant feelings described were suffering and futile desires, not assurance, consolation, or peaceful trust. They suffered, whatever they believed about the afterlife.

This keen focus on human loss, as opposed to divine salvation, made the bereaved no less Christian in the eyes of these writers. The twelfth-century writers wrote about, and for, family-like communities. They shared these communities' cares, and embraced grieving experiences without reserve. Augustine, by contrast, wrote evocatively about his own experience of grief, but self-critically, and in the context of a confession to God, not a history for human readers. It was filled with regret for his own mistakes and failed relationships. Further study of how regrets and relationships framed thinking about emotional experiences is a promising avenue for future work, and may help to illuminate why medieval writers wrote about grief to such different effect.

The Impulse to Act

Grief involved an impulse to act, despite the impossibility of recovering the person lost. Grief thus had qualities both of agency and powerlessness. One could be struck with grief by an external factor, as a result of God's will (when Harold was out of favor) or arbitrary circumstance (as in Leofric's 1066 illness, or the deaths of Henry's sons). An internal act of the spirit — remembering, remembrance, meditation — could also reawaken grief, as when Gerald's Henry II thought of his first son's death, or when the Waltham chronicler remembered the responsive miracle and his own loss. This is important because it shows that meditation was perceived not only as a strategy for consolation, but also as a trigger, involuntary or willfully chosen, for compounded grief.

These medieval writers' explorations of grieving included both spontaneous and deliberate aspects of emotional experience. They did not view an emotion as an internal response to an external stimulus.¹⁸³ Remembering could be a conscious act of will, as it was for Wulfstan's mourners, or involuntary. The bereaved

¹⁸² Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities* (n. 6 above).

¹⁸³ The "hydraulic" model and criticisms of it are summarized in Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History" (n. 99 above), 834–37.

acted in grief, or chose to weep because they could not “do” anything about a loss (Hugh). Grief, too, acted: it could know and move (William of Malmesbury), or fester and reopen as a wound (Gerald). Metaphors are powerful for suggesting ways of thinking about an idea, and these medieval metaphors for grief (a living being, an idea, an action, an event, a wound) suggested a clear, but rather more complex, philosophy of emotion.¹⁸⁴

One implication is that they did not perceive grief in binary terms, in which the bereaved person either wielded grief or was overcome by it. This matters, because their ideas of grief do not conform to the common idea that medieval ecclesiastical writers viewed grand passions as abnormal, unrestrained, and dominant forces in need of curbing, nor to the idea that grief could be used. In the essence of William of Malmesbury’s metaphor, a passion was a dynamic phenomenon with which a person had an ongoing relationship. Two entities were involved, two entities acted, two entities reacted — and the course of that relationship could be as stable or as unpredictable as any human relationship.

This intimate association of grief and action suggests that they did not find it meaningful to make a sharp distinction between grief and mourning. Mourning was part of the experience of grieving, not the public face of a private, inner turmoil. The relationship between agency and powerlessness in the narratives examined here merits further study. There are, for example, intriguing analogies with the views of some modern appraisal theorists, building on psychological theory, who have noted that the stimuli for “phénomènes émotionnels” may be both external and internal to the organism.¹⁸⁵ This article’s findings suggest there may be value in re-thinking existing ideas about private and public grief, thought and action, and will and control in the Middle Ages.

Boundless Grief

When attempting to compare grief, authors adopted the perspective of an external observer comparing relationships, and estimating the probable depth of feeling involved in each loss based on intimacy. They were not trying to see through the eyes of one mourner, to capture the particular quality of *that* grief. The idea of measuring grief related more to the standpoint and aims of the

¹⁸⁴ On the power of metaphors to shape emotional experience, see Laura Otis, *Banned Emotions: How Metaphors Can Shape What People Feel* (Oxford, 2019); and Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies* (n. 5 above).

¹⁸⁵ Piolat and Bannour, “Émotions et affects” (n. 5 above). On action and motivation, see Carolyne Larrington, “The Psychology of Emotion and Study of the Medieval Period,” *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 251–56; Alexander F. Shand, *The Foundations of Character: Being a Study of the Tendencies of the Emotions and Sentiments*, 2nd ed. (London, 1920); and John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, 3: Sadness and Depression*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1991), 28, 30, and 85–93.

writer: was the writer thinking about grief, or with it? Narrative choices like these are subtle, closely connected with an author's chosen perspective; and they offer evidence for a range of medieval sensibilities and ways for thinking about grief. Yet the question of whether or not grief was a measurable thing divided interpreters, and the issue had significant philosophical import for how any writer narrated an experience of grief.

Some medieval writers, looking on from the outside, compared depths or degrees of emotion. Grief invited the same superlatives, or comments that superlatives insufficiently expressed the true nature of grief.¹⁸⁶ The Carolingian commentaries on Lamentations made implicit comparisons between Old and New Testament sorrows. A parent's grief, in particular, might be singled out. Bonaventure's sermons considered Mary's grief for Jesus incomparable; Gerald dwelt on the father's experience of grief. Neither Gerald nor his contemporaries discussed here described any one person's experience as "less" in any meaningful way. They perceived a problem: a comparative or quantitative approach to emotion could easily trivialize what an individual historical person felt. This was Lamentations 1:12's puzzle. Comparing griefs might do no justice to any one experience of loss. By describing each experience as exceptional, they tried to adopt the perspective of the bereaved.

For these twelfth-century writers, "beyond measure" was an experientially valid way of describing grief. Grief felt like that. Thus, as an inherent quality of real human grief, it was not and could not reflect a failure of human control. A narrative of unmeasured grief sought not to rebuke or disparage, but to state what seemed a true quality of real feelings of loss. Grief was like people: human, but universally variable. Gerald both compared and refused to compare: the grief of the king of France as Geoffrey's ally was greatest; but in Henry's own experience as father, grief was incomparable. To William of Malmesbury, who personified grief, to ask "How much grief do you feel?" or "How much grief is too much?" would be an irrational act, and as meaningless as asking, "How much a person are you? Are you too much?"

In their thinking, grief was not a scalable or limited emotion: and that very essence could be communicated. Their confidence that their narratives and descriptions had purchase on reality is intriguing, because it deviates from another contemporary discourse about grieving. These writers ignored the "inexpressibility" convention, unlike many of their contemporaries who wrote that words could not convey the feelings after disaster like the Fall of Jerusalem (1187). Heraclius, the patriarch, wrote that it was barely possible to describe the scale of suffering and grief, while Templar Terricius found the disasters impossible to recount.¹⁸⁷ Hugh Candidus commented on the difficulties of expressing

¹⁸⁶ That grief is incomparable is a common remark, from the earliest stories of grief. See, for example, Kowalik, *Theology and Dehumanization* (n. 4 above), 41–56.

¹⁸⁷ Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (n. 96 above), 221–22.

acute joy as well as grief, but did not claim it impossible (*Illuc autem ueniens, non est nostre paruitatis explicare cum quanto susceptus sit gaudio*).¹⁸⁸ In their historical projects, or William's commentary, these writers did not think valid ideas about grief surpassed the limits of textual expression: they thought they could write meaningfully about the emotion in a way that invited empathy. Through narrating they could render in prose the twists and turns (*versare*) of each unique instance of a universal experience.¹⁸⁹ This is important, because it suggests a philosophy behind literary conventions that placed a high premium on the explanatory and empathetic power of well written words.

Enduring Grief

In these accounts, it was grief's nature to persist. Grief was a continuum, not an episode. The experience of grief was not a function of time: it followed no terminal rise-and-fall trajectory, as has been argued was the case in the French response to Agincourt.¹⁹⁰ Grief compounded grief, as wound worsened wound — a connection Gerald made explicitly.¹⁹¹ For the royal father of his account, grief temporarily retreated from conscious awareness without healing the spirit. The Waltham chronicler, who cared for his lost Waltham family, saw grief for Harold and the English growing in reach over time. For the Waltham chronicler and Henry, grief got worse. Not once did these writers say that grief reached an end or ran its course. Grief could be managed (*curare*), but not cured.

One consequence of these writers' idea that grief persisted (and could increase its reach) is that human grief, though it had an effect, had neither function nor purpose in their minds. It was an experience: lifelike, willful, and unpredictable, not an inert device they could always reliably control. Gerald of Wales, in a different context, cited classical wisdom that it is useful in life (*in uita utile*) to have nothing beyond measure (*ut ne quid nimis*).¹⁹² But grief, as we have seen, was not one of these measurable things. Henry's grief served no function: it was a

¹⁸⁸ *HC*, 120–21.

¹⁸⁹ *Liber super explanationem lamentationum*, ed. Winterbottom et al. (n. 28 above). On the close relationship between experience and narrative, see David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington, 1986). On genuine feeling in medieval writing and tropes, see Mary Garrison, "The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2003): 243–50.

¹⁹⁰ Megan Cassidy-Welch, "Grief and Memory after the Battle of Agincourt," in *The Hundred Years War (Part II): Different Vistas*, ed. L. J. Andrew Villalon and Donald J. Kagay (Leiden, 2008), 133–50. On emotional sequences, see Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*; Elina Gertsman, ed., *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History* (New York, 2012).

¹⁹¹ For a different view, of a later grief as "recapitulating" an earlier, see Garrison, "Early Medieval Experiences of Grief and Separation" (n. 3 above), 230.

¹⁹² Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione* 2.29, ed. Bartlett (n. 165 above), 544–5.

wound. It was neither good nor evil, neither tool nor fault, nor the mechanism of divine justice. It existed.

In many ways, the notion of function is not relevant to a good deal of medieval thought about what grief felt like. Many thought the dead continued to interact with the living, and that the human Jesus, Mary, and the saints were intercessors more powerful than the living.¹⁹³ The rise of an interest in refining the state of Purgatory in the eleventh and twelfth centuries shows the persistent interest in the fate of the dead, and in maintaining a relationship with them.¹⁹⁴ Where grief had the effect of inspiring action or formed communities of grieving, solace was not a corollary of that outcome.

These writers did not think that frequent loss or repeated experiences with grief, as through disease or child mortality, inured or toughened people against grief, nor that grief traumatized sufferers and inhibited meaningful expression of emotion.¹⁹⁵ These findings suggest that studying ideas of grief in qualitative terms has the potential to offer new insights into medieval ideas about whether loss and grieving were experienced in relation to scale. The fervor of the language medieval Jewish communities used to express and communicate loss after the Black Death, for example, did not map in a quantitative or scalable way onto the numerical size of the death toll.¹⁹⁶ Grief was grief, but no two griefs were alike, and neither time nor the number of deaths could affect or predict the course of this feeling with a mind of its own.

These writers did not think people became inured to grief: nor that they became resigned to it. Writers might have accepted, intellectually, the theory that all forms of suffering could be explicable by divine justice. The inevitability of suffering did not make it easier to bear. Despite trusting in divine providence, William admitted he could not intuit the justice of God's plan.¹⁹⁷ He thought suffering had a meaning; but it was a curious phenomenon, one worth understanding on its own terms, as a facet of human experience. These writers did not apply a tone of justice or solace to their narratives of grief because these ideas were irrelevant to the emotional dimension of the experiences they wrote about. Even though the dead were ultimately interred, these writers highlighted the enduring reluctance of the living to part with the dead. To the Waltham chronicler, the still-sorrowing crucifix did not appear to bow in humble acceptance of God's justice. Harold was surely in

¹⁹³ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead* (n. 65 above).

¹⁹⁴ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, 1984).

¹⁹⁵ For the view that trauma did inhibit expression, see Catherine A. M. Clarke, "Signs and Wonders: Writing Trauma in Twelfth-Century England," *Reading Medieval Studies* 35 (2009): 55–77.

¹⁹⁶ Susan L. Einbinder, *After the Black Death: Plague and Commemoration Among Iberian Jews* (Philadelphia, 2018).

¹⁹⁷ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* 3.245, ed. Mynors et al. (n. 44 above), 1:458–60.

heaven, yet Waltham would weep forever. Hugh Candidus's fellow monks denied what appeared to be Hugh's inevitable death. The seeking, clinging actions and eternal laments of the bereaved monks and canons for their spiritual fathers persisted along with their belief in divine justice. Gerald thought Henry II wanted his sons back. These experiences, they thought, were frustrating and emotionally difficult for the people whose histories they narrated—and, at times, for them as authors of history and memoir. These ecclesiastical chroniclers were not resigned to the misery they wrote about, nor were they peaceful and content in the certainty that it would be useful to obtain an end.¹⁹⁸

These writers implied that one could sympathize with, or encourage, people who did not accept grief, and who resisted emotional suffering and bereavement even when those losses and feelings were ordained by God's decree. In their histories, the people who grieved were not following Paul's exhortation to rejoice in suffering (for example, Rom. 5:3–4). In Thes. 4:13, Paul distinguished between the grief of the hopeful (aware of divine salvation) and the grief of the despairing (those ignorant of divine salvation). These twelfth-century writers knew all about divine salvation. So, they thought, did the people they wrote about. Yet the grief they described was far more despairing than hopeful in tenor, and they neither reprimanded nor gently rebuked it. In the late eleventh century, Anselm argued that God chose to have a human son, Jesus, so that the divinity might participate in, and so understand, human suffering; and to save people spiritually.¹⁹⁹ Not all of that human suffering was construed as salutary: it was thought to endure, and to be endured. It may be significant that some writers searched for meaning and insight not in the promise, hope, and revelations of the New Testament, but in the unresolved struggles and plangent voices of the ancient Old Testament — of Job, of Elijah, of Jeremiah.

The absence of consolation and a neat moral framework from their accounts of grief suggests that their thinking had an intellectual affinity with tragic narrative, normally seen as a primarily secular phenomenon. In true tragedy, the experience of suffering is a valid and valuable subject for writing independent of ideology. The writer's interest in the experience was simply because it happened — a phenomenon separate from the goal, function, purpose, or meaning of suffering. The responsive miracle of Waltham's crucifix is the best example of how this tragic tone coexisted in the same thought-world as heavenly prayer. The chronicler imagined a compassionate Christ figure sorrowing for an earthly human loss he was powerless to prevent. The chronicler also imagined Tovi's fervent devotion to

¹⁹⁸ For the view that medieval ecclesiastical thought embraced and accepted suffering, see George W. McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism* (Princeton, 1991), 9.

¹⁹⁹ Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, ed. Franciscus Salensius Schmitt, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia* (Edinburgh, 1946–61), 2:37–133. See also Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion* (n. 60 above).

the Christ figure of ultimate power, whose sufferings had saved human souls. These two ideas coexisted in the same thought-world. The tone of both episodes is supremely confident, both in Christ's compassion and in the tenacity of grief. The chronicler's narrative strengthened the theological idea that Christ was, in some way, still present, sorrowing over present griefs of present people. It also shows that worldly, human-oriented tragedy had a valid place in ecclesiastical thinking about grief. This article has demonstrated that the boundary between sacred and secular thought about worldly grief was by no means clear. An appreciation of a consolation-resistant experience of human grief lived — however unhappily — alongside belief in God's justice and providence.

These medieval works reveal a wider range of thinking on the emotion of grief in an ecclesiastical context beyond a discourse of consolation and divine hope of heaven. One implication of these writers' thinking was that consolation may actually be impossible, because grief behaves with the caprice of a living being, or the occluded festering of a deep wound. Not all stories had ends. Neither rituals of mourning and commemoration, nor philosophical *consolatio* and belief in an after-life, nor even the knowledge of a person's final resting place really assuaged the pervasive sense of loss.²⁰⁰ In these chroniclers' thought, providence and fortune could not give a full account of the experience suffering and grief. Theories about consolation, as in other eras, often had little direct relevance to ideas about experience.

The Dignity of Human Suffering

These writers perceived enduring grief as natural and rational. Grief was a meaningful feeling, rational in the sense not of rational numbers — capable of being counted or measured — but of perfect consistence with reason, judgment, and human experience and learning. And, thus, grief was not evidence of madness or deviance on the one hand; and not in need of moral correction or control in duration on the other. They valued the earthly experience of grief, treating it with an empathetic dignity that matched its depth without moralizing, rationalizing, or sweetening the brutality of suffering. Their narratives emphasized that the experiences of ignorance, confusion, and desperation were related to suffering, but without condemning grief as excessive or a distraction from God. Healing was not an inevitable, natural, or even (in some cases) desirable outcome of loss and grief.

The dignity of grief lay in its honesty — however, and whenever, it might appear. Human loss of other humans mattered to these writers. The idea of sincerity was important to their thinking about grief. Grief was worthy of attention

²⁰⁰ On crusader families and the uncertainty of the lost person's fate as compounding the experience of loss, see, for example, Nicholas L. Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2012).

because it was sincere. It exposed truth in a spirit. William of Malmesbury defended the sincerity of mourners' tears. The brethren's grief for Harold — because as an emotion, it could only be sincere — was worth more to God than prayers or gifts, about which there was no such guarantee. In Gerald of Wales's mind Henry's fatherly grief was not a king's staged political event, but a father's festering wound, which could neither be faked nor wished away.²⁰¹ For these writers grief was not an earthly emotion felt at the expense of a spiritual one, even if there was dissonance between the two; nor was acute and impulsive personal feeling necessarily a reason to feel humiliated, as their relative contemporary Aelred of Rievaulx claimed he did.²⁰² On the contrary. If ecclesiastical writers renounced the world, they still felt its human losses acutely. The Waltham chronicler wrote of his personal sorrow for his religious community, and sorrows for Harold and the fate of the English, in similar ways. In the abbey of Peterborough, grief for other humans kindled an outpouring of divine devotion — not the other way round.

In these narratives of loss we have encountered a grief of many guises: a living entity, a festering wound, a feeling that can neither be averted nor healed. For early medieval writer Alcuin, grief was raw, complex, verging at times on madness.²⁰³ Grief, as the writers discussed here portrayed it, was sound and rational. The Waltham chronicler's experience of separation led him to reflect on how to convey, and how to understand, historical experiences of grief. It was in a state of grief, not hope, that the Peterborough monks knew their desire and gathered in strong and defiant prayer for Hugh's life. And for Gerald of Wales, Henry II was most human, most sympathetic, and most honest, in his enduring grief. These stories of grief offered no moral. Instead, they offered a lesson in the sincerity of human experience. These writers perceived sanity in grief, for grief put the bereaved in touch with their own agony and mortality, the reality of their relationships with others, and the priority of their own values. Grief, in its very rawness and turbulence, demanded that the *animus* express candor and clarity — or emotional sanity and honesty, as we might

²⁰¹ For a different view, that medieval writers did not distinguish between genuine and performed emotions in public, see Gerd Althoff, "Gefühle in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters," in *Emotionalität: Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*, ed. Claudia Benthien, Anne Fleig, and Ingrid Kasten (Cologne, 2000), 82–99.

²⁰² Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spirituali amicitia*, ed. A. Hoste, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, CCM 1 (Turnhout 1971), 287–350; and David Knowles, "The Humanism of the Twelfth Century," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 30 (1941): 43–58, at 53. On medieval emotional humanism, see Boquet and Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities* (n. 58 above); compare Richard C. Dales, "A Medieval View of Human Dignity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977): 557–72, for a medieval view of human dignity framed in terms of Christian perfection.

²⁰³ Garrison, "Early Medieval Experiences of Grief and Separation" (n. 3 above), 229.

choose to view it. Feigning indifference would be the madness, the delusion, the true isolation — the choice that, in the minds of these medieval ecclesiastical writers, would lead a human farther from Christ's model of humanity, suffering, and compassion.

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Keywords: grief, grieving, loss, separation, emotions, suffering, ecclesiastical, monastic, history of ideas, Christian piety and devotion